

Population Panic? Unpacking Public Perception and Media Messaging

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2024 Survey: Fertility Desires and Outcomes

Are people having fewer children than they want,
and if so, why?

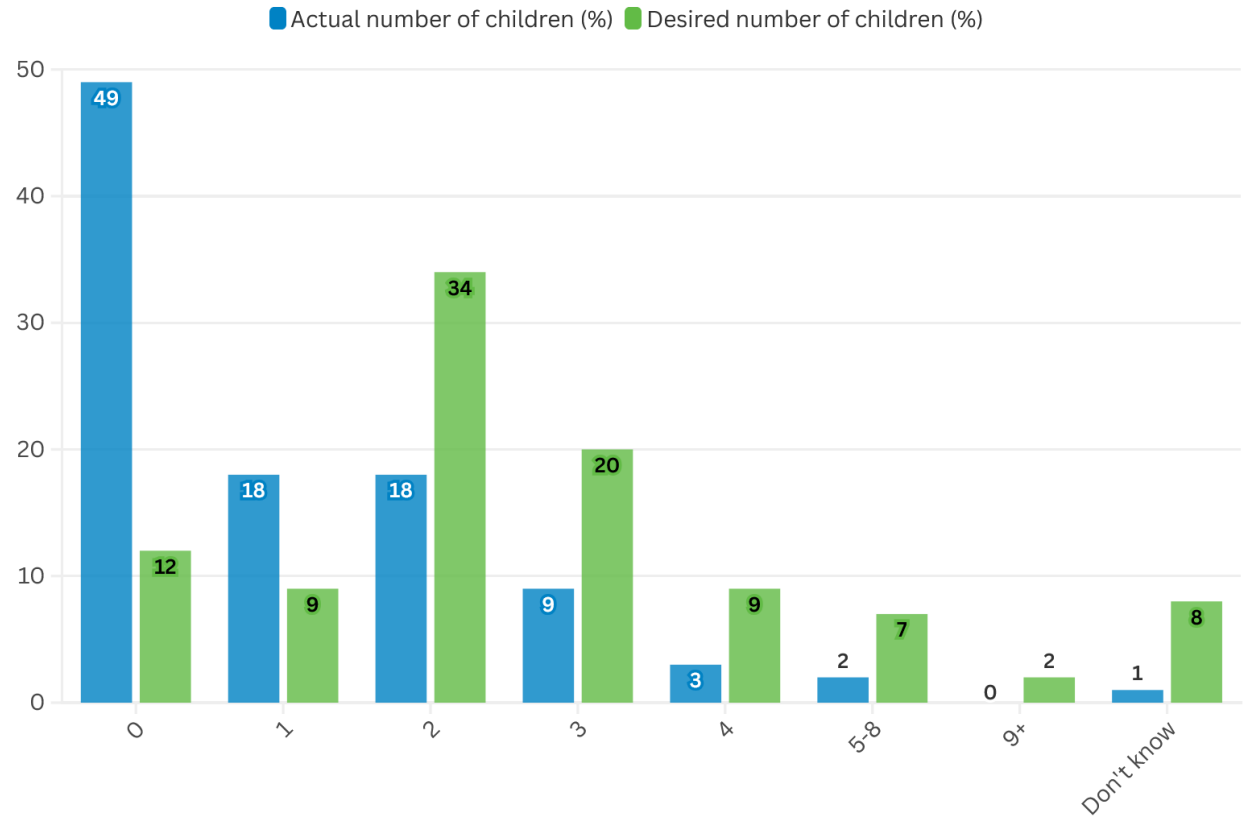
Survey administered by Lake Research Partners



Fertility desires and outcomes survey (2024)



Actual vs. desired number of children for adults under 50



Factors that majorly impact people's fertility



- When asked which factors had a major impact on their ability or decision to have children, the top factors for adults under 50 were concern over the state of the world (35%) and not being able to afford [more] kids (34%).
- For women under 50 and for Gen Z men and women, mental health (33% and 34%, respectively) and being worried about how laws that restrict abortion and reproductive health care will affect them/their partner during pregnancy also have a major impact (30% for both groups).

Concerns about national and world population growth



- 50% said they are very to somewhat concerned about global population growth, while 22% are a little concerned and 24% are not concerned at all.
- 45% said they are very to somewhat concerned about national population growth, while 22% are a little concerned and 29% are not concerned at all.
- Across subgroups, the most concerning impacts of population growth are more children who live in poverty (36% chose this as a top concern) and the depletion of resources, such as fresh water, forests, and food (30% chose this as a top concern).

Level of agreement with selected statements



- Overpopulation and climate change make us uneasy about raising children on a planet that is already in trouble.
 - 25% strongly agree
 - 30% somewhat agree
 - 16% somewhat disagree
 - 24% strongly disagree
 - 4% don't know

Level of agreement with selected statements



- Overpopulation and climate change make us uneasy about creating another human who will contribute to the destruction of the planet.
 - 17% strongly agree
 - 25% somewhat agree
 - 18% somewhat disagree
 - 35% strongly disagree
 - 5% don't know

Our New Survey: Population Knowledge and Perceptions

Are “baby bust” headlines sowing
misinformation?

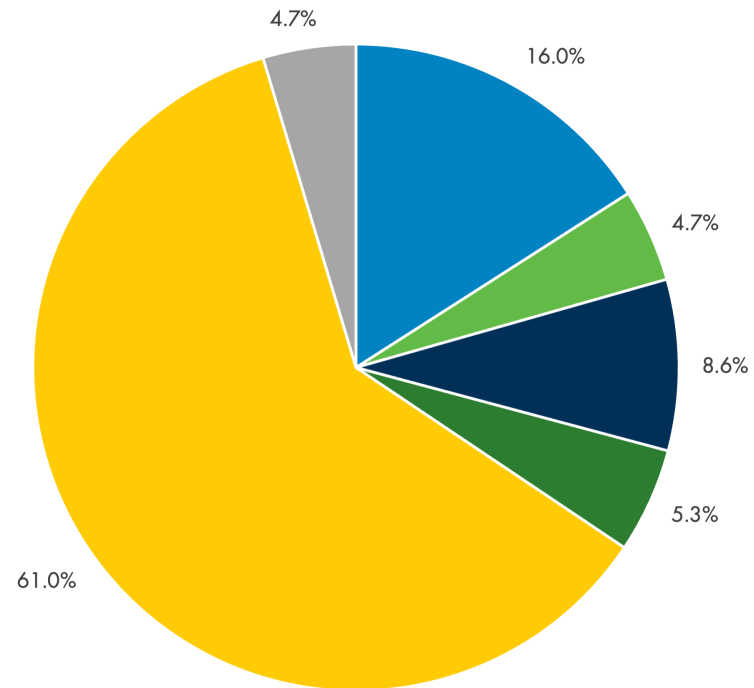
Survey administered by YouGov



Knowledge of US population



What do you think is the current national population, or total number of people in the United States? Please provide your best guess as a number.

