

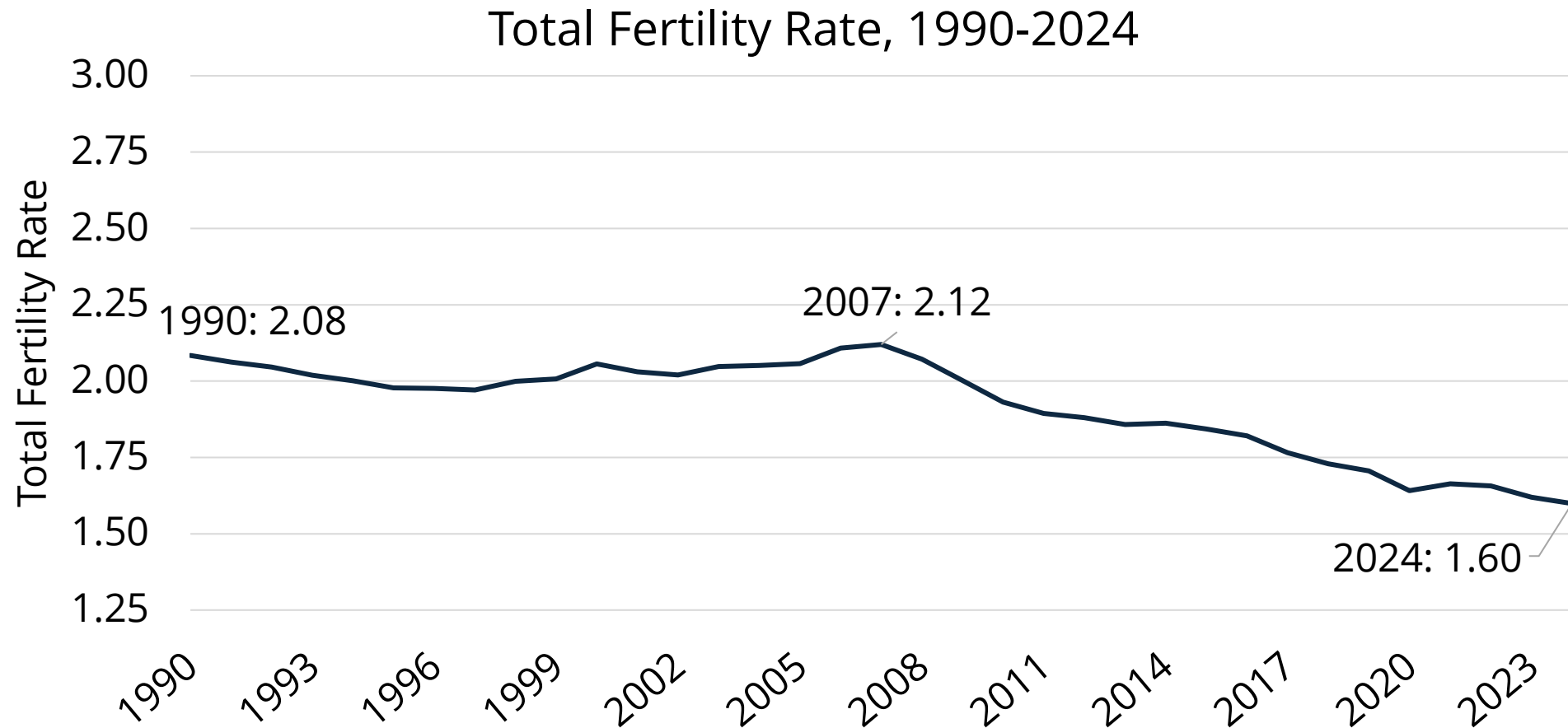
Childbearing Trends in the U.S.

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What are the Current Trends?

- U.S. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is at a record low (1.6)



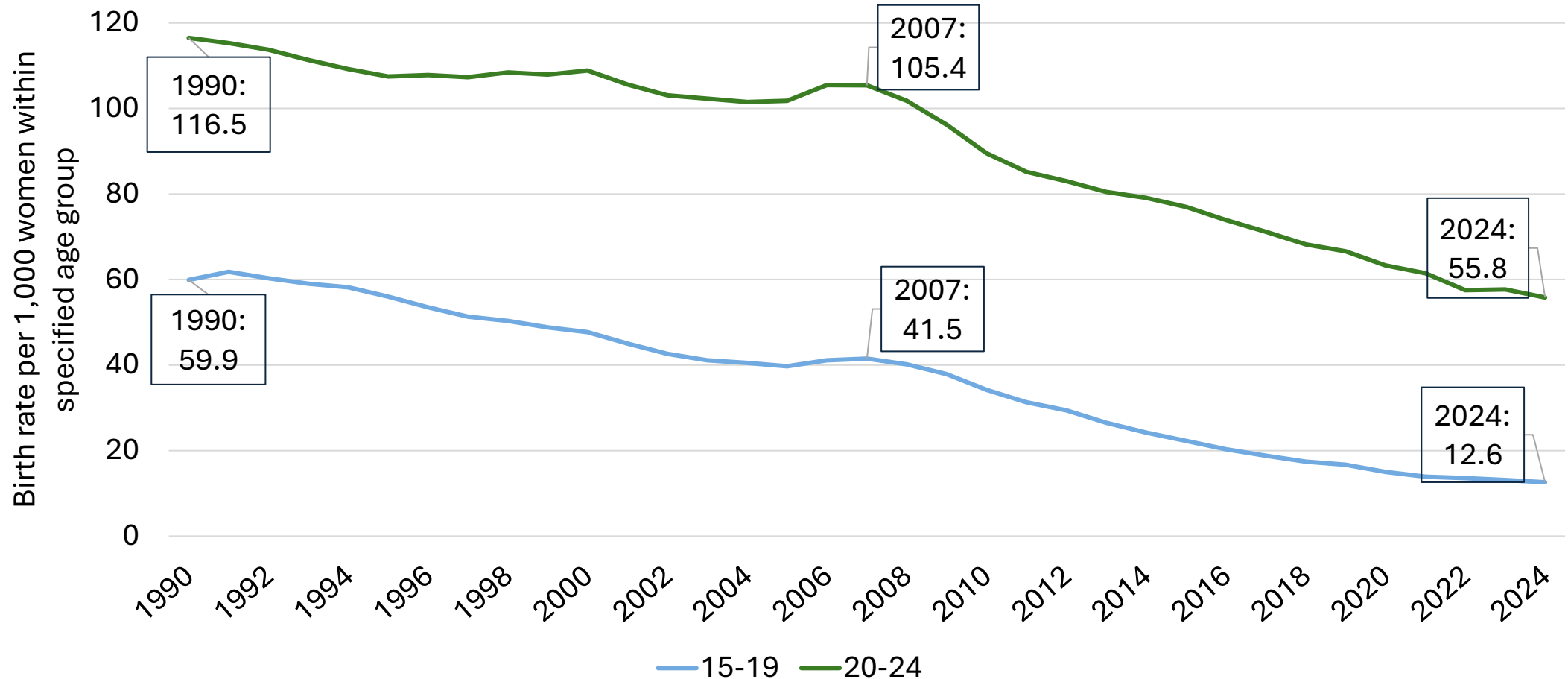
U.S. Total Fertility Rate (TFR)
is at a record low



