

International Responses to Population Change

Paul Spoonley
Distinguished Professor Emeritus

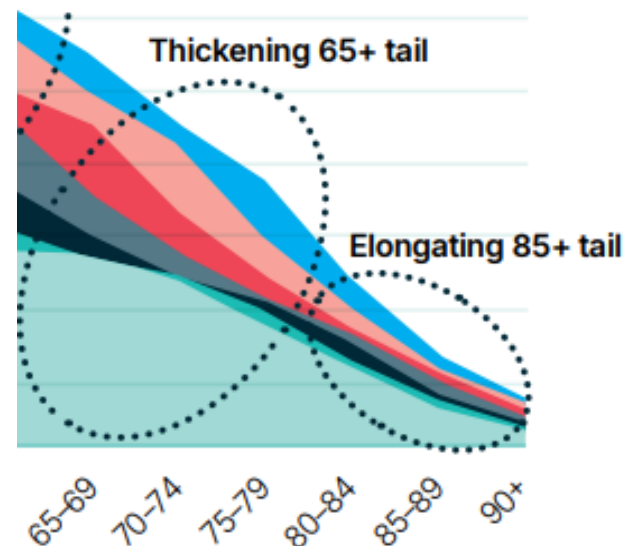
8 June 2026

People, place and prosperity: The case for a population strategy



Georgia Lala, Paul Spoonley and Sir Peter Gluckman

April 2026



The case for a population strategy for New Zealand

What do we mean by population strategy?

What is the value of a population strategy?

