

Topic: Declining Population in Japan

Big Idea: How should Japanese governments deal with a rapidly declining population?

Curriculum connection(s): Saskatchewan Social Studies 20 Unit Two – Population: Changes in Human Behaviour.

Time: 2-3 (60 minute) classes

Part One:

- Students are placed in groups of four and each student is given a copy of “Statistics Japan Population 1920-2014” (<http://www.stat.go.jp/data/nenkan/zuhyou/y650201a00.xls>), students work with each other to interpret data to identify possible trends and make general inferences, eg., effect of WW2 on population growth; the rapid rate of growth in the decade after the end of the war, etc.
- Whole class discussion on trends detected and subsequent inferences.
- Students work with their small group to interpret “Statistics Japan Population Pyramids 2014/2039” (<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/pdf/z02-2.pdf>)
 - Why is the 2014 pyramid shaped the way it is, i.e., why is the shape so different from the 2039 pyramid?
 - What trend(s) are evident in the 2039 pyramid? What does the pyramid tell us?
 - What might future pyramids look like? Students create a predicted population pyramid for 2050.
 - Class compares pyramids from each group
- Students receive “Statistics Japan Future Population Trends” (<http://www.stat.go.jp/data/nenkan/zuhyou/y650202000.xls>)
 - Small group interpretation followed by large group discussion, comparing their predictions with the government source
 - Small group discussion to answer the following prompt: What opportunities/problems might result due to the predicted changes to Japan’s population?
 - Class discussion to list and categorize answers – discussion should lead to economic challenges such as decreased tax base, shortage of workers, increased strain on health care system, etc.

Part Two:

- Students return to small groups
- Teacher assigns each group the following prompt: You are given control of all levels of government in Japan for the next 30 years – what policies (economic, political, social – domestic and international) will you enact to respond to the predicted changes in order to provide the best standard of living for Japanese citizens?
- Students will hand in a ‘policy paper’ outlining their recommendations
- Assessment based upon criteria co-determined by students and teacher.