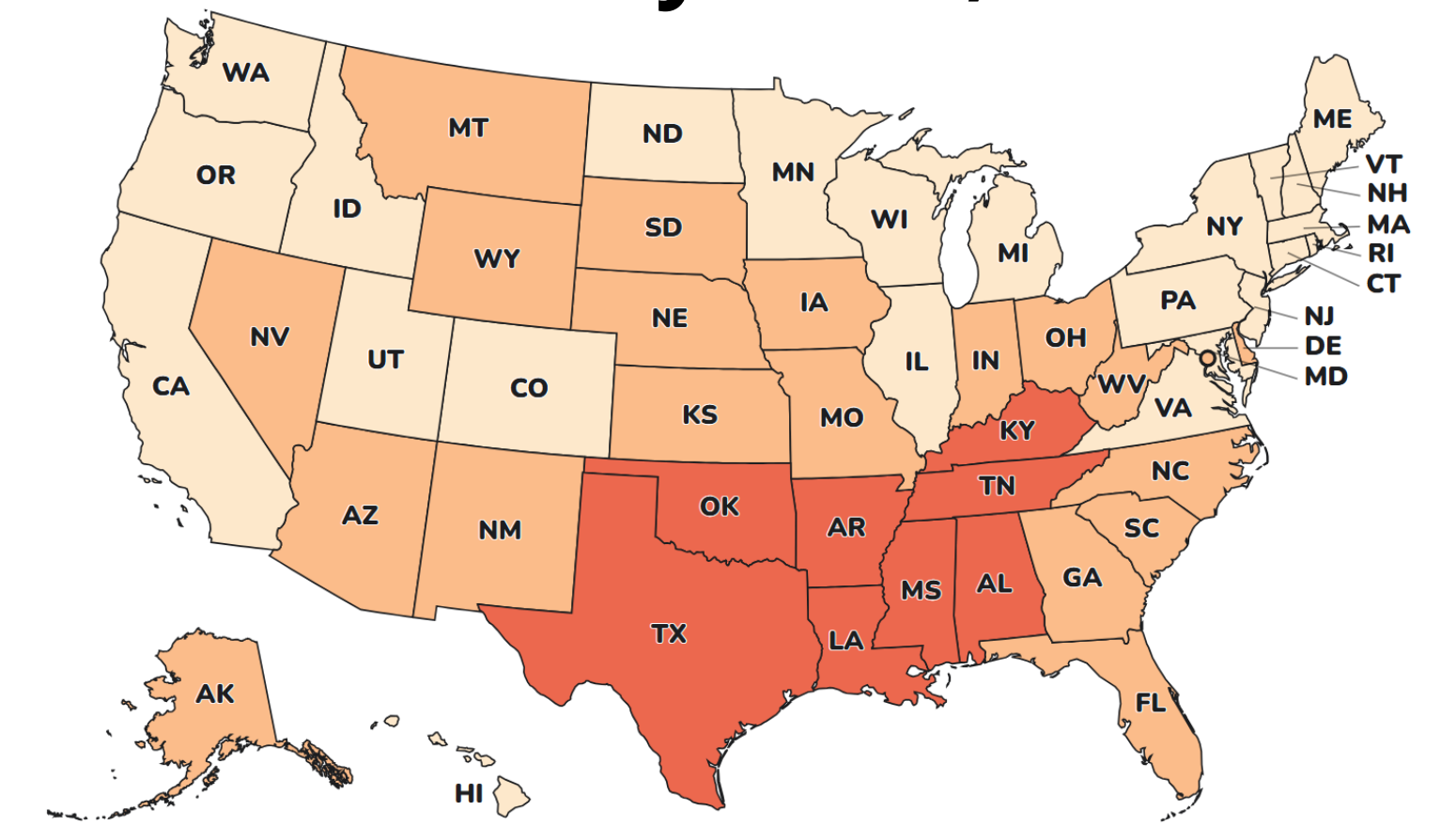
Low TFR driven by shifts
in childbearing among
different age groups