A way forward

The enabling environment of a population strategy

Leadership of a population strategy

Elements of a population strategy

**Webinar: People, place
and prosperity: The case
for a NZ population
strategy**

Demographic Decline

ANDREW STANLEY

SEPTEMBER 2024

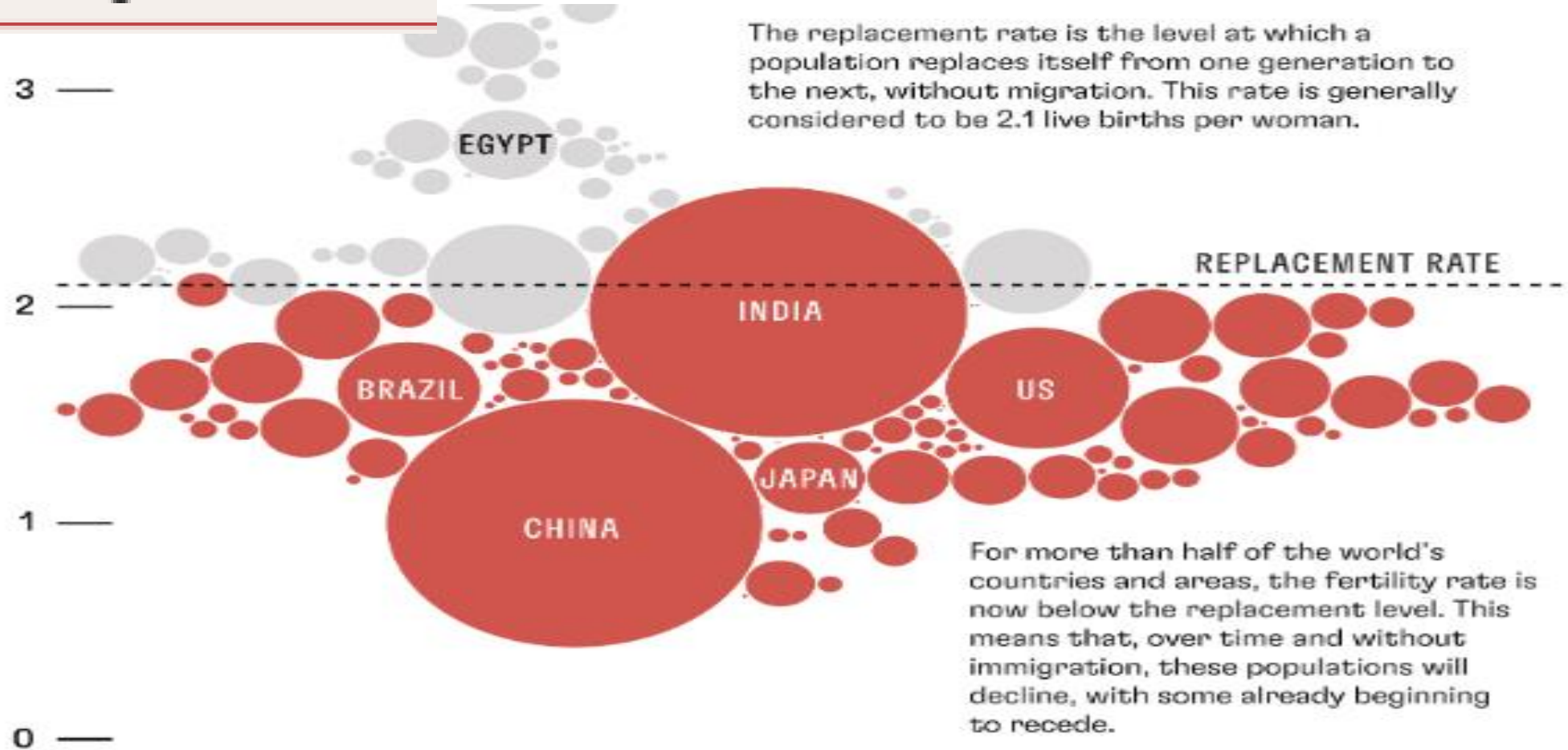


50%

Japan's old-age dependency ratio in 2023, meaning that for every two working-age adults (15–64), there is at least one person aged 65 or older. By 2050, nearly 20 economies, all located in Asia and Europe, are expected to have an old-age dependency ratio exceeding 50%

Falling fertility and aging populations pose significant challenges for many economies

Baby bust



SOURCE: United Nations, World Population Prospects (2024).

NOTE: Not all countries and areas included in the dataset are visible due to small population sizes.

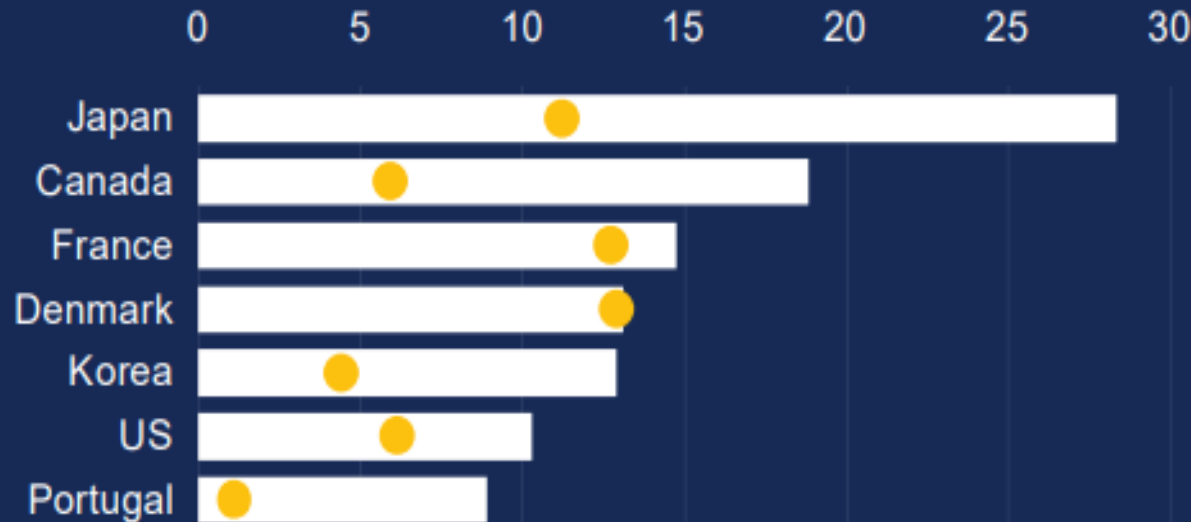
Society at a Glance 2024

OECD SOCIAL INDICATORS

Childlessness has increased in many countries

% of women remaining permanently childless

1975 cohort 1935 cohort



Comparing the fertility of women born in 1935 and 1975, childlessness at least doubled in Estonia, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.

Many factors affect fertility choices



Positive influence

Employment rates of both men and women



Public family benefits



Negative influence

Unemployment rates



Housing costs

Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably



Launched in February 2023 with support from the European Commission, the OECD's Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably project helps regions and cities facing long-term population decline and ageing adapt in a way that is economically viable and environmentally responsible.



Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably



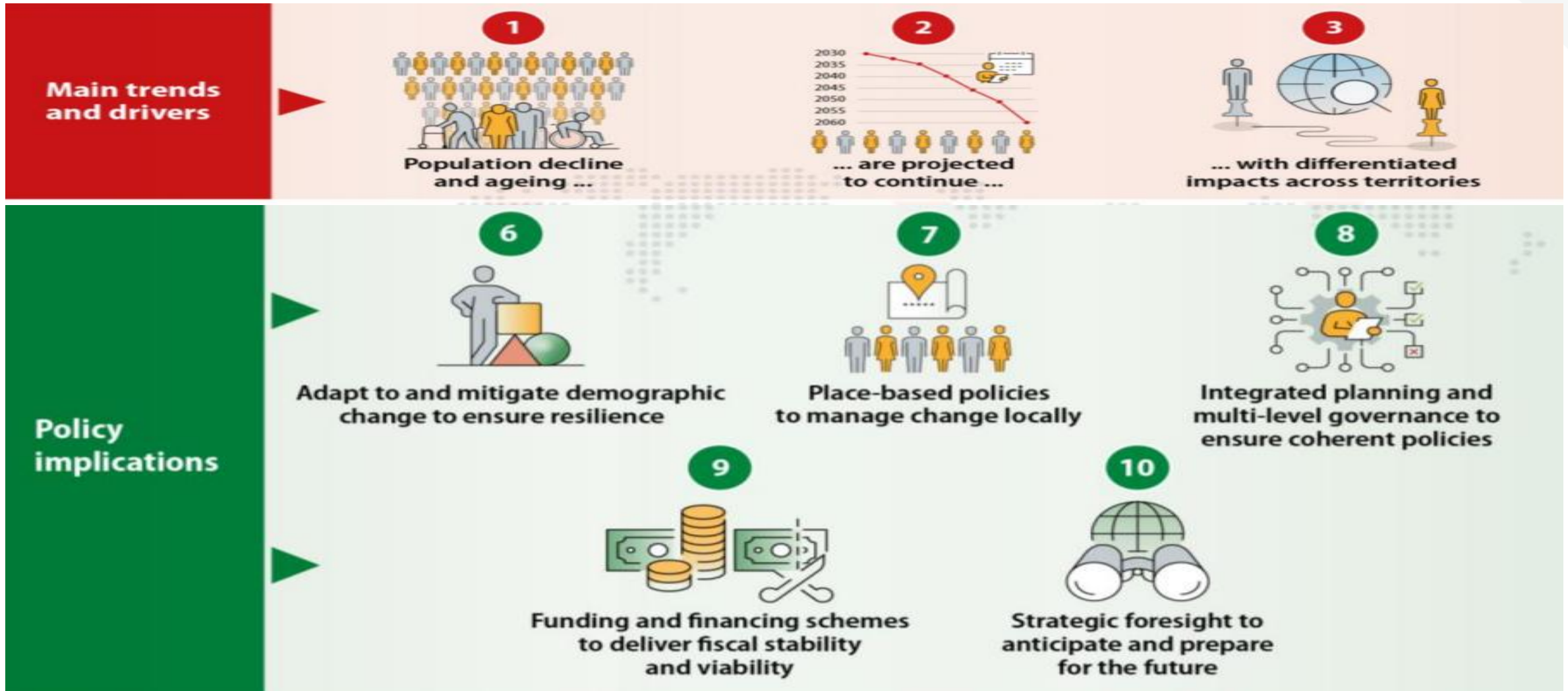
1. Acknowledge the demographic reality and anticipate change through evidence-based policy responses
2. Tailor adaptation and mitigation strategies to regional demographic realities
5. Create age-friendly places for resilient and inclusive communities
6. Strengthen co-ordination across sectors and levels of government
7. Do more with less: Enhancing fiscal resilience in a changing demographic context



CAN SERVICES STOP PLACES SHRINKING?

Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably

Strategies for Action

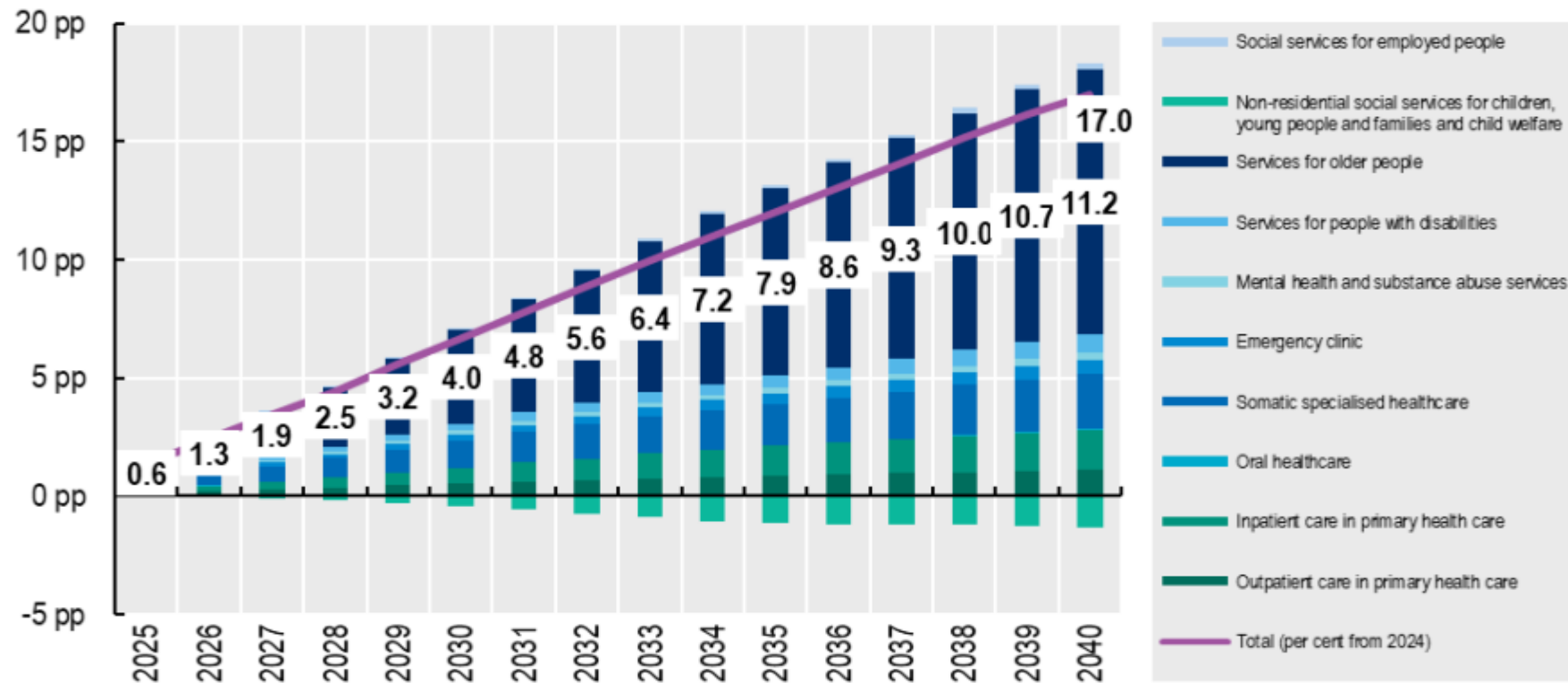


Shrinking smartly and sustainably in Finland

Multi-level governance, subnational finance and service delivery



Figure 2.4. Annual impact of demographic change on the anticipated development of healthcare and social welfare costs, percentage point change from 2024 to 2040

