

UPF Office of the Family: US Panel Suggests Policies to Address Fertility Decline

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April 23, 2026



New York, United States - UPF-USA and the NGO Committee on the Family, NY (NGOCF NY) at the United Nations convened a virtual program on April 23, 2026, titled "The Demographic Turning Point: Family, Fertility, and What Comes Next." With three-quarters of the world now experiencing fertility rates below replacement level, concern over the economic and social consequences of an increasingly aged population has intensified globally. Three research policy experts addressed the central issues, drawing on current data, candid assessments, and potential remedies for declining birthrates worldwide.

Ms. Lynn Walsh, director of UPF's Office of the Family and co-chair of the NGOCF NY, chaired the meeting.

Dr. Lyman Stone - a preeminent demographer, senior fellow and director of the Pronatalism Initiative at the Institute for Family Studies, and research director of Demographic Intelligence - examined the outcomes of various international financial incentives designed to encourage higher birthrates. He suggested that pronatalist measures such as monthly cash payments may carry greater impact when restructured as lump-sum payments to parents. Dr. Stone noted that while pronatalist financial incentives are costly, the long-term expense of sustaining a disproportionately larger aging population is far greater. He also called for increased attention to policies that encourage marriage, which research suggests would likely raise birthrates as well.

Dr. Anna Claire Flowers, of the Department of Economics at George Mason University and family policy fellow at the Archbridge Institute, demonstrated that greater innovation and reduced regulation in childcare and housing have produced promising alternatives to the unaffordable options that burden many young families. Addressing these two areas, she argued, would remove significant obstacles for couples who wish to have more children.

Ms. Susannah Petitt, associate director of the Strengthening Families Research Initiative at the University of Notre Dame, made the case that flexible scheduling and remote work have both contributed to modest gains in fertility among working couples. She noted that studies consistently show no decline in worker productivity when employees work from home. All three researchers emphasized that pronatalist policies are likely to be most effective when targeted not at the general population, but specifically at couples who want more children yet face concrete barriers to having them.