For most of the past century an inverse correlation between human fertility and economic development has been found. This means that as a country got richer, the average number of children born to each woman got smaller. While in the poorest countries women often have eight children, the rate fell as low as 1.3 in some European countries such as Italy, which is below the replacement rate. Such a low rate has two likely negative consequences: the population will fall in the long term, and a growing number of old people will have to be supported by a shrinking number of young. But a recent study by researchers from Pennsylvania University suggests that this pattern may be changing. They related countries’ fertility rates to their human development index (HDI), a figure with a maximum value of 1.0, which assesses life expectancy, average income and education level. Over 20 countries now have an HDI of more than 0.9, and in a majority of these the fertility rate has started to increase, and in some is approaching two children per woman. Although there are exceptions such as Japan, it appears that ever higher levels of wealth and education eventually translate into a desire for more children.

Summary: For most of the last century, people found an inverse correlation between human fertility and economic development. It means that the richer the country, the fewer the average number of children per woman, and the poorer the country, the more children there are. In rich countries, the ratio below the replacement rate may lead to more elderly people and fewer young people , But a recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that with the exception of Japan, it seems that more and more wealth and education eventually translate into a desire for more children.