

Thinking About Population

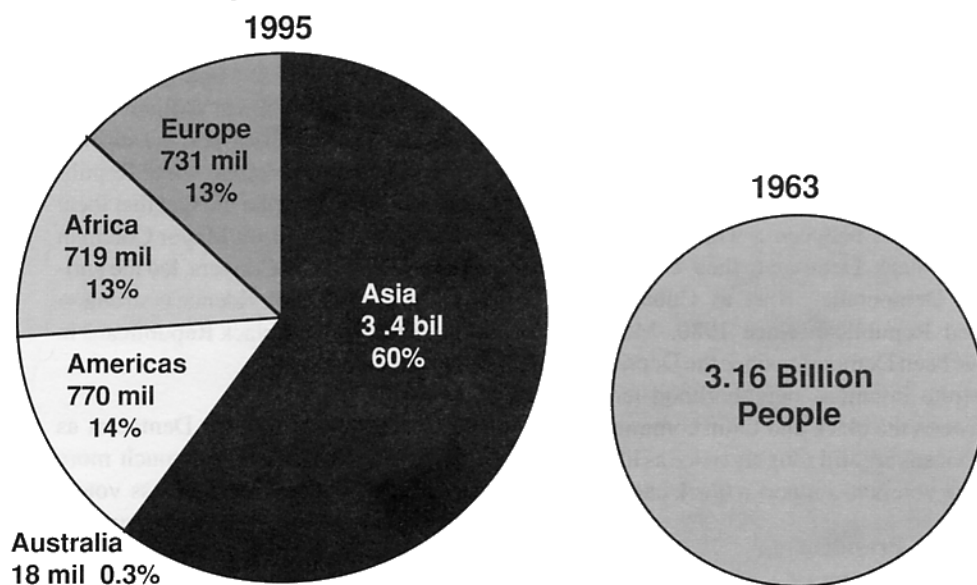
The International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo this past summer gave renewed attention to population trends and policy. At one level, the big story remains the extent of growth. The world's population has increased by roughly 2.5 billion since 1963 (see below).

At the same time, attitudes on the ideal number of children have been changing sharply, toward smaller-sized families—in the advanced industrial nations, but also in many developing countries (pp. 31-2).

Here in the US, young adults—those in the peak child-bearing age—are more inclined to smaller families than are their elders. Differences by education (and socioeconomic status generally), now look small, by historical comparison, while those by degree of religious commitment are relatively large (p.33). Overall, Americans are prepared to grant that overpopulation is a problem but—consistent with their strong commitments to individual choice—they insist that “people everywhere should feel free to have as many children as they can properly raise...” (p.34).

Population Facts: The World's Population in the Mid-1990s

5.7 Billion People: Where are they?



The "Big Ten" Countries, 1995

China	1.2 billion
India	934 million
United States	263
Indonesia	192
Brazil	161
Russia	149
Pakistan	130
Japan	125
Bangladesh	121
Nigeria	111

Source: Data provided by the World Bank, 1995 estimates; and *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1972.

A Big Decline in Birth Rates Around the World

How many children?

(The stated ideal of childbearing aged women 18-49, by selected countries)

Question: What do you think is the ideal size of the family—how many children, if any?

1990-93	Average number reported	Birth Rate*	
		1965-73	1993
Sudan*	5.9	NA	42.7
Ghana*	5.5	NA	44.7
Nigeria	4.5	49.6	43.8
Paraguay*	4.4	NA	32.6
Pakistan*	4.1	36.0	42.6
Kenya*	3.9	NA	43.2
Philippines	3.5	44.7	27.9
Ireland	3.3	22.5	NA
S. Africa	3.1	40.3	33.8
Chile	3.0	27.6	20.9
Argentina	2.9	21.9	19.8
Egypt*	2.8	34.8	32.2
Japan	2.8	19.4	10.3
Thailand*	2.8	42.8	20.0
Mexico	2.7	43.2	27.7
Brazil	2.6	37.8	21.8
Canada	2.6	15.7	14.5
Denmark	2.6	14.3	12.5
France	2.6	16.5	13.2
Sweden	2.6	13.5	13.8
Russia	2.5	17.7**	12.7
United States	2.5	15.0	15.5
Great Britain	2.4	13.9	13.6
India	2.4	42.8	29.1
Italy	2.4	16.0	10.7
Spain	2.4	19.2	10.9
Poland	2.3	17.4	13.6
Czechoslovakia	2.2	18.8	13.0
W. Germany	2.1	10.2	11.1 combined
E. Germany	2.0	10.6	
S. Korea	2.0	NA	15.7
China	1.8	33.1	18.3

* The question text read, "If you could go back to the time you did not have any children and could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be (has living children)?; If you could choose exactly the number of children to have in your whole life, how many would that be (no living children)? Asked of women 15-49 years old.