- Much of this is *good* news

Birth Rates at Younger Ages



Teen Birth Rate by State, 2023



Teen birth rate: live births per 1,000 females ages 15–19

4.6 - < 11.58

11.58 - < 18.56

18.56 - < 25.54

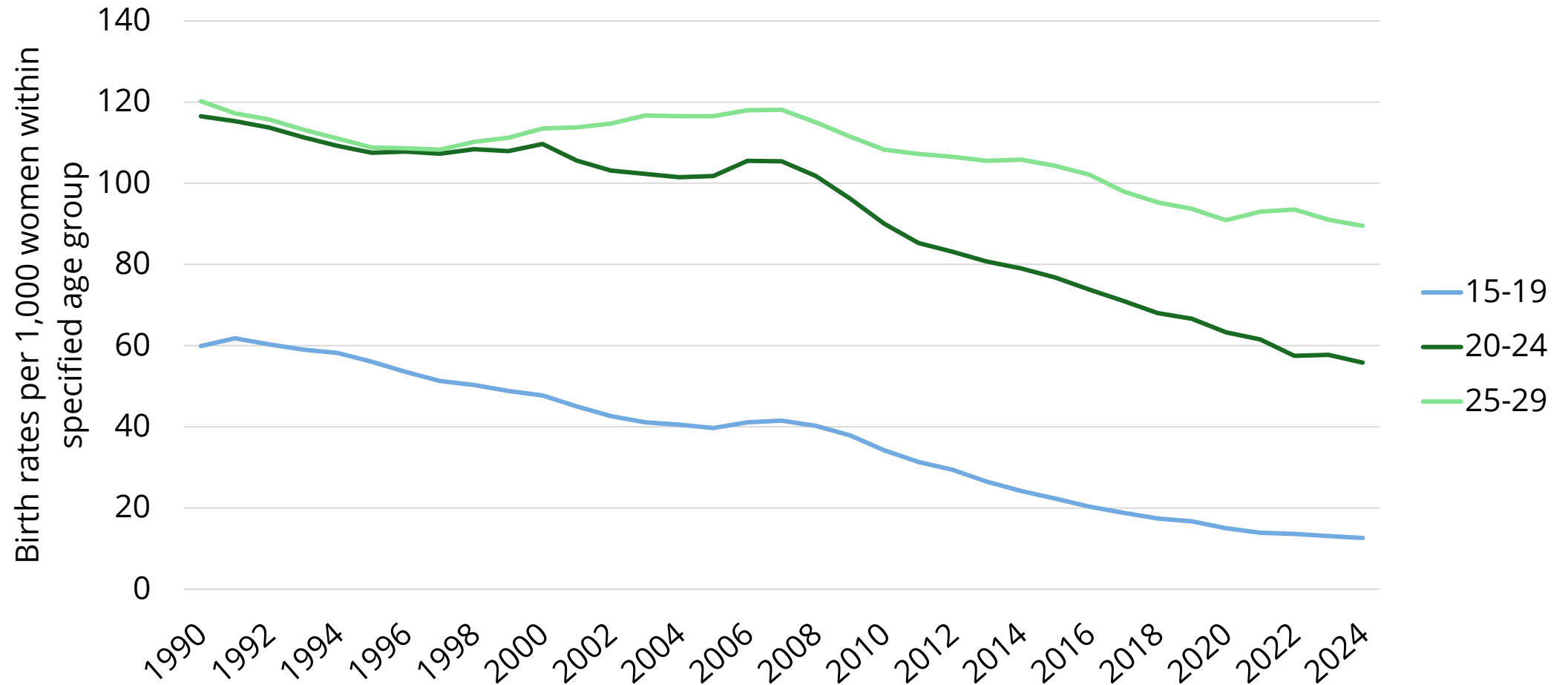
Low TFR driven by shifts in
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graph TD; A[Low TFR driven by shifts in childbearing among different age groups] --> B[Falling birth rates among those ≤ 24 accounts for 80% of TFR decline since 2007]; B --> C[Changes in birth rates at older ages are not offsetting declines at younger ages];
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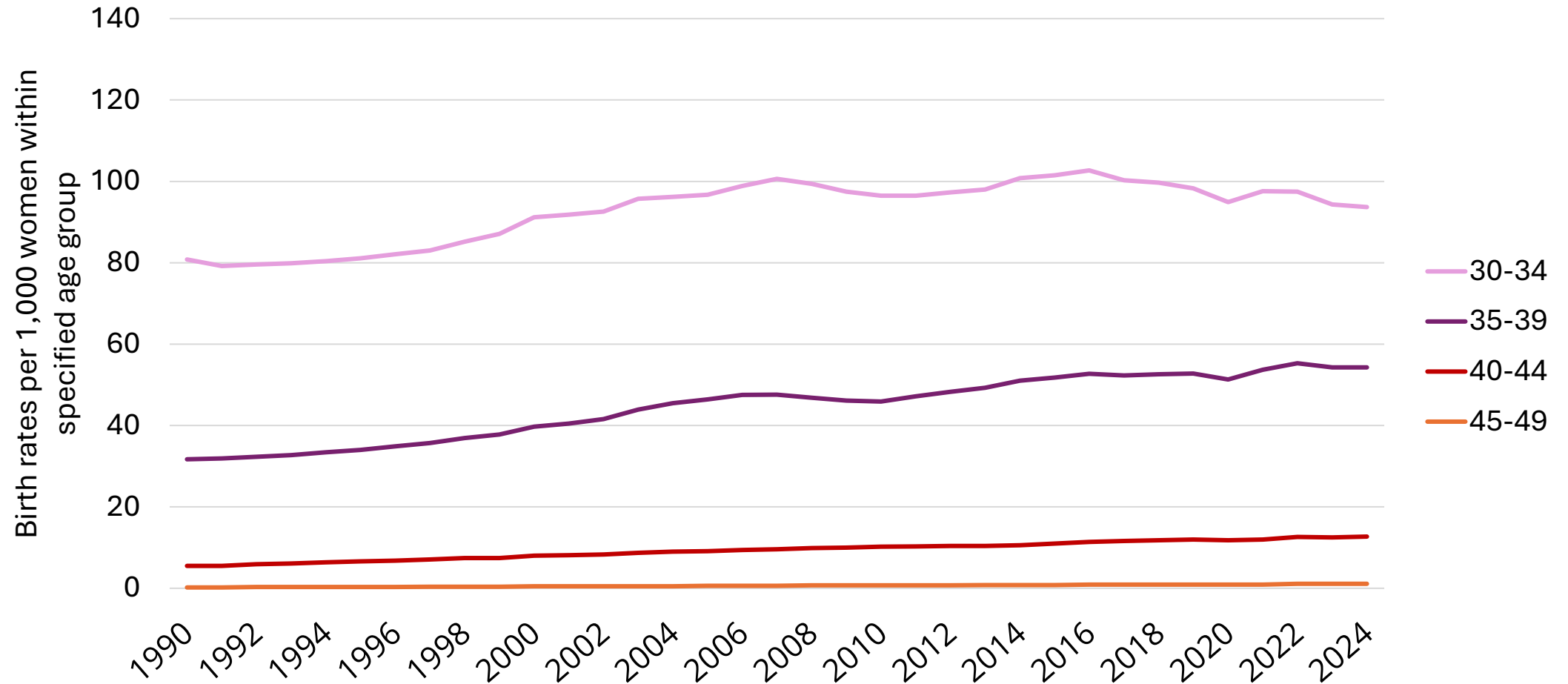
Falling birth rates among those ≤ 24
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Birth Rates by Age Group

