

Humanity Today and Demographics

(As of Dec. 10, 2008)

[This is chapter II from the draft of a much longer work, The U.S. and World Economic and Political Situation, which I was working on a few years ago. In this section I have now brought most of the statistics up to date. –Scott Harrison]

There are a number of demographic trends and changes in the world which are important to keep in mind. One of these is the still increasing population in most parts of the world. Another trend, ultimately contradictory to the first, consists of the rapidly falling fertility rates in a large part of the world, especially in the advanced capitalist countries, but also in China and much of the “Third World”.

2.1 Fertility Rates and Population

Fertility rates can be measured in various different ways, but one important method is known as the “Total Fertility Rate” (or TFR), which is the average number of children which are expected to be born to a woman in a given population, over the course of her lifetime and assuming she experiences the *current* age-specific fertility rates throughout her life.¹ Since there are almost the same number of women as men in the world, each woman must have on average two children to maintain the population at a steady level. (Actually, a bit higher than that because some children do not live to adulthood: the “replacement level” TFR is really about 2.1.)

However, it is possible for the population to continue growing for a while even if the TFR drops below 2.1. The reason for this is that a previous population surge may have generated a temporary abnormally large number of women of child-bearing age. And this is exactly the situation that much of the world is now in. In addition to this, the population of a given country or region may change due to immigration or emigration, changes in life expectancy, and so forth. Thus, despite having a TFR below 2.1, the population may grow if people are living longer due to health advances, or if there is massive immigration into the country. And despite having a TFR above 2.1, the population may decline during pandemics, wars or periods of mass emigration.

Many social and cultural factors may affect the fertility rate, including the availability of birth control methods; religion and other ideologies; whether people live in rural areas (where children have traditionally been needed to help with agricultural work) or in urban areas; whether women are working at jobs outside the home; the degree of equality of rights for women; the prevailing level of education among women; and the general health of the economy. Birth rates dropped significantly in the advanced capitalist countries during the Great Depression of the 1930s, for example, and dropped even more precipitously in Russia during the economic collapse after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most of the social changes at work in the

world today, including the increasingly shaky world economy, are serving (and will continue to serve) to further drive down fertility rates.

For the world as a whole the fertility rate has already fallen from about 5 children per woman a half century ago, to about half of that (2.55) in the 2005-2010 period.² The current rapid decline in TFRs throughout most of the world is somewhat surprising for those of us who are older, and who were indoctrinated to expect that the world population would continue growing exponentially until the world ran out of resources and there would then be a tremendous population crash. The Malthusian image presented to us was that of bacteria growing in a Petri dish which rapidly expands until almost all the food is gone, and then almost completely dies out.

To see just how low the fertility rate has already fallen in many specific countries, consider the following table:

Table 2.1.1: Current Fertility Rates for Selected Countries
(With some key rows highlighted)

Country	TFR – From UN 2006 Report ³	TFR – From CIA Factbook 2008 ⁴
Kenya	4.96	4.70
Philippines	3.23	3.32
India	2.81	2.73
World as a whole	2.55	2.61
Brazil	2.25	2.22
Mexico	2.21	2.37
Indonesia	2.18	2.34
United States	2.05	2.10
France	1.89	1.98
Australia	1.79	1.78
China (mainland)	1.73	1.77
United Kingdom	1.82	1.66
Canada	1.53	1.57
Europe/European Union	1.45	1.50
Portugal	1.46	1.49
Spain	1.41	1.30
Germany	1.36	1.41
Italy	1.38	1.30
Russia	1.34	1.40
Japan	1.27	1.22
Poland	1.23	1.27
Czech Republic	1.24	1.23
Ukraine	1.22	1.25
South Korea	1.21	1.20
Singapore	1.26	1.08
Hong Kong	0.97	1.00

Note that fertility in the United States is at or just below the steady population replacement level of 2.1 and all the countries below the U.S. in the chart (and many more not listed—about 100 in all) have a TFR lower than that, going all the way down to just 0.97 (or 1.00) in Hong Kong. Even mainland China is way below the replacement level fertility rate. Moreover, as we

will see, many countries—especially in Europe—are already losing population because of this. Note also the low and falling fertility rates even in many predominantly Catholic countries such as Poland, Italy, Spain and Brazil.