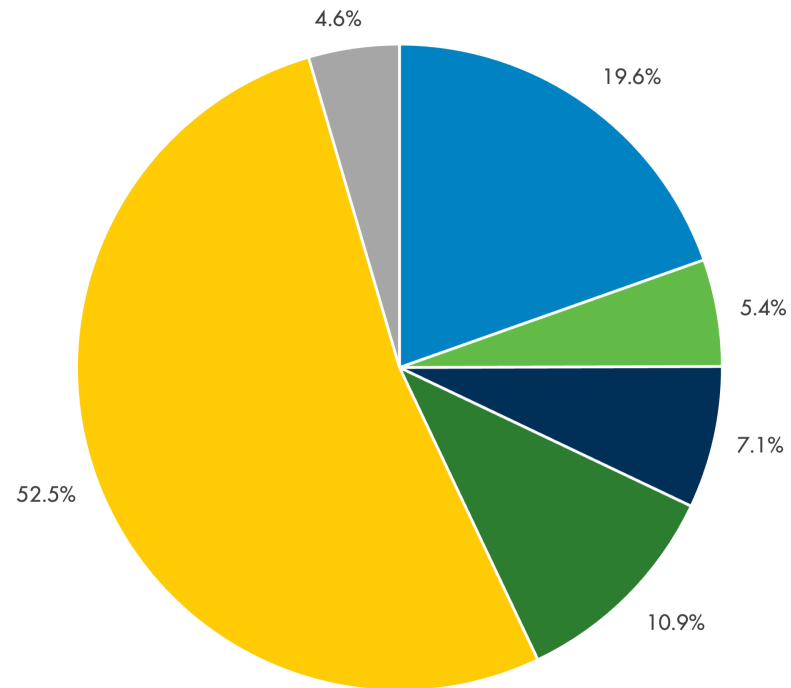


■ Correct or very close ■ Close ■ Reasonable guess ■ Somewhat far off ■ Very far off ■ No guess

Knowledge of world population



What do you think is the current global population, or total number of people in the world? Please provide your best guess as a number.



■ Correct or very close ■ Close ■ Reasonable guess ■ Somewhat far off ■ Very far off ■ No guess

Headlines about declining birth rates and about population growth



Have you seen any headlines about declining birth rates in the past month?

- Yes: 31%

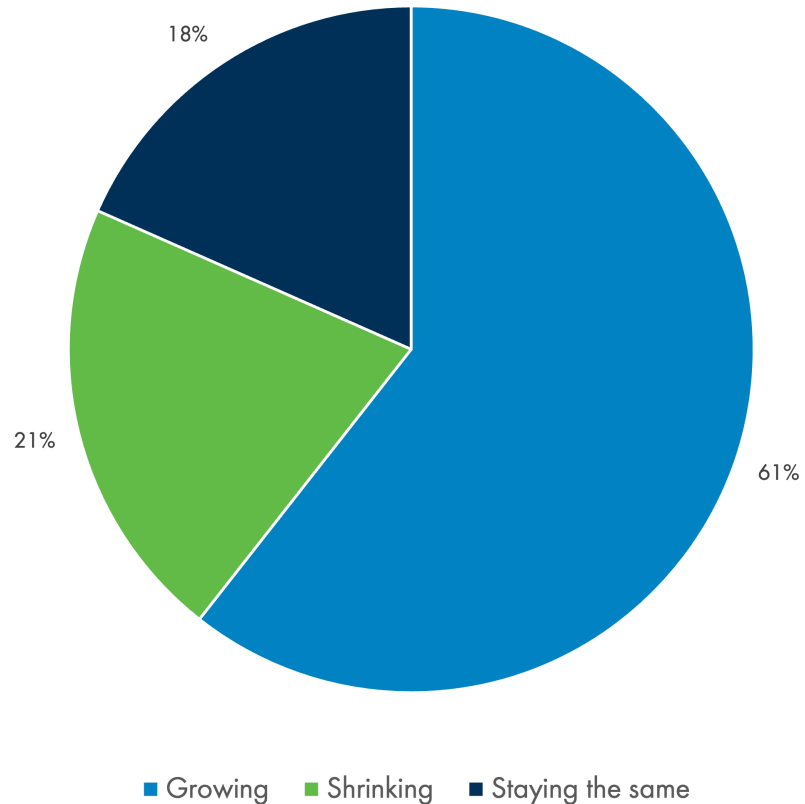
Have you seen any headlines about global population growth in the past month?