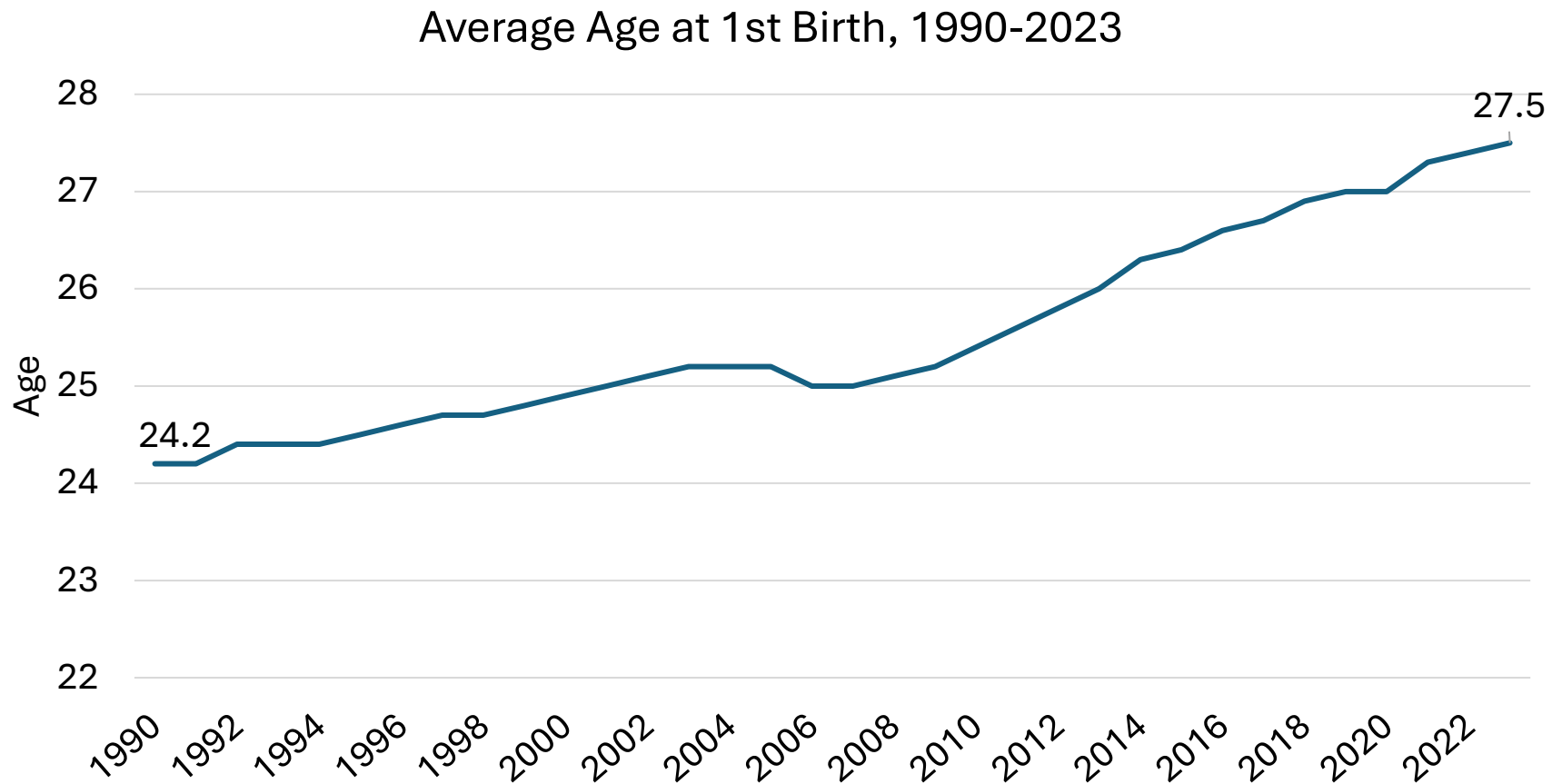


Birth Rates by Age Group

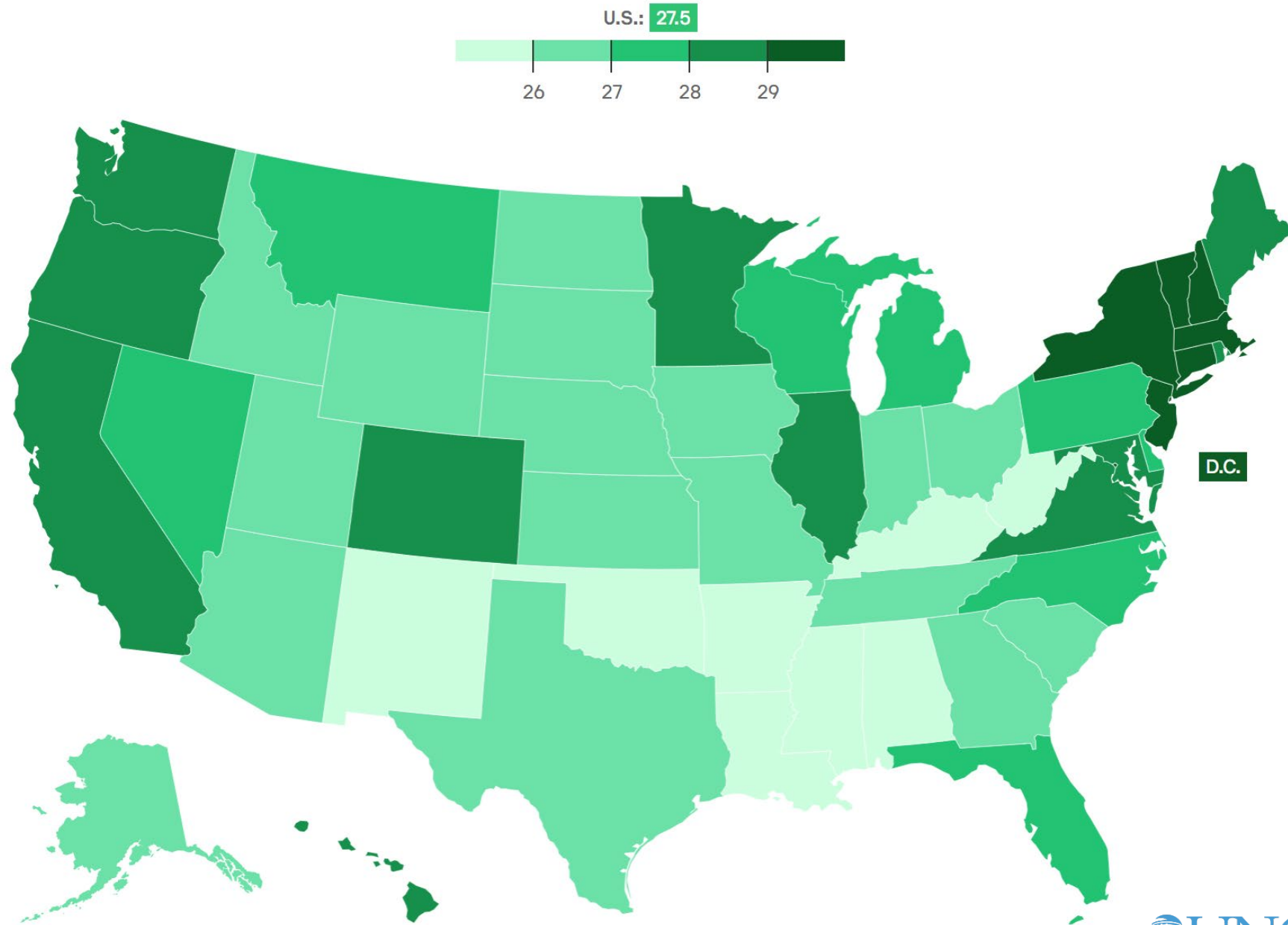


Age at First Birth

- Record high average age at 1st birth (27.5)