Source: Surveys for most countries from the World Values Surveys, 1990-93. Those with an * are from Macro International's Demographic and Health Surveys for the US Agency for International Development, 1987-93.

* Number of births during one year per 1,000 persons.

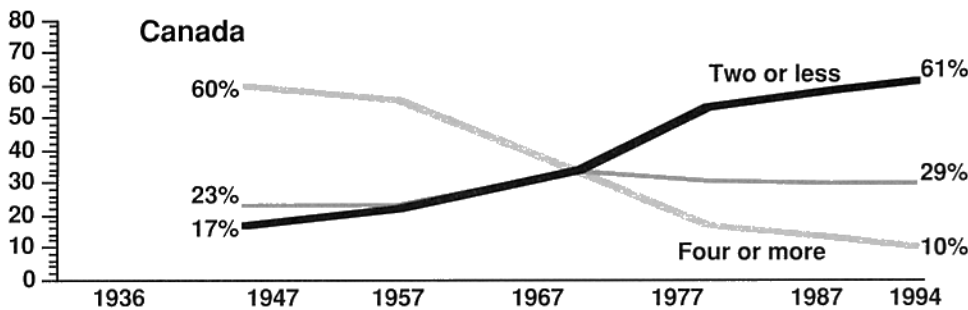
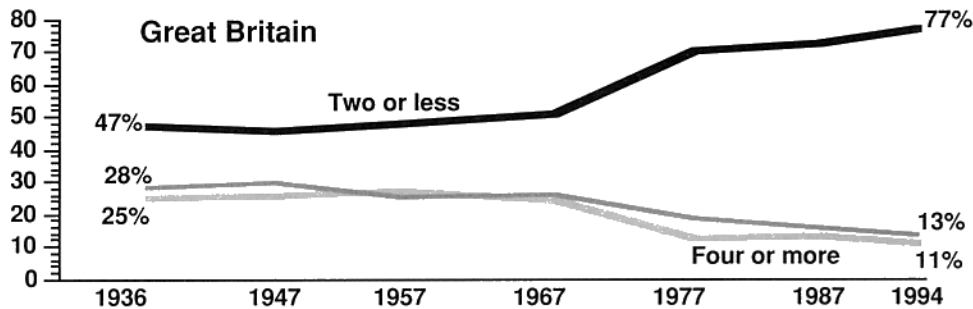
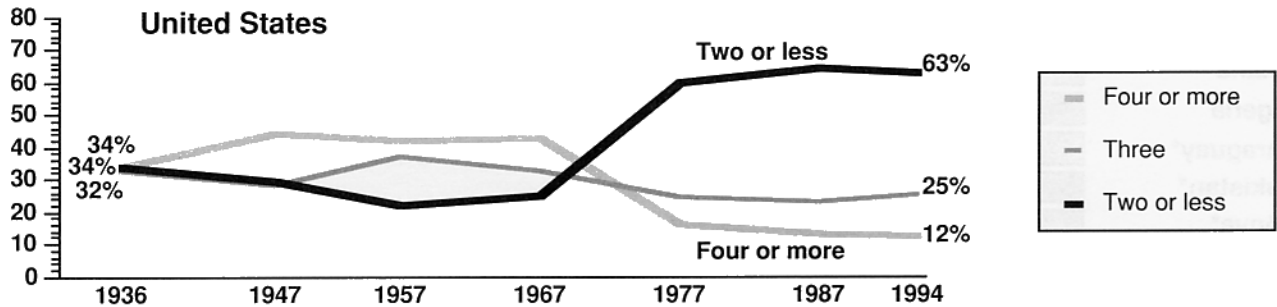
** USSR

Source: *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1975 and 1993.

