

# POPULATION CONNECTION



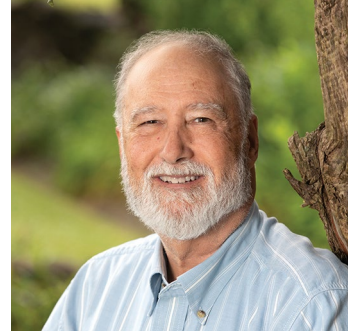
Volume 57, Issue 2  
June 2025

ONE SMALL  
ORGANIZATION IN  
NEPAL MAKES A HUGE  
DIFFERENCE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



# President's Note

John Seager  
[john@popconnect.org](mailto:john@popconnect.org)



"The world remains massively off track to limiting global warming to 1.5°C and avoiding the worst of climate catastrophe."

– UN Secretary-General António Guterres

The terrible toll of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911 was exacerbated by lack of adequate fire escapes — 146 Greenwich Village factory workers died in the tragedy.

Modern building codes require multiple exits where substantial numbers of people congregate. Common sense demands alternate escape routes. Unfortunately, current efforts to address the climate crisis fail this test.

While enormous amounts are being invested in techno-fixes, there is growing evidence that the world will miss the oft-stated 2050 goal of net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from human activities by a very wide margin. The cruel, calculated cancellation by Trump/Musk of all US investments in family planning and their deliberate decimation of climate programs mean that we are betting our future on hallucinations.

There is still a "second exit." If we can resume and accelerate support for family planning within several years, that could prove invaluable in the climate fight, especially if net zero by 2050 proves to be a mirage.

While shifting the population curve is no quick fix, it can make an enormous difference over generations. The UN projects with 95% certainty that the world population will be between 9 billion and 11.4 billion people in 2100 and that the US population will be between 256 million and 625 million. Anyone who thinks the

magnitude of these potential different outcomes doesn't matter in terms of emissions totals is ignoring basic arithmetic.

Calls to meet the climate crisis by stabilizing population through the expansion of voluntary family planning are met with near-universal, unconscionable silence. Most environmental groups either ignore the subject or paper over it with spurious claims that population concerns are inherently racist. Tell that to the leaders in the Global South who are deeply concerned about the dire impacts of overpopulation. Maybe detractors should spend less time looking over their shoulders and more time listening to such voices.

Also, given our own sky-high emissions, it's high time to consider the environmental impacts of the roughly one million+ unplanned births here in the United States annually. Vice President Vance once ominously asserted that "when you go to the polls in this country as a parent, you should have more power — you should have more of an ability to speak your voice in our democratic republic — than people who don't have kids."

Ending existing unmet need for family planning is an investment in our shared future that we can easily afford. Doing so would unquestionably result in substantially lower greenhouse gas emissions.

When long-anticipated disaster strikes, it can be too late to sound the alarm. The clock is ticking for Planet Earth. Is anyone really listening? 🌍

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## Features

### 14 Americans Want Small Families, Aren't Concerned About Declining Birth Rates

By Olivia Nater

### 20 Changing Harmful Traditions and Empowering Women and Girls to Take Charge of Their Lives in Rural Nepal

By Nancy Power



**Cover image:** Nepalese women in the Manaslu Conservation Area, located in Gandaki Province, Nepal (Photo by Bruno Rijsman, courtesy of Flickr)

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## Editor's Note

Marian Starkey  
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We're always looking for ways to get media attention with our rational but outspoken, rights-based take on population challenges. Newspaper editors tend, however, to be more interested in giving space to those threatening that low fertility and slower population growth will upend our economies and institutions — the demographic concern du jour. Just look at all the articles about Elon Musk claiming that “humanity is dying,” and that if low fertility continues, “civilization will disappear.” Or the platform given to the truly unhinged statements and behaviors of Malcolm and Simone Collins, the poster couple of the pronatalism movement. Simone's old fashioned bonnets, ruffled shirts, and long skirts are an odd match for the duo's commitment to conceiving genetically perfect offspring using IVF. She says she'll keep having babies until she dies or her uterus falls out (she's currently pregnant with their fifth). While attending the second Natal Conference in Austin, Texas, in March, Simone admitted to an NPR reporter, “We constantly court controversy in order to get our message out because we know that's what gets clicks.”


Given our typical challenges with getting earned media — we're not willing to be “intentionally cringe” to get clicks (another of Simone's admissions) because we know that it wouldn't be helpful to our mission — we've been encouraged in recent months that survey and focus group research we completed at the end of 2024 (detailed in an article beginning on page 14) has drawn the interest of several reporters at high-profile

outlets. We heard back from three journalists at large national newspapers that they're interested in our study about fertility perspectives, preferences, and impediments, and a fourth journalist, Lydia DePillis of *The New York Times*, mentioned us by name in an article in late March after receiving the press release about our study:

“An agenda that prioritizes large families makes plenty of people queasy. Groups like Population Connection worry that the tactics required to raise birthrates can verge on authoritarianism, and believe that the consequences of population loss aren't as catastrophic as pronatalists make them out to be. And increasing numbers of young people do not want to burden the planet by having children of their own.”

Then, in May, *Fortune* published an article by Beth Greenfield that specifically referenced and linked to our survey:

“Earlier this year, a survey by Population Connection found that, while most people want a small family, others feel unable to have more kids due to factors including affordability, the state of the world, and lack of societal support for parents. And while only 15% of those surveyed thought the falling fertility rate was one of the world's biggest challenges, nearly half (45%) were actually concerned about population growth over fears of children living in poverty and depletion of natural resources.”

While pronatalists continue pressuring women to have more kids, we'll continue advocating for reproductive freedom for all and for a healthy planet to support humanity's future generations, whatever size they may be. 



## Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the information about vasectomies. It makes complete sense given the whole picture.

I had one child, who had one child, who may have no children. I remember my parents' childless friends (from the Depression). If you couldn't afford children, you didn't have them. My parents only had two because they wanted to be able to afford to send us to college.

My gratitude for my years of study and teaching is boundless. At 90, no more anti-war marches for me, but lots of postcards to voters (those in Wisconsin, at the moment). May we survive stupidity/cupidity.

Virginia Witmer

I very much enjoyed reading your editor's note to the readers of *Population Connection* and was particularly impressed with your friend Sam Koenigsberg. I went on to read more about him in the feature article — he seems like such a sincere, cool, progressive guy. Terrific that he has been your lifelong friend!

Deborah Byrd

Thank you for your recent article about vasectomies in the March issue of *Population Connection* magazine.

My wife and I met in 1976 in an art class at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania (which has since merged with two other universities to become Pennsylvania Western University) and got married a few years later.

We both felt that we did not want to have children as the world already had more than enough. Thanks to a referral from Planned Parenthood, we met with a doctor who — after an interview — agreed to give me a vasectomy. We have never regretted it and jokingly refer to that doctor as the patron saint of our adopted pets.

We enjoy children, and I worked in special education for 30 years. I feel that I may have acted as a surrogate father figure to a number of my students.

We believe that we could have been good parents, and we know that we could have adopted if we had wanted to, but being childless has given us more flexibility and time to pursue interests such as social concerns, art, music, gardening, and nature.

When we got married in 1980, the world's population was 4.4 billion. Now, in 2025, it is 8.2 billion. That's a lot of hungry mouths and a lot of people impacting the environment.

We feel that we did a good thing by getting a vasectomy, and we thank our pets' patron saint.

Ron Shissler



## Letters to the Editor, continued

I am childfree and had a vasectomy over 40 years ago. I am well aware that those two acts alone have done more for the positive benefit of earth's environment than anyone with even a single child could ever do in their lifetime.

I see one fundamental issue with your organization — it is something that has been on my mind from the start, and I finally decided to write to you. It is really the elephant in the room that is ignored in every issue of your publication that I have seen: religion.

I don't see how any effective population mitigation can be done without acknowledging the fundamental relationship between natalism and religious belief. What good are birth control measures if they are introduced to a population that views them as tools of the devil because of Bronze Age religious belief?

Populations that are indoctrinated on religion generally want their particular flavor of the god myth to be the de facto one for everyone else. One way to achieve that is to replicate themselves en masse. Their manuals of belief say as much.

As a lifelong atheist and someone who became more politically active mid-way through Trump's first term, I see this as a growing weakness in your mission. I would encourage you to address this situation in one of your upcoming magazine issues. I can't believe I'm the only supporter who has this concern.

Konrad Kummli

Thank you for focusing on men in the March 2025 issue. It is a great start to an effort I hope will continue. How ironic that we have hoped to reduce population, and now we have to face those who want to do the opposite. It's a strange world. You do good work that is much needed.

Elizabeth Kidder Michael

If you'd prefer to read the quarterly *Population Connection* magazine online, please visit our website at [popconnect.org/magazine](https://popconnect.org/magazine) to see archives going back to 2020. The digital version of each issue contains links to sources, staff authors' email addresses, and suggestions for further reading.





## EDITORIAL EXCERPTS

### THE BALTIMORE SUN

... As President Franklin D. Roosevelt once observed, “The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

The ongoing effort to shut down the United States Agency for International Development by Elon Musk and President Donald Trump — bolstered this week by widespread layoffs with thousands more placed on administrative leave — runs counter to this value. ...

If instead of describing USAID’s work dryly as “foreign aid” (or worse, that its programs are worthy of being fed into the “wood chipper” as Musk has gleefully described his budget cutting efforts on social media), Americans were actually given an opportunity to see first hand the good that such aid can do with less than 1% of the federal budget — like famine relief in South Sudan — we are confident that it would be broadly supported.

...

Whatever our political differences, whatever our policy debates and whatever our personal preferences, the United States has a proud history of assisting those desperately in need. Let us not abandon our values — and our humanity — for what amounts to little more than a rounding error in the overall budget.

– February 26, 2025

### The Washington Post

...

Plenty of good arguments can be made in favor of reforming foreign assistance — to make it more effective and efficient. But neither the president nor cost-cutter Elon Musk has articulated them. Their ridicule of specific aid programs only muddles the important debate over how to ensure that foreign aid serves its core mission: to improve the lives of billions living in the world’s most impoverished nations.

...

There are plenty of good ideas for how to make American aid more efficient. For example, the United States could save a lot of money if it didn’t require much of its food aid to be grown by American farmers and shipped across the world on American ships. Trimming the layers of regulation and oversight that require a cadre of expensive experts to ensure compliance would also cut costs.

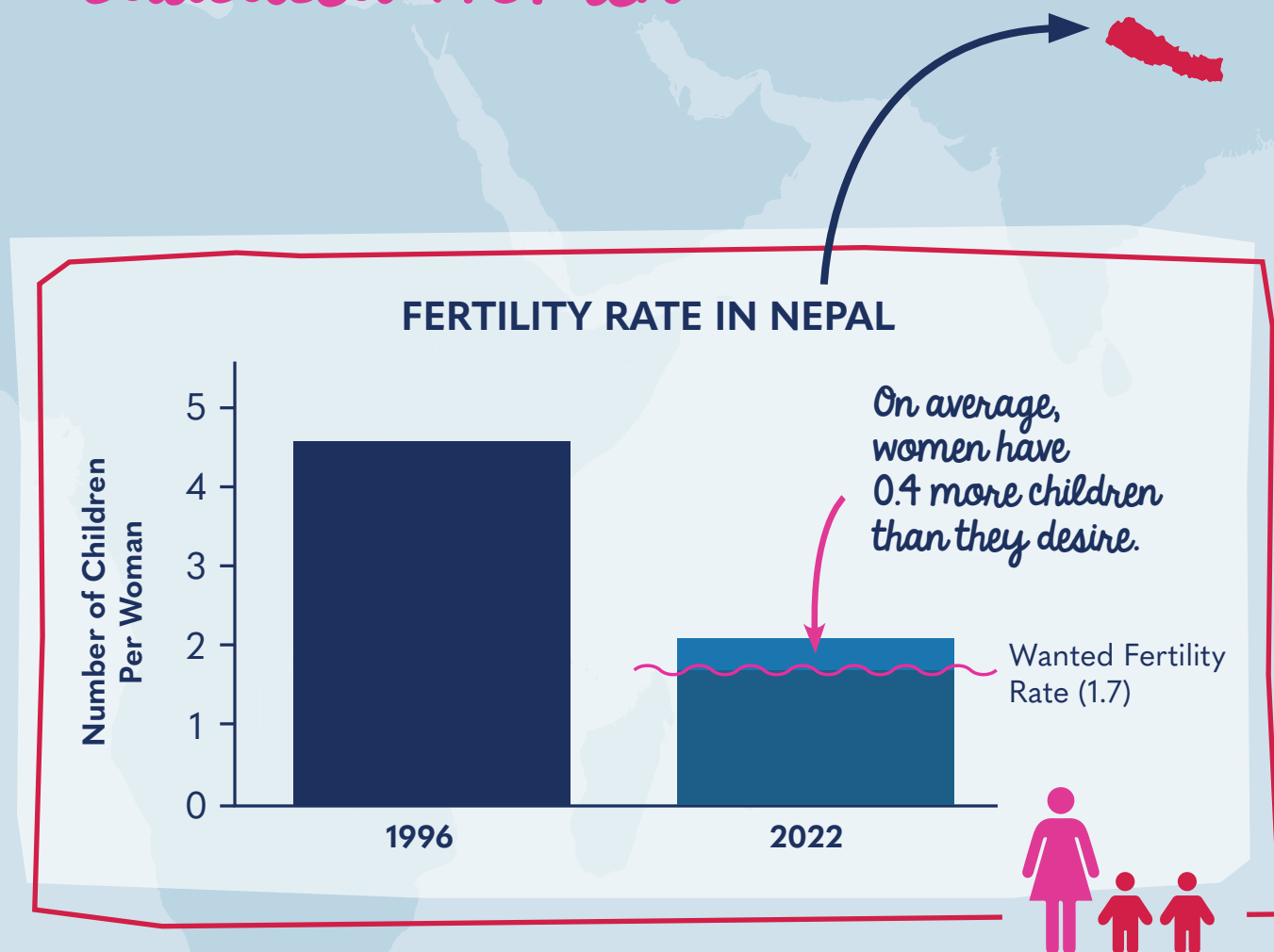
Indeed, the broad global conversation about what foreign assistance can achieve needs to be better focused. But aid is not “ridiculous — and, in many cases, malicious — pet projects of entrenched bureaucrats,” as the White House described it. Aid cannot be the solution for all of the problems that impoverished countries face. But it is a necessary building block for a better world.

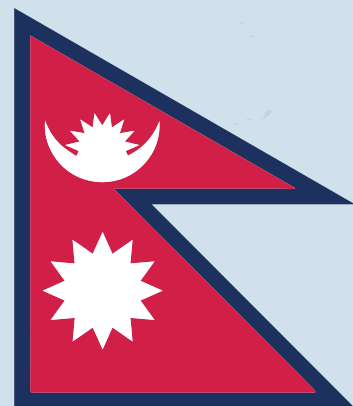
– March 26, 2025



# Nepal:

Fertility Declining Steadily,  
Especially Among  
Educated Women





On average, **women with no education have twice as many children** as **women with more than a secondary education (3.3 vs 1.6).**

The mean ideal number of **children among women with no education is 2.4**, compared with **1.8** among women with at least a secondary education.

The percentage of **women age 15–19 who have ever been pregnant decreases with increasing education**, from **33%** among those with no education to **8%** among those with a secondary education.



**21%** of currently **married women age 15–49 have an unmet need for family planning.** Unmet need is highest among young women age 15–19 (31%).

Among currently married women, **female sterilization (13%) is the most commonly used modern contraceptive method**, followed by **injectables (9%), implants (6%), the pill (5%), male condoms (5%), male sterilization (4%), and IUDs (1%).**

Source: Ministry of Health and Population [Nepal], New ERA, and ICF. 2023. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ministry of Health and Population [Nepal], [dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR379/FR379.pdf](https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR379/FR379.pdf)

**Wanted fertility rate** is the average number of children a woman would have by the end of her childbearing years if she bore children at the current age-specific fertility rates, excluding unwanted births.

**Ideal family size** is the number of children a woman would have if she could choose exactly the number of children to have in her whole life.





# IN THE NEWS

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

## **Special report: Population Connection at CPD58**

Population Connection, alongside health ministers, ambassadors, and other civil society experts with consultative status, attended the 58th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD58) in April in New York City.

CPD's primary role is to monitor, review, and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action that came out of the landmark 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt. Commonly known as the Cairo Consensus, the Programme of Action puts women's empowerment and reproductive health and rights at the center of development efforts.