Table 2.1.2: World Fertility Trends (According to the UN)⁵

(Total fertility [children per woman] during different periods, including projections for the future. The most plausible projection is shaded.)

Major Area	1970-1975	2000-2005	2045-2050		
			Low	Medium	High
World	4.47	2.55	1.54	2.02	2.51
More developed regions	2.13	1.60	1.29	1.79	2.28
Less developed regions	5.41	2.75	1.57	2.05	2.54
Least developed countries ⁶	6.61	4.63	2.02	2.50	2.99
Other less developed countries	5.25	2.45	1.42	1.91	2.41
Africa	6.72	4.67	1.97	2.46	2.95
Asia	5.04	2.34	1.40	1.90	2.39
Europe	2.16	1.45	1.26	1.76	2.26
Latin America & Caribbean	5.04	2.37	1.36	1.86	2.36
Northern America	2.01	2.00	1.35	1.85	2.35
Oceania	3.23	2.30	1.43	1.93	2.43

It is clear that fertility rates are falling virtually everywhere, and in Europe and parts of Asia they are already amazingly low. But which of the three projections for the 2045-2050 time period is most apt to be correct? After looking into this a bit, I've come to the conclusion that the lowest of the three projections is by far the most likely (though even it may overstate things somewhat!). The medium and high projections are based on quite dubious assumptions, such as that TFRs will eventually begin to rise even though *no reasons* are given for this hypothesized turnaround.⁷ There is, apparently, some residual ideological disbelief—even among UN demographers—that fertility rates can fall so low and remain there over a long period of time. But as long as the factors which have led to this fall remain in place, fertility rates will remain very low; and there is no reason to believe that these factors are going to disappear anytime soon, or that strong new factors working in the opposite direction will soon arise. Even serious and expensive efforts by governments to raise fertility rates significantly seem very unlikely to succeed.⁸

Furthermore, there is actually one powerful new force currently developing which I predict will *fortify* the trend toward lower fertility over the next several decades, and that is the huge intensification of the long-developing world capitalist economic crisis even ultimately into the form of a new depression. (The reasons for thinking that a new depression will occur will be discussed in later chapters.) As I mentioned earlier, depressions and other prolonged economic collapses, have already historically demonstrated that they lead to drastically falling fertility rates. And no doubt the first, quite mild, stage of the current economic crisis (which began around 1973 and is now in 2008 rapidly worsening) has already been a factor in lowering the fertility rate, especially in Europe and Japan.

Given, then, that fertility rates around the world have fallen greatly, are continuing to fall, and have already reached quite low levels in the advanced capitalist countries (other than the U.S.), what does this mean for population levels? As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is quite possible for the population to continue growing in a country for a while even

if its fertility rate has dropped below the “replacement level” of 2.1. This is what is still happening in many parts of the world, including China. But over the next several decades China and the other countries in this situation will reach a peak population level, and then begin to *decline* in population. The same thing will occur for the world as a whole.

The world population as of July 2007 was 6.7 billion people. Under the UN’s “medium” projection the world population will peak at just over 9 billion a little after the year 2050 and then begin to fall. But using what I consider to be the much more plausible “low” projection, the world population will peak at just under 8 billion around the year 2040, and fall afterwards. And given the rapidly intensifying world economic crisis, I would not be at all surprised to see the world population peak even before that, and at even a lower peak level. The following table shows the world and regional populations as of 1950, 1975 and 2007, and projections for 2050:

Table 2.1.3: Population of the World and Regions at Various Times⁹
(The most plausible projection for 2050 is shaded.)

Major Area	Population (millions)			Population in 2050 (millions)		
	1950	1975	2007	Low	Medium	High
World	2,535	4,076	6,671	7,792	9,191	10,756
More developed regions	814	1,048	1,223	1,065	1,245	1,451
Less developed regions	1,722	3,028	5,448	6,727	7,946	9,306
Least developed countries ¹⁰	200	358	804	1,496	1,742	2,002
Other less developed countries	1,521	2,670	4,644	5,231	6,204	7,304
Africa	224	416	965	1,718	1,998	2,302
Asia	1,411	2,394	4,030	4,444	5,266	6,189
Europe	548	676	731	566	664	777
Latin America and the Caribbean	168	325	572	641	769	914
Northern America	172	243	339	382	445	517
Oceania	13	21	34	42	49	56

There are a couple things in particular to take note of in the above table. First, on the most plausible “low variant” projection for 2050, the population of the less developed countries will increase by 1.279 billion people while the population of the more developed countries will *fall* by 158 million people, or almost 13%. Even with the “medium variant” projection virtually all of the growth in world population will take place in the less developed countries and the population of 46 different countries or areas will *decline* in the period from now until 2050.¹¹ This is one of a number of factors that suggests that the revolutionary political importance of the “Third World” will continue to increase.

