

# CLIMATE AND THE CRIB

## Do Environmental Concerns Reduce Fertility?

Lyman Stone | November 2023

### Key Points

- In an attempt to better understand fertility ideals and intentions, Cardus surveyed 2,700 Canadian women and found that almost half of those who are near the end of their reproductive years report that they desire more children that they will likely not have.
- This report examines the extent to which Canadian women's concerns about climate change or overpopulation affect their fertility choices.
- Twenty-eight percent of women under age thirty who desired to have more children than they currently had cited climate change as a concern that influences their family-planning decisions, making this concern the tenth-most prevalent of all concerns surveyed.
- Seventeen percent of women under age thirty who desired to have more children than they currently had cited overpopulation as a concern that influences their family-planning decisions.
- The top five family-planning concerns were, in order: "Want to grow as a person," "Need to focus on career," "Overall low income," "Desire for leisure consumption," and "Desire to save money."
- Women who expressed worry about climate change also generally had lower fertility ideals, a smaller reduction in fertility intentions, and no significant difference in actual fertility behaviours compared to those who did not have this worry.
- To the extent that climate-change worry correlates with fertility attitudes and behaviours, it may operate more as a rationalization for postponed fertility than as motivating permanently lower fertility. Concern about climate change is part of a larger set of cultural or political beliefs, and these broader beliefs are actually a stronger predictor of fertility outcomes.
- Both women who are worried about climate change and women who are not worried about it are likely to have fewer children than they desire or intend. Even women who report that climate-change worry influences their childbearing plans desire more children than they are actually likely to have.
- Policymakers should examine the broader package of impediments to achieving the fertility goals that women say they want, and in particular explore how broader anxieties about the difficulty of childrearing can be allayed. Highly specific worries (such as climate change) are not the core underlying factor driving low fertility.

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For the full publication, see Stone, Lyman. "Climate and the Crib: Do Environmental Concerns Reduce Fertility?" Cardus, 2023. <https://www.cardus.ca/research/family/reports/climate-and-the-crib/>.