Average age of first-time mothers, 2023



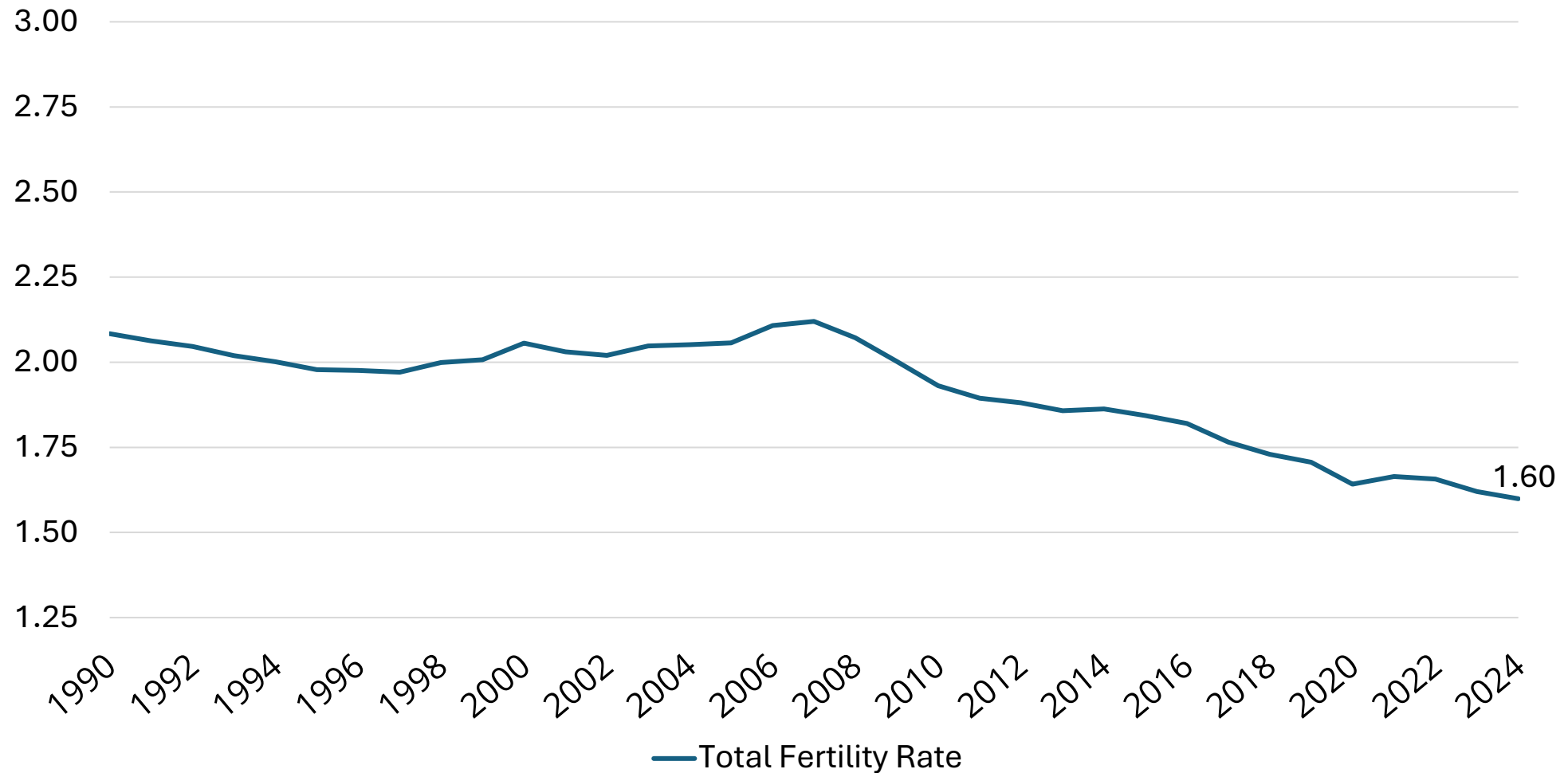
Data: CDC; Map: Alex Fitzpatrick/Axios

What Does It All Mean?

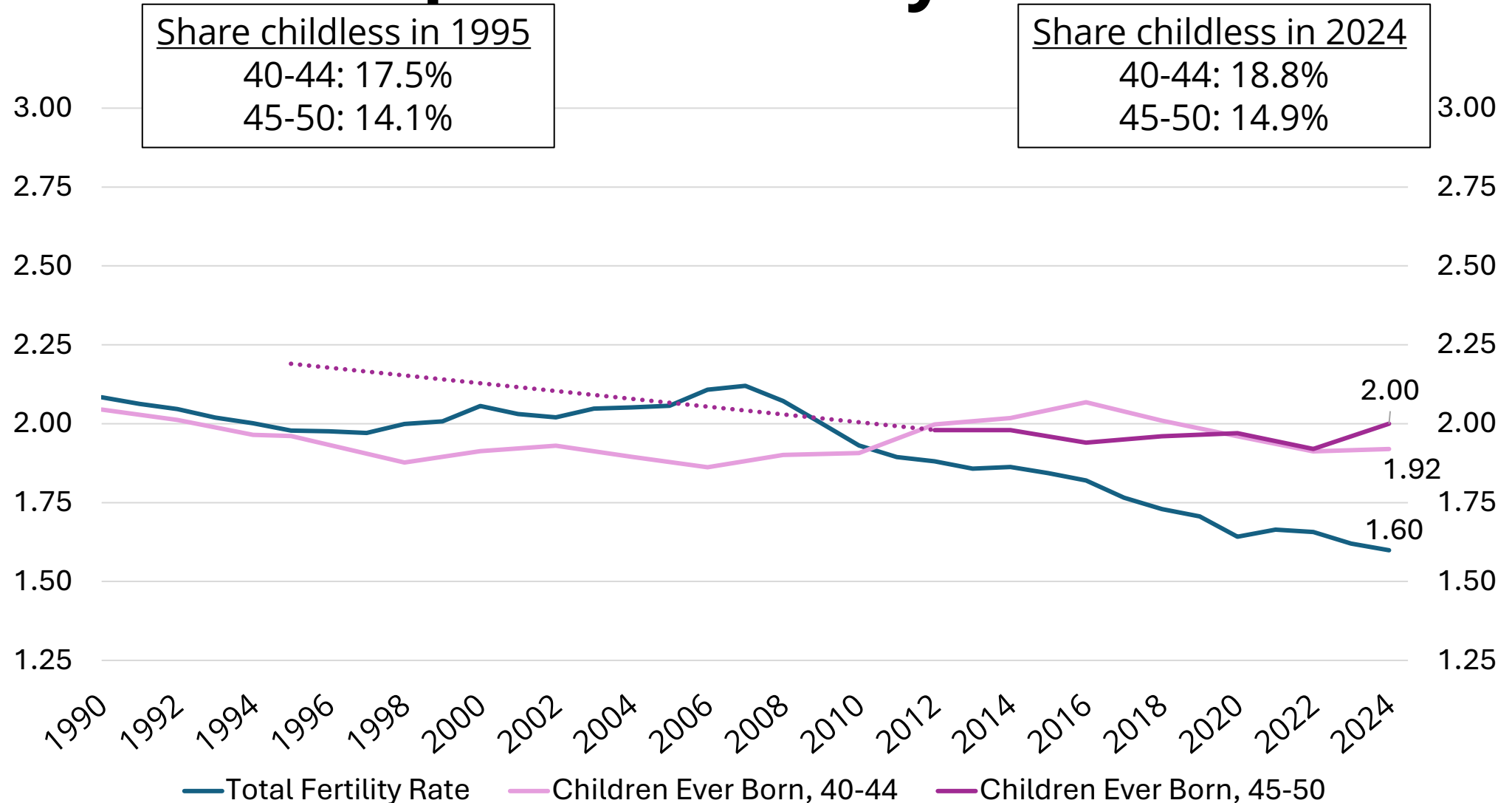
- Birth rates are down, and people are waiting longer to become parents
- The TFR is **not** a prediction of how many children women will necessarily have over their lifetime
- How many children do women actually have by the end of their childbearing years?



TFR vs Completed Fertility



TFR vs Completed Fertility



* Weighted estimates from Current Population Survey June Fertility Supplements (1990, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024)

