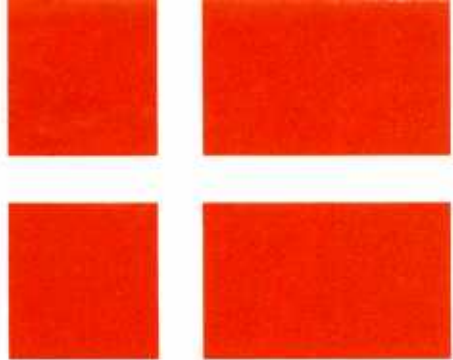


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Factsheet Denmark

Demographic Denmark

Prior to the mid-1960s a certain stability marked the demography of Denmark. The numbers of live births and deaths were respectively 18 and 10 per 1,000 inhabitants. This produced – in conjunction with moderate net immigration – an annual population growth of about 1 per cent. The fertility level showed that every woman gave birth to an average of 2.6 children, while the mortality level corresponded to an average lifespan for men and women of respectively 71 and 75 years. Marriage figures revealed that over 90 per cent of men and women married, with the average age of first marriages at 25 for men and 22 for women. The annual divorce rate was slightly more than 1/5 per cent of existing marriages.

However, this situation has undergone radical change during the last 20 years. While the mortality level followed the previous trend with a steady rise in the average expectation of life – today this is over 71 years for men and 77 years for women – dramatic changes have occurred in demographic variables relating to live births, marriages and divorces.

After a peak in 1966 of almost 90,000 live births there followed a decline that, after a temporary upward swing in 1971 and 1972, brought the number of live births down to slightly less than 51,000 in 1983, i.e. a drop of more than 40 per cent. The present fertility level shows that every woman on average gives birth to 1.4 children. This marked decrease results from more women remaining childless, fewer women having more than two children, and the age at which they bear children being later.

There has been a drop in the population since 1981. The number fell by almost 5,000 in 1983, equal to 1 per thousand of the total population.

Consensual unions

The decline in the numbers of contracted marriages was equally striking, namely from just under 42,000 marriages in 1965 to some 24,000 in 1982. The number of divorces rose from rather more than 6,000 at the start of the 1960s to almost 15,000 today, i.e. more than double in quantity. In connection with this there has been a significant increase in consensual unions, where two persons of opposite sex keep house together and have sexual relations without being legally married. The



Fewer children: After a peak in 1966 of almost 90,000 live births in Denmark there followed a decline that, after a temporary upward swing in 1971 and 1972, brought the number of live births down to slightly less than 51,000 in 1983, i.e. a drop of more than 40 per cent. The present fertility level shows that every Danish woman on average gives birth to 1.4 children. This marked decrease results from more Danish women remaining childless, fewer women having more than two children, and the age at which they bear children being later. There has been a decline in the population of Denmark since 1981. The number fell by almost 5,000 in 1983, equal to 1 per thousand of the total population.

percent of all marriages the consensual union type. The proportion of persons in consensual unions among the non-married – unmarried, divorced and widowed – over 16 years made up 25 per cent. This proportion was highest among the divorced, at 36 per cent.

56 per cent of persons living in consensual unions are between 20 and 30 years while more than 25 per cent are 35 and above. Recent years have shown a mounting proportion of consensual union partners in higher age brackets.

More than 70 per cent of the consensual unions had a duration of over two years, and a third of them of 5 or more years. 37 per cent of these couples had at least one child – and 15 per cent at least two children. Surveys made in 1982 showed that at most 25 per cent of persons under 35 in consensual unions rejected any idea of contracted marriage on principle. In actual fact in most cases consensual unions presumably serve as a preliminary to contracted marriage.

An analysis of the number of consensual

facts regarding the extent of this type of cohabitation are obtained from current interview programmes.

In 1974 the number of consensual unions amounted to more than 100,000, corresponding to 8-9 per cent of all contracted and common law marriages. In 1976 there were more than 150,000 consensual unions. This number increased to 225,000 in 1982, making 17 per



More working women: Extensive social changes underlie the development in the numbers of live births, marriages, divorces and consensual unions in Denmark. The most notable of these is the sharp increase in the numbers of married Danish women in paid employment. While barely 50 per cent of married women aged between 20 and 50 formed part of the labour force in the middle of the 1960s, the proportion is now above 80 per cent. In conjunction with this has been the sharply increased level of education among women in Denmark. This social change has resulted in individual couples finding it expedient to have fewer children.

unions and contracted marriages showed an increase in the establishment of families or couples since the mid-1960s.

