

New Survey Findings - How And When Young People See Themselves As Parents

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As young people exit school or university and enter the professional world, they begin to more seriously consider adult responsibilities, like having children. Â

As the chart below indicates, birth rates have steadily declined across a majority of the 15 countries under review over the last three decades.

In an effort to explore the idea of parenthood, family and life fulfillment in the midst of this changing environment, Euromonitor reached out to 4,700 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 living in 15 countries around the world. Â

Parenthood in an environment of declining birth rates Â

Birth rates vary significantly by country, with more children per mother in developing countries and recent upticks in birth rates in Malaysia, the UK, and Russia.Â Overall, birth rates across these countries have steadily declined and will continue to do so.

Our respondents echoed some of this distinct regional variation in birth rate when they talked about the value of parenthood.Â Fully eight in ten Russian youth we spoke with view raising children as central to their fulfillment in life â€“ perhaps not surprising, given recent increases in births in that country.Â In addition, 78% of Indonesian youth say that raising children is quite important to them.Â On the opposite side of the spectrum, fewer respondents in Japan (40%), Colombia (52%), and Turkey (54%) think raising kids will be satisfying.Â Â Â Â Â

Although, from a macro-economic perspective, Turkey and Colombia have achieved higher birth rates than Russia, in our survey, Russian youth placed a higher value on raising children. This may suggest that Russia will continue its recent upward trend in birth rates, or, that they may just be more satisfied parents.Â In Japan, on the other hand, low levels of perceived fulfillment in parenting will likely continue to perpetuate low birth rates.Â As for countries such as Turkey and Colombia, with relatively high but declining birth rates and also young people who do not think of raising children as the key to living a satisfied life, the future of parenthood is less clear. Â

How important is family to the next generation?Â Â Â

Family is considered very important by most youth, with nine in ten say that strong and supportive family relationships are key to their overall happiness (89%).Â In addition, more than eight in ten assert that a strong sense of family is either important or extremely important to their overall life fulfillment (82%).Â The same proportion of respondents believes that having a close personal relationship is crucial to their sense of fulfillment (82%).

Young women are more likely than men to feel that such family and romantic relationships are more important for their sense of happiness, but even three-quarters of young men see family as a key part of living a satisfactory life. Â

Parents, siblings, extended family and romantic partners are all seen as key to a full life, but are oneâ€™s own children seen as part of that highly desired â€˜familyâ€™ early in life?Â Only 10% of our young respondents have children. Â

More important things to worry about right now?Â Â

Other aspects of life are also greater priorities for youth than family and children. Â For instance, in all countries, having good health and having a rewarding job/work are seen as more conducive to happiness than being a parent.Â Everywhere except Indonesia and Russia, young people think having fun and having an active and varied social life are and will be more fulfilling than raising children.Â Finally, in Germany, the UK, the USA and Japan, young people believe that having fun is more fulfilling than a strong sense of family.Â Â

How fundamental is parenthood to young peopleâ€™s life plans?Â Â Â

In many countries, the average age of first childbirth is now between age 25 and 30, so our 16-24 year old respondents still have a few years to decide.Â Even within that eight year range, 23% more 24 year olds than 16 year olds feel that having children is quite important for their overall happiness.Â Yet, the fact that, on average, only 50% of young respondents believe that having children will be an integral part of their happiness in life implies that future parenthood should not be taken for granted.Â Â Â

Economic prospects may be impacting family planning.Â A full one-third of young people say that unemployment and lack of job opportunities will probably have an impact on their future happiness, and another 40% say it definitely will:Â

meaning three out of four young people are concerned about their future job prospects.Â Because it is taking them longer to find secure jobs and many are living at home longer than past generations, these young people seem to be holding off on starting families until they are more stable and independent â€“ though even they are unclear on how old theyâ€™ll be then.Â

Overall, the value of parenthood remains relatively robust:Â fully two out of three young people believe that raising children will significantly contribute to their sense of fulfillment in life.Â If their feelings about life do not change as they age into their late 20s, then many young people will likely act on their already high valuation of parenthood and have children of their own.Â That said, their decision to become parents will be influenced by their job prospects, as well as by the activities of their social circles.Â Parenthood may be an integral part of a complete life for many, though by no means all, young people, but other aspects of life will remain as or more important for the next generation â€“ with dwindling consequences for birth rates.

For more information about Passport Survey, please [click here](#) .

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