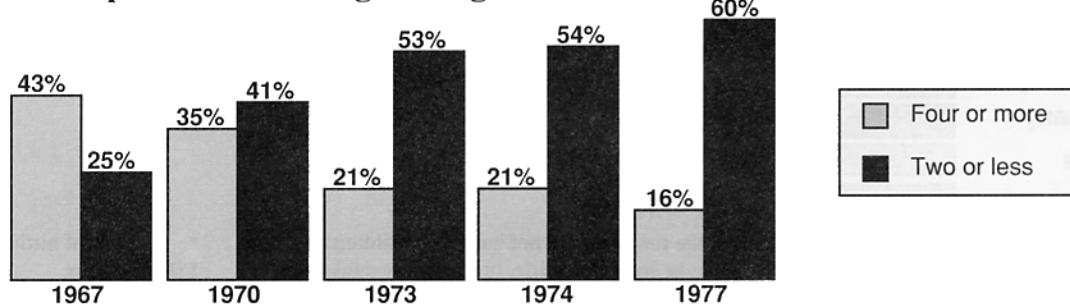
How Many Children...

The US, Canadian & British Answers Over the Last Half Century

Question: What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have (US and Canada)? What do you think is the ideal size of a family—husband, wife and how many children (Great Britain—only the number of children shown here)?



Snap Shot of the Big Change in the US



Note: Responses of “don’t know,” “no opinion” and “as many as you want” have been calculated out. In 1936, 1947 and 1973 the question text in the US varied slightly.

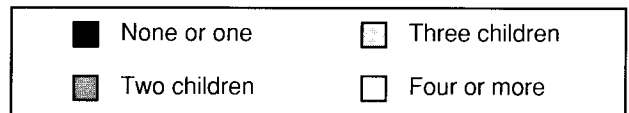
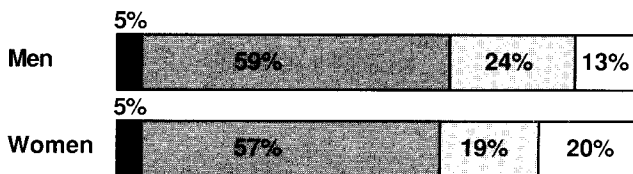
Source: US, all askings except 1994 by the Gallup Organization; 1994 survey by the National Opinion Research Center’s General Social Survey (NORC-GSS); Great Britain, surveys by Gallup Great Britain; Canada, surveys by Gallup Canada, Inc.

...is the Ideal?

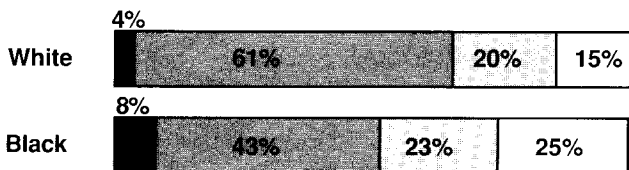
The Contrasting Answers of Different Groups of Americans Today

Question: What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?

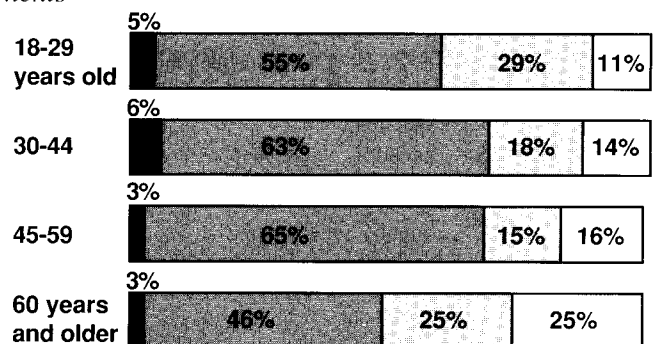
"4 or more" finds a bit more favor among women than men



"4 or more" finds a bit more favor among blacks than whites

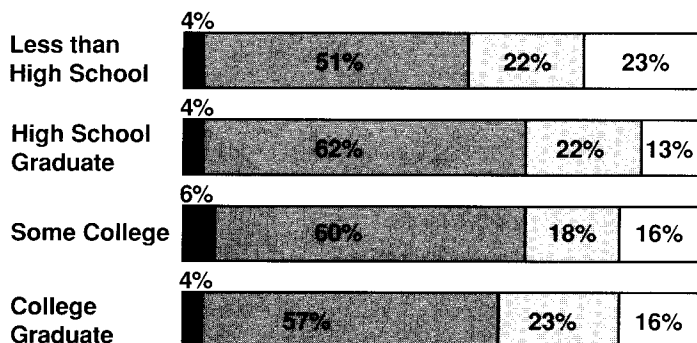


Just 11% of the young (18-29) say "4 or more" is the ideal—but no children or just one, still finds few proponents

