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POPULATIONS IN PERIL

PRE-READING ①

Complete the sentences with the key words in bold from the text.

- 1 Since the 1960s, _____ in countries like the UK and the US have fallen quite a lot.
- 2 My parents are _____ to Australia. My mother was born in China and my father was born in Canada.
- 3 Sam joined the _____ at 16 when he left school. He's had a job ever since.
- 4 The numbers of some animals like tigers and pandas are _____ so much that people are worried they may soon become extinct.

② Talk to a partner and answer the questions.

- 1 What is happening to the population of your country?
- 2 What are some of the implications of a shrinking or aging population?

③ Read the text quickly and answer the questions.

- 1 When could the population of the earth reach 11 billion? _____
- 2 What is happening to the population of Japan? _____
- 3 How many babies approximately were born in Japan in 2013? _____
- 4 In 2014, what percentage of the population in Japan was below 65 years old? _____



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POPULATION CRISIS

As of 2015, there are an estimated 7.3 billion people on the planet and the number is growing annually by roughly 77 million. Recent forecasts have predicted that by 2100 there could be as many as 11 billion people on the planet! Such rapid population growth will inevitably lead to some major challenges for food and water, as well as issues with pollution and overcrowding. However, in many developed countries such as the UK, the US, Japan, and South Korea, the main issue is not overpopulation but a **declining** and aging population.

In 2014, the population of Japan shrank by over a quarter of a million. Just over a million babies were born, which was 9,000 fewer than in 2013. With the birth rate dropping for four years in a row, and the higher number of deaths than births, the overall population in the country is declining, setting a worrying trend. If this decline continues, Japan's population could fall below 100 million by 2050 – that's almost 30 million fewer people than today.

Of course, on the face of it, this doesn't seem to be such a bad thing. Surely, if more countries had a declining population, this would help offset the population explosion taking part in many other areas of the world. This, in turn, would help alleviate problems connected to overpopulation. However, for countries like Japan and South Korea, low **birth rates** are a concern for governments as they will have a significant, negative impact on society.

Firstly, the number of people of working age decreases. This immediately affects things like a country's GDP (gross domestic product) and, in turn, its economy. It also means that those in the **workforce** have the added burden of paying for people who aren't working, and the most common way of doing this is to increase taxes. As more people retire and become eligible for a pension, the problem simply gets bigger. In 2014, 25% of the total population in Japan were aged 65 or above, and there are fears that this could rise to almost 40% by 2060. Figures in other Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan are just as alarming at the moment.

Another consequence of an aging population is an increased pressure on the healthcare system of a country. While it is true that people are living longer because of improvements in healthcare, diet, and general fitness, this does not mean that doctors and hospitals don't face challenges. Increases in diseases usually associated with age, including dementia, diabetes, and arthritis, are almost inevitable. Often, such conditions are long-term and can be a drain on financial resources and in terms of the number of healthcare workers needed.

45 But why are the birth rates in Japan, South Korea, and other
developed countries so low? In 2013, the number of births per
1,000 people was eight in Japan, and only slightly higher in South
Korea, at nine. This compares to 24 in the Philippines and 20 in
Bangladesh. A number of reasons have been suggested for the
50 falling birth rates in developed countries, including the rising costs
of bringing up children, particularly the cost of education, as well
as an increase in the number of working women who decide to
have children later in life or have none at all. The change in
attitude towards marriage also has a negative impact on birth rates.
55 In many Asian countries, the number of marriages has fallen over
recent years, leading many to fear that the birth rate will decrease
further.

60 So what are the solutions? As long ago as 1994, the Japanese
government realized there was a potential crisis and began to try
and tackle the problem by implementing the “Angel Plan”, which
offered counselling to couples, encouraged fathers to take an
active role in child raising, and gave financial incentives to couples
with children. The government has continued to revise the plan to
ease the burdens for families with children in an attempt to boost
the birth rate. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have had much
65 effect as the number of births has continued to fall.

70 Another possible solution is to attract **immigrants** into the country,
a policy adopted by countries like Australia and the US. However,
immigration can lead to other challenges. In Australia,
immigration is often seen as part of the make-up of the national
identity and culture. After all, of the 23 million people living in
Australia today, more than six million were born outside the
country. A big increase in the number of foreigners living in a
country can have a profound effect on many aspects of life and the
nation’s cultural identity.

75 While the population of the globe as a whole continues to increase,
some of the most developed countries in the world face a
completely different problem. If they don’t find a solution soon,
they risk declining living standards and many other social and
economic issues. And it seems they have quite a long way to go to
80 tackle this crisis.

COMPREHENSION 1

Read the text and check the sentences True (T), False (F), or the information is Not Given (NG).

