

FERTILITY

Together with mortality and migration, fertility is a core driver 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 from an average of 2.8 children per woman of childbearing age in 1970 to 1.7 in the early 2000s. The decline has been especially pronounced – by around or greater than three children per woman on average – in Korea, Mexico and Turkey, but a number of other OECD countries have also seen the total fertility rate fall by at least one child per woman on average since 1970. There are many reasons behind the decline in fertility, but the postponement of family formation and a decrease in desired family size –

Overview

Prior to the start of the economic crisis in 2008, fertility rates in many – although not all – OECD countries were recovering slightly from the record lows observed in the early 2000s. Fertility rates continued to decline or remained stable in Austria, Japan, Korea and Switzerland – all low fertility countries. Fertility rebounded 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 2008, possibly as a consequence of the economic crisis. Since 2008, fertility rates have fallen in more than two-thirds of OECD countries, with the decline greater than two decimal points in three European OECD countries (Denmark, Estonia and Iceland) and the United States (a relatively high fertility country). Israel and Japan have seen the largest increases since the start of the economic crisis, but no OECD country has seen the total fertility rate increase by more than 1 decimal point since 2008.

In 2013, the highest fertility rate was recorded in Israel, where women had almost one child more than in the second country, Mexico. Israel and Mexico were in fact the only two OECD countries with a total fertility rate 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) generally reported low fertility, along with even lower fertility rates in the East Asian and Southern Europe OECD countries. Fertility rates were particularly low in Portugal and Korea, with two parents replacing themselves in the next generation by little more than one child, on average.

Fertility rates were generally higher but have declined sharply in the emerging economies; with current rates only above replacement levels in India, Indonesia and South Africa.

themselves driven by rising female education and employment, insufficient support for families juggling work and children, the need to generate a secure job and income, and growing housing problems – have played a central role.

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 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.

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 (2015), “Family Indicators”, OECD *Social and Welfare Statistics* (database).

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

- Adema, W., N. Ali and O. Thévenon (2014), “Changes in Family Policies and Outcomes: Is there Convergence?”, OECD *Social Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 157, OECD Publishing.

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

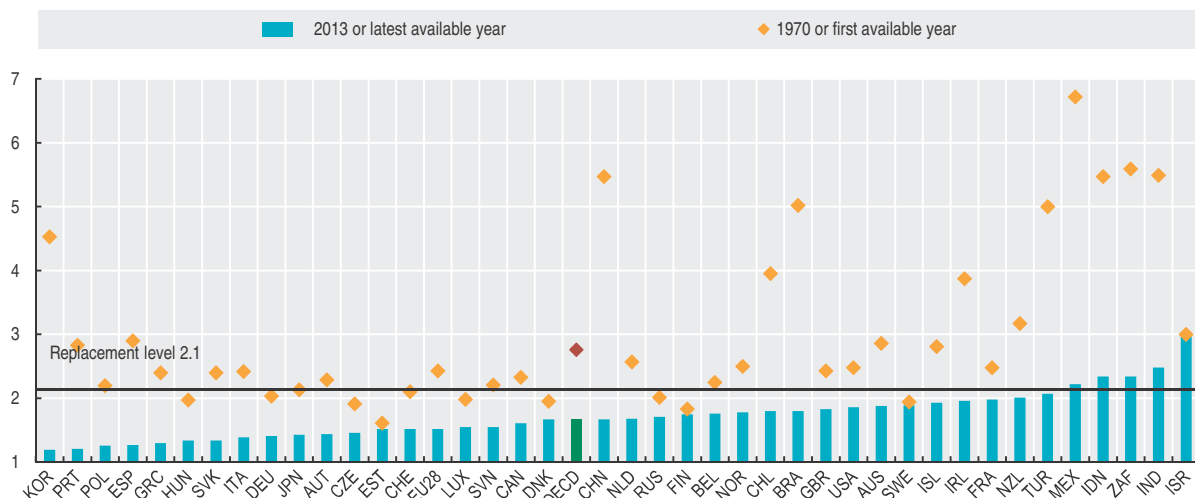
Number of children born to women aged 15 to 49