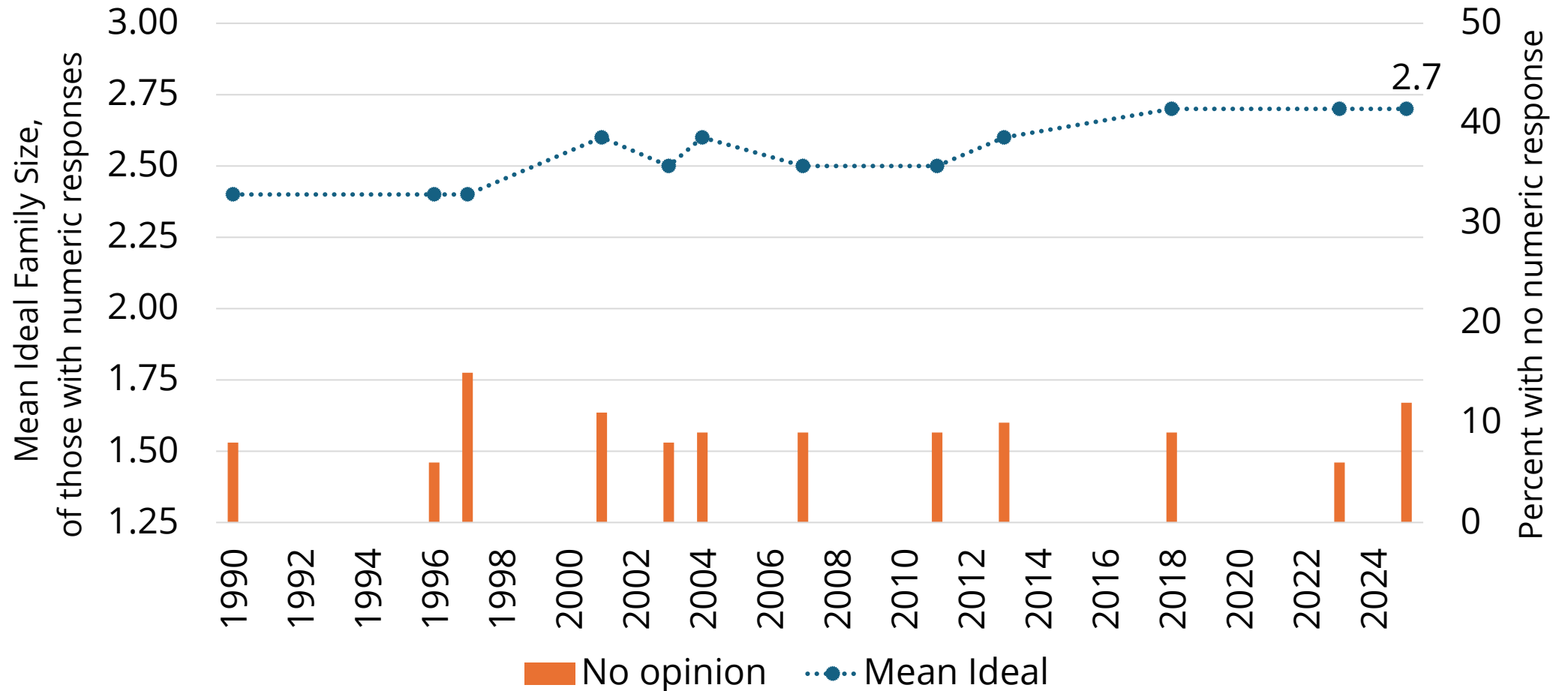
What Does It All Mean?

- Birth rates are down, and people are waiting longer to become parents
- The TFR is **not** a prediction of how many children women will necessarily have over their lifetime
- Stability in completed fertility size is consistent with trends in norms about ideal family size



Ideal Family Size

What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?



Gallup Polls (4/90, 2/96, 2/97, 5/01, 7/03, 2/04, 6/07, 6/11, 8/13, 6/18, 6/23, 7/25)

What Does It All Mean?

Declining fertility is ***not*** primarily driven by people rejecting parenthood or preferring to have only one child

Contemporary childbearing is ***conditional***

People have preferred circumstances to become a parent and/or to have another child

If those circumstances are not currently present and don't seem likely in the near future, they postpone having a(nother) child

What are the “Conditions” for Childbearing?

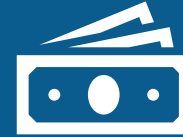
Stable, good quality
partnership



Stable, rewarding,
flexible full-time job



Financial security



Psychological health



Access to
healthcare during
pregnancy/childbirth



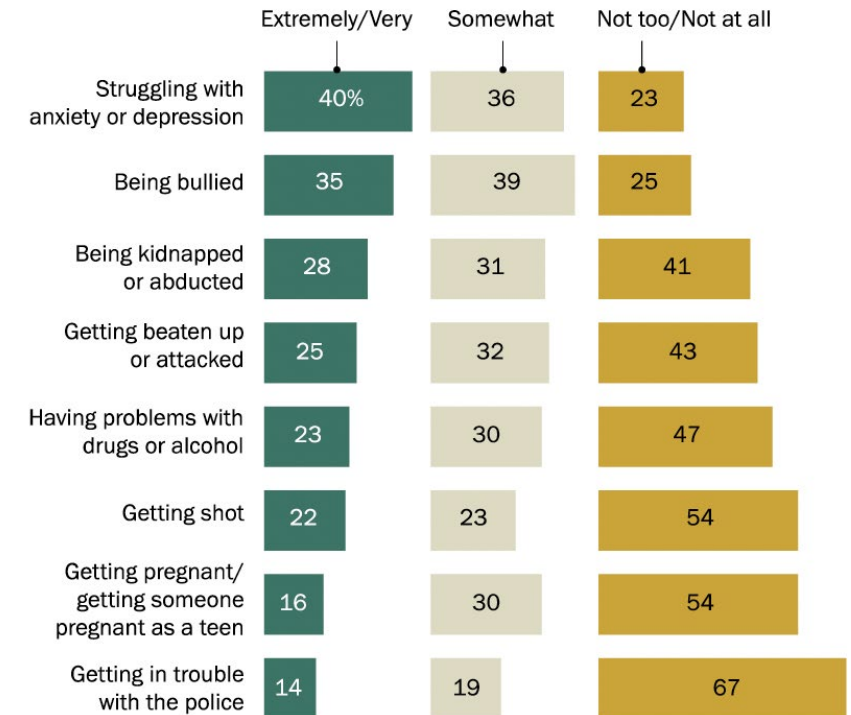
Why are These “Conditions” so Important?

Parenting is hard, and parents/would-be parents have many concerns

- Short-term
 - Mental health
 - Bullying
 - Violence
 - Screen time
 - Physical health

Mental health tops the list of parental concerns

% of parents saying they are ___ worried about each of the following happening to any of their children at some point



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.