- Yes: 11%

Nearly 40%
of Americans
don't know
that our
national
population is
growing



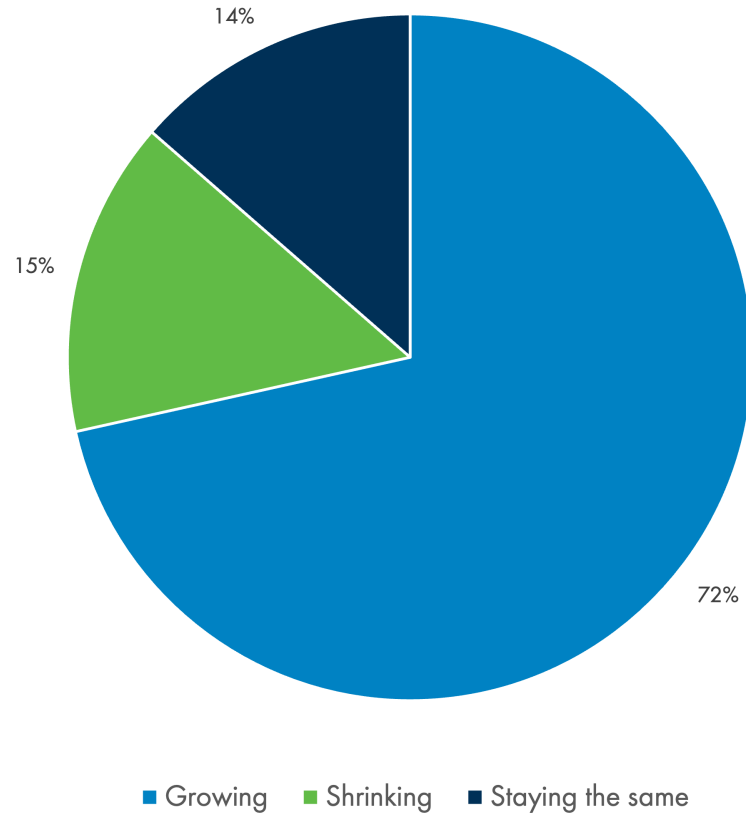
Do you believe our national population is growing, shrinking, or staying the same?



Nearly 30%
of Americans
don't know
that our
global
population is
growing



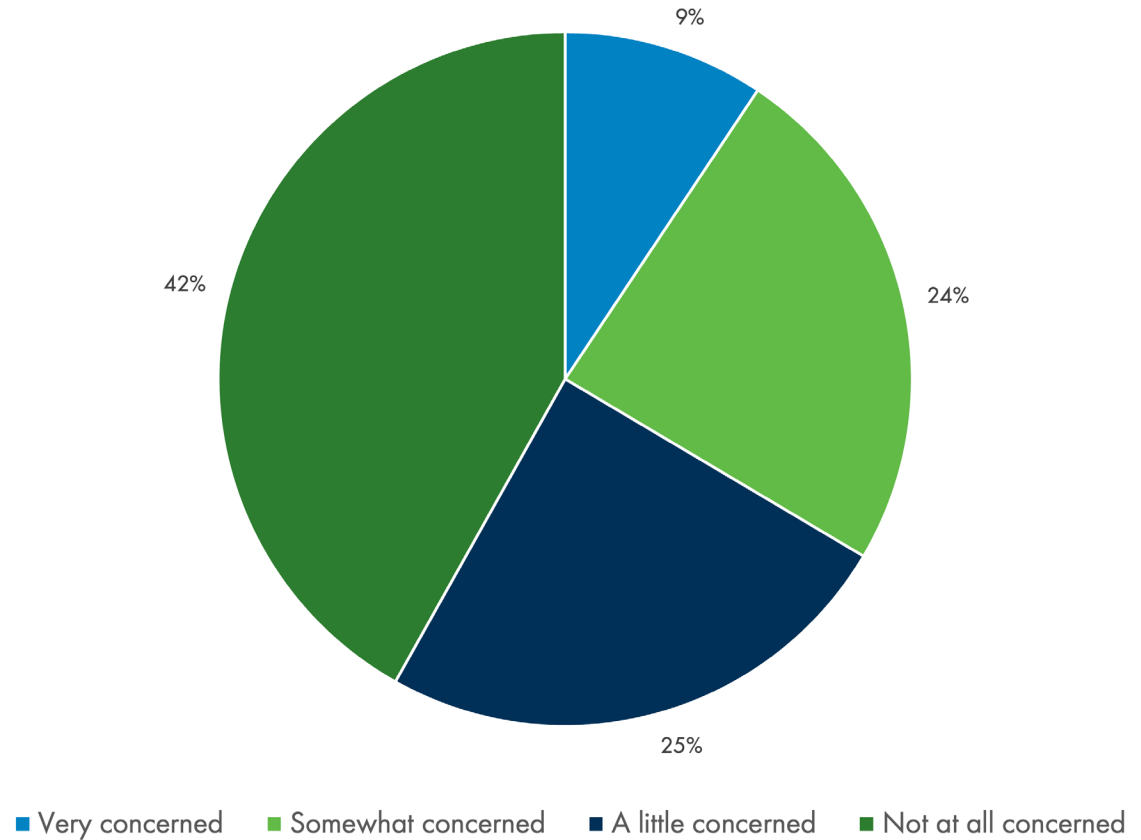
Do you believe our global population is growing, shrinking, or staying the same?



