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Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
Topic 2: Declining Birth Rates
YUNMUN XXXVII

The second topic that CSW will discuss this year is declining birth rates. Whether to have children is one of the most personal decisions a woman can make, yet it is heavily shaped by economic and social conditions. The issue looks different for each country, but it raises one central question: Do women have the safety, healthcare, and financial security to make real choices about having children?

This issue has been previously discussed, with the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action identifying women and health as one of its 12 areas of concern, including access to good quality healthcare and reproductive health services.[1]

Global birth rates have been declining for more than three decades. The global fertility rate has fallen to just above the replacement level of roughly 2.25 births per woman, down from 3.31 in 1990. While fertility rates remain above four births per woman in some countries, others have fallen well below the global average. [2] Causes of this decline include women's greater access to education and work, but also include the cost of raising children, housing costs, and job insecurity. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the problem for many people is not a desire for fewer children, but the cost and uncertainty that keep them from having the number they want.[3]

Despite slow steps being taken in the right direction, further improvements are needed in this area. Please use the following questions to guide your research:

- How can states ensure that women who want children are not deterred by healthcare costs, workplace penalties, or financial insecurity?

[1] https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/health.htm
[2] https://population.un.org/wpp/assets/Files/WPP2024_Summary-of-Results.pdf
[3] https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN_State%20of%20World%20Population%20report%202025.pdf

- What steps can CSW take to help governments expand access to affordable and good quality reproductive and family healthcare, particularly in rural and low-income areas?
- What role can international organizations play in supporting governments and collecting reliable data on fertility and family-planning needs?
- How can the international community address the social and economic conditions that discourage people from starting or expanding families?
- What policies, such as paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and flexible work arrangements, can help women balance career and family, and how should CSW encourage countries to adopt them?

These questions should serve as a starting point for your research, but do not feel limited to these questions. While researching, remember that you are representing your country and should stay aligned with said country's approach. Please also remember that plagiarism and prohibited AI usage will not be tolerated.

Feel free to reach out to me at ekohl2@mail.yu.edu with any questions. I'm excited to hear your ideas!

Sincerely,

Lizzie Kohl

Chair, Commission on the Status of Women

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