Population Connection began participating in UN conferences and other events in 2024 to try to encourage policymakers to recognize the vital links between population, social justice, and

the environment, and to adopt holistic, empowering solutions.

At this year's session, we delivered two oral statements and a written statement. We also hosted an official virtual side event featuring our friends at Population Media Center and Women for Conservation.

The US delegation issued a shocking and shameful statement on the final day of the event:

“The United States rejects and denounces the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and will no longer reaffirm the SDGs as a matter of course.”

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a vision for peace and prosperity for people and the planet — they include ending hunger and poverty, improving health and gender equality, and protecting nature. The fact that the world's richest and most powerful country publicly denounced these morally essential and indisputably beneficial goals is

deeply alarming, and reflects the Trump administration's outright hostility toward human rights and the environment.

At CPD58, the US chose to align itself with countries like Russia, Iran, Belarus, Burundi, and Nigeria, rejecting and undermining hard-fought commitments to the rights of women. As a result, the conference's concluding session failed to produce a consensus — a sad and frustrating outcome.

Population Connection will continue our fight for human rights and the environment — stay tuned for more reports on our UN involvement.

## **European aid cuts follow US ones, dealing further blow to world's poorest**

Amid struggling economies and growing nationalism, many European countries are slashing their aid budgets and redirecting funding toward defense and domestic priorities.

In February, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced plans

to reduce the UK's foreign aid budget from 0.5% of the country's gross national income (GNI) to 0.3% by 2027 — its lowest level in 25 years.

Germany, the largest donor in the EU, which spent 0.67% of its GNI on official development assistance (ODA) in 2024, is also planning to cut its aid budget under the next coalition government, according to a document leaked in March. The German government had already reduced its foreign aid in both 2024 and 2023.

Also earlier this year, the French government approved a spending bill that cuts ODA by 37%, its largest reduction in a decade, while the Netherlands announced it would decrease ODA from its 2024 level of 0.62% of GNI to 0.44% in 2029.

These losses are not as extreme as the US ones — even though the US spent only 0.22% of its GNI on overseas aid in 2024, this still represented by far the biggest total amount, at over \$60 billion. Nevertheless, further aid reductions compound an already devastating situation, with millions of the most vulnerable people being cut off from life-saving support as well as essential health and education programs. This blow to developing countries threatens peace and security at a global scale by exacerbating poverty, conflict, and mass displacement.

## **Protective states key to helping Americans access abortion care**

Data revealed by the Guttmacher Institute in April shows that amid ongoing abortion bans in many states, in 2024, there were 1,038,100 clinician-provided abortions in US states that don't have total bans — a small increase of less than 1% from 2023.

Approximately 155,000 people traveled to a different state for an abortion, representing 15% of all abortions in states without total bans. While this is a slight decline from 16% in 2023, it is still close to double the number of people who crossed state lines for abortion care in 2020.

The share of abortions in states without total bans provided via online-only clinics rose to 14% in 2024, up from 10% in 2023. Guttmacher notes that the national figure is likely higher, as the 14% does not include people in states with total bans receiving telehealth services under shield law protections.


The states with the highest number of abortions provided to out-of-state residents were the same four as in 2023 (all bordered by states with full bans): Illinois, North Carolina, Kansas, and New Mexico. These and other states with protective laws will play an increasingly important role in helping people access abortion care as

policymakers in hostile states double down on their efforts to curtail reproductive rights.

## **China and US biggest plastic polluters**

A study published in April reveals the world has made little progress on plastic waste management. In 2022, 268 million tonnes (Mt) of plastic waste were generated globally, with China accounting for the largest share (30%), followed by the US (15%). Of those 268 Mt, only 38 Mt were recycled.

That same year, the US had the highest plastics consumption per capita of any country.

The study notes that based on current trends, global demand for plastics is projected to double by 2050, which has severe implications for the environment and human health. 

Visit our blog to read more about some of these news items: [popconnect.org/blog](https://popconnect.org/blog)

The digital version of this article includes hyperlinked sources: [popconnect.org/article/in-the-news-june-2025](https://popconnect.org/article/in-the-news-june-2025)



# CALLING ALL PROFESSORS!

## **Did you know that we speak to over 100 college and university classes each year, in addition to teaching a full-credit summer course at the University of North Carolina?**

The connections between population growth, health, development, and the environment are complex and can be difficult to articulate if you don't spend all day, every day, working on them like we do!

Hannah Evans, Senior Analyst, is available as a guest speaker for your college or university classroom to help explain these connections to students and to demonstrate how population stabilization is crucial for achieving a sustainable future.

Hannah educates students across the country about human population dynamics through lively, thought-provoking presentations focused on causes and impacts of, as well as solutions to, global population challenges.



**"I wanted to reach out to express my appreciation for the time and insight you shared with my environmental science class during your last visit. I was reviewing this fall term student feedback and many stated that they loved having a guest speaker and it helped bring the content to life and made it more relatable to them. The students were highly engaged and gained so much from your presentation. ... I look forward to the possibility of having you back in our classroom!"**



**"It was such a pleasure to meet you and have you share your expertise with our family policy class. Thanks so much for your time! ... I hope we can entice you to speak again with our students."**

## ★ PROFESSOR TESTIMONIALS

★  
“It was so great that you were able to give four different presentations to my critical thinking students this week. Thank you for your time and all the effort you put into designing and presenting the information. I know that students were very interested in your talk, and the info you provided will, no doubt, fuel further discussions and investigations into the interrelated nature of our world’s most daunting problems. It’s some great fodder for the critical thinking practice. Thank you again for this opportunity and for your advocacy for increased education for women and girls to preserve our environment. I hope we’ll be able to work together again. Cheers!”

★  
“[T]hank you for such an engaging guest lecture this week. The students really enjoyed it, and your material was a wonderful addition to our class. Thank you again for making the time for it.”

★  
“Thank you for reaching out and for coordinating the lecture. ... I truly admire the great work your organization does. Thank you again!”

★  
“Thanks again for this guest lecture! The students found it really informative! I wouldn’t be surprised if some of them reach out to you.”

### INVITE HANNAH TO YOUR CLASS



If you’d like to invite Hannah to speak to your college or university class, please get in touch with her!

[hannah@popconnect.org](mailto:hannah@popconnect.org)



# PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE MEMBER PROFILE

## Christopher Brown

By Sydnie Stocks, Special Gifts Officer

A beaming force of passion and purpose, President's Circle member Christopher Brown has been a long-time advocate for social justice, environmental conservation, and community building. Christopher grew up in the Bay Area in Northern California during a time of change, when cultural and political values were shifting. As a third-generation Oaklander, Christopher was influenced by the economic and population booms of the 1950s and the radical awakenings of the 1960s. "I was a young person growing up next door to the progressive university town of Berkeley, the heartbeat of the nationwide student activist movement, watching the pollution rise, the population explode, and feeling the urgency of change all around me."



Christopher's activism was not only informed by the social and political landscape of the Bay Area; it began right at home with his family. His parents were founding members of Oakland's first Planned Parenthood clinic in the early 1960s. Watching his parents' involvement in the reproductive rights movement laid the foundation for a lifetime of reproductive health advocacy. "Even as a kid, I remember listening to conversations about how every child should be wanted. That idea stuck with me," he recalls.

In his adulthood, Christopher made the critical connection between overpopulation, environmental degradation, and health. He is deeply concerned about population overshoot. In 1994, he joined Population Connection because he was inspired by our candid population messaging as an environmental



organization — an increasing rarity among US-based environmental groups.

Christopher got his degree in Industrial Arts at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo, where he honed his skills in community building. In his early career at Cal Poly, he taught everything from drafting to woodshop to auto shop and metalworking. But after encountering the challenges inherent in traditional classroom teaching, he pivoted to his true passion: building.

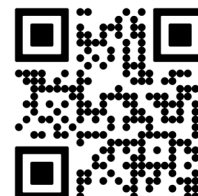
Over the years, Christopher has built a life for which he is immensely grateful. He has built homes, raised two children with his wife, Susan Urquhart-Brown, and makes time for his hobbies: bonding with his quirky cat, Bob, bike riding, and connecting with others through holistic spirituality.