Working women

Extensive social changes underlie this development in the numbers of live births, marriages, divorces and consensual unions. The most notable of these is the sharp increase in the numbers of married women in paid employment. While almost 50 per cent of married women aged between 20 and 50 formed part of the labour force in the middle of the 1960s, the proportion is now above 80 per cent. In conjunction with this has been the sharply increased level of education among women. This social change has resulted in individual couples finding it expedient to reduce the size of their families. The number of children must conform with the expectations now entertained by both parents with regard to education and work participation.

The ability to fix the size of the family was greatly facilitated during this period by the introduction and development of effective methods of family planning. Since the advent of the contraceptive pill in Denmark in the mid-1960s this form of contraception has been so widely adopted that today it is used by 25 per cent of all women between the ages of 15 and 50. The number of IUDs inserted per year corresponds to 5 per cent of women in the same age group. There has also been a marked effort on the part of the authorities to publish information on contraception. In this connection an act was passed in 1966 relating to hygiene in pregnancy, which imposed it as a duty on doctors to give free guidance on the use of contraception to women after confinement. Lastly, access to legal abortion grew steadily easier during the course of the 1960s, a development that culminated with the introduction of abortion on demand in 1973. In 1982 more than 21,000 abortions were performed, corresponding to 40 per cent of live births. Another officially recognised contraceptive method is sterilisation. The Sterilisation Act of 1973 gave every man and woman over 25 years of age the right to be sterilised. From a few thousand before the passing of the act the numbers of annual sterilisations now hover around 10-15,000.

What are the consequences?

Effective contraception now enables families

to prevent the birth of previously unplanned-for children, i.e. children who were either completely unplanned or at least not planned for so soon. At the outset this will bring about both a lasting reduction and a postponement of births. But in a number of cases the postponement of a birth will lead to its permanent cancellation, since parents' motivation towards enlarging their family will be weakened by their increasingly firm attachment to interests outside the home.

Just as the change in educational and work opportunities for women has reduced the fertility level, it has also promoted the drop in the number of marriages, the increase in divorces and the considerable numbers of consensual unions. The ability to earn her own living has made contracted marriage less necessary for a woman as a security for her own and her children's maintenance. It is for this reason that contracted marriage has been replaced to such an extent by cohabitation. Further, the advance in family planning technique has made it possible to cohabit without the danger of unwanted reproductive consequences.

The increased opportunities now open to women for other lifestyles than marriage must *per se* encourage the trend towards the dissolution of marriages that have only partially fulfilled the partners' expectations. Moreover the changed role of the married woman in respect of work opportunities provides her with more contacts and thus increased possibilities for establishing relationships with other partners.

New population prognosis

Among these demographic variables it is particularly the decline in the fertility level that will exercise a decisive influence on the future economic, social and political situation in Denmark. An estimate for the remaining years of the century has been assessed on the basis of the - 1983 - official population prognosis.

The prognosis takes account of the low fertility level of 1982 since the future level has been projected at only 1.4 children per woman. The future mortality level is projected as corresponding to that of 1980-81 or a mean life span for men and women of 71.1 and 77.2 years respectively. Given the modest net immigration in 1982, immigration and

emigration will presumably cancel each other out.

According to the prognosis there will be a birth deficit of not less than 7,000 in 1984, and the population of Denmark will decrease from 5,112,000 in 1984 to 4,939,500 in the year 2000. After this the decline will increase, and in the year 2025 will reach a figure of 37,000 a year. A continuation of this trend will produce in the long run an annual decline of 1.3 per cent.

These predictions have given rise to a good deal of comment in the press, but political reaction has been sparse. This is probably because the general opinion in Denmark is that demographic policy measures are organised only for socio-political reasons.

