

What Is Making Population Numbers Crash?  
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The UN Population Agency reports that Europe's fertility rate may have plummeted to the point of no return. Certain countries (Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece) have fertility rates in the single digits that by the end of this century could spell doom. This applies to Japan as well, and threatens the modern and developed parts of China and India. In 1980, China's median age was 22; today it is 34.5. Not enough young to support the old. The same is happening in India's modernizing cities.

Remember the panic about population explosion threatening widespread famine and disaster if not stopped? Now demographers are alarmed at populations crashing at such speed that there may be no reversing the trend.

Two sets of numbers about the Muslim world are in dispute: that they are reproducing at such a rate that they will overwhelm Europe or that Muslims are now almost universally in the most rapid population decline seen since the fall of Rome or the Dark Ages.

I would normally doubt the UN's figures on the Muslim world; they get these numbers from host governments, not from real census taking. Which Muslim countries have a reliable census (aside from Turkey and Iran)? Traditional people are very suspicious of government agents asking personal questions, particularly about who lives inside walled compounds where women are sequestered and not talked about.

However, when certain Muslim governments themselves express alarm and sometimes outrage over their plummeting birth rate (both Turkish and Iranian presidents have bitterly complained about this, blaming this free-fall on outside conspiracies), I do believe it. I suspect that all these governments know the truth because they keep track of water consumption and food supplies.

That the numbers are coming down is undeniable. But what are the reasons for this phenomenon? The most obvious reason is modernization. When women, for the first time in human history, are permitted choice over their fertility, they choose not to have the seven children that their hapless mothers had. Even a 7th grade education for a girl will cut her lifetime fertility rate in half. In those parts of the world where girls have no choices (Central Africa, Afghanistan, tribal Pakistan, and northern India), the fertility rates, child mortality rates, and maternal death rates are what they have been for millennia—very bad indeed.

Despite being literate and modern, despair has created the population plummet in every country that formerly lived under Communism or Fascism (Russia, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Italy, and Greece.) What role has despair on declining to reproduce? We see that in certain formerly hidden tribes in the Amazon jungles, when exposed to western culture, the suicide rate explodes and the fertility rate dwindles.

David Goldberg, author of *How Civilizations Die*, has some devastating demographics to make his case. He also addresses Europe's apparent population crash as well, but notes that the flood of Muslims who have poured into Europe have plummeting fertility rates as well. Yasser Arafat had once boasted about the Arab secret weapon: "the wombs of our women." For the Palestinians, this was true because for a half century, the UN kept Palestinian refugee camps open, unlike other refugee camps, and paid the inmates by the head. Their numbers exploded, but so did their despair. Young Palestinians, with little hope for a decent future, are opting out of the fertility game.

It is possible that authoritarian governments will try to forbid two of the causes for decline: female literacy and availability of contraceptives. Ayatollah Khomeini tried that once—but after he died, family planning (and literacy) revived.

Although alarmists such as Goldberg see a death wish in people who have lost their cultures to modernization, this is not necessarily so. The really educated will figure out how to live in a world where rapid population growth is no longer necessary. Europe could change their downward trend at any point, sustaining themselves at a smaller level. Countries such as Denmark and Norway already do this. More traditional cultures may not be as lucky.

670 words

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