

Mitigation and Adaptation: Analyzing and Shaping Demographic Change

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Abstract

Demography, the statistical study of human populations, has rapidly gained importance in recent political discussions, both in individual countries and multilateral institutions. Demographic data are an excellent starting point for policymaking because they allow for long-term and reliable projections. However, in most cases, demographic issues are addressed in a rather selective manner with a focus on individual topics such as pension systems, migration, or workforce development. A comprehensive view is rather rare. The lack of a holistic view and comprehensive policy approaches entail the risk of acting too late and inadequately to problems brought about by the consequences of demographic changes. The concept of mitigation and adaptation, developed and successfully applied in other fields, has great potential when applied to demographic issues. The concept does not explain demographic change, nor is it a generator of solutions. But it can form a useful framework and heuristic approach for understanding demographic change, classifying challenges, and deriving measures and policies. Precisely because the concept is not a closed model, it invites the consideration of research findings from very different fields.

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As a Think Tank, the WDA Forum actively shapes the discussion on demographic topics. We work closely with the Institute of Insurance Economics at the University of St. Gallen as well as other educational and research institutions including the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, Stanford University in California, American Enterprise Institute in Washington/DC, Population and Ageing Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Fudan University in Shanghai, and Swissnex Network of Science and Technology.

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