

Workshop on
**Fertility Decline, Below Replacement Fertility and the Family in Asia:
Prospects, Consequences and Policies**

Organized by

**Asian MetaCentre
For Population and Sustainable Development Analysis**

in Association with

**Family Studies Research Programme
National University of Singapore**

Supported by

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United Kingdom**

Date & Venue

**10 – 12 April 2002
National University of Singapore, Singapore**

Scope and Context

Fertility decline has largely characterised the Asian population transition over the later part of the last century. Beginning with the initiation of Japan's transition in the 1930s, fertility declines in other Asian countries soon followed, with levels in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore beginning to fall by the 1960s. The latter part of the 1960s and the 1970s heralded the beginning of transitions in the major Chinese and South Korean cities, as well as the Chinese populations in Southeast Asia. A number of reasons have been suggested for the Asian fertility declines. Declines in most countries have generally been concomitant with the rise in the pace of industrialisation and relative economic prosperity. Socioeconomic factors such as the spread of education, particularly among women, have been cited as vital to bringing down fertility to below-replacement levels in several Asian countries. The diffusion of contraceptive use arguably plays an important role as well. Many studies have also considered anti-natalist policies by relatively strong-handed

governments in many Asian nations as playing a significant role in bringing about the rapid pace of decline.

Fertility decline in Asia is an uneven process, with declines being particularly pronounced in the urban areas, to the point of sub-replacement fertility in some countries. The implications of such trends are wide-ranging, often provoking changes at both the level of the family and at state level. These problems range from the social - changing gender politics within the household - to policy concerns, such as ageing populations and labour shortages. Indeed, Asian governments are beginning to recognise some of the problems of fertility decline, which have significant impacts on the countries that are approaching sub-replacement levels of population, such as Singapore and Japan.

However, due the complex, contextual nature of the phenomenon, Asian countries experience and respond differently to fertility decline. Even as some countries embark on pro-natalist policies in attempts to reverse the phenomenon, marked variations exist within and between countries in the way fertility decline is socially and geographically manifested. Fertility declines are not uniformly experienced, and differentials continue to exist, whether they be based on ethnicity, educational qualifications, or urban-rural variations. As an important unit in Asian society, the changes in family structure, values and relations need to be examined in order to link the local fertility variations with population policies. Policy actions, however, are also contingent upon whether the country is experiencing sub-replacement fertility levels. For example, in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines that are experiencing fertility declines but not to the point of below-replacement fertility, the relationship between education and fertility is not as evident as in Singapore, where a eugenics-based policy was in place in the mid-1980s in attempts to counter the trend of graduate women having fewer children than their less-educated counterparts. There is hence a need to examine the particular contexts of Asian fertility decline that help set in motion social and ideological changes, as well as to embark on a timely re-assessment of the relevance of current theories of fertility decline to the Asian context, and indeed, that of the developing world.

Workshop Themes

The workshop welcomes the opportunity to consider papers on the following themes in the context of declining and below-replacement fertility in Asia:

- Re-assessing theories of fertility decline: lessons from Asia
- The question of 'optimal' fertility, mortality, rate of migration, and ultimately, an 'optimal' population size for a country
- Population projections, with an emphasis on possible scenarios of fertility changes in the future
- Intergenerational relations, fertility and the family
- Gender politics within the family and fertility
- The effects of declining family sizes on 'family values' in Asia

- Social, economic and political implications of below-replacement fertility (ageing, labour shortages, etc)
- Fertility decline, family planning and government policy

Invitation to Submit Abstracts

The workshop will include both invited and submitted papers. The organizers invite submissions in the form of abstracts for their proposed contribution of about 500 words, or full-length papers. Interested participants should also submit their Curriculum Vitae (include research projects and publication record), together with their abstracts to:

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Fertility Decline Workshop
Asian MetaCentre
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National University of Singapore
5 Arts Link, Shaw Foundation Building, AS7
SINGAPORE 117570

Email: popnasia@nus.edu.sg
Fax: 65-7791428

Applicants are encouraged to send in their abstracts via email. The deadline for submission of abstracts (or full papers) is **31 October 2001**. Notification of acceptance of papers can be expected by 25 November 2001.

Application for Funding Support

Participants are expected to find their own funding to attend the workshop, but limited funding to cover economy-class return airfare, and accommodation for the duration of the workshop is available for the best abstracts selected on a competitive basis to successful applicants. Registration fees will be waived for successful applicants.

If you are applying for funding support from the Asian MetaCentre, please indicate clearly in your cover letter whether you are applying for full support or a partial subsidy (in which case indicate the type of support needed (e.g. accommodation only)).

All participants supported in part or in full are required to give first **right of refusal** to the organizers to publish their papers, after revisions if necessary, in a book or journal special issue planned for the workshop.

In the case of self-supporting participants, registration fee will be waived if your paper is accepted for presentation at the workshop. Information on accommodation options will also be made available in our subsequent announcements (hotel accommodation is estimated at no more than S\$140 per night and there will be other less expensive university visitors' lodge accommodation which will be made available).

Applications should reach us by **31 October 2001** and the results can be expected by 25 November 2001.

Registration Fee

For those who will not be presenting papers but would like to attend the workshop, registration fee of S\$250 inclusive of 3% Goods and Services Tax is applicable. The registration fee covers the workshop papers and meals (lunches and tea-break only) for the 3-day event. Applicants will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation arrangements. Interested applicants should send in their cheques or bank drafts of \$250 in Singapore Dollars, made payable to the “**National University of Singapore**” together with a completed registration form (attached below) to the Asian MetaCentre headquarter. Please state your name and “Asian MetaCentre / Fertility Decline Workshop” on the reverse side of the cheques or bank drafts. Interested applicants are to respond by **31 October 2001**.

[Registration form](#) (downloadable in .rtf)