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Americans Want Child Care Help, Not Birth Rate Push

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As the United States grapples with a falling birth rate, new research shows that most Americans don't see having more babies as the answer. Instead, they want the government to make it easier to raise the children that families already have.

A recent poll from The Associated Press–NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that only about 12% of U.S. adults think encouraging more births should be a high priority for the federal government. By contrast, nearly three-quarters say the high cost of child care

is a major problem. Many also want better health outcomes for pregnant women, especially Black mothers who face the highest maternal mortality rates in the country.

Pronatalism, the idea that having more children is good for society, has gained attention among some conservatives and tech leaders. Figures like Elon Musk and Vice President JD Vance have spoken publicly about it. Even former President Donald Trump floated ideas such as a \$5,000 “baby bonus” to encourage larger families. But the poll shows that these proposals have not won over most Americans, including many Republicans. Only about 3 in 10 people consider the declining birth rate a serious issue.

For many families, the practical costs of parenting weigh more heavily than abstract concerns about demographics. Maria Appelbe, a Trump voter from Arizona, left her job to care for her daughter because child care was too expensive. “I was lucky that, back in those days without inflation, we were able to make it work,” she said.

Others, like Misty Conklin of Indiana, also believe the government should focus on making it more affordable to raise children. “It’s hard to live as just a couple, let alone with children,” she said. “It’s getting worse and worse.”

While ideas like paid family leave and free or low-cost daycare are broadly popular, supported by about two-thirds of Americans, the concept of government-backed incentives to boost birth rates remains divisive. Even among conservative Republicans, opinions about a “baby bonus” are split, with many opposing the idea.

The poll also found that about 4 in 10 adults see the high cost of fertility treatments as a major problem. Nearly half support requiring insurance companies to cover those services. For most Americans, supporting families already raising children is more urgent than promoting bigger ones.

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