Only a third are
very to
somewhat
concerned about
global population
growth



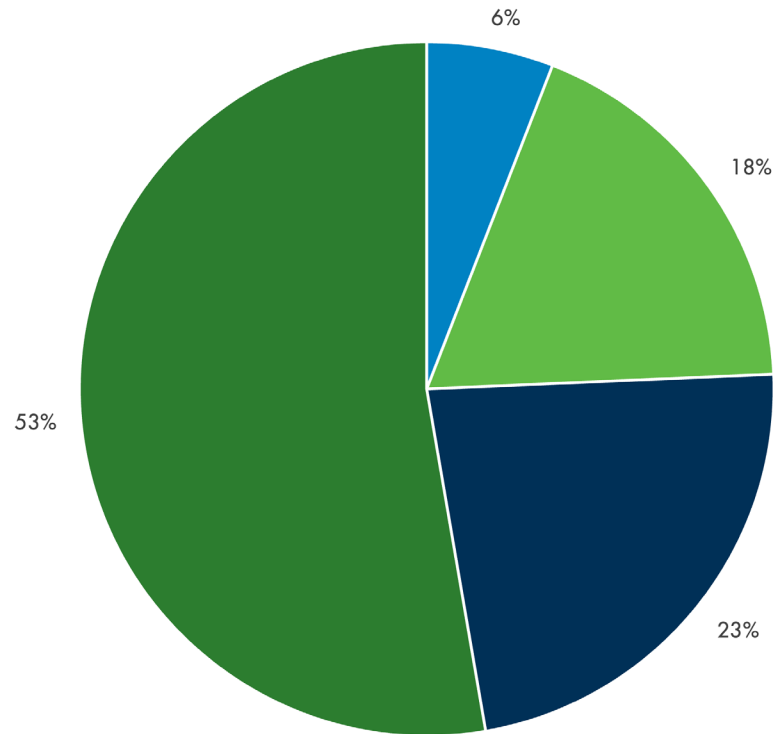
How much, if at all, are you concerned about global population growth?



Just a quarter
are very to
somewhat
concerned about
declining birth
rates



How much, if at all, are you concerned about declining birth rates?