Second, note that according to the “low variant” projection the population of Europe in particular will fall by 165 million (almost 23%). Even according to the “medium” projection, Europe’s population will fall by 67 million people (about 9%). This is one of several factors that strongly indicates that Europe will not be able to successfully challenge the U.S. imperialists for “world leadership” (i.e., domination) over the next half century despite the weakening economic situation of the U.S. (even relative to Europe which is also weakening).

Summing up then, we can say that the world population is continuing to grow, though the rate of growth is slowing down. The brakes are already on. It will continue to grow for a few more decades, but almost all of that growth will occur in the less developed countries. And

finally, many advanced capitalist countries, including Japan and much of Europe will actually lose a substantial portion of their population in the coming decades.

One thing to emphasize here, however, is that the slowing growth of the world population (and its eventual peaking and turn toward negative growth) does not in any way mean that the current environmental crisis is not real, severe, and rapidly intensifying! Global warming, for example, is a real and serious phenomenon which is already starting to generate havoc and which will continue to do so over the next century and probably beyond.

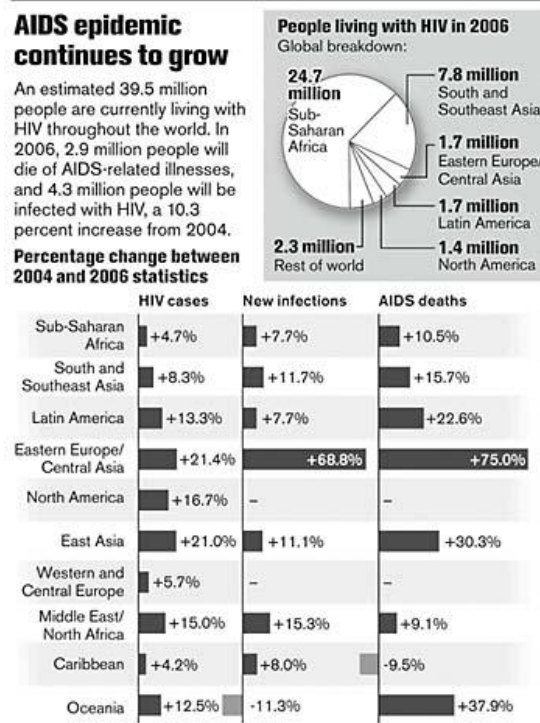
However, the Malthusian alarm which is still widespread in liberal circles about how runaway population growth is supposedly leading to the utter destruction of the environment is grossly exaggerated. The fundamental problems humanity faces today, whether environmental, economic or political, are not fundamentally due to any excessive human population growth, but rather to the profit system, to capitalist-imperialism and its rapacious destruction of the world without regard for what this means for the lives of the people. Yes, the world population surge of the 20th century, which though now rapidly tapering off still continues a bit into the 21st century, has somewhat aggravated the environmental problems in particular. But the rapidly falling fertility rates everywhere in the world will very soon bring that secondary aspect of the social problems of the current era under full control. The solution to that very secondary problem is already in place. Consequently the place to focus our efforts today is on changing the present social system which is incapable of respecting the real interests of the people, such as their basic interests in having a means to live, or in even having a clean and healthful world in which to live.

