

**ST ANDREW'S JUNIOR COLLEGE**  
JC2 Preliminary Examination



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Civics Group: \_\_\_\_\_

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**GENERAL PAPER**

**8881/02**

PAPER 2

27<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2024

1 hour 30 minutes

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This Insert contains the passage for Paper 2



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**This question paper consists of 6 printed pages.**



**Passage 1:** *Wang Feng presents an optimistic story of population decline.*

- 1 The shoe has dropped. The big one. China, the most populous country on the planet for centuries may have only around half of the 1.41 billion people it has now, according to U.N. projections, and may already have been overtaken by India. The news has been seen as the harbinger of a demographic and economic time bomb that will strain the world's capacity to support ageing populations. 5
- 2 But the alarmist warnings are often simplistic and premature. The glass is at least half full. Shrinking populations are usually part of a natural, inevitable process, and rather than focus excessively on concerns like labour shortages and pension support, we need to look at the brighter spots for our world.
- 3 China, South Korea and Japan, for instance, are now all in population decline; this is due in part to rapid increases in income, employment and education. The number of South Korean women who went on to postsecondary education rose from 6 percent in 1980 to more than 90 percent by 2020; China and Japan also have seen big gains. Lower birthrates reflect greater personal and reproductive freedom, such as the choice to stay unmarried; higher pay; and more professional opportunities for women in these nations. 10 15
- 4 Average world life expectancy has increased from 51 years in 1960 to 73 in 2019 and even more so in China, from 51 in 1962 to 78 in 2019. Increases of that magnitude reshape lives and open up opportunities unimaginable when life spans were shorter, such as workers remaining productive later in life and growing markets for older consumers in areas like tourism, nutritional supplements and medical devices, among others. 20
- 5 Fewer people on the planet, of course, may reduce humanity's ecological footprint and competition for finite resources. There could even be greater peace as governments are forced to choose between spending on military equipment or on pensions. And as rich nations come to rely more on immigrants from poorer countries, those migrants gain greater access to the global prosperity currently concentrated in the developed world. 25
- 6 There is no reason the world's population must keep growing or even remain level. And just as earlier panic led to harmful policies in China and elsewhere, efforts to raise fertility — which may prove futile — risk viewing women once again as birth machines. 30
- 7 Global population will inevitably decline. Rather than try to reverse that, we need to embrace it and adapt.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/30/opinion/china-world-population-decline.html>



**Passage 2:** *Niall Ferguson discusses the detriments of population decline.*

- 1 Not many people foresaw the global fertility collapse. Nor did just about anyone expect it to happen everywhere. And I cannot recall a single pundit predicting just how low it would go in some countries. In South Korea the total fertility rate (TFR) in 2023 is estimated to have been 0.72. In Europe there is no longer a difference between Roman Catholic and Protestant countries. Italy's current TFR is lower than England's. Nor is there a difference between Christian and Islamic civilizations — those great historical entities whose clashes the historian Samuel Huntington worried about. 5
- 2 What are the drivers of the great fertility slump? One theory is that societies progress up the hierarchy of needs from physical survival to emotional self-actualisation, and as they do so, rearing children gets short shrift because people pursue other, more individualist aims. People find other ways to find meaning in life. 10
- 3 Another interpretation gives the agency to women, emphasising that fertility drops as female education and employment rise. Over the past century, beginning in Western Europe and North America, a rising proportion of women have entered higher education and the skilled labour force. Improved education has also given women greater autonomy within relationships, a better understanding of contraception, and greater input into family planning. Many have opted to delay becoming mothers to pursue their careers. 15
- 4 Yet another way of looking at the problem is that, after its initial kids-in-cotton-mills phase, the industrial revolution reduced the importance of children as a source of unskilled labour. As countries develop economically, families invest more in their children, providing them with better education, which increases the cost of raising each individual child. While some countries have introduced pro-natalist policies such as child benefits, parental leave, and subsidised childcare to counter low birth rates, the effectiveness of these measures has been mixed at best. 20 25
- 5 One significant factor that is often overlooked is rising environmental concerns. Some couples choose to have fewer children, or none at all, citing the grim global outlook owing to overcrowded cities and an already strained ecosystem.
- 6 Cultural change has also played a part— the stress and busyness of modern life, the supply of online entertainment that may compete with sexual activity, elevated rates of depression and anxiety among young adults, the detrimental effect of smartphones on real-world human interactions, and the lack of appeal to women of “hooking up”. 30
- 7 Visions of human extinction are hard to stomach, but the reality is that a sub-2.1 global TFR is a powerful historical force. It is coming. And there is nothing we can do to stop it. 35



**Passage 3:** *A demographer laments the recent trends in population growth.*

- 1 As a demographer watching the global trends with a keen eye, it's impossible not to see the gathering storm clouds over humanity's future due to declining birth rates. While some herald the decline as an opportunity for environmental and economic renewal, this perspective glosses over the grave challenges that lie ahead.
- 2 Firstly, the ageing population crisis cannot be overstated. With fewer young people to support an increasingly elderly population, the strain on healthcare and pension systems will be unprecedented. Countries like Japan and Italy are already grappling with these challenges, offering a glimpse into a future where the youth are burdened with the care of the elderly, potentially leading to a decline in quality of life for all. 5
- 3 Moreover, the decline in population has far-reaching implications for global security. Historically, nations with youthful populations have been more vibrant and innovative. A global decline could lead to a stagnation in innovation, impacting economic growth and, by extension, global stability. Without a young workforce to drive change, we may find ourselves in a world that is both literally and metaphorically grey. 10
- 4 As societal priorities shift, the traditional focus on childbearing is often deprioritised. For instance, in urban centres where career-oriented lifestyles predominate, many opt to delay or forego having children. Furthermore, as hobbies and community involvement gain importance, these become significant sources of personal satisfaction and identity, offering rich, fulfilling experiences that might have traditionally been found in raising a family. 15 20
- 5 The environmental benefits of a smaller human footprint are also misleading. While fewer people might mean less strain on resources, it could also lead to less motivation for sustainable innovation. Without the pressure of supporting a large population, the urgency to find solutions for sustainable living may wane, paradoxically endangering our planet further. 25
- 6 The looming population decline is not merely a demographic shift but a harbinger of profound changes to the fabric of society. It challenges us to rethink how we value and organise our communities, economies, and lives. We should not fall into the trap of viewing demographic collapse through rose-tinted lenses.