

ECONOMY SLOWS BIRTH RATE



"No one is ever going to be able to quantify it, but there definitely is some cause and effect going on," said Carl Haub who works as a demographer at the Washington, D.C.-based Population Reference Bureau. The birth rate is defined as the average number of children a woman will give birth to in her lifetime. During the Great Depression that number dropped to a then record low of 2.1, but it would hit its all-time low of 1.7 during the economic woes of the 1970's. Haub also noted that dips have occurred after most recorded recessions. Dr. B.G. Parulkar of a Marlborough, MA Hospital recently asked one of his patients why he had cancelled his appointment for a vasectomy reversal. The answer was simple and logical. He considered his job status and the state of the economy and it was summarized in one sentence; "Do I really need to have one more mouth to feed?" According to a U.S.D.A. study, before the age of 2, a child can cost at least \$7,800 per year. It is a historical trend that lower birth rates occur during times of economic hardship, and it is a trend no one is predicting a change in. While the current recession wasn't officially recognized by most experts until last year, most now approximate the beginning of the downturn to be December of 2007. Haub said that if it continues, an impact on the birth rate would be expected, but probably would not be noticed until 2010. A quick survey of hospitals seemed to confirm this with most saying that they had not yet noticed any changes. Dr. Henry Lerner said "It has to be long-lasting enough so that planning can take place. Most young couples see this as a temporary downturn and not something that's going to turn their lives upside down." Though no significant change has been noticed in births or in family planning, the recession already seems to have decreased attendance at adoption information meetings run by the Adoption Community of New England. "I think people are much more realistic in their family planning," said Deb Shrier, a board member, noting the fees that are part of adopting infants. Julie McGilvray's husband was laid off from his job, but they have decided to go ahead with their plans to have a third child. They have found ways to cut back on spending, started buying less expensive groceries, and reduced their number of "date nights". "We can't put it on hold because the economy's shaky," said the pregnant McGilvray, telling of her and her husband's big families growing up and the desire for a similarly large family of their own. "It just feels right." Keep track of all the latest employment related news at <http://www.employmentcrossing.com>