

FERTILITY

Together with mortality and migration, fertility is an element of population growth, which reflects both the causes and effects of economic and social developments.

Total fertility rates in OECD countries have declined dramatically over the past few decades, falling on average from 2.7 in 1970 to 1.7 children per woman of childbearing age in the early 2000s. The reasons were postponement of family formation and a decrease in desired family size. Rising female education and employment, insufficient support for families juggling work and children, a need to generate a secure job and income, or growing housing problems may have all also played a role. Falls were especially pronounced – by at least three children per woman on average – in Korea, Mexico and Turkey.

Overview

Before the crisis, there was a moderate recovery in average fertility rates between 2000 and 2008. However, trends have been quite heterogeneous. Fertility rates continued to decline or remained stable in Austria, Japan, Korea and Switzerland – all low fertility countries. Fertility was more likely to rebound in countries with higher initial fertility rates, and even exceeded the replacement level in New Zealand and Iceland. This fertility rebound stalled in many OECD countries in 2009, possibly as a consequence of the economic crisis.

During the first crisis years (i.e. between 2008 and 2011), fertility rates fell in more than two-thirds of the OECD countries and by almost two decimal points in the United States (a relatively high fertility country) and by one decimal point in five European OECD countries (Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and Spain) and New Zealand and Turkey. The rate for the United States fell to an all-time low in 2011 at 1.89, down from 2.12 in 2008.

In 2011 the highest fertility rate was recorded in Israel, where women had almost one child more than in the second country, New Zealand. Israel was in fact the only OECD country with a level above the replacement fertility rate (2.1 children per woman). Anglophone and Nordic countries were typically at the higher end, while continental Europe (France being the one major exception) reported low fertility, along with even lower fertility rates in Japan and South Europe. Fertility rates were notably low in Hungary and Korea, with two parents replacing themselves in the next generation by little more than one child, on average.

Fertility rates are generally higher in emerging economies; rates are above replacement levels in India and South Africa. While fertility increased in the Russian Federation by one decimal between 2008 and 2011, fertility decreased in other emerging economies (except Brazil).

Definition

The total fertility rate in a specific year is the total number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and give birth to children in agreement with the prevailing age-specific fertility rates.

Comparability

The total fertility rate is generally computed by summing up the age-specific fertility rates defined over a five-year interval. Assuming there are no migration flows and that mortality rates remain unchanged, a total fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman generates broad stability of the population: it is also referred to as the “replacement fertility rate” as it ensures replacement of the woman and her partner with another 0.1 children per woman to counteract infant mortality.

Data are collected every year from national statistical institutes. 2011 refers to 2010 for Chile and 1970 refers to 1980 for Brazil, Estonia and Israel.

Sources

- For OECD member countries and Brazil, Russia and South Africa: National statistical offices.
- For China, India and Indonesia: World Bank *World Development indicators*.
- Fertility rates: OECD (2014), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2014), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

Methodological publications

- Addio, A.C. d' and M.M. d'Ercole (2005), “Trends and Determinants of Fertility Rates: The Role of Policies”, *OECD Social Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 27.

Online databases

- *United Nations World Population Prospects*.

Websites

- OECD Family Database, www.oecd.org/social/family/database.
- World Bank – World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.



Total fertility rates

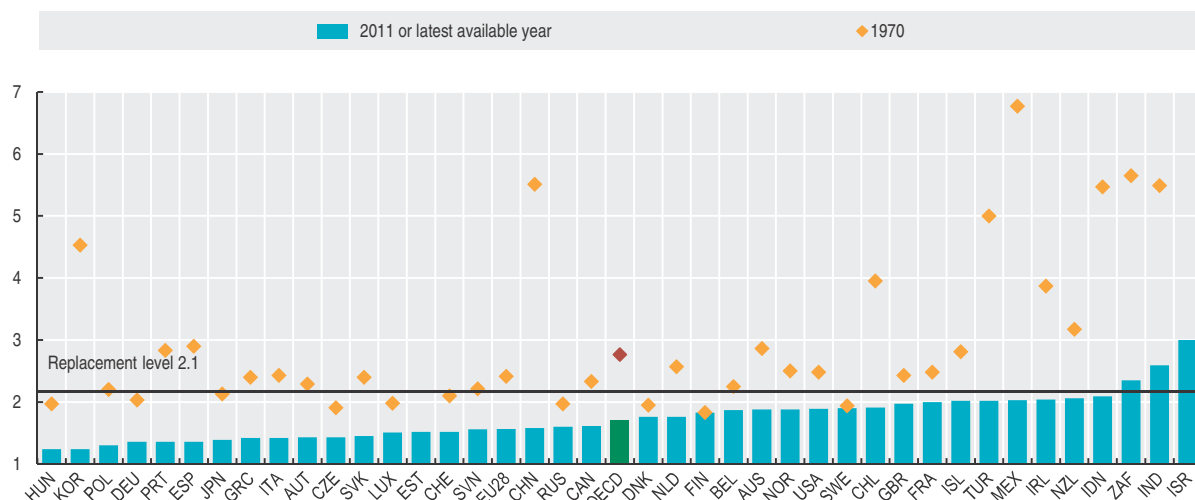
Number of children born to women aged 15 to 49