2.2 The HIV/AIDS Pandemic and Life Expectancies

While other pandemics are certainly possible and frequently predicted (such as from “bird flu”), there is one actual major pandemic that has been going on for a quarter century and which is still spreading and getting worse; and that is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The UN sums up the situation as follows:

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to expand. The number of countries with a significant number of infected people according to the *2006 Revision* is 62, up from 60 in the *2004 Revision* and 53 in the *2002 Revision*. Although HIV prevalence in some countries has been revised downward since 2004 on the basis of newly available nationally representative data, the toll of the disease continues to be high and is expected to remain so, despite projected reductions in the prevalence of HIV infection.¹²

Chart 2.2.1: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic Situation as of Dec. 2006¹³



Source: UNAIDS/WHO 2006 AIDS Epidemic Update Associated Press

Global life expectancy at birth was just 47 years in 1950-55, and rose to 67 years in 2005-10. The UN projects it to reach 75 years by 2050. In the advanced capitalist countries life expectancy is projected to rise from 76 years at present to 82 by 2050. However, in the least developed countries life expectancy today is only 55 years. In many cases this is partly due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.¹⁴ Southern Africa is especially harshly affected by this disease:

In Southern Africa, the region with the highest prevalence of the disease, life expectancy has fallen from 62 years in 1990-1995 to 49 years in 2005-2010 and is not expected to regain the level it had in the early 1990s before 2045.¹⁵

The 2004 UN *World Population Report* even projected that the life expectancy in Southern Africa might fall further to 43 years during the next decade before a slow recovery starts.

The failure of the advanced capitalist countries, starting with the Reagan administration in the U.S., to rapidly develop a crash program to stop the spread of AIDS and to conquer this disease has already been a major contributing cause in the death of millions of people. This is yet another of the continuing series of horrible crimes against humanity by the capitalist-imperialist system.

2.3 Aging of the World's Population

A corollary to the slowing rate of growth of the population in most countries, the actual diminishing population already in some countries, and improved health care in most countries, is that the population is “aging”. That is, the average and median ages of the population are increasing almost everywhere.

In the more developed regions, 20 per cent of the population is already aged 60 years or over and that proportion is projected to reach 33 per cent in 2050. In developed countries as a whole, the number of older persons (persons aged 60 or over) has already surpassed the number of children (persons under age 15) and by 2050 the number of older persons in developed countries is expected to be more than double the number of children.

Population ageing is less advanced in developing countries. Nevertheless, the populations of a majority of them are posed to enter a period of rapid population ageing. In developing countries as a whole, just 8 per cent of the population is today aged 60 years or over but by 2050, 20 per cent of their population is expected to be in that age range.

Globally, the number of persons aged 60 years or over is expected nearly to triple, increasing from 673 million in 2005 to 2 billion by 2050.

A feature of ageing populations is that the number of older persons increases faster the higher the age range considered. Thus, whereas the number of persons aged 60 or over is expected to triple, that of persons aged 80 or over (the oldest-old) is projected to increase nearly five-fold, from 88 million in 2005 to 402 million in 2050. Today, about half of the oldest-old live in developing countries but that share is expected to reach 71 per cent in 2050.¹⁶

In 2005 only 13 countries had a median age above 40 years. (The median is the point where 50% of the total are older and 50% are younger than that value.) However, by 2050 it is expected that 93 countries, including 48 of the less developed countries, will have a median age above 40.¹⁷ “Population aging, which is becoming a pervasive reality in developed countries, is also inevitable in the developing world and will occur faster in developing countries.”¹⁸

The direct effect of aging populations both in the U.S. and in most parts of the world is probably a negative thing for the spread of revolutionary ideology (since youth tends to be the most open to new and radical ideas). However, aging populations are also a very negative factor for capitalist economies, and will likely lead to numerous intensified social problems. Thus, because of this indirect effect, aging populations will probably have a net destabilizing result overall.

2.4 Urbanization of the World

Another very important demographic trend in the world today is the already extensive and rapidly increasing urbanization of the world. And this is taking place not only in the advanced capitalist or imperialist countries, but also in the Third World.

The rural population of most advanced capitalist countries peaked around 1950 and declined thereafter. The rural population of Third World countries is expected to peak around 2025 and then begin a similar decline.¹⁹ Even at the present time, however, most of the population increase in Third World countries either occurs in or migrates to the cities. In fact, over the next quarter century urban areas are predicted to grow at twice the rate of the world as a whole.²⁰

According to UN demographers, in 1950 only 29% of the world's population lived in cities. As of 2005 the world's urban population was 48.7% and the figure is expected to top 50% by 2008. The UN predicts that 60% of the global population, about 4.9 billion people, will live in cities by 2030.²¹ They add:

In 2005, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania were highly urbanized with more than 70 per cent of their total population living in cities. Africa and Asia were the least urbanized major areas in the world. By 2030, however, 50 per cent or more of the population of Africa and Asia is projected to be living in a city.²²

While the United States and Canada together are 80.7% urban (as of 2005), and Great Britain is almost 90% urban, the fastest *rates* of urbanization are now in Africa and Asia. Also as of 2005, China is more than 40% urban, and India is about 29%.²³ This means that *half a billion* Chinese now live in cities, as do nearly a third of a *billion* Indians.