Age distribution and dependency ratio

Table *Population of Denmark 1984-2000: Age distribution and dependency ratio* shows the distribution of population for the remainder of the century in three age groups with the dependency ratio, i.e. the numerical relationship between what are termed the unproductive and productive age groups. The



POPULATION OF DENMARK 1984-2000: AGE DISTRIBUTION AND DEPENDENCY RATIO

Age distribution (1,000)

Age	1984	1990	1995	2000
A 0-19 years	1,378	1,216	1,117	1,049
B 20-64 years	2,972	3,058	3,115	3,135
C 65 years +	762	787	777	756
A + B + C	5,112	5,061	5,009	4,940

Dependency ratio (per 100)

	1984	1990	1995	2000
A/B	46	40	36	34
C/B	26	26	25	24
(A+C)/B	72	66	61	58

unproductive age groups are limited to include persons under 20 and over 65 years of age, since these groups are chiefly supported by the transfer of income from wage-earners between the ages of 20 and 65. For the rest of the century there will be a decline in the dependency ratio from 72 to 58 children, young people and elderly per 100 persons in the productive age groups.

The reduction in the total dependency ratio is due to the drop in the numbers of persons in the under-20 age group from 46 to 34 per 100 productive persons. This age group will undergo a natural reduction since it will gradually be filled up with the smaller birth cohorts from the years following 1966. The reduction up to the year 2000 will consist of more than 325,000 children and young people. To achieve a significant lightening of the dependency ratio during the rest of the century it will be necessary to restrict the supply of resources for children and the young – child care and education – in line with the demographic development. But this type of regulating is difficult to carry through because of the rigidity of the public system of resources and the political desirability of improving the level of public services for children and young people.

The proportion of dependency ratio involving the older age groups naturally has no connection with the reduced fertility level. Even in the year 2000 these age groups will be recruited from among the birth cohorts prior to 1935. Up to 1990 the numbers of old people will increase slightly after which there will be a slight drop. The decline during the last decade of the century will be due to the advancement of the small birth cohorts from the 1920s and 1930s. These were due, of course, to the general reduction in the size of families after

Lively press coverage: According to the prognosis there will be a birth deficit in Denmark of not less than 7,000 in 1984, and the population of Denmark will decrease from 5,112,000 in 1984 to 4,939,500 in the year 2000. After this the decline will increase, and in the year 2025 will reach a figure of 37,000 a year. A continuation of this trend will produce in the long view an annual decline of 1.3 per cent. These predictions have given rise to a good deal of comment in the Danish press, but political reaction has been sparse. This is probably because the general opinion in Denmark is that demographic policy measures are organised only for socio-political reasons.

1890 that continued up to the beginning of the 1930s. Although the dependency ratio in respect of old people will ease slightly the cost of their maintenance will grow, because the age distribution will change. While the proportion of persons aged 80 and over today makes up 21 per cent of all old people, in the year 2000 this will have risen to 25 per cent. This increase is due to the fact that this age group will be recruited increasingly from the numerically strong birth cohorts from about the turn of the century, when the reduction caused by death and emigration was less than in preceding years. It is particularly the 80 plus age group that is in need of resources in the field of health care and nursing. In the case, for example, of nursing homes, 20 per cent of the 80 plus group are in these homes as against only 2 per cent in the 65 to 79 age group.

The under-25 age group

Table *Development in under-25 age groups 1984-2000* presents a detailed age division of children and young people that aims to give a more finely graded indication of the influence of the reduced fertility level on the child care and education sector as well as on the labour and housing markets.

The first age group comprises potential applicants for places in day nurseries, play-

groups and nursery schools. The next group includes schoolchildren, while the 16-19-year-olds represent to a great extent applicants for training schemes – basic vocational training schemes, apprenticeships etc. – and preliminary instruction for higher education – normal gymnasium (sixth form studies), A-level equivalent courses and Higher Preparatory Examination. The 20-24 group comprises a considerable proportion of those applying for further education – universities, teacher training colleges, business colleges, etc. – as well as entry to the housing and labour markets.

The youngest age group will drop by about 10 per cent during the remainder of the 1980s as it will gradually be filled by the small birth cohorts of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. The subsequent stagnation is based on the projected constant fertility level of 1.4 children per woman.

