

Baby-0-Matic

Concept

The number of children each of us has is closely correlated to our lifestyles and the norms of our society. Students examine several such factors, and use their responses to determine how many children they, or someone of their background, would likely have.

Procedure

Distribute the worksheet to your students. Allow a few minutes for the students to individually answer the questions and calculate their results. Go over the discussion questions with the class.

Discussion

A. How many children did each of your students come up with? What was the class average?

B. Go over these notes below with your students. Each number corresponds to a question on their worksheet. You may wish to frame the notes as questions (e.g. Why do you think that this is a factor?)

1. Family life

The number of children a woman bears varies with her status in the household. Women who are able to play a part in important decisions often choose to have fewer children. In some cultures, women don't have any say about the number of children they bear.

2. Education

The more education a person has had, the fewer children they typically bear. As one indicator, people who are literate have fewer children than those who can't read.

3. Social security

People tend to have more children if they see no other way of supporting themselves in old age.

4. Status symbols

In many cultures, large families are important status symbols. In other areas, our personal successes better represent our status in society.

5. Time and money management

In some cultures, children are considered a drain on their parents' time and money. In other cultures, each child represents an additional worker that can help support the household, or enable the parents to get more work done.

6. Health

People often have larger families as insurance when they are unsure whether their children will survive their childhood. In the United States, for example, an average of 7 children out of 1,000 die in infancy. Compare this to the West African country of Sierra Leone, where out of 1,000 children, 157 die in infancy (more than 1 in 6).

7. Personal beliefs

Societal pressures often pull people towards having very large or small families. When people are able to make their own decisions about how many children to have, as in North America, the number approaches two per couple.

8. Timing

The longer people wait before starting their families, the fewer children they will have. This is partly owing to our "biological clocks." Also, people who choose to wait longer to have children often build careers for themselves, and so their priorities change.

C. Did any students think the BABY-O-MATIC gave them the wrong answer? (It is often possible to find variations among individual cases. A person with little schooling, for example, could conceivably have a small family. However, taken in total, statistics bear each of these factors out.)

Follow-up Activity

Assign each of your students a different country, so that they can conduct research into the lives of people there. Have your students retake the quiz, this time from the perspective of a person in their assigned countries. What changes have they observed? How do their calculations compare to the actual demographic data from that country?

Baby-O-Matic

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Want to know how many children you'll have? Take the BABY-O-MATIC Quiz!

For each number, circle the statement that best describes you and your lifestyle:

1. Family life

- A. I plan never to marry.
- B. When I marry, both I and my spouse will share in important decisions.
- C. When I marry, only the man in the couple will make important decisions.

2. Education

- A. I don't know how to read, and I don't expect I will ever learn.
- B. I know how to read, but I do not expect to graduate from high school.
- C. I will definitely finish high school, and may continue my formal education.

3. Social security

- A. When I grow old, or am unable to work, I expect my family to provide for me.
- B. I hope to rely on my personal savings, when I grow old, or am unable to work.
- C. When I grow old, or am unable to work, the government will take care of me.

4. Status symbols

- A. I believe that the position I hold in the workplace, and the money that I accumulate in life are the most important gauges of how successful I have been.
- B. A large family is much more important to me than a successful career.
- C. My status in the workplace is important to me, but family is equally important.

5. Time and money management

- A. Raising children takes a lot of time and money, and I would rather be doing other things with those resources.
- B. Raising children may be expensive, but is something that I want to do with my life.
- C. My children will be very useful to me as workers, and will help support the family.

6. Health

- A. If I have children, I'd expect them to have long, full lives.
- B. If I have children, there is a good chance that they wouldn't live very long.

7. Personal beliefs

- A. I have been taught that my responsibility in life is to have as many children as I can, and I intend to do just that.
- B. I believe that no one should tell me how many children I should have. That decision is for me and my spouse to make.
- C. I believe that the world just has too many people, and we'd all be better off if there were fewer.

8. Timing

- A. I'd like to be a parent by the time I turn 20.
- B. If I'm not a parent by the time I turn 40, no problem.
- C. I'd like to be a parent by the time I turn 35.

19-24: 4 or more children	18: 3 children	15-17: 2 children	12-14: 1 child	11: 0 children	Your Score:
4. A:1; B:3; C:2	3. A:3; B:2; C:2	2. A:3; B:3; C:2	1. A:1; B:2; C:3	8. A:3; B:1; C:2	7. A:3; B:2; C:1
6. A:2; B:3	5. A:1; B:2; C:3				

Give yourself points as follows: