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Fertility Rates in Low Birth-Rate Countries, 1996-2011

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(March 2012) PRB has updated "[Fertility Rates in Low Birth-Rate Countries, 1996 to Most Recent Year](#)," showing birth rate trends in low-fertility countries. A large number of TFRs for 2011 are now available, either reported officially by national statistical offices (in normal typeface) or estimated by PRB from reported births (lightface italic).

Government concern over chronically low birth rates has grown dramatically over time. The number of media stories covering the issue continues to grow. But in many respects, it is too little, too late. In Germany, for example, the total fertility rate (the average number of children per woman, or TFR) fell below the "replacement level" of 2.1 children per woman in 1970—over 40 years ago—then dipped as low as 1.2 and has been fairly steady at about 1.35 in recent years. While some would see slower population growth as a good thing, especially for the environment, the government is very concerned about the disproportional aging such very low birth rates cause. Currently, over 20 percent of Germany's population is in the age group 65 and over, a share projected to rise to 35 percent or more in the next 40 years. Germany is far from alone. Official Japanese projections show the same proportion passing 40 percent by 2050. **Lengthy periods of low fertility have an irreversible consequence.** With greatly decreased numbers of young people, there will simply not be enough parents in the future to make a serious difference in a country's demographic prospects even if there are some modest increases in birth rates. And the prospects for that now appear very

dim. Although governments scramble to encourage childbearing, the demographic futures of their countries have been, for all practical purposes, already decided.

This update shows TFRs up to 2011 for most countries. Most 2011 figures have been released very recently. This year, likely 2011 TFRs have been estimated by PRB for the few countries that have released monthly birth statistics for most of 2011. These figures are indicated by an asterisk in the table. The ultimate TFR will differ, but the estimates show the likely direction of change projected by PRB based on birth data for less than a full year when such data are available.

Fertility Trends in Very Low-Fertility Countries Through 2011

Risers	Modest Risers	No Significant Rise and/or Consistent Pattern	Declined in 2011
Belarus	United Kingdom*	Ireland*	Denmark
Bulgaria*	Slovakia	Austria	Estonia
Russia	Italy	Belgium*	Iceland
Ukraine	Portugal	Malta	Latvia
	China, Hong Kong SAR	Israel	Lithuania
		Japan	Norway
		Singapore	Sweden
		South Korea	France
		Taiwan	Germany
		Australia	Luxembourg*
		Canada	Netherlands
		Cuba*	Switzerland
			Czech Republic
			Hungary
			Moldova
			Poland
			Romania*
			Bosnia-Herzegovina
			Croatia

			Greece
			Macedonia
			Montenegro*
			Serbia
			Slovenia
			Spain**
			New Zealand
			United States*

* Through 2010

** Through 12-month period ending June 2011

Source: National statistical offices and PRB estimates.

In order to classify such a large amount of data, the table above groups countries into fertility-change categories. This is difficult given the various patterns of change, but the table offers an approximate summary of where countries stand. In this update, a new category has been added from last year: "Declined in 2011." In a large number of countries, the TFR declined in 2011 (and may have in 2010 also), a development often linked to the global recession. Only in a handful of Eastern European countries, such as Russia, have there been notable increases, likely due to pronatalist policies and financial incentives. In the table, "Riser" countries are those that have had an increase of 0.3 or more above the TFR low point since 1996. Countries with less than a 0.3 TFR increase but more than 0.2 are called "Modest Risers." The other two categories are self-explanatory.

For many countries concerned about a dwindling number of younger workers paying taxes to support a growing number of retirees, the 2011 results must be rather discouraging.

Fertility Rates for Low Birth Rate Countries, 1995 to Most Recent Year Available

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Europe																
Northern Europe																
Denmark	1.747	1.752	1.724	1.735	1.771	1.747	1.723	1.758	1.784	1.802	1.850	1.846	1.892	1.842	1.875	1.756
Estonia	1.371	1.313	1.278	1.311	1.381	1.335	1.371	1.367	1.461	1.496	1.549	1.639	1.662	1.630	1.636	1.525
Finland	1.763	1.746	1.710	1.735	1.729	1.726	1.718	1.760	1.800	1.800	1.840	1.830	1.850	1.860	1.870	—
Iceland	2.119	2.040	2.048	1.994	2.076	1.948	1.932	1.990	2.033	2.052	2.074	2.094	2.140	2.221	2.197	2.027
Ireland	1.888	1.936	1.948	1.911	1.905	1.962	1.978	1.977	1.947	1.879	1.905	2.026	2.099	2.070	2.070	—
Latvia	1.177	1.130	1.114	1.179	1.238	1.207	1.233	1.286	1.240	1.309	1.353	1.412	1.453	1.319	1.177	1.148
Lithuania	1.493	1.467	1.459	1.459	1.388	1.297	1.236	1.262	1.261	1.272	1.306	1.354	1.470	1.550	1.550	1.533
Norway	1.889	1.857	1.814	1.845	1.851	1.784	1.754	1.797	1.828	1.836	1.904	1.901	1.957	1.979	1.946	1.880
Sweden	1.606	1.532	1.511	1.503	1.547	1.570	1.653	1.718	1.752	1.769	1.854	1.879	1.908	1.935	1.980	1.903
United Kingdom	1.729	1.728	1.720	1.691	1.644	1.627	1.638	1.712	1.768	1.779	1.839	1.900	1.960	1.940	1.980	—
Western Europe																
Austria	1.445	1.392	1.369	1.340	1.364	1.329	1.394	1.378	1.419	1.407	1.405	1.384	1.414	1.392	1.440	1.443*
Belgium	1.591	1.605	1.590	1.610	1.660	1.640	1.620	1.660	1.720	1.760	1.800	1.820	1.860	1.840	1.820	—
France	1.733	1.726	1.764	1.791	1.874	1.877	1.864	1.874	1.898	1.920	1.980	1.959	1.990	1.988	2.013	2.001
Germany	1.316	1.369	1.355	1.361	1.379	1.349	1.341	1.340	1.355	1.340	1.331	1.370	1.376	1.358	1.390	1.337*
Luxembourg	1.760	1.710	1.680	1.740	1.787	1.660	1.630	1.620	1.653	1.626	1.647	1.607	1.602	1.583	1.652	—
Netherlands	1.529	1.562	1.628	1.652	1.723	1.710	1.731	1.747	1.726	1.708	1.720	1.718	1.773	1.790	1.796	1.741
Switzerland	1.500	1.480	1.470	1.480	1.500	1.380	1.390	1.390	1.420	1.420	1.440	1.457	1.484	1.497	1.540	1.503*
Eastern Europe																
Belarus	1.335	1.250	1.300	1.310	1.317	1.286	1.240	1.232	1.233	1.252	1.335	1.429	1.488	1.509	1.494	1.507
Bulgaria	1.230	1.090	1.110	1.230	1.270	1.240	1.210	1.230	1.290	1.310	1.380	1.420	1.480	1.570	1.490	—
Czech Republic	1.185	1.173	1.157	1.133	1.144	1.146	1.171	1.179	1.226	1.282	1.328	1.438	1.497	1.492	1.490	1.420
Hungary	1.460	1.380	1.320	1.280	1.330	1.310	1.310	1.280	1.280	1.320	1.350	1.320	1.350	1.330	1.260	1.240
Moldova	1.600	1.700	1.490	1.370	1.290	1.249	1.211	1.219	1.257	1.219	1.229	1.256	1.277	1.326	1.309	1.263
Poland	1.580	1.513	1.431	1.366	1.367	1.315	1.249	1.222	1.227	1.243	1.267	1.306	1.390	1.398	1.382	1.303
Romania	1.297	1.320	1.317	1.302	1.306	1.232	1.254	1.268	1.291	1.319	1.313	1.293	1.360	1.380	1.319	—
Russia	1.270	1.212	1.232	1.157	1.195	1.223	1.286	1.319	1.340	1.287	1.296	1.406	1.494	1.537	1.549	1.562
Slovakia	1.470	1.428	1.374	1.329	1.292	1.198	1.185	1.199	1.241	1.253	1.239	1.251	1.320	1.410	1.400	1.416*
Ukraine	1.332	1.270	1.207	1.121	1.110	1.085	1.126	1.172	1.218	1.213	1.310	1.345	1.458	1.460	1.445	1.472

Continued

Key
 The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman would bear in her lifetime if the rate of childbearing of a particular year remained constant. TFR's in normal typeface were taken from official online or printed publications and databases of national statistical offices. TFR's in lightface were taken from secondary sources such as the Council of Europe. TFR's in *lightface italic* are PRB estimates based on officially reported births for the year.
 * Estimate based upon nearly complete birth reporting for 2011
 ** Officially reported for the 12 month period ending June 2011
 — Data not available.

Notes
 Rates for Moldova exclude Transdniestria and Bender.



