

Publication

# A brave new demographic world: depopulation and examples from Japan

In an article for the International City/County Management Association's *Public Management Magazine*, Haley & Aldrich consultant Sarah Sieloff and co-author Fernando Ortiz-Moya, Ph.D., discuss the implications of population decline for local government, especially in small and rural communities.

The article, "A Brave New Demographic World: Depopulation and Examples from Japan," highlights lessons that local governments worldwide can learn from Japan's experience as the country faces a shrinking and aging population. Traditional growth-focused strategies have proven inadequate, highlighting the need for a shift in urban planning and community development approaches.

Sarah and Fernando emphasize that local governments can prioritize quality-of-life improvements for existing residents, rather than solely focusing on attracting new residents. They note that some of Japan's municipalities have chosen to leverage cultural and natural assets, foster community engagement, and redefine success metrics beyond population growth. Cities have focused on stabilizing populations and enhancing livability through initiatives such as centralized housing, sustainable development, and welcoming populations that maintain connections to the municipalities without permanent residency.

Japan’s example, argue Sarah and Fernando, underscores the importance of adapting to demographic realities by exploring alternative development pathways and investing resources wisely. By learning from Japan, local governments can better prepare for the challenges of population decline and aging, ensuring sustainable and resilient communities.

Read the full article.