- 1 The population of every country in the world is increasing.
T F NG
- 2 In 2014, the population of Japan decreased.
T F NG
- 3 In 2014, less than one million babies were born in Japan.
T F NG
- 4 In countries where the population is getting smaller, it's likely that people in the workforce will see their taxes increase.
T F NG
- 5 In Asia, only Japan is facing the problem of an aging population.
T F NG
- 6 Japan's problem of an aging population is the most serious in the world.
T F NG
- 7 The birth rate in the Philippines is higher than that in both Japan and South Korea.
T F NG
- 8 The biggest reason for the low birth rates in Asia is the falling number of marriages.
T F NG
- 9 More than a quarter of the people in Australia are immigrants.
T F NG
- 10 The writer is optimistic that developed countries will find a solution to their population problems soon.
T F NG

2 Read the text again and complete the table.

reasons for a low birth rate	problems of a declining and aging population

3 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1 In line 3, the word _____ means *statements about what is likely to happen*.
- 2 In line 12, *four years in a row* means ...
 - a in the next four years.
 - b four consecutive years.
 - c every four years.
- 3 In line 17, *on the face of it* means ...
 - a after examining all the facts.
 - b something appears to be true, but in fact might not be true.
 - c something is controversial.
- 4 In line 20, the word _____ means *to make something less serious*.
- 5 In line 23, *they* refers to ...
 - a the government.
 - b low birth rates.
 - c the countries
- 6 In line 30, *eligible* means ...
 - a legally allowed to receive something.
 - b refusing to receive something.
 - c volunteering to do something.
- 7 In line 41, something is *inevitable* means that ...
 - a a lot of effort is required to avoid it.
 - b it is too late to do anything about it.
 - c it's impossible to avoid it.
- 8 In line 50, *bringing up* can be replaced by ...
 - a feeding.
 - b teaching.
 - c raising.
- 9 In line 61, *financial incentives* means ...
 - a money to try and make people want to do something.
 - b money that people have to pay if they want to do something.
- 10 In line 63, *in an attempt to* can be replaced by ...
 - a so as to.
 - b as a result.
 - c resulting in.

11 In line 73, *profound* can be replaced by ...

- a possible.
- b great.
- c relevant.

4 Complete the text with the words in the box. Use each word only once.

cultural economy encouraged immigration
increased policy rates trend workforce

Countries like Australia and the US have relied heavily on (1) _____ to increase their populations and, in particular, their (2) _____. In Australia, where there are shortages of certain skills, the government has (3) _____ people with those skills to move to the country. The skill shortage list issued in 2015 included surveyors, plumbers, doctors, and electricians. However, such a (4) _____ is not welcomed by everyone, especially in areas where there is a high unemployment rate and the local (5) _____ is not strong. Another issue that has recently surfaced is the changes in the demographics of the country and to its (6) _____ make-up. In many cases, birth (7) _____ among new immigrant families are considerably higher than the national (8) _____. Of course, this is nothing new in Australia, but it has led to (9) _____ tensions in some communities.

5 Underline the word that does not belong in each group.

For example:

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| decline | fall | <u>grow</u> | reduce |
| 1 consequence | impact | aspect | effect |
| 2 explode | increase | rise | shrink |
| 3 burden | issue | problem | solution |
| 4 fear | concern | crisis | reason |
| 5 actual | likely | possible | potential |
| 6 cost | tax | expense | improvement |

LIFE SKILLS

STUDY AND
LEARNING

Evaluating arguments

- Identify arguments and the supporting evidence.
- Evaluate the relevance and strength of the evidence.
- Decide if the arguments are strong.

Evaluate the arguments in the text.

Grammar

Present simple and present perfect

The choice of present simple or present perfect depends on what time frame we focus on. We use the present simple when ...

- the information is simply factual with no focus on any particular time.
... *low birth rates are a concern for governments* ...
- we want to focus on the current situation only.
Figures in other Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan are just as alarming at the moment.

We use the present perfect when ...

- we want to focus simultaneously on the present and the past.
In many Asian countries, the number of marriages has fallen over recent years ...
- we want to say that something has happened before in the indefinite past.
A number of reasons have been suggested for the falling birth rates ...

GRAMMAR

Read the sentences and match them to the functions (a–d) of the verb forms.

- a states a general fact that is always true, with no specific time focus
- b only tells us about the present situation
- c tells us the action or situation is happening now and for how long it has happened
- d tells us an event has happened before in the indefinite past or has never happened before

- 1 Keiko has wanted to have children since she got married. _____
- 2 She now lives with her husband in Tokyo. _____
- 3 Charles has lived in Hong Kong for almost two years. _____
- 4 He has never been to Japan. _____
- 5 The term *migration* refers to the movement of people or animals from one place to another. _____
- 6 Many countries are worried about low birth rates and the inevitable consequences. _____
- 7 Most countries have never had such serious problems before. _____

SPEAKING

Talk to a partner and answer the questions.

- 1 A number of solutions are suggested in the text to deal with a declining and aging population. Do you think those are good solutions? Why / Why not?
- 2 What other solutions can you think of?

ESSENTIAL

SKILLS

ACTIVATING THE TOPIC

Why do some people choose not to get married? Talk to a partner.



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A happy married life?

NO, THANK YOU!

Most people dream of a beautiful wedding ceremony with their Mr or Mrs Right. They imagine a harmonious family with two lovely children enjoying a home-cooked dinner every evening. That is the typical image of a happy married life and it is believed

5 that everybody should have a family to provide love, rest, and contentment. However, ever since I was young, I have had a different point of view about marriage. Marriage is just an option, and the word “marriage” is not in my dictionary. Marriage does not

10 guarantee love and it will require me to accept difficult roles that I do not wish to have.