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Australia	2.86	1.89	1.90	1.76	1.85	1.88	1.99	2.02	1.97	1.95	1.92	1.93	1.88
Austria	2.29	1.65	1.46	1.36	1.41	1.41	1.39	1.42	1.40	1.44	1.43	1.44	1.44
Belgium	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.64	1.74	1.78	1.80	1.86	1.83	1.84	1.81	1.79	1.76
Canada	2.33	1.68	1.71	1.49	1.54	1.59	1.66	1.68	1.67	1.63	1.61
Chile	3.95	2.72	2.59	2.05	1.84	1.83	1.88	1.92	1.92	1.89	1.85	1.80	..
Czech Republic	1.91	2.10	1.89	1.14	1.28	1.33	1.44	1.50	1.49	1.49	1.43	1.45	1.46
Denmark	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	1.80	1.85	1.84	1.89	1.84	1.87	1.75	1.73	1.67
Estonia	..	2.02	2.05	1.36	1.52	1.58	1.69	1.72	1.70	1.72	1.61	1.56	1.52
Finland	1.83	1.63	1.79	1.73	1.80	1.84	1.83	1.85	1.86	1.87	1.83	1.80	1.75
France	2.48	1.95	1.78	1.87	1.92	1.98	1.95	1.99	1.99	2.02	2.00	1.99	1.98
Germany	2.03	1.56	1.45	1.38	1.34	1.33	1.37	1.38	1.36	1.39	1.39	1.40	1.41
Greece	2.40	2.23	1.40	1.27	1.32	1.38	1.38	1.47	1.49	1.47	1.40	1.35	1.30
Hungary	1.97	1.92	1.84	1.33	1.32	1.35	1.32	1.35	1.33	1.26	1.24	1.34	1.34
Iceland	2.81	2.48	2.31	2.08	2.05	2.07	2.09	2.14	2.22	2.20	2.02	2.04	1.93
Ireland	3.87	3.23	2.12	1.90	1.88	1.94	2.03	2.07	2.07	2.06	2.04	2.01	1.96
Israel	..	3.14	3.02	2.95	2.84	2.88	2.90	2.96	2.96	3.03	3.00	3.05	3.03
Italy	2.42	1.68	1.36	1.26	1.32	1.35	1.37	1.42	1.41	1.41	1.39	1.42	1.39
Japan	2.13	1.75	1.54	1.36	1.26	1.32	1.34	1.37	1.37	1.39	1.39	1.41	1.43
Korea	4.53	2.82	1.57	1.47	1.08	1.12	1.25	1.19	1.15	1.23	1.24	1.30	1.19
Luxembourg	1.98	1.50	1.62	1.78	1.62	1.64	1.61	1.60	1.59	1.63	1.51	1.57	1.55
Mexico	6.72	4.71	3.36	2.65	2.45	2.42	2.38	2.35	2.32	2.28	2.26	2.24	2.22
Netherlands	2.57	1.60	1.62	1.72	1.71	1.72	1.72	1.77	1.79	1.80	1.76	1.72	1.68
New Zealand	3.17	2.03	2.18	1.98	1.97	2.01	2.18	2.19	2.13	2.17	2.09	2.10	2.01
Norway	2.50	1.72	1.93	1.85	1.84	1.90	1.90	1.96	1.98	1.95	1.88	1.85	1.78
Poland	2.20	2.28	1.99	1.37	1.24	1.27	1.31	1.39	1.40	1.38	1.30	1.30	1.26
Portugal	2.83	2.18	1.56	1.56	1.42	1.38	1.35	1.40	1.35	1.39	1.35	1.28	1.21
Slovak Republic	2.40	2.31	2.09	1.29	1.25	1.24	1.25	1.32	1.41	1.40	1.45	1.34	1.34
Slovenia	2.21	2.11	1.46	1.26	1.26	1.31	1.38	1.53	1.53	1.57	1.56	1.58	1.55
Spain	2.90	2.22	1.36	1.23	1.33	1.36	1.38	1.45	1.38	1.37	1.34	1.32	1.27
Sweden	1.94	1.68	2.14	1.55	1.77	1.85	1.88	1.91	1.94	1.98	1.90	1.91	1.89
Switzerland	2.10	1.55	1.59	1.50	1.42	1.44	1.46	1.48	1.50	1.54	1.52	1.53	1.52
Turkey	5.00	4.63	3.07	2.27	2.12	2.12	2.16	2.15	2.08	2.06	2.03	2.09	2.07
United Kingdom	2.43	1.90	1.83	1.64	1.76	1.82	1.86	1.91	1.89	1.92	1.91	1.92	1.83
United States	2.48	1.84	2.08	2.06	2.06	2.11	2.12	2.07	2.00	1.93	1.89	1.88	1.86
EU 28	2.43	2.01	1.78	1.48	1.49	1.52	1.54	1.60	1.60	1.59	1.55	1.56	1.52
OECD	2.76	2.17	1.91	1.67	1.66	1.69	1.72	1.76	1.74	1.75	1.71	1.71	1.67
Brazil	5.02	4.07	2.81	2.36	2.07	2.00	1.94	1.90	1.86	1.84	1.82	1.81	1.80
China	5.47	2.71	2.51	1.51	1.59	1.60	1.62	1.63	1.64	1.65	1.66	1.66	1.67
India	5.49	4.68	3.88	3.15	2.82	2.75	2.69	2.64	2.60	2.56	2.53	2.51	2.48
Indonesia	5.47	4.43	3.12	2.48	2.49	2.50	2.49	2.48	2.46	2.43	2.40	2.37	2.34
Russian Federation	2.01	1.90	1.89	1.20	1.29	1.31	1.42	1.50	1.54	1.57	1.58	1.69	1.71
South Africa	5.59	4.79	3.66	2.87	2.56	2.53	2.53	2.52	2.51	2.50	2.44	2.39	2.34

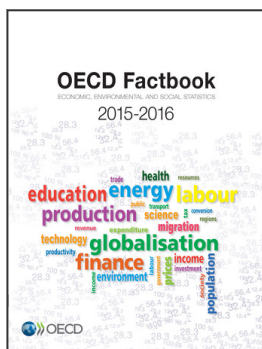
1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933336165>

Total fertility rates

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1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933334982>



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