

NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH

Press Release

For immediate release

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New NPG Report: The Rise in Feminism and Its Impact on Population Growth Birthrates and Female Empowerment Tied Together

Alexandria, VA (March 21, 2019) – The release of a new Forum Paper from Negative Population Growth celebrates 2019’s Women’s History Month with a report on the link between women’s economic gains and America’s birthrate.

The paper, [Controlling Population in A Strong Economy: Is Feminism The Answer?](#), presented by NPG researcher Edwin S. Rubenstein, looks at U.S. birth statistics during tumultuous times in America’s history – from women getting the right to vote, to gaining greater access to the work force, through the arrival of “the pill,” and right up to the impact of the most recent recession.

Rubenstein highlights the long-standing correlation between economic growth and population growth throughout the paper and calls into question whether the dynamics of the past will carry forward into the future.

He states: “In recent years, however, the link between population and economic growth has gone missing. The Great Recession – the worst economic decline since the 1930s – ended in 2009. Despite a long and increasingly strong economic recovery, marked by record low unemployment and strong wage gains, births and fertility rates have continued to fall.”

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the fertility rate fell to 60.3 births per 1,000 women of child bearing age in 2017, down 4% from 2016. Rubenstein notes that: “It was the largest annual decline since 2010, when families were still reeling from the effects of the Great Recession. The number of births also declined for the third straight year, hitting the lowest level since 1987.”

Looking at those numbers, Kenneth M. Johnson, a demographer at the University of New Hampshire, is quoted as saying: “Every year I look at data and expect it will be the year that birthrates start to tick up, and every year we hit another all-time low. It’s one of the big demographic mysteries of recent times.” Rubenstein looks at recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics that show declining birth rates by women ages 25 to 35 between 2007 and 2017 and comes to “two inescapable conclusions:”

First: “U.S. women increasingly minimize the financial distress caused by children by postponing births to

their late thirties and early forties. This strategy has worked well for them. Since the end of the Great Recession women's employment has increased more than that of men, even in jobs dominated by males. Nationally, 28% of wives earn more than their husbands today, up from 12% in 1980."

Second: "If continued, these fertility trends portend ever lower rates of natural increase (births minus deaths) and, eventually, a smaller U.S. population."

His takeaway from these conclusions: "When women take control of their fertility, they opt for smaller families and longer, more lucrative careers. These personal choices may explain why strong economic growth co-exists with declining fertility today."

Rubenstein's report is a rich source of information on women, birthrates and the economy. He takes the reader on a short historic journey that covers a period from the 1920s when more women began to work after World War I, the reduction of infant mortality rates, the movement of more families from farms to cities, the positive impact of the Sheppard-Townes Act, the post WWII baby boom, the introduction and widespread use of birth control pills in the late 60s, and more women entering the workforce in the 70s and beyond.

Rubenstein wraps up his study with the statement: "Three generations of U.S. mothers –suffragettes, Baby-boomers and Me-too millennials – are profiled in this paper. While the policy issues differ, the overarching goals of each generation are similar: these women want empowerment. They want the power to control their fertility, the power to raise healthy children, and the power to compete with men in the labor market. Population reduction is never their explicit goal, yet with each of these feminist waves fertility rates declined amidst a strong economy."

He leaves us with this assessment: "Anyone who values a smaller national population and a larger per capita income would do well to study the desires of young millennial women."

Founded in 1972, NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to educating the American public and political leaders regarding the damaging effects of population growth. We believe that our nation is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long-range carrying capacity of its resources and environment. NPG advocates the adoption of its Proposed National Population Policy, with the goal of eventually stabilizing U.S. population at a sustainable level – far lower than today's. We do not simply identify the problems – we propose solutions. For more information, visit our website at www.NPG.org, follow us on Facebook [@NegativePopulationGrowth](https://www.facebook.com/NegativePopulationGrowth) or follow us on Twitter [@npg_org](https://twitter.com/npg_org).