

FRANCE MESLÉ , LAURENT TOULEMON, JACQUES VÉRON (editors)

**Dictionnaire de Démographie et des Sciences de la Population**

Armand Colin, Paris, 2011, pp. 528.

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The interest in population and demographic issues has increased progressively in the last decades given the contradictions and paradoxes that characterize the state of the world's population. Think about the “population explosion” of the poorer countries while the richest, conversely, tend to be stationary; the rise of life expectancy almost everywhere while some countries are experiencing a decline; fertility dropping below replacement level in developed

countries while high levels still persist in the poorest part of the world. Last, but not least, the world's population reaching 7 billion and projected to increase for decades to come, is a goal which seems impressive. This phenomenon is going to impact every sphere of human life, particularly the social and economic life of societies.

Because of the familiarity of the concepts and the precision of applied instruments, demography occupies a special position in the social sciences. However, as Lotka wrote, themes like aging, sustainable growth, longevity, fertility, and migration are familiar concepts in everyday life, although they are difficult to understand when referred to as indicators and methods used for demographic analysis. For example, everybody knows what "births" means but the meaning of "Net Reproduction Rate" may not be so easy to understand for non-demographers.

In that light, the Dictionary of Demography and Population Sciences comes in handy. Concepts and tools used by demographers are accurately defined and represent core themes of population study. They afford the reader to look at the past, present and future through the contribution of related disciplines, which allow for better analysis and better understanding of the dynamics of human populations. Words and terms borrowed from other disciplines are defined, whereas such tools as life tables, rates, pyramids etc. are accurately described. Ample emphasis is given to the relationship between demography and other disciplines such as economy, anthropology, and sociology, which underlies the interdisciplinary aspect of the book as evidenced by the title of the Dictionary including the study, besides formal demography, of population sciences.

The Dictionary of Demography and Population Sciences is structured as an encyclopedic dictionary, including 400 short listings, organized alphabetically. It discusses a wide range of topics related to demography and population sciences. Besides the definitions of the indicators used by demographers, it also presents entries that trace the history of some population issues from an international comparative perspective. The multidisciplinary framework, which stems from the contributions of authors from various disciplines related to demography, i.e. sociology, economics, epidemiology, geography, anthropology and history, offers tools to better understand the motivations and consequences of demographic behaviors.

In addition to the list of entries, the Dictionary contains a series of 22 mini-essays which address many of the key issues of current population problems, including healthy aging, sustainable population growth, and low fertility. Unlike most dictionaries, it is also rich in figures, tables and maps which tend to enhance readers' comprehension and allow for rapid comparison and interpretation of relationships or trends. A useful English translation of each entry of the dictionary is also given. A comprehensive index organizes entries, authors, mini-essays, and graphics so that the Dictionary's vast store of information can

be quickly and easily referenced.

The dictionary, edited by Meslé, Toulemon and Véron, is the result of the collaboration of an international panel of experts involving INED (Institute nationale d'études démographiques) researchers from different disciplines, all engaged in the study of population.

Thanks to its multidisciplinary approach, the Dictionary offers an easy and comprehensive format, a quick and exhaustive guide to demographic issues from which not only demographers, but also academics in economic and social sciences and students can benefit. Furthermore, the simple language makes it suitable for readers interested in demographic changes, causes and consequences, past evolutions as well as future trends in human population.

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