Christopher speaks regularly at multiple churches and online spaces about the significance of personal transformation and interconnectedness. His approach of quiet influence, direct dialogue, and compassion aims

to highlight “reverence for the planet and all species, with the understanding that humans are not superior.”

His hope for Population Connection is that we continue to raise awareness about the multi-pronged benefits of family planning services. “It’s about planting seeds — sharing the bigger picture without shame, especially around contraception and choice. If we don’t cooperate with each other, we’re not going to make it.”

We are extremely grateful to Christopher and Susan for their President’s Circle participation and for their unwavering commitment to promoting harmony among people and the planet. If you would like to learn more about our giving societies, contact our Development team at [giving@popconnect.org](mailto:giving@popconnect.org). Or, you can scan the QR code below to go directly to our President’s Circle join page!





# POPULATION CONNECTION RESEARCH:

## Americans Want Small Families, Aren't Concerned About Declining Birth Rates

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

An extensive new survey by Population Connection reveals that Americans have an established preference for small family sizes and do not perceive low fertility rates as a problem. Our survey also sheds light on the factors that influence the childbearing decisions of younger Americans — the top impacts being concern over the state of the world and affordability.

### The context

The population narrative in today's media stories revolves predominantly around low fertility rates in high-income countries, with many outlets describing this as a problem or "crisis." This narrative is grounded in concern that population aging and decline could negatively impact economies, and ignores the countless benefits of reduced population pressure. It also fails to acknowledge the fact that our global population is still growing, and that even many high-income countries with low birth rates are still becoming more populous due to a combination of demographic momentum and immigration.

Previous studies on family size preferences in the Global North have found that people's "ideal"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Typically, when "ideal" number of children is cited in the media, the data comes from a Gallup poll that asks participants, "What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?" This is quite different from asking people how many children they themselves would like to have.

family size is often higher than actual fertility rates, leading reporters to suggest that many people are having fewer kids than they would like to have.

At Population Connection, we wanted to find out whether "baby bust" worries were also prevalent among the American people, and whether there is in fact a significant gap between US adults' desired and actual family sizes.

### The research

In October 2024, on behalf of Population Connection, research firm Lake Research Partners conducted a mixed-mode online and phone survey of 1,418 US-based adults. Lake Research Partners also held a series of in-person and virtual focus group discussions to dig deeper into people's thoughts around parenthood.

Respondents were asked nearly 30 questions to gain insights into people's actual and desired family sizes, and into which factors have had the biggest impacts on their family planning decisions.

While we surveyed adults of all ages, this article focuses on adults under the age of 50, who are commonly considered, in statistical analyses, to be in their reproductive years. To see the full results of the study, broken down by age, generation, gender, and race, visit our website at [popconnect.org/fertility-research](https://popconnect.org/fertility-research).

## The findings

### Most people want a small family, but some feel unable to fulfill their desired family size.

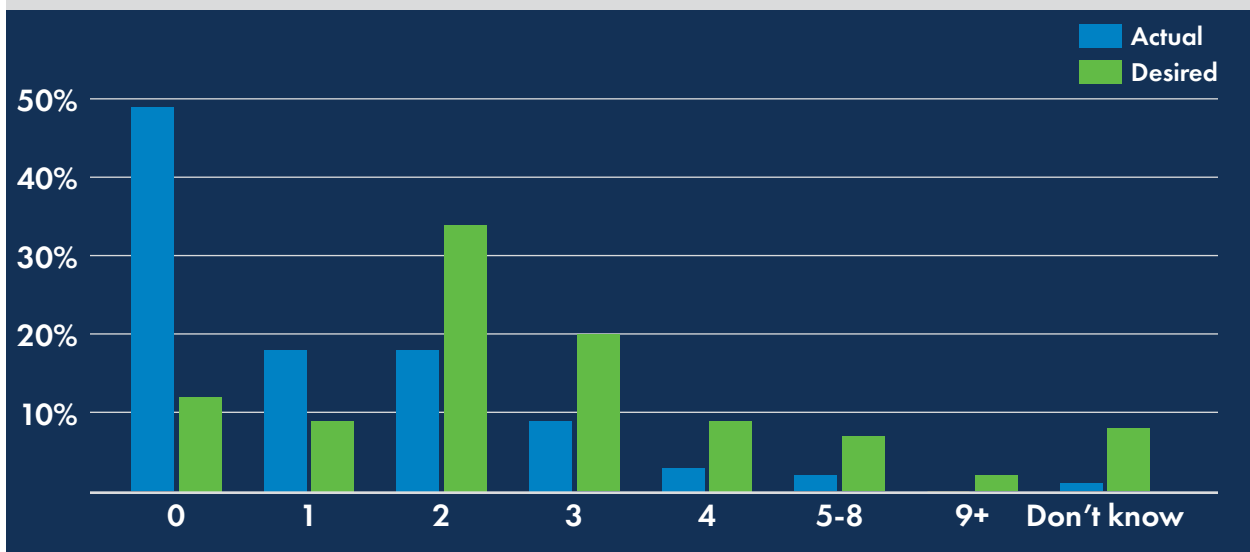
We found that the majority (55%) of participants desire a small family of zero to two kids. Well over half (58%) of respondents said their desired number of children has stayed about the same over time, while 19% said their desired number of children had increased and 20% said their desired number had decreased.

While survey participants were almost evenly split on whether their desired number of children had increased or decreased over time, among focus group participants whose ideal number of children has changed over time, almost all said it had decreased, citing lack of affordability, experiences with difficult pregnancies and/or deliveries, and wariness about the state of the world.

Among women under 50, 39% have the same number of children as their desired number of children, while 45% have fewer than they desire and 15% have more than they desire. Among men under 50, those figures are 34%, 53%, and 13%, respectively. Given that the survey included Gen Z and younger Millennials, it's to be expected that many of them have not yet started or completed their families and therefore still have fewer children than they desire.

### Actual vs. Desired Number of Children

Note that a large proportion of respondents have not yet started or completed childbearing, as the survey sample includes participants as young as 18.



**“Now I am going to read you some reasons that may impact people’s ability or decision to have children. For each, please tell me how much of an impact this reason has had on you — a major impact, somewhat of an impact, a little impact, or no impact at all.”**

Results below are by percentage of survey participants who responded that a reason had “a major impact.”

<b>Women &lt;50</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 37%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 34%</li> <li>• Mental health – 33%</li> <li>• Worried about how laws that restrict abortion and reproductive health care will affect you/your partner during pregnancy – 30%</li> </ul>
<b>Men &lt;50</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 34%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 33%</li> </ul>
<b>Women 50+</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 42%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 30%</li> </ul>
<b>Men 50+</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 37%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 24%</li> </ul>
<b>Gen Z</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 40%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 35%</li> <li>• Mental health – 34%</li> <li>• Worried about how laws that restrict abortion and reproductive health care will affect you/your partner during pregnancy – 30%</li> </ul>
<b>Millennial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 35%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 30%</li> </ul>
<b>Gen X</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 39%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 32%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 29%</li> </ul>
<b>Boomer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 41%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 23%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 22%</li> </ul>
<b>White</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 32%</li> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 31%</li> </ul>
<b>Black</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 29%</li> <li>• Age – 28%</li> </ul>
<b>Latino/a</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worried about the state of the world – 35%</li> <li>• Age – 32%</li> <li>• Can’t afford kids/ more kids – 32%</li> </ul>



Among survey participants, the most common family size was zero children (49% of respondents had no children), which is significantly higher than the number of respondents who said they desire no children (12%). While this difference can be partly attributed to younger participants not having started childbearing yet, it also suggests that many childless people would like or would have liked to become parents but feel or felt unable to do so.

Mirroring previous studies' findings, a two-child family was by far the most desired family size, with 34% of respondents preferring this size. Three (20%) and zero (12%) children were more popular desired family sizes than one child (9%). One-child families have been shown to be unpopular by other surveys too, suggesting bias against only children, likely due to debunked yet persistent stereotypes.

### **People feel limited by the state of the world and affordability.**

When asked which factors had a major impact on their ability or decision to have children, the top factors were concern over the state of the world (35% said this had a major impact) and not being able to afford kids/more kids (34% said this had a major impact).