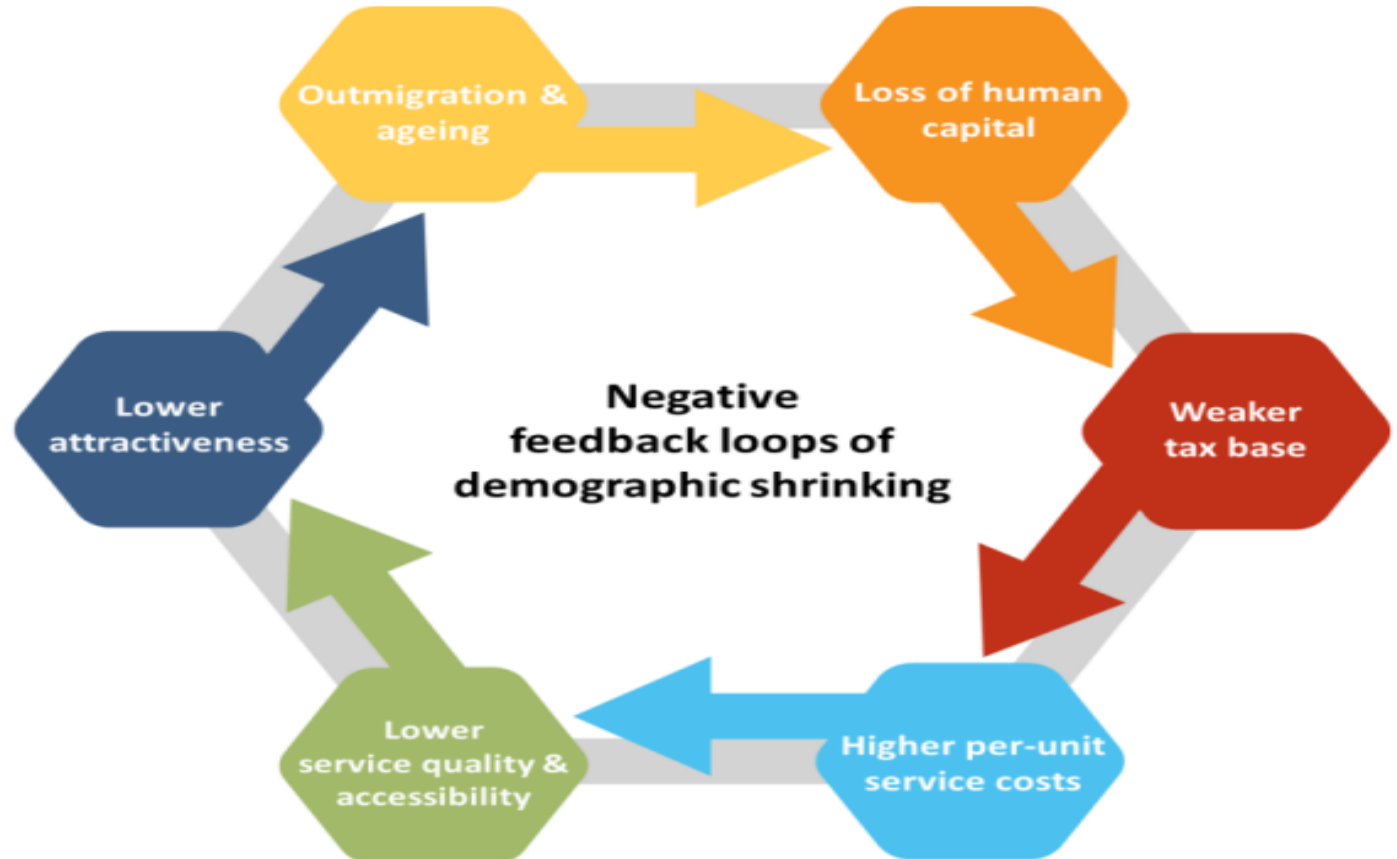


Shrinking smartly and sustainably in Finland



Multi-level governance, subnational finance and service delivery

The negative feedback loops of demographic shrinking



Shrinking smartly and sustainably in Finland



Multi-level governance, subnational finance and service delivery

Harnessing multi-level co-ordination to address demographic shrinkage

Tailoring foresight and administrative capacity to shrinking contexts

Implementing territorial mergers as a response to demographic and fiscal pressures

Facilitating citizen engagement to sustain local identity amidst demographic shrinking



Shrinking smartly and sustainably in Finland



Multi-level governance, subnational finance and service delivery

Addressing workforce shortages as a top priority

Preventive care and digital services

Inter-municipal co-operation and digital learning

Optimising existing infrastructure and housing

Multi-level governance

Service delivery

Subnational finance and investment

Clarify and unify the smart adaptation mandate.

Population in Brief

SINGAPORE

Koi Tū
Centre for
Research & Innovation

The Population in Brief is an annual publication that provides an update on Singapore's key population trends, showing how our population strategies support **a thriving people, a dynamic economy, an inclusive society and a resilient nation.**

S'pore's fertility rate sinks to new low of 0.87, citizen population could shrink by early 2040s