Over the period 1950-2005 the urban population of Nigeria grew from 11.6% to 48.2%, that of Cameroon from 9.3% to 54.6%, of South Korea from 21.4% to 80.8%, and of Mexico from 42.7% to 76%.²⁴ And the percentages keep growing all the time.

Moreover, whereas in 1950 there were only two “mega-cities” with 10 million or more inhabitants, by 2005 there were 20. The largest metropolitan area is Tokyo with 35 million inhabitants, followed by Mexico City and New York-Newark (each with 19 million), and São Paulo (with 18 million). There will be two more such mega-cities in the next 10 years, and 15 of the 22 will be in the Third World.²⁵

These facts have profound implications for revolutionary strategy in the Third World. While the traditional Maoist strategy of people's war and the countryside “surrounding the cities” still basically worked in a very backward and rural country like Nepal and might perhaps still work in the rural parts of India and some other countries, this rural and peasant-based strategy seems less and less appropriate in most parts of the Third World.

Capitalism—being the horrible system for the masses that it is—seems to be providing another revolutionary venue, however. The massive urban populations around the world are by no means comfortable, happy and content. As of 2001 about 924 million people were living in slums around the world, which was about 31.6% of the world's urban population that year and 43% of the urban population when just considering Third World countries alone. During the 1990s, when the world's economy was mostly expanding, the number of slum dwellers still grew by 36%. A UN study, “The Challenge of Slums”, projected that the number of slum dwellers in the world could reach 2 billion by the year 2030.²⁶ And that is without even factoring in the advent of another world economic depression. The future of humanity may depend on our global movement's ability to effectively bring revolutionary ideas to the rapidly expanding slums of the world.

2.5 Immigration

Immigration, especially from the Third World to the advanced capitalist countries, is already a very important aspect of world demographics, and will likely become even more important in the future. It is interesting to note that the U.S. just passed the 300 million population mark in

October 2006 and, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, of the 100 million people who have been added since 1967, 55% were immigrants or their U.S.-born offspring.²⁷

In the period from 2005 to 2050 the United Nations demographers expect that the net number of migrants from the Third World to the advanced capitalist countries will be around 98 million people, or an average of 2.2 million per year.²⁸ These demographers also expect that this level of immigration “will largely offset” the loss of population in the advanced capitalist countries, due to falling fertility levels. However, this expectation is based on their “middle projection” of fertility rates in the “developed” countries. On the much more plausible “low projection”, this level of immigration will not even come close to offsetting the population loss in the advanced capitalist countries. Moreover, some advanced capitalist countries are much more hostile to immigration than others, which means that the population drop in countries such as Japan cannot possibly be offset by immigration.

The situation in the United States, however, is quite a bit different. Despite the ambivalent attitudes of the American ruling class (and therefore population), in recent decades the U.S. has accepted far more immigrants than any other country. This, in fact, is one of the major reasons that the U.S. economy has performed qualitatively better than Europe and Japan over the past 15 or 20 years. (Among other things, more people mean more consumers, more customers.) The current expectation is that this history of relatively high immigration into the U.S. will continue in the future (though a deep economic decline may slow it down substantially). The UN projections are as follows:

In terms of annual averages for the period 2005-2050, the major net receivers of international migrants are projected to be the United States (1.1 million annually), Germany (202,000), Canada (200,000), the United Kingdom (130,000), Italy (120,000) and Australia (100,000). The major countries of net emigration are projected to be China (-327,000 annually), Mexico (-293,000), India (-241,000), the Philippines (-180,000), Indonesia (-164,000), Pakistan (-154,000) and the Ukraine (-100,000).²⁹