Focus group participants shared these concerns. A Millennial woman with a blended family of five kids said:

**“Day care is costly. Education is costly. I’m saving for each one of them for their college education right now. Only**

**two [children] instead of five would have been a lot easier, for financial reasons and just the crazy world we live in.”**

Following that same theme, a Gen Z man said:

**“No one’s going to want to raise a kid when they’re struggling. They don’t want to bring a kid up when the kid’s going to have to struggle. So, a good economy helps you live a better life, which will help you raise a kid in a better life.”**

These top impacts (state of the world and affordability) on people’s ability or decision to have children are followed by mental health (27%), being worried about how laws that restrict abortion and reproductive health care will affect them/their partner during pregnancy (25%), age (25%), there not being enough support for parents in our country (22%), and current work demands and schedule making it difficult (22%).

Survey participants were also asked how much they agree with a variety of statements — close to half of respondents strongly agreed that basics like food and housing cost so much that it forces people to prioritize jobs and income

over having children (51% strongly agreed), and that sometimes people want to spend their time, energy, and love doing other things than raising children (49% strongly agreed).

Over a quarter (27%) of respondents strongly agreed that overpopulation and climate change make them uneasy about raising children on a planet that is already in trouble. A slightly smaller proportion (21%) said that overpopulation and climate change make them uneasy about creating another human who will contribute to the destruction of the planet.

### **Reproductive rights restrictions and not wanting kids also play an important role.**

A quarter of respondents (25%) said that worries about how restrictions on abortion and reproductive health care would impact them or their partner during pregnancy have had a major impact on their childbearing decisions. This figure rose to 30% for Gen Z and for women under 50.

Among those who don't plan on having kids, not wanting them was by far the most important factor (46% said this had a major impact, and 15% said it had 'somewhat of an impact'), conveying the growing popularity of the childfree choice.

### **People are more concerned about population growth than low fertility rates.**

A statement about falling fertility rates being one of the biggest challenges facing our world received the lowest amount of agreement, with only 17% of total respondents strongly agreeing.

Conversely, nearly half of respondents (45%) said they were 'very' to 'somewhat' concerned about national population growth, while slightly more than half (51%) were 'very' to


'somewhat' concerned about global population growth. Only 27% and 22% said they are 'not concerned at all' about national and global population growth, respectively, while 24% and 21%, respectively, said they are 'a little concerned.'

The top cited reasons for concern over population growth were more kids living in poverty (35% said they are most concerned about this impact) and natural resource depletion (30% said they are most concerned about this impact).

## **The implications**

Our survey results suggest that most Americans have a preference for small families, which needs to be acknowledged by policymakers seeking to blindly increase the birth rate for the sake of the economy — especially given all of the policy levers that could be (but haven't been) implemented in order to maintain a healthy economy.

We also found that some people feel unable to fulfill their desired family size — policymakers' focus should instead be on reducing the barriers that prevent people from having the number of kids they want. Concern over the state of the world and financial constraints were found to be the most important limiting factors, which is in line with what other surveys have shown. We found that mental health and reproductive rights restrictions are also perceived as a major barrier among younger generations — the latter factor being particularly relevant in light of the hostility of the Trump administration toward sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Slides summarizing key findings and banner tables for all questions and full survey results are available on our website at [popconnect.org/fertility-research](https://popconnect.org/fertility-research). 

We are honored to include Joyanne Bloom in our ZPG Society. In addition to her yearly support, she established a **charitable gift annuity** with Population Connection.

*"It's a win-win. I can feel good about donating, and I'm also receiving quarterly checks, which is nice."*

Joyanne will continue to receive payments for life.

Joyanne Bloom  
ZPG Society Member



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# CHANGING HARMFUL TRADITIONS AND EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR LIVES IN RURAL NEPAL

By Nancy Power | Photos courtesy of RUWDUC

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Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba is from Kathmandu, but she married a man from the impoverished Sudurpashchim Province (called the Far-Western Region prior to 2015) of Nepal. Many of the villages there are accessible only by long, winding roads over difficult terrain. When she visited her husband's homeland, although dazzled by the natural beauty, Deuba was dismayed by the widespread malnutrition, low education levels, and high infant mortality rate. The area had poor infrastructure, low literacy, glaring gender inequity, and limited means of income generation. In response, in 1995, Deuba collaborated with a group of local Sudurpashchim women to establish the Rural Women's Development and Unity Center (RUWDUC, pronounced ROO-duck).

RUWDUC's first project in Sudurpashchim was to provide beehives and beekeeping training to 2,700 farmers, 75% of whom were women, enabling them to sell honey to increase their family income. Thirty years later, 60% of those initial trainees still maintain their beekeeping businesses.

With his mother and aunt among the trainees, nine-year-old Kamal Rawal (photo opposite page) got a close-up view of the project. He saw that the women were excited to keep beehives on their farms and sell honey in the market. He remembers that "they started sending their children to schools and started to purchase nutritious food as well. I was so touched, I thought that I would also become a social worker and serve at remote places." Rawal is now the Executive Director of RUWDUC.

*Changing harmful norms, attitudes, and practices*

## **Chaupadi**

RUWDUC works to end two traditions that harm girls' and women's health: chaupadi and child marriage. Meaning "becoming untouchable," chaupadi, a custom unique to Nepal, is — in its most extreme interpretation — the practice of prohibiting girls and women from entering their homes, visiting the temple or water sources, attending school, or cooking when they are





menstruating or have recently given birth. In these extreme cases, they are exiled to a hut or cow shed with no doors, far from the house, where they are vulnerable to cold, attacks by wild animals such as venomous snakes, rape, and kidnapping (in order to be sex trafficked internationally). Young children are expected to stay with their mothers in these unsafe conditions. Chaupadi practices fall along a spectrum of severity, but generally involve exclusion from normal household and community activities, sometimes including school.

“It made the girls’ lives hell,” says Rawal. Many women and children have died as a result of it. The practice was still common among adolescent girls in western Nepal as of 2021, according to a survey by the US National Institutes of Health. Another survey, in 2019, found that chaupadi is six times more common in Sudurpashchim than in Nepal as a whole.

Despite the Nepal Supreme Court outlawing the practice and the Parliament passing many laws to eradicate it, monitoring and enforcement so far have been

## *Population Connection's thriving Global Partners program* assists

18 community-based, locally-led organizations in several countries in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa and one organization in South Asia: RUWDUC in Nepal.

Due to escalating climate change and land use changes, Nepal is more susceptible to flooding than in the past. Flooding is more frequent and more extreme, resulting in landslides, destruction of villages, and displacement of people and animals. With the help of Population Connection, OXFAM, and other NGOs, in 2022, RUWDUC was able to install an early warning system in Kalakot along the Rangoon River. The grant also allowed RUWDUC to distribute clothing and food to residents in Parshuram Municipality, a river basin community that experienced devastating flooding in the fall of 2021, which forced around 90 families to flee their homes. Since then, Population Connection has sponsored several RUWDUC initiatives. One of those is the Girls Empowerment Project, which aims to sensitize students and their guardians and teachers about menstruation, family planning, hygiene and sanitation, and child marriage and other harmful practices. The project works to keep girls in school and helps them develop leadership skills that set them up for roles in their community where they can make a difference in other girls’ and women’s lives. We are proud to support this small but ambitious organization and thank our members for their generous gifts toward our Global Partners program. If you’d like to dedicate your donation to our Global Partners, please visit our website at [popconnect.org/GlobalPartners](https://popconnect.org/GlobalPartners).

– Lee S. Polansky, Senior Director of Executive Initiatives

Meaning “becoming untouchable,” chaupadi, a custom unique to Nepal, is — in its most extreme interpretation — the practice of prohibiting girls and women from entering their homes, visiting the temple or water sources, attending school, or cooking when they are menstruating or have recently given birth.

inadequate to eliminate the custom. RUWDUC complements the laws by facilitating discussion about menstruation as a normal biological process, to help end chaupadi voluntarily at the local level. Since chaupadi is rooted in centuries-old patriarchal cultural beliefs about women being impure and inferior, raising awareness and changing norms must be part of any lasting effort to end the practice. In some places where RUWDUC has worked, the girls are now allowed to stay in their homes during menstruation. Rawal’s own mother ended the practice in her family.

### Child marriage

RUWDUC also raises awareness about the risks of child marriage. According to UNICEF, as of 2019, 33% of Nepalese women currently in their

early 20s were married before age 18, down from 58% in 1994. Among women of all ages, 5.3 million were married or in a union before age 18; of these, 1.2 million married at age 14 or younger.