"Parenting in America Today"

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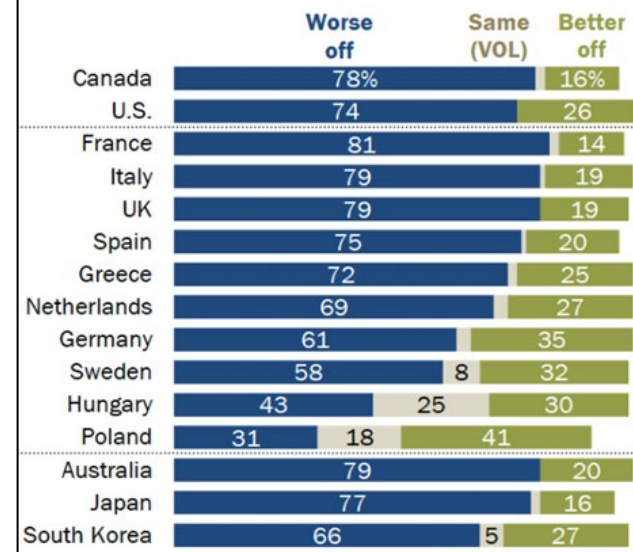
Why are These “Conditions” so Important?

Parenting is hard, and parents/would-be parents have many concerns

- Short-term
- Long-term
 - Financial security
 - Labor market options
 - Educational costs and opportunities
 - Declining intergenerational mobility/ stability

Globally, most think children will be worse off financially than their parents

% who say that when children in their country grow up, they will be ___ financially than their parents



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

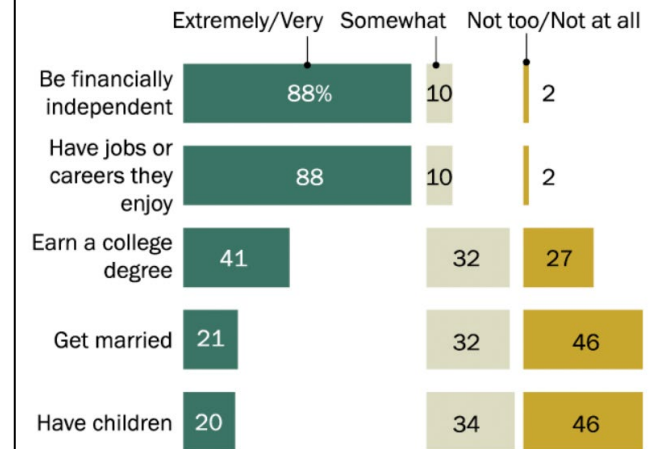
Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

“Economic Inequality Seen as Major Challenge Around the World”

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Parents prioritize financial stability, job satisfaction for their children when they reach adulthood

% of parents saying it is ___ important to them that their children do each of the following as adults



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.

“Parenting in America Today”

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Why are These “Conditions” so Important?

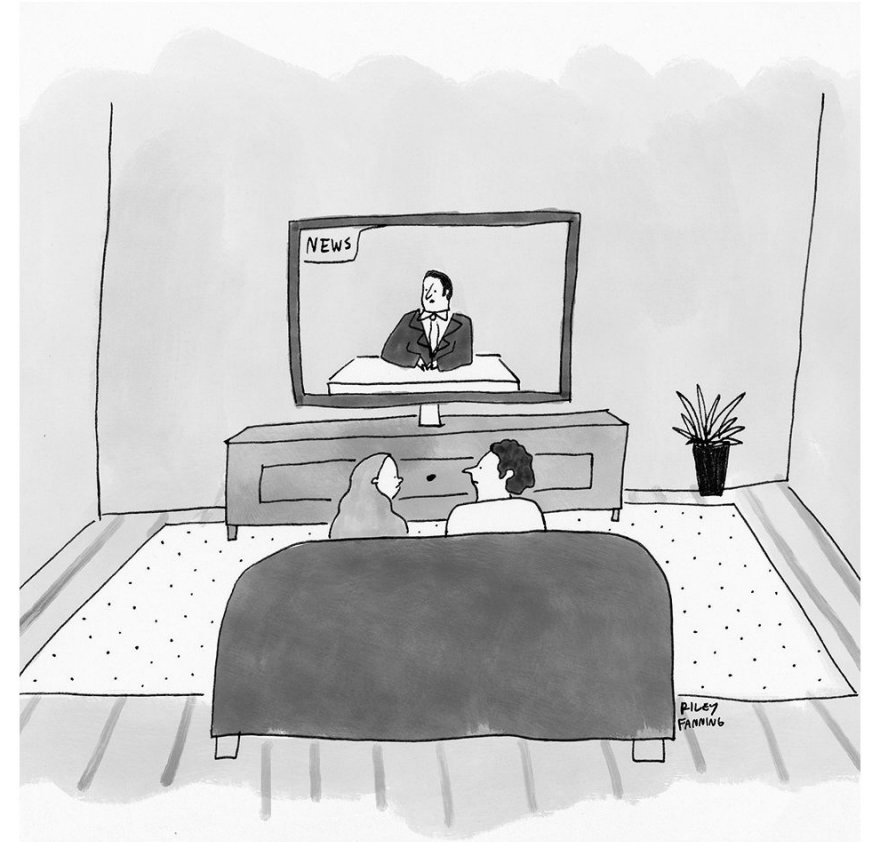
Parenting is hard, and parents/would-be parents have many concerns

- Short-term
- Long-term
- Existential
 - Climate change
 - Political polarization
 - Globalization
 - War
 - Health threats



Why are Birth Rates Low?

- Childbearing is inherently about making a commitment to the future
- People do not feel confident about their futures, so they are deciding “not now” – and doing so over and over again
 - Some will end up not having any children
 - Some will end up with fewer than they would have liked



“Wages are down, prices are up, and terror and uncertainty plague the streets, but first our top story—why aren’t women having more babies?”

Riley Fanning, The New Yorker, 9/19/25

Questions?

Thank you