

Conservatives Have More Kids Than Liberals, but Will It Help Turn the Tide?

A July 2021 headline in the Western Journal announced, "Birth Rates Are the Right's Secret Weapon as Liberal Values Backfire." The article by Miska Salemann stated that "Data from the General Social Survey indicates that in the 1970s 'there was little or no difference in fertility rates between liberal and conservative women,' according to the Institute for Family Studies."

Over time, though, that statistic has changed dramatically, and Salemann reports, "As of 2018, the gap had widened markedly, with conservative women between the ages of 30-44 averaging near 2.5 children and liberal women just over 1.5." She continues, "To approach the data another way, the survey also shows that a random sample of 100 conservative adults will raise 208 children. One hundred liberal adults will raise only 147 kids, according to Fatherly."

And what does this mean in practical terms? "That gap means that conservatives could hold a political edge, as the size of liberal families continues to dwindle. The evidence that supports this idea is overwhelming."

As noted by Ryan Burge on Oct. 4, 2021, in America,

The group that is the least likely to have children are atheists and agnostics. They hit peak fertility around 42 years old, when about 40% of them have children. It's noteworthy that, according to this data, potentially half of atheists and agnostics never reproduce. Thus, for these groups to grow, they have to rely on conversion more than retention.

Writing on the Fatherly website on Aug. 3, 2018 (and updated July 8, 2022), Joshua Krisch noted:

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Liberals are not having enough babies to keep up with conservatives. Arthur Brooks, a social scientist at Syracuse University, was the first to point this out all the way back in 2006 when he went on ABC News and blew blue staters minds. "The political Right is having a lot more kids than the political Left," he explained. "The gap is actually 41 percent." Data on the U.S. birth rate from the General Social Survey confirms this trend—a random sample of 100 conservative adults will raise 208 children, while 100 liberal adults will raise a mere 147 kids. That's a massive gap.

These are very striking, consequential observations. But they are not surprising observations. That's because the great majority of atheists and agnostics lean left politically and ideologically, putting them in the pro-abortion, pro-same-sex marriage category—in other words, in a category that does not put the same emphasis on procreation as does the pro-life, pro-natural marriage category. In addition, those leaning to the left are often more pessimistic about the future due to fears of catastrophic global warming or other end-of-the-world scenarios, because of which they are less inclined to bring children into the world. That's why Burge's article was titled "The Future of American Religion: Birth Rates Show Who's Having More Kids."

An article by Lyman Stone posted on August 8, 2022 by the Institute of Family Studies reinforces these observations. Stone wrote:

Birth rates in the United States are near record lows, but not for everyone. Indeed, under the surface of the fertility

decline since 2007 is a little noticed fact: fertility has declined much more among nonreligious Americans than among the devout. Data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) from 1982 to 2019, along with data from four waves of the Demographic Intelligence Family Survey (DIFS) from 2020 to 2022, point to a widening gap in fertility rates between more religious and less religious Americans. In recent years, the fertility gap by religion has widened to unprecedented levels.

Stone then added a major caveat in terms of the *retention rate* of the children religious people are having: we are having more babies, but many of our children, as they grow up, are leaving the faith. As a critic posted on my YouTube channel, “The reason Xianity is still growing—along with atheism—is demographics. Xians have more kids. But give every child a college-level education and internet access and watch Xianity die out!” As exaggerated as this comment was, it was not without some basis in fact.

So, on the positive side,

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The more frequently Americans attend religious services, the more children they will have, on average. The less frequently they attend religious services, the less children they will have, on average. Even in 2015, Pew Research could report that evangelicals and Catholics averaged 2.3 children per family (Mormons averaged 3.4) while atheists averaged 1.6 children per family and agnostics 1.3 children.

These are significant, undeniable disparities. But they don’t tell the whole story.

And so, Stone writes, “while this difference may comfort some of the faithful who hope higher fertility will ultimately yield stable membership in churches and synagogues, these hopes may be in vain. Rates of conversion into irreligion are too high, and fertility rates too low, to yield stable religious populations.”

Yes, “Despite a widening fertility gap, the ongoing trend of younger Americans becoming more secular more than offsets the fertility advantage enjoyed by religious people.” Please stop for a moment and read those words again. They really do cut to the heart.

Consequently, “religious communities in America will tend to decline by about 25% in each generation. If these trends continue, then within three generations (that is, by the time current children in churches are elderly grandparents), religious communities in America will have shrunk by more than half, a devastating loss.” And then, for the real kicker: “On the other hand, nonreligious Americans need to only have 0.8 to 0.9 children, on average, to achieve population growth, given their conversion rates: in fact, they currently have 1.3 children, implying 50-60% population growth every generation.”

The solution, then, is threefold: 1) As God leads and provides, we should continue to have larger families than do secular Americans. (Please stay with me here even if you say, “That’s not for me.” I am *not* here to judge or legislate, let alone to play God.) 2) With God’s help, we must find better ways to get our kids grounded in the faith so that the great majority do not fall away. (Again, please don’t feel condemned if your kids are not walking with the Lord. We’ll revisit each of these points in depth—and with compassion.) 3) We increase our Spirit-empowered efforts to win and disciple the lost, as well as do our best to win back those who have left the faith, especially those closest to us. This threefold plan of attack, with the help of the Lord, can bring about a massive shift in the spiritual and moral fabric of America over the next 30 to

40 years.

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