According to Rawal, typically a 14-year-old boy marries a 12- or 13-year-old girl, who has her first child when she is 15. This practice leads to high maternal mortality — teenagers’ bodies are typically not suited to pregnancy and childbirth. If the girl survives the delivery, she nearly always drops out of school, destroying her prospects for earning a meaningful income. Because she lacks financial independence, she is at greater risk of gender-based violence. RUWDUC provides girls who are already in child marriages with counseling, encourages them to continue their



Girls Empowerment Project participants upon completing a reproductive health training (look closely to see the Population Connection logo in the bottom left of the sign they’re holding)





Mahendra Secondary School students delivering a message against child marriage through Nepal's popular game, kabaddi; the front of the girls' jerseys says: STOP CHILD MARRIAGE RUWDUC/POPULATION CONNECTION

education, informs them about family planning and reproductive health, and warns them of the dangers of chaupadi.

## Abortion

Together with Nepali women activists, RUWDUC lobbied for over five years to pass the 11th Amendment to the Civil Code in 2002, decriminalizing abortion in Nepal. RUWDUC also led efforts to release and rehabilitate women imprisoned for abortion-related cases, gathering information from police, lawyers, and affected families to build their legal cases and hiring lawyers to represent them. These efforts led to the release of 30 women from various district prisons. Eight of those women, whose families rejected them after their release, stayed in RUWDUC's shelter for a year. During this time, they learned sewing skills, and upon completing the training, RUWDUC provided them with seed money and sewing machines to start small businesses, ensuring their financial security and independence.

## Girls' Empowerment Project

Population Connection sponsored the Girls' Empowerment Project (GEP) at Mahendra Secondary School in the Dadeldhura District of Sudurpashchim Province in 2023 and 2024. The project raised awareness among students as well as their guardians and teachers about menstrual hygiene, family planning, child marriage, and chaupadi. Other topics included domestic violence, drug addiction, and cyber-bullying. To improve girls' academic performance, the GEP provided access to sanitary products, enabling adolescent girls to attend school during their menses. The GEP also developed the girls' leadership and oratory skills and increased their participation in sports. All these activities boosted the girls' confidence, enabling them to take charge of their lives and socialize more. Srijana Sethi reports that, because of participating in the GEP, "I feel that I can put my ideas in [front of] a group of people and fight for my rights."



## *From child bride to confident student and role model*

Geeta Oad, a young Dalit<sup>1</sup> girl from Belapur Village in Dadeldhura, grew up in a poor family. Due to their hardships, she was married off at 17 to Suresh Tamrakar, a local man from her village.

Once married, Geeta shouldered the burdens of a large, joint family. Her dreams of further education were crushed under the weight of caring for her husband, her parents-in-law, and two brothers-in-law while managing household chores and farm work. Her in-laws constantly pressured her to start having babies. To top it off, Geeta's husband migrated to neighboring India for work.

Everything changed when Geeta attended a local women's empowerment program organized by

RUWDUC. For the first time, she learned about women's rights, the damage caused by child marriage, and the importance of education. The sessions ignited her long-suppressed desire to return to school.

Geeta invited her husband to meet the RUWDUC team, but he resisted. After much persistence, however, she convinced him to return to Nepal for that purpose. Following counseling and advocacy from RUWDUC staff, Geeta's new family finally agreed to let her enroll in Mahendra Secondary School. Determined to change her life, Geeta used the blessing money (dakshina) she had received at her wedding to pay for her education. She rented a room near the school, embracing her newfound independence.

At school, Geeta actively participated in the GEP's extracurricular programs, learning about child marriage, adolescent reproductive health, and leadership. These sessions empowered her

<sup>1</sup>Dalit people, also known as "untouchables," are members of the lowest caste in the South Asian countries that have a caste system, including Nepal.



Above and left: Members of the women's leadership program attending a session to prepare the monthly youth network action plan in Dadeldhura District



Women's leadership program participants planning a community awareness program in Dadeldhura District to combat violence against women




to advocate for herself: She confidently told her in-laws that she was not ready for motherhood and wanted to focus on her education. For the first time, she understood that pregnancy was her choice, not an obligation.

Now Geeta not only attends classes but also shares her knowledge with her community during school vacations. She raises awareness on menstrual hygiene, child marriage, and drug addiction, while serving as a role model for other girls.

## Women finding their voice

All of the teenage girls and adult women beneficiaries of RUWDUC I interviewed said that their connection with RUWDUC had increased their confidence and public speaking skills. As 36-year-old Dhana Awasthi puts it, “My life would have [otherwise] been dark and limited to housework within the four walls of my house.” Bishna Gairal, 45, says, “I used to feel afraid when speaking with others in public and would often avoid participating in groups. I can now speak confidently in public settings and independently lead and organize programs.”

RUWDUC has succeeded at improving the prospects of rural families in Nepal for 30 years in part because it collaborates effectively with many international organizations — Oxfam, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), several United Nations agencies (UN Human Rights, UN Women, UN Development Programme), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), and World Vision International — to carefully and competently propel its mission into reality. Population Connection proudly stands alongside these larger donors in supporting RUWDUC’s sustainable development projects throughout Nepal. 

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Nancy Power is a scientist who also writes articles for four different farming magazines. She was a high school science teacher for over 14 years before leaving to earn a PhD in Agricultural Entomology from the University of California, Riverside. She served as a commercial horticulture agent for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension. She lives in North Carolina where she continues teaching and enjoys growing fruit and vegetables. She is passionate about empowering Americans to eat more plant-based foods.



# GLOBAL PARTNERS

## Turimiquire Foundation

By Marian Starkey, Vice President for Communications

Photos courtesy of Turimiquire Foundation

Venezuela's political and socioeconomic strife is well documented, but the toll it takes on the reproductive health of Venezuelan people, especially those living in remote regions, is less widely discussed. The Turimiquire Foundation works in the northeastern coastal region of the country, delivering family planning and reproductive health services and improving rural education and development for a population that's often overlooked.



A group of college students doing a senior project with Turimiquire. Steven is in the center, and his partner, Teresa, is at his right. She is the office manager and attends to the public.

Steven Bloomstein arrived in Venezuela as a recent college graduate in 1973, part of a small group of North Americans interested in tropical fruit farming. After traveling around the country and into the Amazon, they began farming in the northeastern Caribbean state of Sucre in 1977.

Steven and his companions were soon distraught over the high maternal morbidity and mortality rates in their new home, resulting from the lack of perinatal care in their remote region and back-to-back pregnancies beginning in women's early teenage years. They helped as they could using their

own limited resources. After the particularly tragic death during childbirth of a woman in their community, and inspired by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Steven co-founded the Turimiquire Foundation. It became a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in 1996,

registered in the United States and operating on the ground in Venezuela through its sister organization, Fundación ServYr (Sociedad de Educación Rural: Vida Y Reproducción, meaning Society for Rural Education, Life, and [Healthy] Reproduction), based in the small coastal town of Cumaná, about 200 miles east of Caracas.

The main focus of the organization is family planning education, counseling, and contraceptive services, but the all-Venezuelan, 95% female staff also provides other primary health care services, including selected surgeries, as well as rural education and literacy, sustainable livelihood


and economic development, and humanitarian aid projects, in line with the self-identified needs of the community.

Since 1997, Turimiquire has delivered high-quality family planning services to more than 81,685 rural and low-income urban women and men. Since 2003, the organization has offered 5,293 reproductive health workshops to more than 126,510 adult and student participants. Venezuela has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in Latin America, and the educational outreach and services that help teens to prevent unwanted pregnancy are crucial to their health, continued education, and employment prospects.

More than 50 rural high school students receive scholarships to continue their studies each year. Over 500 students have now attended high school, and over 100 have graduated — the first in their families to do so. Turimiquire runs a rural education center, as well as a small, free cyber café in Cumaná, which offers students a place to use the internet, receive tutoring, eat snacks, and socialize.

Alongside all of the incredible work Turimiquire has done in the past three decades, the original objective of the North American travelers back in

1973 lives on — they operate a farm in a roadless valley, where they cultivate and distribute unusual tropical fruits such as durian, mangosteen, jackfruit, biriba, and star fruit, in a program which offer farmers new sources of revenue and helps to reforest the degraded local landscapes.