Of course the U.S. is so rich (and rich in large part off the wealth it extracts from the rest of the world) that it should accept vastly more immigrants than it does. It should certainly also legalize the millions of “illegal” immigrants already here. But the current trend seems to be in the other direction. As the mildly pro-immigrant section of the ruling class, with George W. Bush as its inconsistent figurehead, loses support (mostly because of its disastrous adventure in Iraq) the anti-immigrant section and forces are now gaining strength in both the Republican and Democratic parties. In October 2006 the majority of the Democrats in the U.S. Senate, including “liberal” Hillary Clinton, the frontrunner for the 2008 Democratic Party presidential nomination, voted for the \$6 billion, 700-mile high tech fence along the U.S.-Mexico border.³⁰

There will probably continue to be small shifts of opinion, in one direction or the other, with regard to “illegal” immigration in the U.S. over the next few years. But as the U.S. and world economy makes a further qualitative change for the worse the right-wing anti-immigrant attitudes will likely harden for a prolonged period. Immigration and immigrant rights will, however, be an important area of mass struggle both in the U.S. and around the world, for a long time to come.

2.6 Marriage and Families

Except for the small Caribbean island of Aruba, the United States has the highest divorce rate of any country in the world.³¹ Still, the divorce rate in many advanced capitalist countries—including the U.S.—is declining for a very interesting reason: more and more people are just living together and not getting married in the first place!

According to the 2005 report of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University the U.S. divorce rate is now 17.7 per 1,000 married women, down from 22.6 in 1980. A newspaper summary of this report goes on to say:

The marriage rate is also on a steady decline: a 50% drop since 1970 from 76.5 per 1,000 unmarried women to 39.9, says the report, whose calculations are based on an internationally used measurement.

“Cohabitation is here to stay,” says David Popenoe, a Rutgers sociology professor and report co-author. “I don’t think it’s good news, especially for children,” he says. “As society shifts from marriage to cohabitation—which is what’s happening—you have an increase in family instability.”

Cohabiting couples have twice the breakup rate of married couples, the report’s authors say. And in the USA, 40% bring kids into these often-shaky live-in relationships.³²

The other co-author of the report, social historian Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, remarks that “It’s a pretty short period of time for that change (cohabitation) to have occurred and to have taken hold in the way it has.” The summary continues:

In the USA, 8.1% of coupled households are made up of unmarried, heterosexual partners. Although many European countries have higher cohabitation rates, divorce rates in those countries are lower, and more children grow up with both biological parents, even though the parents may not be married, Popenoe says.

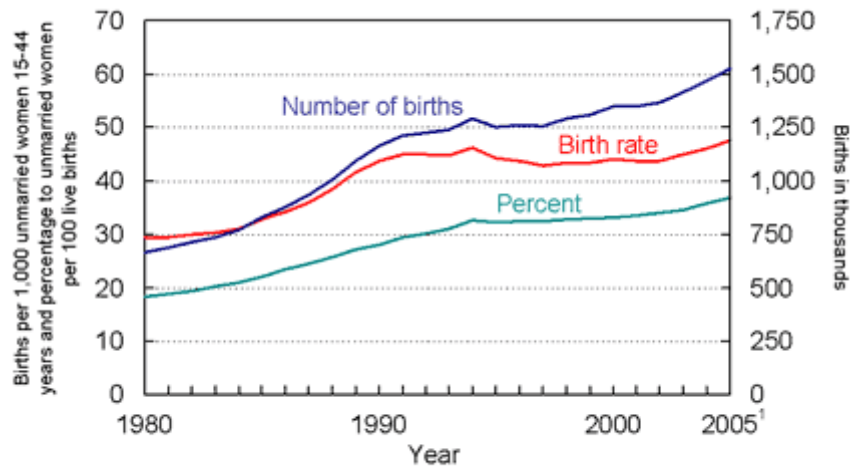
The USA has the lowest percentage among Western nations of children who grow up with both biological parents, 63%, the report says.