The idea that marriage ensures long-lasting love and happiness is just an illusion. People say that marriage is a symbol of love and that is confirmed

15 in their married life. However, many happy couples live together without being married. Further, domestic violence is frequently reported and South Korea is among the countries with the highest divorce rates.

20 Where are the holy marriage vows the couples made before? Despite the rising frequency of divorce, being divorced is regarded as a flaw

25 in South Korea.



Many people still think that there must be something wrong with those who are divorced, and look down on them. Therefore, many couples stay married even though their married life is extremely difficult, while others who divorce have to suffer considerable discrimination from society.

30 I do not want to be under the pressure of a legal commitment. Love should be truly honest and human beings cannot be forced to sustain this feeling. It is very natural that the feeling of love comes and goes. Men and women should make an effort to deepen their love, but should break up if they find there is no longer any happiness in their relationship.
35 People pursue love to be happy and if they are happy in their love, it does not matter whether they are married or not. Marriage itself is just a piece of paper and nothing more.

40 Married women suffer more hardships and pressure in their work places and homes. Society requires a lot of sacrifice from women. People complain that the low birth rate is a big social problem and children feel neglected because two-career couples are increasing. Maybe so, but how many childcare facilities are available, and how well do the government and companies protect a woman's right to have sufficient maternity leave, or to get paid the same as men? In addition, many men still believe that women should work and do all the housework, as well as look after their husbands' families. Society demands married women be superwomen. Yet, despite all their sacrifices, the image of married women is still quite negative.

50 I do not want to be this kind of exhausted and unappreciated married woman. In my life, the most important things are me and my career. I am goal-oriented, ambitious, and hard-working. I have been studying and working hard to reach my destination. To be honest, I am not self-sacrificing enough to accept the roles that are imposed on a wife and mother. When I have free time, I want to meet friends, pursue hobbies,
55 read books, and study, so there will be no time to raise kids and do household chores. Married life cannot satisfy what I would like to achieve and what I am looking for.

60 Some people might say that I am too young to understand how important marriage is, or that I am a radical feminist who rejects social convention. But I am what I am, and I do not need to change myself and what I want to have just because of unfair social expectations and demands. I can be happy, successful, and enjoy my life without marriage.

INFERRING

The writer believes that marriage does not guarantee love and it will require her to accept difficult roles that she does not wish to have. Her arguments include:

- A Marriage does not guarantee a happy life or lasting love.
- B Married women suffer from unfair demands made on them.

Which argument (A or B) do these sentences support?

- 1 Society looks down on you if you get divorced. _____
- 2 It's possible to love someone without being married. _____
- 3 The divorce rate is high. _____
- 4 Companies do not provide assistance to married women. _____
- 5 Marriage pressurizes people who are not in love to stay together. _____
- 6 Men expect women to have a career and take care of the house. _____
- 7 Marriage forces women to abandon their career dreams and hobbies. _____

RESPONDING TO THE TEXT

Talk to a partner and answer the questions.

- 1 What is your reaction to the essay? Review the arguments above. Do you agree with them?
- 2 Do you feel you could be satisfied with life if you never get married? Why / Why not?
- 3 What expectations do you have of your future spouse about earning money?
 - a He/She should completely support our family.
 - b He/She should provide about half of our family income.
 - c He/She should only provide a small portion of the income.
 - d He/She does not have to provide any income.
- 4 What expectations do you have of your future spouse about housework and taking care of children?
 - a He/She should do all the work at home.
 - b He/She should do about half of the work at home.
 - c He/She should do just a little work at home.
 - d He/She shouldn't do any work at home.

WRITING

How do you want your life to be in future? Write about it.



Our shrinking planet

Although birth rates have declined in some countries, the world population continues to **boom**. From the year 1800 to 1927, the population of the world doubled to 2 billion, and then doubled again in less than 50 years. As of 2015, the world's population is about 7.3 billion and increases annually by more than one per cent. **Analysts** are concerned about the additional strain population growth will put on the world's resources, particularly in regards to water and food. According to the U.N. World Water Development Report in 2003, severe water **shortages** will affect the majority of the planet within the next 50 years, which will have a strong effect on agriculture and thus the world's food supply. Most of the world's population growth is taking place in developing countries, and it is these regions that can expect to be hit the hardest by **famine** in the years to come.

EXERCISE 1

Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What is the main problem discussed in the text?

- 2 What was the population of the world in 1800?

- 3 About when did the world's population increase to 4 billion people?

- 4 What are analysts concerned about?

- 5 What major problems might people face in the future?

- 6 What areas of the world can expect to suffer the most from these problems?

EXERCISE 2

Look at the key words in bold in the text and match them to the definitions.

- 1 a serious lack of food that causes many people to become sick or to die

- 2 to grow or develop quickly

- 3 a lack of something that you need or want

- 4 people whose job is to carefully examine a situation in order to provide other people with information