The population of Venezuela has risen from 12 million when Steven and his friends arrived in the 1970s to roughly 28 million today — an increase of 129%. The population growth rate has dramatically declined during that period though, partially due to the remarkable level of outmigration since the country was thrown into political and economic chaos two decades ago, but also due to a steadily declining fertility rate, which now stands at just under 2.1 lifetime births per woman. Turimiquire continues to address the enormous unmet need for family planning services in this remote and beautiful corner of the country's northeastern coast. 

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Turimiquire, pronounced Too-ree-mee-kee-ray, means “Seat of the Gods” in the Indigenous Carib language, and refers to the mountain range that dominates this tropical coastal area. To learn more, please visit [turimiquire.org](http://turimiquire.org).



Dr. Arantxa Bernasconi with family planning patients in February 2025

# VIRTUAL EVENTS

## Spring Events and Activities in Full Swing

By Natalie Widel, Director of Digital Marketing

Population Connection members and supporters have brought loads of energy and enthusiasm to our spring slate of virtual events — we hope you'll be inspired to join us in the future! You can find recaps of featured events and see what we have in store for the coming months at [popconnect.org/virtual-events](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events).

### March

We celebrated International Women's Day with Wendo Sahar, the Founder and Executive Director of Kenya-based NGO Dandelion Africa. This women-led organization focuses on reducing

gender-based violence and improving women's and girls' reproductive health, maternal and child health, and economic livelihoods.

In just the last five years, Dandelion has provided reproductive health services to over 250,000 women and

girls, eliminated female genital mutilation in 36 villages, facilitated the start of over 10,000 businesses led by rural women ... and more!

We're proud to feature this incredible organization and the work of Wendo and her team. Learn more about their programs and impacts at [dandelionafrica.org](https://dandelionafrica.org).

### April

We celebrated Earth Month with a slew of activities supported by members and supporters like you!

Over 200 people joined us for two virtual events:

- We hosted an official side event to the 58th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development called What's the Story With





Family Planning? How Women's Empowerment, Reproductive Freedom, and Storytelling Build Healthier, More Sustainable Communities. Panelists from Population Media Center and Women for Conservation captivated the audience with their vivid stories of the life-changing power of family planning.

- Population Connection President and CEO John Seager gave a passionate and provocative presentation entitled: Deadly Silence: Ignoring Overpopulation Risks the Future of Our Living Planet.

Members tabled at Earth Day events in New York City, Pensacola, Florida, and Galena, Illinois — reaching hundreds of people in their local communities with materials and information making the links between population growth, climate change, resource depletion, and other environmental challenges.

We reopened the Green Spaces of Our Lives photo project for submissions and invite you to share a photo of yourself enjoying your favorite natural space (examples of what your fellow members have submitted at top right)! You can see the current entries and submit your own at [popconnect.org/learn/green-spaces-of-our-lives-photos](https://popconnect.org/learn/green-spaces-of-our-lives-photos).

## May

Every other month, Population Connection members and supporters meet on Zoom to discuss a book or long-form publication. During our May meeting, we discussed *What If We Get It Right? Visions of Climate Futures* by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson. This 2024 *New York Times* bestseller offers an optimistic take on the future of the climate crisis. It features a diverse array of experts, including farmers, financiers, architects, and advocates, to envision a flourishing world where climate action triumphs. In exploring these viewpoints, Johnson asks, “What if we get climate action right?”

## Upcoming

Our very popular Summer Photo Contest is now in its fourth year, and we invite YOU to submit photos! Winning entries will be printed in the September issue of this magazine, featured on our website throughout the year, and used in other Population Connection digital and print publications. Learn more and enter the contest at [popconnect.org/photo-contest-2025](https://popconnect.org/photo-contest-2025). The deadline for entries is World Population Day — July 11!

This summer, we're hosting a special series with our Senior Analyst, Hannah Evans. She spent two weeks in March



**Above, from top:** Corey Raffel, Kathy Raffel, and Janice Beglau-Taylor bird watching in the rainforest in Queensland, Australia; Dorothy Bradley hiking in the Bridger Mountain Range in Montana with her dog, Breaker Morant  
**Opposite:** Kathy Schwarz tabling at the Earth Day festival in New York City

visiting all four of our Guatemalan Global Partners: Manos Abiertas, Maya Health Alliance, Seeds for a Future, and WINGS. Join us to learn more about these organizations' important work, which complements our mission to stabilize population. Register for each virtual event in this series at [popconnect.org/virtual-events](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events). 

## Feds Freeze Family Planning Funding

By Brian Dixon, Senior Vice President for Governmental and Political Affairs

### Global health funding freeze cuts contraceptive access for millions

On Inauguration Day, Donald Trump and Elon Musk issued an executive action freezing all new foreign assistance grants for 90 days, while the administration assessed whether funded projects aligned with the administration's values. Four days later, they also issued a "stop work" order for existing global health grants.

The impact was immediate and catastrophic. According to the Guttmacher Institute, during the 90-day freeze, since extended by at least 30 days, 11.7 million women and girls lost access to contraceptives and family planning services. This resulted in an estimated 4.2 million unintended pregnancies and more than 8,000 maternal deaths.

The United States has long been the leading donor to international family planning programs, providing close to

40% of overall donor funding. In 2024, US family planning assistance helped nearly 48 million women and couples get contraceptive supplies and reproductive health care services. It prevented over 17 million unintended pregnancies, more than 5 million unsafe abortions, and 34,000 maternal deaths.

In short, US family planning aid has been among the most successful investments in terms of improving health, expanding educational and economic opportunities for girls and women, protecting and conserving natural resources, and reducing poverty.

In addition to the freeze on bilateral aid, the administration also ended all grants to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). As the world's largest multilateral provider of reproductive health care, UNFPA works in over 150 countries and is the lead agency when it comes to meeting these critical needs in the aftermath of disasters and in ongoing humanitarian settings.

It's not just family planning programs being dismantled though. Efforts to provide childhood vaccinations, to fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and to provide food and nutrition to hungry children are being abandoned. US aid has been, in the words of *New York Times* columnist Nick Kristof, "the first line of defense against epidemics and pandemics, whether involving bird flu, Ebola, or other diseases."

*The New York Times* reported that Musk's assault on US global health funding halted 13 clinical trials, including one in South Africa for a new device to prevent unintended pregnancy and HIV, leaving patients stranded with drugs and/or devices in their bodies with no monitoring or access to follow-up care.

Like the Global Gag Rule, a policy Trump reimposed in his first week back in office, the funding freeze is both cruel and stupid. It is undermining public health and global stability.

## White House withholds Title X domestic family planning grants

On March 31, the administration informed 16 health providers that it was “temporarily withholding” previously awarded grants to provide low-income Americans with family planning and other reproductive health care services through the Title X (ten) program. Among those informed of this news were all nine of the nation’s Planned Parenthood affiliates scheduled to receive a grant. Of the total of 22 grants being frozen, 13 of them were to those Planned Parenthood affiliates.

According to the Trump administration, the grants are being withheld to allow for a review of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies of the private providers — a federal intrusion with massive implications for free speech and the equitable provision of medical care.

Title X was established by the Nixon administration for the purpose of expanding access to contraceptives to low-income Americans. It is the only domestic program with the sole objective of reducing disparities in reproductive health care access.

Like the freeze on international family planning aid, this action will cause

real harm. The Guttmacher Institute estimates that well over 800,000 Americans will lose access to Title X supported care in a year should the freeze on grants be made permanent.

## Congressional Democrats introduce legislation to protect reproductive health and rights

On February 5, Reps. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) and Angie Craig (D-MN), along with Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), introduced the Right to Contraception Act to prevent federal, state, or local governments from interfering with any individual’s protected right to use the contraceptive method of their choice or the

right of health care providers to distribute those methods.