“The United States has the weakest families in the Western world because we have the highest divorce rate and the highest rate of solo parenting,” Popenoe says.³³

At one time only married people had children, at least intentionally! However, this is rapidly changing in the U.S. and even faster in Europe. In 2005 the number of “out-of-wedlock” births in the U.S. reached an all-time high of 36.8% of all births. Moreover, most of these births did not occur to teenage women, as was once the case. Instead it is women in their 20s who show the most dramatic increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births. This is a result of the increasing tendency of people to put off marriage, or to simply live together without getting married. In fact, the percentage of unwed mothers increased in all age groups in 2005 *except* for ages 10 to 17!³⁴

Capitalism has thus had a complex impact on women and families. Its economic forces have led (and even forced) more and more women to get jobs. With those jobs has gradually come—through considerable struggle!—somewhat more equality and independence for women. This, of course is a good thing, but it would be a *much better thing* if it did not mean negative results for families and children, as it does under the present socio-economic system.

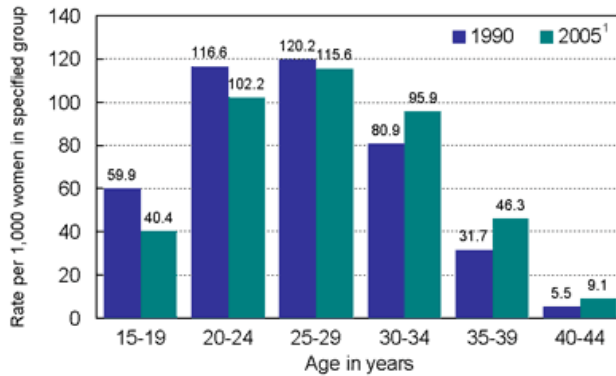
Chart 2.6.1: U.S. Births, Birthrate and Percent of Unmarried Mothers 1980-2005³⁵



¹ Based on preliminary data.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System

Note in the following chart that younger women are having fewer children, and older women are having more children.

Chart 2.6.2: U.S. Birth Rates by Age of Mother 1990 and 2005³⁶



¹ Based on preliminary data.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System

Notes

¹ The Total Fertility Rate is arrived at by summing the various age-specific fertility rates for women in that population at a given time. It is therefore a hypothetical value overall, but one which has been found to be very useful to understand current fertility trends. It seems to me, however, that in a period of rapidly changing fertility rates—and especially if there is a cultural shift between women of different generations—that the TFR may tend towards systematic bias. At present, for example, we have a fairly rapid worldwide drop in TFR rates, and therefore the *actual* drop in fertility is, if anything, probably being understated.

There is a good introductory discussion of the TFR and how it is determined on the Wikipedia site at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Total_Fertility_Rate

² *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, (NY: United Nations, 2007), Table II.1, p. 9. This important document is available online at: http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/WPP2006_Highlights_rev.pdf

³ Data from *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, “Table A.15, pp. 74-78. Total fertility, by country, for selected periods (median variant)”, using the column for the 2005-2010 period. For reasons explained in the text, the real TFRs are probably lower than the “median variant” figures given here. The figure for Europe as a whole (not explicitly the European Union) comes from “Table II.1. Estimated and Projected Total fertility for the World...”, p. 9.

⁴ Data in this column from *The World Factbook* (2008) published online by the CIA at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2127rank.html> (as of Dec. 10, 2008). Although the CIA’s figures are supposed to be for 2008 I do not know if they are actually any more accurate or up-to-date than the UN figures. The data for Europe is explicitly for the European Union only.

⁵ Data in this table taken from *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, “Table II.1. Estimated and Projected Total fertility for the World, the Major Development Groups and Major Areas...”, p. 9.

⁶ The 50 “least developed” countries of the world in UN statistics are: Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar [Burma], Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.

⁷ The basic assumption of the UN Population Division is: “At the world level, the medium variant projects total fertility to be 2.02 children per woman in 2045-2050 (table II.1), the result of 1.79 children per woman in the more developed regions and 2.05 children per woman in the less developed regions.” [*World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, p. 10.] But what *basis* do they have for making this assumption? None whatsoever except for their ideological bias that lower fertility rates simply cannot fall lower than that and remain there.

The “high variant” is even more ridiculous, assuming as it does (for no good reason) that the fertility rate in developed countries will eventually converge to 2.28, and in less developed countries to 2.54. And the “low variant” is also based on the arbitrary assumptions that fertility rates in developed countries will eventually converge to 1.29 and in less developed countries to 1.57. The low projection is the most reasonable not because it is less arbitrary, but because it conforms more closely to what we actually see happening in the world. It is actually quite possible that the fertility rate will continue sinking for a long while in most countries and then stay very low everywhere, but without “converging” on any particular value. That is, it may well vary from country to country and from time to time within particular countries, without ever growing very large again—at least during the capitalist era.

