

Education Offers a Solution to Overpopulation

Contributed by Bright Future Staff
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Problem: As the total human population of the earth increases it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a sustainable society.

Solution: As the average level of education increases birth rates decline.

There is a consistent relationship between the level of education attained by women in a society and their birth rates per capita. Reviewing the statistics below suggests that increasing education programs in underdeveloped countries with high birth rates would have the effect of putting more women into the workforce and falling birth rates – changes that would not only reduce the strain on local resources, but also may help to build the local economy.

The statistics below show consistent results for this pattern in the US. Similarly, a study looking at Ireland's recent economic expansion and increased quality of life showed a clear relationship between implementing new education programs, participation in these programs by women, and falling birth rates as these women entered the workforce.

[The following is reprinted from website maintained by the National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the US Center for Disease Control.]

The study... found a direct relationship between years of education and birth rates...

A women's educational level is the best predictor of how many children she will have, according to a new study from the National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study, based on an analysis of 1994 birth certificates, found a direct relationship between years of education and birth rates, with the highest birth rates among women with the lowest educational attainment.

Birth rate patterns also vary greatly by mother's age. Among women in their twenties - the peak childbearing ages - and women in their forties, birth rates are highest for women with the least education. For women with college degrees, rates are highest for those in their early thirties, perhaps signaling the preferred time for childbearing by this group. First birth rates for women in their thirties with a college degree were two to five times the first birth rates for women with less education.

Birth rates also vary by race and ethnicity. Birth rates for Hispanic women are higher than rates for either non-Hispanic black women or non-Hispanic white women in every educational attainment category. The disparity is particularly evident for birth rates for women with less than a high school education.

Educational attainment is

a very critical factor in accounting for lifetime fertility differentials. Women with 1 or more years of college have sharply lower lifetime fertility

than less educated women, regardless of race or Hispanic origin. Women with college degrees can be expected to complete their childbearing with 1.6-2.0 children each; 1.7 for non-Hispanic white, 1.6 for non-Hispanic black, and 2.0 for Hispanic women. For women with less education the total expected number of children are: 3.2 children for those with 0-8 years of education; 2.3 children for those with 9-11 years of education and 2.7 for high school graduates.

Among unmarried mothers

age 25 and older only nine percent had college degrees; about a third has less than a high school education. Birth rates for college-educated unmarried women are substantially below the rates for less-educated unmarried women.

"Birth and Fertility

Rates by Educational Attainment: United States, 1994," by T. J. Mathews and Stephanie J. Ventura is also available from NCHS by calling (301) 458-4800.