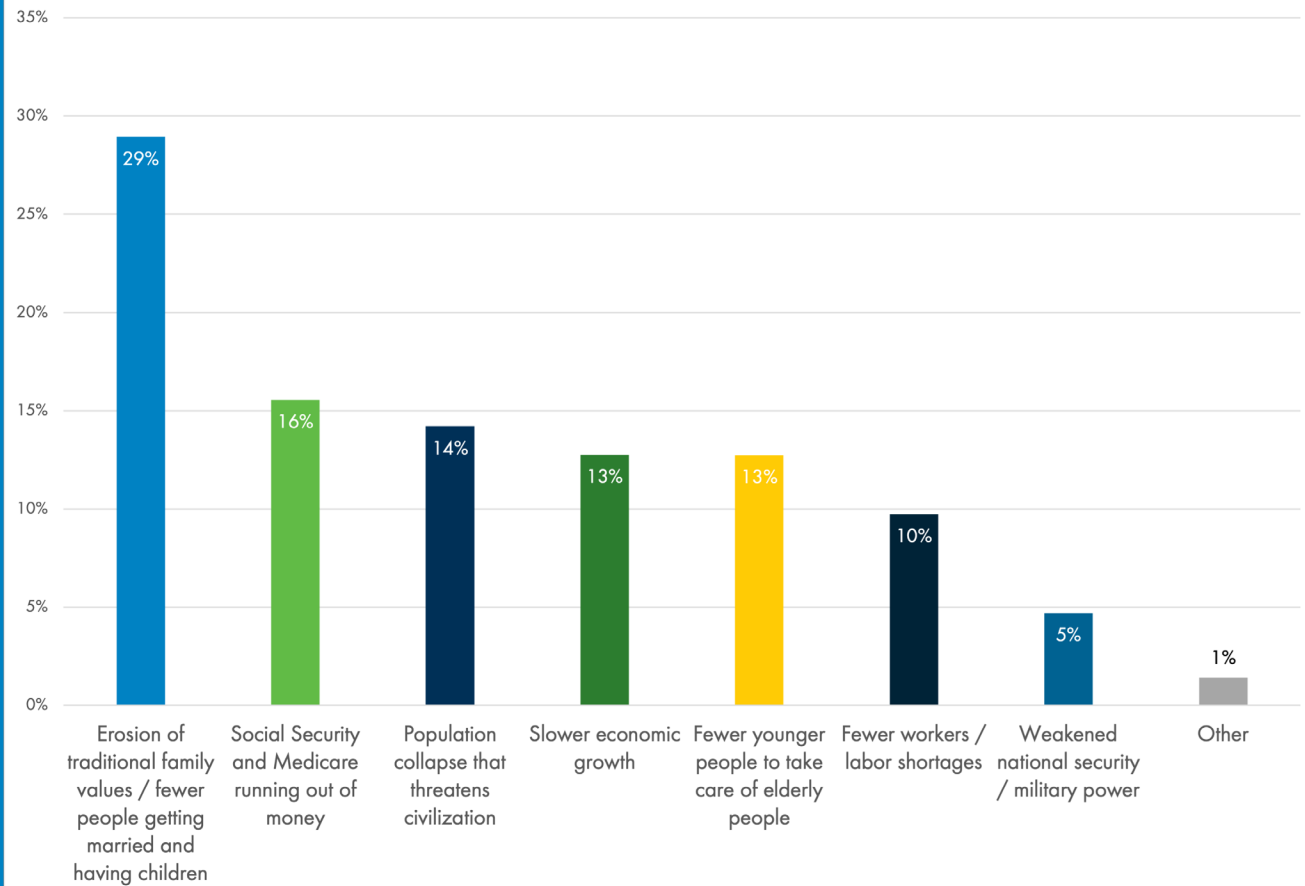


■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ A little concerned ■ Not at all concerned

