



The Future of Iran's Population: Balancing Aging Trends and Fertility Rates

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As current population growth trends persist, Iran's population is projected to reach 42 million by the year 1480, marking a significant transition from a predominantly youthful demographic to an increasingly aging society. While European countries face similar demographic challenges, their population decline is occurring gradually. In contrast, Iran's declining youth population presents a more urgent concern. Presently, there are approximately 5 million couples, representing 10 million individuals of marriageable age, who remain unmarried. It is imperative to provide these individuals with essential resources, including employment opportunities and housing, to facilitate family formation ¹. Another critical issue is the prevailing trend of having only one child. As parents age, their children face the difficult choice between establishing their own lives and providing care for their aging parents, a dilemma that poses significant implications for future demographic stability. In approximately 20 years, the rates of birth and death in Iran are expected to equalize, resulting in zero population growth. Subsequently, the number of deaths is projected to exceed births, leading to a decline in the population to below 50 million by the year 1480 ¹. Current demographic data indicate that approximately 24% of Iran's population of 85 million consists of children and adolescents under the age of 15. Additionally, 25% are young individuals aged 15 to 29, while 44% are middle-aged, and the remaining population comprises elderly individuals over 65. This demographic structure highlights a predominance of middle-aged individuals. Alarming, road traffic accidents claim the lives of approximately 20,000 individuals annually, a significant proportion of whom are productive young people. Urgent preventive measures are necessary to address this issue, including improvements in road conditions, driving culture, and vehicle safety. The car industry, while contributing to road fatalities, also exacerbates environmental pollution through inefficient fuel combustion, positioning it as a potential barrier to population growth. Furthermore, the interval between marriage and the birth of the first child currently spans 4.5 to 5 years, a gap that must be addressed. Delayed marriage and extended intervals between childbirth can diminish the desire for larger families. The average age of marriage among Iranian youth, particularly in provinces where fertility rates have fallen below 1.5, has been on the rise.

To counteract these trends, targeted population interventions should be implemented in provinces with fertility rates below 1.5, promoting childbearing through practical measures rather than mere rhetoric. This responsibility extends beyond the Ministry of Health to encompass the entire government. While Level 2 and 3 infertility treatment centers have been established across all provinces, providing essential services to infertile couples, the number of such centers exceeds the number of provincial health facilities. Addressing demographic challenges requires a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social, and cultural factors alongside medical interventions. Over the past 35 years, Iran has made significant strides in infertility treatment, emerging as a regional leader in this field, with health insurance covering nearly 100% of infertility treatment costs. In conclusion, a comprehensive and coordinated policy response is essential to address the demographic challenges facing Iran. By fostering an environment conducive to family formation and addressing the underlying social determinants of fertility, we can work towards a sustainable demographic future.

References

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