

## Questions submitted by attendees, with responses from Marian Starkey, VP for Communication.

1. Can you share accurate resources for examining national and global population numbers?
  - a. The UN Population Division is great for world and individual country population estimates and projections: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/world-population-prospects-2024>
  - b. The US Census Bureau is a source for more detailed demographic information about the United States: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/tables.html>
2. I want to build a positive argument for vasectomy as a birth control method. Do you have any strategies for this?
  - a. Our [March magazine issue](#) focused on vasectomy and its rise in popularity since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. Since we're not a direct health care provider, we aren't in a position to counsel patients on the benefits of vasectomy over long-acting or permanent contraceptive methods women use. We are, however, supportive of service providers who work to make this option more accessible for men and, perhaps most importantly, reassure men that vasectomy does not equal castration and does not impair sexual function. These two myths are especially widespread in developing regions where men don't already know someone who's had a successful vasectomy procedure and can speak to its effectiveness and lack of invasiveness. Many of the family planning outreach programs that the US no longer funds because of the block on foreign assistance educate men on the benefits of vasectomy and condom use. They will undoubtedly have to scale back or end their outreach work, if they haven't already.
3. I would like to know the response rate for the Lake Research survey, why they interviewed people over 50, and male/female answers.
  - a. The Lake Research Partners survey was only given to people who agreed to take it. People were called on the phone and given the survey verbally or emailed and given the survey in writing, digitally, but only those who had expressed interest were contacted.

We surveyed people over 50 because we wanted a retrospective look at the childbearing outcomes of people who've completed their reproductive years. The possibility of future births is always there when surveying people who are still of reproductive age, so we thought it would be interesting to hear from those who were definitely done having children.

You can see detailed results, including the male/female breakdown, by looking at the slides and banner tables on our website. Slides summarizing key findings are available [here](#), and banner tables for all questions and full survey results are available [here](#).

4. Based on data from other countries that have pursued this effort over the years (e.g., China), are pronatalist activities likely to have any impact on reversing declining fertility rates?

- a. Pronatalist initiatives haven't succeeded in raising birth rates in any country more than a couple tenths of a child (crude as that sounds), and even in those cases, demographers suspect that the increases are likely due to people having children they wanted to have anyway at an earlier point in time than they otherwise would have — meaning that their total completed family size likely won't be larger than it would have been without the incentives.

Helping people afford and comfortably raise children that they want is something that most of us support, but people's reasons for not having children go far beyond affordability. The opportunity costs of having children, especially for women, are such that even people who think they someday might want kids often end up having none or only one because they realize as they live their twenties and thirties that there are other things they'd rather do with their time and money.

Olivia Nater, one of the two speakers in the webinar, has written about the failure of pronatalist policies several times in our blog. Here are some examples:

[Conservative pronatalists' push for more births is all kinds of wrong](#)  
[The truth about "baby busts" and population decline](#)  
[How the spread of conservative pronatalism threatens women's hard-won rights](#)  
[Revealed: Elon Musk is spending millions on 'population collapse' research](#)

And here are our [recent media hits](#), many of them about pronatalism, and [dozens of letters to the editor](#) that Olivia has written to newspaper editors, many of them also about pronatalism.

5. What articles can you share with us to counter the argument that abortion reduces the population?

- a. Inasmuch as abortion prevents the eventual birth of (viable) embryos and fetuses, it does reduce population growth, but I can't think of a time when I've heard anyone say that abortion should be used for the purpose of achieving demographic targets (except when reading about coercive population control programs like the one China had for 35 years).

The Guttmacher Institute estimates that there are about [73 million](#) abortions each year worldwide. Abortion is a matter of reproductive freedom and agency, bodily autonomy, and health. It should never be used in a top-down way to force or encourage people to end pregnancies that they want to continue.

6. Would a chart with the relationship between birth rates and the quality of life in various countries be constructive? The chart would show the high birth rates in the "disaster countries" that people are trying to migrate out of, and the low birth rates of high-quality-of-life countries that people are trying to migrate to.

- a. It is indisputable that fertility rates are highest where gender equality scores are lowest, and you can read more about that on our [women's empowerment webpage](#), which includes data maps. It's a great idea to create a similar map and/or chart depicting the relationship between birth rates and the [Human Development Index](#) though — we'll do that!
7. Is Pop Connect doing any education on overconsumption in the US?
  - a. Our PopEd program covers overconsumption and consumption inequality in its [lesson plans](#), and our [higher education outreach](#) focuses heavily on consumption patterns and social and environmental justice. The same way that we recognize that consumption is an important factor in the I=PAT equation, we wish those who work primarily on consumption would recognize that population is an important factor as well.
8. As a senior, having nursing care and a labor workforce (e.g., landscaping, construction, restaurant staff) is important. Isn't the answer that our world population needs to be redispersed? But that gets into the issue of immigration. However, the issue is more illegal immigration, not controlled immigration. So, how does this get out to the general public? Seeing tens of thousands crossing the border in caravans and crime is very convincing visually and in the news.
  - a. There's no doubt that many industries, companies, and individuals rely on the labor of immigrants — many of them undocumented. Last year, there was an immigration bill that started out as bipartisan and was then [blocked](#) by Senate Republicans. It's hard to see how immigration decisions will be made in a way that suits Americans already living here and would-be immigrants who want to come. There's much hypocrisy too, which adds to the problem. Take, for example, [the story of this man](#) who is married to an undocumented immigrant but calls illegal immigrants "parasites."
9. Immigration is a component of national population changes. It also comes with the potential to change the racial balance of the population, and issues associated with immigration are destabilizing democracies across the globe. How do concerns over immigration influence people's feelings about domestic birth rates?
  - a. Some of the most vile political "leaders" oppose immigration and encourage "native" populations to have more babies because they want to maintain racial purity, whatever that means to them. Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán and Italy's Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, for example, have called on Hungarians and Italians, respectively, to have more babies in order to reduce dependence on immigrants to fill workforce gaps. The ["Great Replacement" theory](#) is a nasty one.
10. Isn't Elon mainly concerned about the decline of White babies and the decline in White civilization?
  - a. Echoing the answer in the question above, yes, indeed: Elon Musk completely ignores the fact that the world population is growing by a billion people every dozen years because they're not the people he thinks count. He talks about a population collapse and humanity going extinct as if the countries of the Global North contain the only humans on earth.