The number of children of primary and lower-secondary school age will drop from almost 650,000 to about 475,000 by the late



Fewer young people: The youngest age group in Denmark will decrease by almost 10 per cent during the remainder of the 1980s. The number of children of primary and lower-secondary school age will drop from almost 650,000 to about 475,000 by the late 1990s equal to a decline of 175,000 or more than 25 per cent. The number of 16-19-year-olds will dip even more steeply, namely from 335,000 to almost 220,000 or a 35 per cent decline. And finally the number of 20-24-year-olds will begin to fall by the late 1980s so that by the year 2000 there will be 16 per cent fewer 20-24-year-olds in Denmark than today.

DEVELOPMENT IN UNDER-25 AGE GROUPS 1984-2000

Absolute figures (1,000)

Age	1984	1990	1995	2000
0- 6 years	398	367	369	357
7-15 years	646	556	484	474
16-19 years	335	294	263	217
20-24 years	382	397	364	322

1984 = 100

Age	1984	1990	1995	2000
0- 6 years	100	92	93	90
7-15 years	100	86	75	73
16-19 years	100	88	79	65
20-24 years	100	104	95	84



1990s equal to a decline of 175,000 or more than 25 per cent.

The number of 16-19-year-olds will dip even more steeply, namely from 335,000 to barely 220,000 or a 35 per cent decline. The number of 20-24-year-olds will only begin to fall by the late 1980s. Only then will the smaller birth cohorts from after the mid-1960s constitute the recruitment base of the age bracket. By the year 2000 there will be 16 per cent fewer 20-24-year-olds than today. As it is from these age groups that entry to the labour market is recruited, their decline will gradually improve the prospects of solving the problem of youth unemployment. At the same time the reduced intake of young people to the labour market will produce sluggishness, since there will be fewer young people to channel into the new occupations emerging from developments in the job market. A stagnant and falling population will simultaneously bring about a reduced rise in production and consumption, which means that the structural changes in manufacturing industry will make manpower more easily redundant. In future, recruitment of manpower for new sections of industry will increasingly be made up of workers from the older age groups who may have to undergo retraining. This situation can cause problems both in personal adaptation and in production. It is a well-known fact that people find it difficult to make a change from the work they have been trained for. In the longer term the new population situation in Denmark will give added importance to further training and retraining schemes.

Regional policies

A declining population will also come to influence regional policies. In Denmark these policies aim at counteracting local depopulation trends and at the same time creating a wider geographical spread of population. For instance, population density is markedly varied in the eastern and western parts of the country. Thus the Copenhagen region contains almost 35 per cent of the population but covers only 7 per cent of the total land area. There have been concrete practical attempts

to counteract the depopulation trends through giving support to industries established in economically depressed regions, and state-run educational institutions have been vigorously developed all over the country. These government-supported measures aim to preserve – from a demographic point of view – any surplus of population that has arisen from increased fertility levels in a region. A declining population will make this type of policy difficult to realise because there will not be any population surplus in the region concerned. It is even likely that there would be an increased exodus because the constantly declining population substructure in the local area will gradually bring about a sharp reduction in acceptable means of existence. No doubt a declining population will necessitate ever more drastic measures of state support in economically depressed areas.

Various opinions have emphasised the advantages resulting from a declining population, including decreased pressure in recreational spheres and fewer traffic problems. However, the decisive factor in these questions is the geographical localisation of the population. It has also been stressed that a declining population will consume less energy and raw materials.

Conclusion: In abeyance

It is hardly possible today to assess the advantages and disadvantages of a declining population and then draw a definite conclusion. The decline in the population is still so new that the whole question – at least where Denmark is concerned – has not yet been subjected to sufficiently thoroughgoing analysis. Moreover, the development will depend on how extensive the decline in population turns out to be. But judging from discussions of the question in the media many people feel a certain disquiet at the prospect of a lasting decline in the population of their country.

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lowest in west Denmark. The population density is markedly varied in the eastern and western parts of Denmark. Thus the Copenhagen region contains almost 35 per cent of the population of Denmark but covers only 7 per cent of the total land area. There have been concrete practical attempts to counteract the depopulation trends through giving support to industries established in economically depressed regions, and state-run educational institutions have been vigorously developed all over the country. And there can hardly be any doubt that a declining population will necessitate ever more drastic measures of state support in economically depressed areas.

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