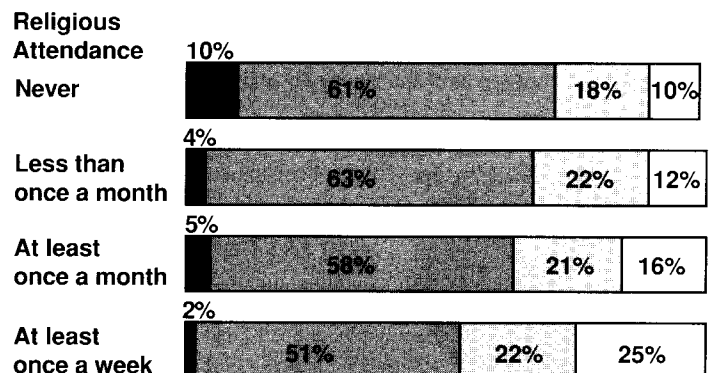


Note: Black responses 1990 (1991)—none or one, 1% (6%); two, 44% (36%); three, 22% (23%); four or more, 33% (36%).

Modest differences by education



Differences by religiosity are substantial

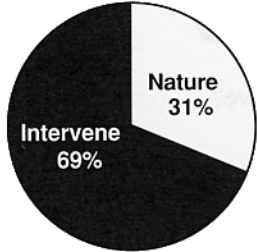


Source: Survey by the NORC-GSS, February 5-April 26, 1993.

Thinking about Population:

American Ambivalence

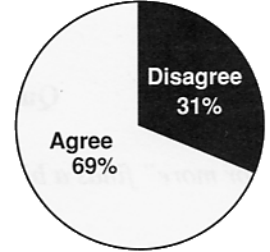
Question: Do you agree more with those who say that nature will take care of balancing the earth's population or more with those who say that unless humans intervene in nature, the earth's population growth will create a crisis?



Without our intervention world population growth will cause a crisis

But

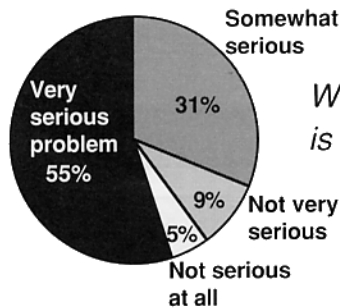
People everywhere should decide on how many children to have



Note: Those responding "don't know" have been calculated out.

Source: Survey by Belden & Russonello for the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative, February 3-15, 1994.

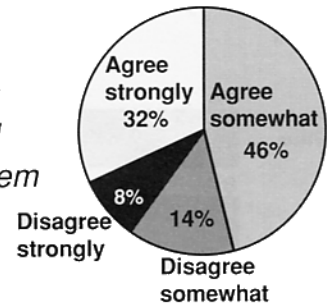
Question: Thinking about the world in general, do you think overpopulation is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not a serious problem at all?



World over population is a very serious problem

But

Distribution of world's population, not actual numbers, is the problem



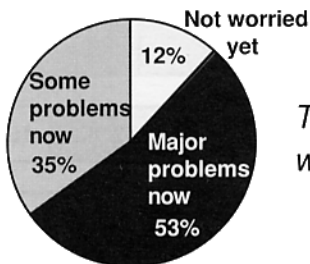
Note: Those responding "don't know" have been calculated out.

Source: Survey by Yankelovich Partners for *Time/CNN*, August 31-September 1, 1994.

Note: Those responding "don't know" have been calculated out.

Source: Survey by Belden & Russonello for the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative, February 3-15, 1994.

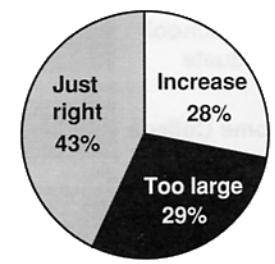
Question: ...Please tell me which statement most closely reflects your opinion. The US is a large country, and it will be a long time before we have to worry about population growth problems; or the US is a larger country, but we are already having some population problems. We should probably start thinking about ways to control population growth now; or, the US is a large country, but we already have major problems with population growth that will only get worse in the future and we must try to solve the problems now?



The US has big problems with population growth

But

The US problem is limited to certain states



Note: Those responding "don't know" have been calculated out.

Source: Survey by the Roper Organization for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, March 27-April 14, 1992.