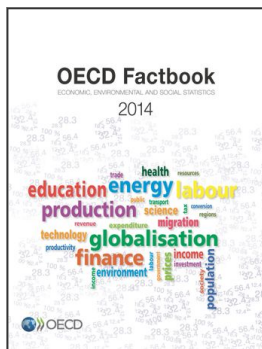
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Australia	2.86	1.89	1.90	1.76	1.75	1.76	1.79	1.82	1.92	1.96	1.90	1.89	1.88
Austria	2.29	1.65	1.46	1.36	1.38	1.42	1.41	1.41	1.38	1.41	1.39	1.44	1.43
Belgium	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.67	1.67	1.72	1.76	1.80	1.82	1.85	1.86	1.87	1.87
Canada	2.33	1.68	1.71	1.49	1.53	1.53	1.54	1.59	1.66	1.68	1.67	1.63	1.61
Chile	3.95	2.72	2.59	2.05	1.89	1.85	1.84	1.83	1.88	1.92	1.94	1.91	..
Czech Republic	1.91	2.10	1.89	1.14	1.18	1.23	1.28	1.33	1.44	1.50	1.49	1.49	1.43
Denmark	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	1.76	1.78	1.80	1.85	1.85	1.89	1.84	1.88	1.76
Estonia	..	2.02	2.05	1.39	1.37	1.47	1.50	1.55	1.63	1.65	1.62	1.63	1.52
Finland	1.83	1.63	1.79	1.73	1.76	1.80	1.80	1.84	1.83	1.85	1.86	1.87	1.83
France	2.48	1.95	1.78	1.87	1.87	1.90	1.92	1.98	1.95	1.99	1.99	2.02	2.00
Germany	2.03	1.56	1.45	1.38	1.34	1.36	1.34	1.33	1.37	1.38	1.36	1.39	1.36
Greece	2.40	2.23	1.40	1.26	1.28	1.30	1.33	1.40	1.41	1.51	1.52	1.51	1.42
Hungary	1.97	1.92	1.84	1.33	1.28	1.28	1.32	1.35	1.32	1.35	1.33	1.26	1.24
Iceland	2.81	2.48	2.31	2.08	1.99	2.03	2.05	2.07	2.09	2.14	2.22	2.20	2.02
Ireland	3.87	3.23	2.12	1.90	1.98	1.95	1.88	1.90	2.03	2.10	2.07	2.07	2.04
Israel	..	3.14	3.02	2.95	2.95	2.90	2.84	2.88	2.90	2.96	2.96	3.03	3.00
Italy	2.43	1.68	1.36	1.26	1.29	1.33	1.32	1.35	1.37	1.42	1.41	1.41	1.42
Japan	2.13	1.75	1.54	1.36	1.29	1.29	1.26	1.32	1.34	1.37	1.37	1.39	1.39
Korea	4.53	2.82	1.57	1.47	1.18	1.15	1.08	1.12	1.25	1.19	1.15	1.23	1.24
Luxembourg	1.98	1.50	1.62	1.78	1.62	1.66	1.62	1.64	1.61	1.60	1.59	1.63	1.51
Mexico	6.77	4.97	3.43	2.77	2.34	2.25	2.20	2.17	2.13	2.10	2.08	2.05	2.03
Netherlands	2.57	1.60	1.62	1.72	1.75	1.73	1.71	1.72	1.72	1.77	1.79	1.80	1.76
New Zealand	3.17	2.03	2.18	1.98	1.93	1.98	1.97	2.01	2.17	2.18	2.12	2.15	2.06
Norway	2.50	1.72	1.93	1.85	1.80	1.83	1.84	1.90	1.90	1.96	1.98	1.95	1.88
Poland	2.20	2.28	1.99	1.37	1.22	1.23	1.24	1.27	1.31	1.39	1.40	1.38	1.30
Portugal	2.83	2.18	1.56	1.56	1.44	1.40	1.41	1.36	1.33	1.37	1.32	1.37	1.36
Slovak Republic	2.40	2.31	2.09	1.29	1.20	1.24	1.25	1.24	1.25	1.32	1.41	1.40	1.45
Slovenia	2.21	2.11	1.46	1.26	1.20	1.25	1.26	1.31	1.31	1.53	1.53	1.57	1.56
Spain	2.90	2.22	1.36	1.23	1.31	1.32	1.34	1.38	1.39	1.46	1.39	1.38	1.36
Sweden	1.94	1.68	2.14	1.55	1.72	1.75	1.77	1.85	1.88	1.91	1.94	1.98	1.90
Switzerland	2.10	1.55	1.59	1.50	1.39	1.42	1.42	1.44	1.46	1.48	1.50	1.54	1.52
Turkey	5.00	4.63	3.07	2.27	2.09	2.11	2.12	2.12	2.15	2.15	2.07	2.05	2.02
United Kingdom	2.43	1.90	1.83	1.64	1.71	1.77	1.79	1.84	1.90	1.96	1.94	1.98	1.97
United States	2.48	1.84	2.08	2.06	2.04	2.05	2.06	2.11	2.12	2.07	2.00	1.93	1.89
EU 28	2.42	1.99	1.79	1.48	1.46	1.48	1.48	1.51	1.53	1.59	1.59	1.58	1.56
OECD	2.76	2.18	1.91	1.68	1.63	1.65	1.65	1.68	1.71	1.75	1.74	1.74	1.70
Brazil	..	4.06	2.79	2.39	2.20	2.13	2.06	1.99	1.95	1.89	1.94	1.91	..
China	5.51	2.63	2.34	1.74	1.69	1.68	1.67	1.66	1.64	1.63	1.61	1.60	1.58
India	5.49	4.68	3.92	3.12	2.93	2.88	2.83	2.79	2.74	2.70	2.66	2.63	2.59
Indonesia	5.47	4.43	3.12	2.45	2.35	2.32	2.28	2.25	2.21	2.18	2.15	2.12	2.09
Russian Federation	1.97	1.90	1.89	1.20	1.32	1.34	1.29	1.30	1.41	1.49	1.54	1.59	1.60
South Africa	5.65	4.56	3.32	2.90	2.81	2.75	2.69	2.64	2.58	2.52	2.47	2.41	2.35

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Total fertility rates

Number of children born to women aged 15 to 49

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