



Jennifer Scuibba, PhD

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WIL Highlights for Jennifer Scuibba, PhD

“Ten Billion and Counting: Leading and Learning in a World of Declining and Aging Population”

Primary message: To raise awareness that we need to exchange FEAR for RESILIENCE about what’s actually happening. Counter the myths and misunderstandings for sound data and positivism. She uses her positive energy to share new perspectives and to let others know that it’s OK to imagine a smaller and graying world. There are definite benefits.

Her journey: Born in Emerson, GA so she’s a true Southern girl / woman. Started her interest / passion for demography at Agnes Scott College. Began to see / and want to see the

world through a different lens which allows one to raise different questions. Looking for a more accurate view perspective on population trends and other factors associated with demography.

1968 book *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich, made the study of demography important. (ALSO, AT THE TIME THE BOOK MADE EVERYONE FEAR THAT OVERPOPULATION WAS GOING TO OVERWHELM THE EARTH. NOW WE SUDDENLY WORRY ABOUT THE OPPOSITE – POPULATION IS DECLINING ALMOST EVERYWHERE] Trends change, but often perceptions about those trends don’t.

Three main variables to consider: Sex (Birth Rate), Death and Migration

Facts & Stats

- In the 20th century the world went from 1.6 to 6.1 B in population – a much accelerated pace. (From Chart showing population milestones.) Another chart shows concentration of deaths according to national income of countries and sex – very telling.

- In 2023 global birth rate was 2.1, barely above replacement rate (one man, one woman and one child each). Fertility is down everywhere (not the ability to conceive but the actual birth rate.) Japan becoming ‘top heavy’, oldest country with 1.3 births per woman (very low fertility / women not marrying as in the past). Maine is the Japan of the USA in terms of aging.

- **Ideal birth rate?** Doesn’t exist. People think “2” but nobody has that. No one factor affects birth rate. IDEA & RECOMMENDATION: What if we / all countries stopped trying to manipulate

the birth rate and instead focused on improving quality of life! Increased education for women has definitely contributed to lower birth rate. China's policy changed from only 1 child per family to now wanting women to stay home and have more babies. Actually, it's a values issue: should support women's options.

- Some technologists and uber rich people like Elon Musk support low fertility, but want to see more geniuses, a more elite determination. Say it's IDEAL, but ideal for whom??

- **Migration Question:** what percentage of the world's population lives outside the country they were born in? Answer: only 4% - but the perception differs significantly.

- Census showed heavy influx of migrants in the southern part of the US. Bring differences in religion, ethnicity, etc and that leads to fear. There will continue to be more news and focus on migration in the US for the foreseeable future. Demography can be used by policy makers for long term planning (versus fear) including for workforce planning etc. We know also there will be a continuous need for upskilling, flexible working arrangements, and more care workers for the very young and for older people.

More insights from Jennifer:

- **Lesson from her work at the Pentagon in the 2000's:** Storytelling versus data presentation may be best way to influence other leaders. Often even the smartest leaders have an emotional or negative reaction to data and perception is reality. Best to help with scenario planning and to show them how to get to peace and prosperity.

Are there best practices in this field? You have to ask "best for whom?" Not an easy answer. Teachers in the classroom for example have to try to help their refugee students by slowing down but that can lead to holding back other students.

Canada is among top 10 countries with fastest growing migrant population. No perfect example of how to handle but countries / states have to try to balance economics and human rights.

- **MEDIAN AGE?** If you guess it, the answer may surprise you. It's actually 38 and that's the same in the USA and in China and Russia. Some thought to count Russia and China out but shouldn't. Does an aging population mean more peaceful country or world? NO.

- Thailand, Iran and Cuba are aging fast but doesn't mean the same as in the USA. The regime in charge matters. And there are clear differences in democratic versus nondemocratic countries. For example, death by communicable disease versus noncommunicable disease is highest in poorest countries.

- Dr. Scuibba wants to change the rhetoric from doom and gloom. Work with businesses versus government to use her influence and perspective. With a “magic wand,” she’d start with story-based discussions and is using that approach in her new book. Talk about how to THRIVE in a smaller, older world. Knows that younger people are very concerned about the environment and we need to listen. Also change the ways we talk about aging (not a SILVER TSUNAMI.) In the world of work, there should be more rewiring, flexibility and soft exits.

For Women: More women in the military and in leadership in every sector would be a positive thing. Need to lean into who you are / we are as women.

Question: why is Thailand’s birth rate so low? Answer: Choices there and in other countries are being made; the leadership matters; and women are empowered. Is this the age of ‘ultra independent women’? A different kind of ‘mommy wars.’ But truthfully, mommy wars never really ended.

Marriage rates are down in wealthier countries while birth rates are UP for 40-45 year old women. Teen pregnancies are down though.

One FINAL message:

We need more positive views versus fear on current trends in demographics. There will be lots of negative stuff this election year, we simply must make the most of what we have.