On March 27, Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) introduced the Support UNFPA Funding Act to restore funding to the essential UN agency. The bill states, “Access to voluntary contraception and reproductive health care is a cost-effective intervention that enhances women’s economic participation, reduces poverty, and strengthens communities — advancing United States strategic interests,” and calls for a US contribution of “no less than \$50 million in fiscal year 2026 and no less than \$55 million in fiscal year 2027.” There is no companion bill in the Senate. [🔗](#)

**“United States support for UNFPA has played a crucial role in bringing essential and often life-saving reproductive health and family planning services to hundreds of millions of people around the world. It has helped provide educational and economic opportunities to girls and women and remains essential to building a more secure, more stable and healthier world for everyone. That’s why this bill is so important. We’re looking forward to working with Rep. Houlahan to pass it and reverse the shortsighted and deeply misguided actions of the administration to eliminate all assistance to UNFPA.”**

— Brian Dixon, on behalf of Population Connection Action Fund



# FIELD + OUTREACH

## Taking Action on Capitol Hill and Online

By Rebecca Harrington, Senior Director of Advocacy and Outreach

The months since Donald Trump was inaugurated have felt like decades, given how much damage he has done since re-taking office. While it has been hard to watch the freezing of foreign aid, the dismantling of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the slashing of family planning and reproductive health care, including to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), we have been heartened by the progressive activist commitment to fighting back (including from our members and supporters)!



SVP for Education  
Pam Wasserman  
at the Save USAID  
rally in February

Nearly immediately upon taking office, Trump issued a 90-day freeze across all types of foreign aid (which was later extended by 30 days), with limited exceptions for programs deemed “life-

saving.” With the help of Elon Musk and his ill-intentioned Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), Trump set out to hack apart USAID, which has for the last 60 years led most of the humanitarian, democracy building, and global health programs around the world.

Then, on February 26, UNFPA was notified that the US had terminated all its grants, totaling \$377 million. This loss of US support is a tremendous blow to UNFPA’s lifesaving maternal and child health, family planning, and humanitarian assistance programs.

In addition to their sinister work decimating global health, Trump and his congressional Republican enablers have also set their sights on crushing

access to reproductive health care here in the US. As of writing, 16 Title X (ten) grantees, including all nine of the nation’s Planned Parenthood affiliates, have been informed that their grants are being temporarily withheld. Up to 834,000 low-income Americans who rely on Title X are at risk of losing their family planning and reproductive health care. We can only assume that the administration will soon find a way to make these cuts permanent.

### On the ground

We’ve been busy this spring, attending rallies to resist the administration’s heinous actions. Here’s a round-up:

- **February 5:** We protested with thousands on Capitol Hill at the Save USAID rally.



Staff attend the Save Our Health Care rally in DC (from left: Lauren Salmieri, Carol Bliese, Rebecca Harrington, Barbara Huth)

- **March 12:** We joined with pro-choice and pro-democracy organizations at the Save Our Health Care rally against cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, and Planned Parenthood.
- **March 31:** We stood with trans activists at a rally to commemorate the National Trans Day of Visibility.
- **April 2:** We joined Planned Parenthood and other reproductive rights groups in front of the Supreme Court to rally during oral arguments for *Medina v. Planned Parenthood of the South Atlantic*, a case challenging South Carolina's attempt to block Planned Parenthood as a Medicaid provider in the state.

## Digital activism

In addition to gathering in person, we have engaged our supporters with a variety of digital actions. In advance of confirmation hearings for several of Trump's Cabinet nominees, we shared a "Stop These Nominees" email action, which over 500 people used as an opportunity to contact their senators.

Over 700 of our supporters have contacted their representatives in the House, asking them to co-sponsor Rep. Chrissy Houlahan's (D-PA) Support UNFPA Funding Act (H.R.2439), which currently has 47 co-sponsors (all Democrats).

We launched Repro Rundown, a biweekly newsletter, in early April for our most engaged activists, and are now sharing it with our larger engaged list of donors and activists. If you're on our email list, keep an eye on your inbox! [📧](#)

## Welcome Back, Lauren!

We are thrilled to welcome Lauren Salmieri back to Population Connection as our National Field Director! Lauren worked with us for just over six years, from 2015–2022, in various roles in our Advocacy program, where she notably helped us build and launch the #Fight4HER campaign — our most successful grassroots effort to date.

After Lauren left Population Connection for new adventures in January 2022, she spent eight months consulting for the Veteran's Health Administration. She then served as a Senior Communications Advisor for USAID, where she supported critical programming from Haiti to Tajikistan. At the end of January, Lauren — along with many of her equally talented colleagues — was laid off from USAID by Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency.

We reconnected with Lauren after she was "DOGE-d," as she puts it, and were fortunate that circumstances aligned for her to come back to work with us. In her first few months back as National Field Director, Lauren has contributed thoughtful insights toward our strategic planning for the next phase of the #Fight4HER campaign, creative ways to engage our group of supporters, and day-to-day talent and energy as a team leader.

We're so grateful to have Lauren back with us, and look forward to our work ahead!

# POPULATION EDUCATION

## From Campuses to Conferences PopEd Travels the US for Spring Teacher Workshops

By Pamela Wasserman, Senior Vice President for Education

Our PopEd team just finished several months of winter and springtime travel to bring our curriculum to current and future teachers around the country. From January through May, staff traveled to nine states to present workshops at educational conferences and universities. Here are some highlights from recent trips by team members Bennett Steidinger, Barbara Huth, Cara Borja, Laura Short, Lindsey Bailey, and Carol Bliese.

Bennett's travels took her to several campuses in the Boston area, including Tufts University, where Professor Steve Cohen has been hosting PopEd workshops for his graduate students for nearly 30 years! At Endicott College in Beverly, students reflected on how PopEd lessons connect

to Massachusetts Learning Standards, and made plans to use them in their student teaching classrooms. Bennett also presented at the National Conference on Science Education in Philadelphia where she shared new elementary lessons she created for PopEd.

Just weeks after devastating fires in the Los Angeles area, Barbara worked with student teachers at five universities in the region. Several of the hosting professors were inspired to enroll in our PopEd Leadership Institute planned for this July at UCLA, so that they can continue to provide workshops in their teaching methods courses for years to come.

Cara received a warm welcome from professors and student teachers in Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Nebraska. In the "Cornhusker State," she engaged students on three campuses including the state's flagship, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she facilitated workshops for







**Clockwise from top left:** Science teachers at the National Conference on Science Education in Philadelphia play the collaborative board game “Lessons from The Lorax”; University of Nebraska students create models of carbon emissions from different countries in “Carbon Crunch”; Teachers visit the PopEd booth at the National Conference on Science Education in Philadelphia; Students at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh examine data in “Pop Ecology Files”


**Opposite page:** Bennett leads students at James Madison University in Virginia in the “Web of Life” interactive story

all of the elementary science methods classes.

Our team covered other parts of the Midwest, too, including Laura’s travels to campuses around Iowa (Des Moines, Iowa City, and Cedar Falls), and Lindsey’s week at universities in and around Chicago.

Carol finished the team’s spring travel with workshops up and down Florida’s Gulf Coast.

In all, our staff and volunteer trainers facilitated 272 workshops for nearly 5,000 future and current teachers in 39 states and four Canadian provinces through May. Plans

are underway to reach even more educators during our fall workshop season. 

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Visit [PopulationEducation.org](https://PopulationEducation.org) for more information on our workshop locations.



## CARTOON



CartoonStock.com

We are honored to include Julian and Kathy Donahue in our ZPG Society. In addition to having included Population Connection as a beneficiary of their trust, the Donahues have given through their IRA by making a **qualified charitable distribution** to Population Connection.

Contact us or your IRA administrator to find out if a QCD is right for you!

*Kathy and Julian Donahue*  
ZPG Society Members



## GIVE THROUGH YOUR IRA **TAX-FREE**

At 70 ½ years old, you may make **qualified charitable distributions** directly from your traditional IRA to Population Connection, up to \$108,000 per person in 2025! And if you're required to take a minimum distribution, then your QCD can reduce your taxable income for the year. You may also include Population Connection as a charitable beneficiary of your IRA! Contact us or your IRA administrator to find out how.



To learn more visit [popconnect.org/support](https://popconnect.org/support),  
email [giving@popconnect.org](mailto:giving@popconnect.org), or call **202-974-7756**.





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*Rebecca Weiner,  
ZPG Society Member,  
and her husband, Mike,  
in the Black Hills  
of South Dakota*

## PLAN FOR YOUR LEGACY

By including a gift to Population Connection in your will or trust, you can ensure our work continues as long as overpopulation threatens our world. After providing for your loved ones, you might consider designating a remainder gift, or a percentage, to Population Connection. Make your legacy one that protects people and our planet well into the future.

Make your will for free! Just go to **[freewill.com/populationconnection](https://freewill.com/populationconnection)**



To learn more visit **[popconnect.org/legacy](https://popconnect.org/legacy)**,  
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