	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Southern Europe																
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1.647	1.684	1.558	1.362	1.300	1.400	1.200	1.215	1.217	1.200	1.176	1.258	1.285	1.303	1.266	<i>1.195*</i>
Croatia	1.640	1.700	1.454	1.380	1.391	1.378	1.342	1.328	1.346	1.415	1.382	1.401	1.466	1.498	1.464	<i>1.430</i>
Greece	1.300	1.310	1.290	1.280	1.272	1.254	1.271	1.286	1.304	1.333	1.399	1.417	1.514	1.527	1.508	<i>1.461</i>
Italy	1.200	1.227	1.214	1.233	1.256	1.252	1.270	1.290	1.330	1.319	1.352	1.370	1.420	1.410	1.420	1.420
Macedonia	1.900	1.740	1.730	1.610	1.680	1.550	1.590	1.540	1.520	1.460	1.460	1.460	1.471	<i>1.524</i>	1.550	<i>1.461*</i>
Malta	2.010	1.950	1.810	1.720	1.690	1.500	1.460	1.480	1.370	1.370	1.410	1.370	1.430	1.400	1.400	—
Montenegro	—	—	—	—	1.853	1.790	1.890	1.835	1.715	1.600	1.640	1.690	1.800	1.850	<i>1.620</i>	—
Portugal	1.444	1.473	1.475	1.508	1.558	1.460	1.473	1.444	1.403	1.408	1.362	1.335	1.374	1.323	1.366	<i>1.320</i>
Serbia	—	1.600	—	—	—	1.510	1.570	1.561	1.572	1.452	1.434	1.381	1.408	1.439	1.412	<i>1.341*</i>
Slovenia	1.282	1.250	1.235	1.213	1.257	1.210	1.210	1.200	1.250	1.260	1.310	1.380	1.530	1.530	1.570	<i>1.537*</i>
Spain	1.160	1.173	1.153	1.191	1.231	1.241	1.259	1.306	1.325	1.341	1.377	1.392	1.458	1.394	1.382	1.38**
Asia																
China, Hong Kong SAR*	1.191	1.127	1.016	0.981	1.032	0.931	0.941	0.901	0.922	0.959	0.984	1.028	1.064	1.055	1.127	1.189
Israel	2.940	2.930	2.980	2.940	2.955	2.887	2.888	2.945	2.904	2.836	2.880	2.905	2.934	2.963	3.029	<i>2.973</i>
Japan	1.430	1.390	1.380	1.340	1.360	1.330	1.320	1.290	1.290	1.260	1.320	1.340	1.370	1.370	1.390	—
Singapore	1.661	1.607	1.470	1.470	1.600	1.410	1.370	1.270	1.260	1.260	1.280	1.290	1.280	1.220	1.154	1.200
South Korea	1.574	1.520	1.448	1.410	1.467	1.297	1.166	1.180	1.154	1.076	1.123	1.250	1.192	1.149	1.226	1.240
Taiwan	1.760	1.770	1.465	1.555	1.680	1.400	1.340	1.235	1.180	1.115	1.115	1.100	1.050	1.030	0.895	<i>1.053</i>
Oceania																
Australia	1.800	1.780	1.760	1.755	1.756	1.730	1.756	1.748	1.763	1.791	1.817	1.920	1.903	1.886	1.886	—
New Zealand	1.969	1.962	1.893	1.980	1.977	1.962	1.887	1.932	1.983	1.965	2.049	2.172	2.183	2.113	2.149	2.060
Americas																
Canada	1.623	1.555	1.540	1.526	1.488	1.510	1.501	1.525	1.526	1.543	1.586	1.659	1.681	1.668	<i>1.655</i>	<i>1.657*</i>
Cuba	1.439	1.593	1.601	1.637	1.584	1.602	1.669	1.629	1.544	1.493	1.394	1.432	1.589	1.704	1.688	—
United States	1.976	1.971	1.999	2.008	2.056	2.034	2.013	2.043	2.046	2.054	2.101	2.122	2.085	2.007	1.932	—

* SAR Special Administrative Region

Key

The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman would bear in her lifetime if the rate of childbearing of a particular year remained constant.

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TFR's in *lightface italic* are PRB estimates based on officially reported births for the year.

* Estimate based upon nearly complete birth reporting for 2011

** Officially reported for the 12 month period ending June 2011

— Data not available.

Notes

Rates for Singapore are for the resident population only.

Rates for Serbia exclude Kosovo and Metohija.

"Rates for Hong Kong SAR are from the "resident population approach."