⁸ Some argue that governments and peoples will become alarmed at the low fertility rates once populations start to rapidly fall, and will provide massive political (ideological and economic) incentives to induce women to have more children “for the good of the nation” and the like. No doubt they will attempt to do so, and in a number of countries they have already been trying. However, the evidence so far suggests that such political programs are not likely to be very successful. The reactionary writer Ben J. Wattenberg discusses this topic in his book *Fewer: How the New Demography of Depopulation Will Shape Our Future*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), and reluctantly comes to this same conclusion. The plain fact is that capitalist economic forces which lead women to have fewer and fewer children are far more powerful than ideological forces working in the opposite direction. We see this, for example, in the failure of the Catholic religion to prevent low and falling fertility rates in Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and many other predominantly Catholic countries despite the ranting of all the priests and the Pope himself.

Wattenberg also points out that economic incentives which are actually capable of significantly raising low fertility rates are not likely to be employed (at least very widely) because of the enormous cost before they start to become effective. He describes how the already very expensive “pro-natalist” policies attempted in many European countries have not stopped their TFRs from falling drastically (see pp. 106-8).

⁹ Data from *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, “Table I.1. Population of the World, Major Development Groups and Major Areas...”, p. 1.

¹⁰ See note 6 for a list of the 50 “Least developed” countries referenced by UN statistics.

¹¹ *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, p. x.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. viii.

¹³ Associated Press graphic which appeared along with the article by Sabin Russell, “HIV in young Africans starting to show decline: Global numbers continue to grow, says U.N. group”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 22, 2006.

¹⁴ *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, p. xi.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. x. (Points 4, 5 & 6.)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, points 11 & 12.

¹⁸ *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision*, p. ix. The youngest populations, however, will continue to be in the least developed countries. According to the *WPP: 2006 Revision* (p. xi, point 13), even in 2050 the median age in 8 countries (Afghanistan and 7 in Africa) is expected to be equal to or less than 24 years!

¹⁹ J. E. Cohen, “Human Population: The Next Half Century”, *Science*, 2003, 302: 14, 1172.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*, available online at: <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WUP2005/2005wup.htm> See also “Fact Sheet 1” there.

²² *Ibid.*, “Fact Sheet 3”.

²³ *Ibid.* and also “Table A.2”

²⁴ Ibid., “Table A.2”

²⁵ Ibid., “Fact Sheet 7”.

²⁶ News report from the Kyodo News Service, Oct. 7, 2003, reporting on the 2003 report “The Challenge of Slums”, by the UN Human Settlements Program.

²⁷ This item from the *Chicago Tribune* has been re-quoted from *The Week* magazine, Nov. 3, 2006, p. 16.

²⁸ *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision*, p. ix.

²⁹ *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision*, p. ix.

³⁰ The Senate passed the 700-mile high tech border fence bill by a vote of 80 to 19, with a majority of Democrats including Hillary Clinton voting for it. Bush signed the bill on Oct. 26, 2006. Critics say the whole 700 miles will cost \$6 billion, while defenders say that it will “only” cost \$2.2 billion. (So far Congress has only appropriated about \$1 billion.) Clinton made her reactionary position known long before. See “Clinton backs border ‘smart fence’”, *Newsday*, April 24, 2006, online at: <http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/nation/ny-usimmi244715236apr24.0.6166268.story>

³¹ *The Economist Pocket World in Figures: 2007 Edition* (2006), p. 89. Sweden, a country often lambasted for its libertine ways in the U.S. press, has a divorce rate of less than half that of the U.S.!

³² “Divorce declining, but so is marriage”, by Sharon Jayson, *USA Today*, July 18, 2005. Online at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-07-18-cohabit-divorce_x.htm The original Rutgers University report is entitled *The State of our Unions 2005*.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “Births to unwed mothers hit record high in U.S.”, AP report by Mike Stobbe, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 22, 2006.

³⁵ Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Health Statistics, at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestat/prelimbirths05/prelimbirths05.htm.pdf>, Figure 3. (Accessed Dec. 13, 2006).

³⁶ Ibid., Figure 1.