

Groundbreaking international survey explores the relationship between culture and fertility

Data from the U.S. and over a dozen other countries looks at the impact of celebrities, religious leaders, public figures, cultural norms, and more on fertility

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA, UNITED STATES, October 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new joint

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Lyman Stone

report from [the Institute for Family Studies](#) and [the Wheatley Institute](#) uses groundbreaking international survey data to explore the relationship between culture and fertility, and identify specific norms and practices that can impact fertility rates.

[Baby Nudges: How Social Influences Shape Fertility Choices](#), is based on survey data of 10,000 people in the U.S. and over a dozen other countries, the report looks at the impact of celebrities, religious leaders, public figures, peer networks, parents, cultural norms, and personal

values on fertility.

Fertility rates vary tremendously among different groups of people living in the same material environments. Conversations about birth rates often look at material factors and “culture” broadly speaking, without going deeper into the exact norms and practices of pronatal cultures.

The Institute for Family Studies’ Pronatalism Initiative decided to take a different approach. Researchers Dr. Lyman Stone, Dr. Jason Carroll, and Peter Foreshaw Brookes studied the specific social and cultural factors that influence fertility desires and norms across a variety of countries.

Ultimately, this report provides a first-of-its-kind look at what values and behaviors actually impact fertility in the U.S. and elsewhere. These findings will be enormously relevant to fertility discussions moving forward, and can be studied with an interactive tool that compliments the final report.

KEY FINDINGS:

30%: Parental encouragement significantly increases the likelihood a person will intend to have another child.

20%: Believing one's friends would celebrate another child is also shown to have a noticeable impact on the likelihood a person will intend on having another child.

14%: The increase in the likelihood of having another child among people who admire public figures with large families.

30%: People who believe children are the greatest joy in life are much more likely to intend on having more.

9%: The top-third of respondents in terms of religiosity were more likely to have children, desire more kids, and intend to have more kids.

OTHER FINDINGS:

- Belief that most people have a moral obligation to have children does not significantly predict intent to have a child.

- Division of household labor does not have a big impact on fertility.

- A willingness to take risks and an optimism about the future both predict intentions to have children and the number of children a respondent already has.

"The differences in birth rates between various groups of people are not simply a function of differences in child care affordability or household incomes; they are at least partly a function of differences in cultural norms and values," elaborated Dr. Carroll.

"Policymakers often focus on the finances of fertility, but our work shows they may need to focus on the friends, the family, and the famous people just as much. People have the families their societies tell them are good to have," said Dr. Stone.

"Fertility is driven by many things, but it is also important to realize when there is not strong evidence for an alleged factor. In our survey, we failed to find any association between housework division nor beliefs about a moral duty to have children and fertility intentions, suggesting that policymakers should look elsewhere (such as to facilitating social support systems) to better support prospective parents," commented Peter Foreshaw Brookes.

Baby Nudges: How Social Influences Shape Fertility Choices, concludes with sets of recommendations for prospective grandparents, religious leaders and communities, and policymakers who want to have the conversations necessary to create a more pro-family cultural environment.

About the authors

Dr. Lyman Stone is a Senior Fellow and Director of the Pronatalism Initiative at the Institute for Family Studies. Stone also works as the Director of Research at consulting firm Demographic Intelligence. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from McGill University and was previously an economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Peter Foreshaw Brookes is Research Associate for the Pronatalism Initiative at the Institute for Family Studies. He is also the Director of The Centre for Family and Education. He studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Oxford, specializing in Econometrics and Philosophy of Religion.

Dr. Jason S. Carroll is the Family Initiative Director at the Wheatley Institute and a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Institute for Family Studies. He was a professor of family life at Brigham Young University and holds a Ph.D. in Family Social Science from the University of Minnesota.

About IFS

The Institute for Family Studies is a non-partisan research organization dedicated to strengthening marriage and family life through evidence-based research and public education.

About the Wheatley Institute

The Wheatley Institute engages students, scholars, thought leaders, and the public in research supported work that fortifies the core institutions of the family, religion, and constitutional government.

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