



## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



Source: iStock by Getty Images

### Intergenerational Population Ethics

Paolo Piacquadio (University of St. Gallen)

#### Abstract

In less than half a century, the world's human population has doubled in size to the current 8 billion. Yet, despite the importance of population change for growth, resource scarcity, and climate change, there is no “reasonable” welfare criterion to assess alternatives with different number of individuals. We reexamine the evaluation of intergenerational allocations with endogenous population dynamics. Our proposal identifies a new balance between the well-being and the size of generations, obtained by respecting the fertility preferences of parents. The axiomatic characterization singles out a simple and intuitive family of recursive welfare criteria, which generalize discounted utilitarianism and avoid the most controversial implications of existing criteria.