**Introduction**

For most of human history, fertility rates have remained high—well above the 2.1 children per woman needed for replacement. Families were large. This is because, in times where demanding agricultural work was the norm, so too was childhood mortality. The more children a family had, the more likely it was that one or more would survive. However, as education and technology have increased, an interesting demographic phenomenon has emerged. The growth of education and technology has coincided with a decline in family sizes and fertility rates well below the replacement rate. Japan has a fertility rate of 1.39 children per woman, the U.S. 1.84, and Spain 1.29. By contrast, countries like Niger, Angola, and the DRC have fertility rates of 6.73, 5.76, and 5.56, respectively. That is an astonishing difference. It is something not limited to just European or Western countries but also countries like Japan and Taiwan. What is causing this, and why? What could this mean for the future? Such a colossal demographic change could have far-reaching consequences.

In 1979, the People’s Republic of China introduced the infamous One-Child Policy. Now, China has started experiencing the consequences of the so-called demographic transition. Most noticeably, the population pyramid has inverted. A once growing and young population is now dying and aging. Already, this has become noticeable in the United States. A glance at the population growth rate shows a plateauing curve, while the average age continues to climb. Still, why should we care? Health insurance premiums and health related expenses could quickly outpace incomes. Social Security, the delicately financed house of cards that it is, could collapse and leave tens of millions of senior citizens and disabled Americans without any support. Moreover, fewer workers might mean higher wages, but also less specialized labor and less access to vital services. Perhaps most importantly, shrinking and altogether disappearing families could have the direst consequences as support systems fall apart and an already atomized society loses its last institution.