Changing family values is the top concern related to low birthrates



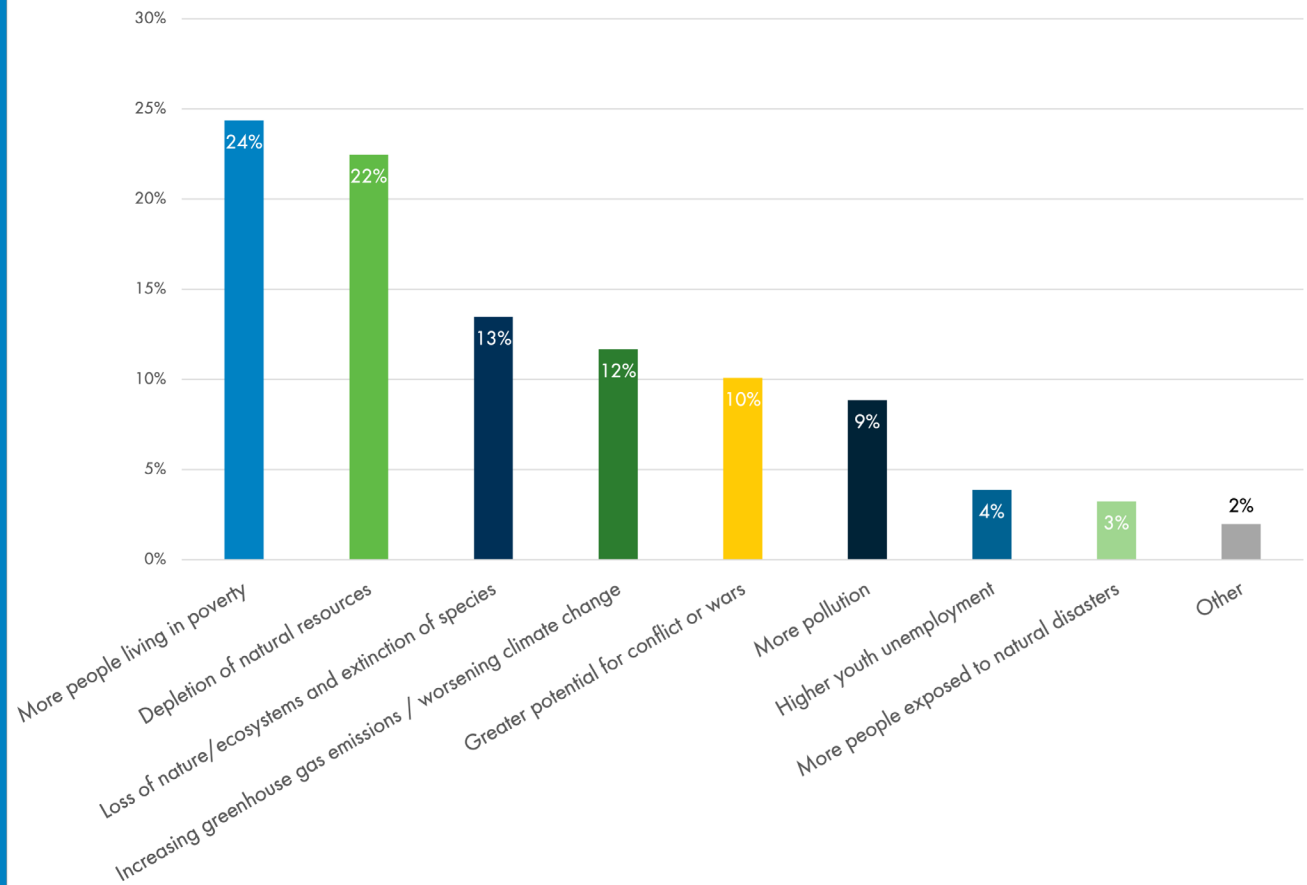
What are your top three concerns about declining birth rates?



More poverty
and resource
depletion are the
top concerns
related to global
population
growth



What are your top three concerns about global population growth?



What does this tell us?



- 1) The general public is ill-informed about population sizes and trends, which is likely being exacerbated by the barrage of media stories about declining fertility rates.
- 2) Not many are concerned. However, pop. growth concern is still higher than concern over declining birthrates.
- 3) Conservatives are more concerned about declining birth rates and changing family norms, while liberals are more concerned about global population growth and its environmental impacts.
- 4) There is clearly a need for organizations like Population Connection to continue to push back against “baby bust” misinformation, and to raise awareness of population trends and impacts.

Questions?



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