THE STRAITS TIMES

Updated Mar 17, 2026, 05:04 PM

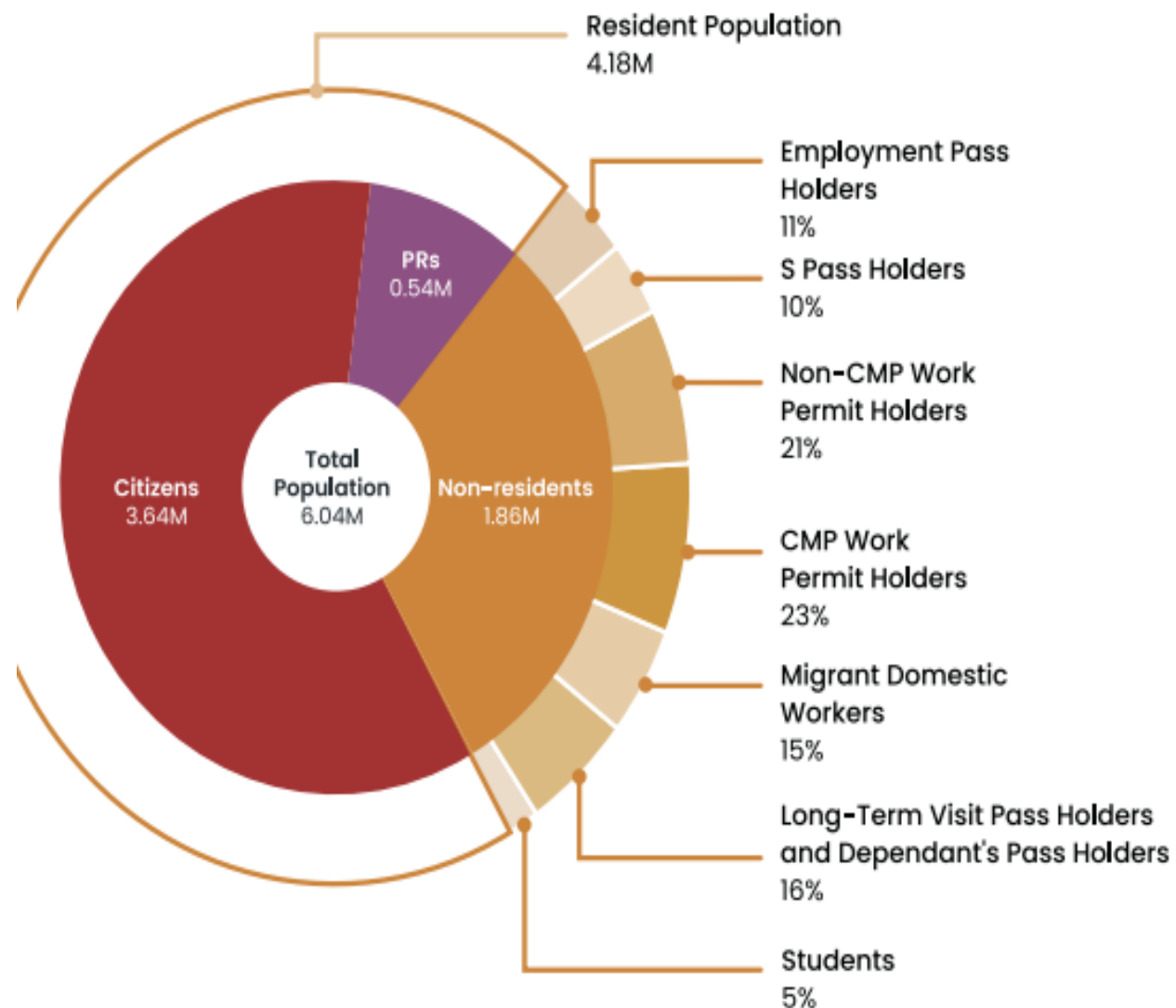
Why 40 years of pro-baby policies haven't boosted Singapore's birth rate
Week | ABC NEWS

Population in Brief 2024

Overall Population
Longevity

Marriage & Parenthood

Immigration & Citizens
by Descent



What is the aim of Government population policies?

10 OCT 2024

NPTD | STRATEGY GROUP
NATIONAL POPULATION AND TALENT DIVISION | PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Koī Tū
Centre for
Informed Futures

Our population size is affected by many factors, including birth rates, life expectancy, as well as global developments. The Government aims to achieve a careful balance between these factors to ensure a sustainable Singapore with a cohesive society and vibrant economy that improves Singaporeans' lives

Our population strategies seek to achieve this by:

- Strengthening **assurance** for Singaporeans in starting and raising families;
- Growing **opportunities** for Singaporeans, through a vibrant and resilient economy;
- Strengthening **solidarity** for a more inclusive and cohesive society; and
- **Planning ahead** for future generations.

- Really difficult to find population strategies which deal with **all the components in a holistic way**
- A very strong focus on fertility decline and **pro-natalist policies**
- **Immigration** is problematic in both a political and policy sense
- Some interesting policies around supporting **communities in place** and regional policies to manage population/economic stagnation or decline
- OECD focuses on **policy innovation/change** and **institutional reform**



Getting to Services in Towns and Villages

PREPARING REGIONS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE



November 2024

RURALPLAN - Innovative planning in shrinking societies



informedfutures.org