

## The Tragedy of Brexit

Brexit is a response to changes in a world that is increasingly hard to get your head around. It represents an understandable wish to stop galloping change lest we are thrown beneath its pounding feet. This fear is strongest in those areas that have seen least change, including less immigration - and so, predictably - these are the most prominent 'Leave' areas. People in remoter communities have not had the adaptation experiences of those in cosmopolitan ones.

In any case, the vast majority of these changes are beneficial. In almost every way we are safer, healthier, more prosperous, better educated, longer-lived than ever before. You are much less likely to be hurt in an accident, especially road accidents, but including everything from falls to poisoning. If you take deaths from pedestrian accidents, you are 3 times less likely to be killed today than just 50 years ago, when there were less roads. less people and fewer cars.

In almost every respect we are safer, more protected, less at risk than we ever were. So much so, that much of the risk we do experience is largely that which we impose on ourselves from poor choices. Yet our media don't EVER reflect this improved picture of civilisation. The threat from terrorists causes much more alarm than that from cars. You are 100 times more likely to be hurt by a vehicle driven by you or your neighbours than by a terrorist attack. Terrorist fears are exaggerated by the media. Don't get knocked down while worrying that the bloke in the funny clothes is a terrorist!

Brexit is also a response to the idea there are too many people chasing too few resources. This is a modern expression of something that used to be known as the population bomb. But birth rates across the developed world are dropping and the growth in world population has been falling since the 1960's. ***It is due to fall to zero or less by 2050/2070.*** This will be speeded up if we are willing to continue our investments in overseas development. As soon as a population becomes educated and healthier with greater access to resources, birth rates plummet.

By every factual measure people are healthier, live longer, are more prosperous than ever before. We have experienced the longest period of sustained peace in history, based on the recognition that war is a bad idea (rather than a heroic destiny) together with the levels of collaboration & familiarisation that freedom of movement has promoted.

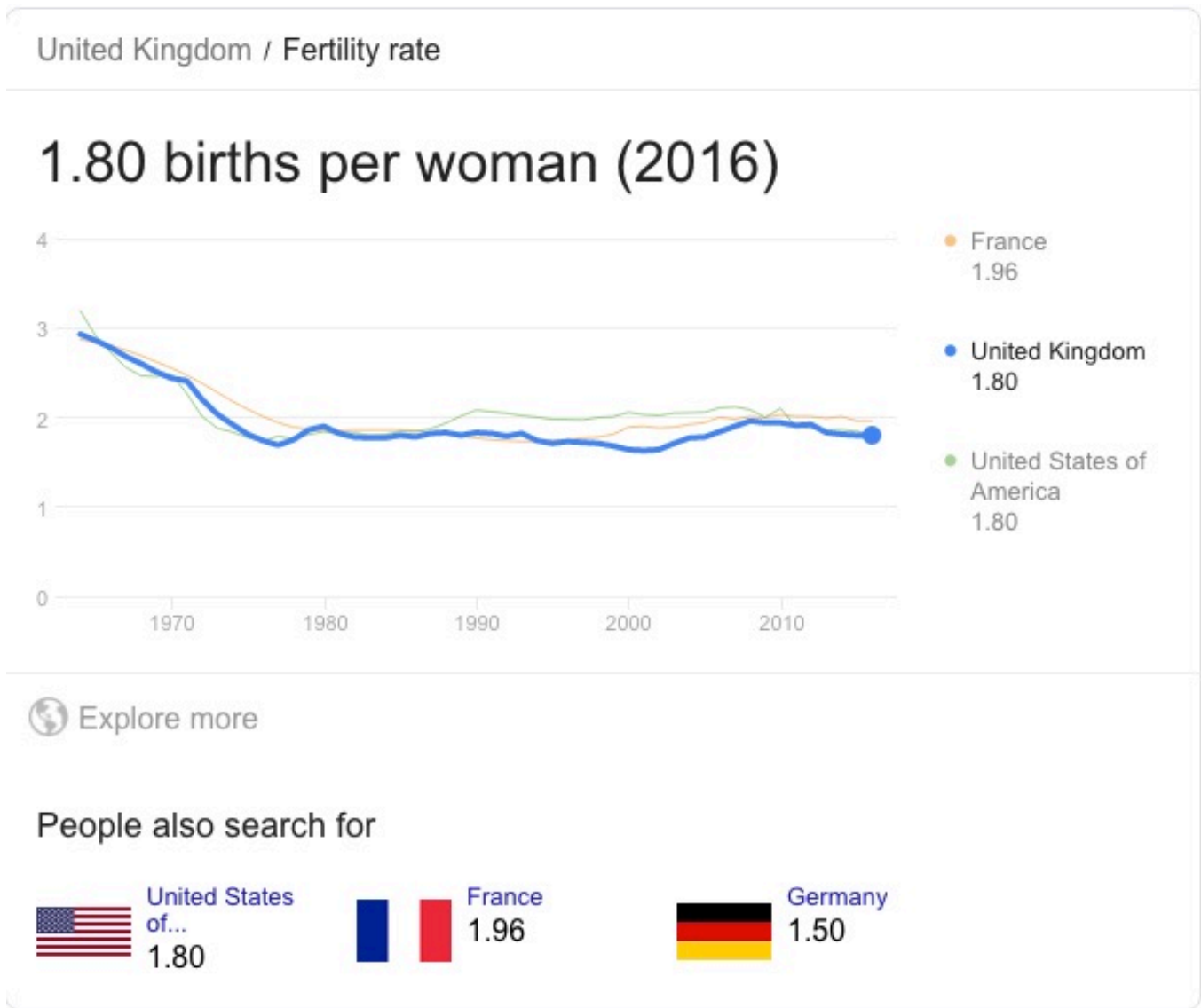
Populism tends to view cultural purity - including race - as a desirable road to well-being and an improved society. There have been many expressions of this purity, but one of the most popular, supported by cognitive and moralistic biases is that we were a purer group just a short while back. This in turn drives the populist view that we should go back to how things used to be, if we want to make progress.

Well, **it isn't racial purity that drives progress.** There are more important contributors, health, security, education and investment in public goods to name a few of them. However, race is in

some ways a convenient justification for hostility that does not take key facts into account, that underestimates the dangers of seeking to exclude others from our society.

One such uncomfortable fact is the declining birth rate in the UK and in the West generally.

Here is a graph showing the falling birth rate in the UK, USA and France:



In the analysis linked below, the Independent points out how our growing ageing population can't be supported by a shrinking working population, particularly in the domains of work and effort that many Brits seem no longer to enjoy, like outdoor maintenance work, nursing and care work. All essential parts of a sophisticated, civilised society.

Odd as it may seem, we need immigration if we are to continue enjoying public goods, like health, schools and roads. This is a problem all over the developed world, with the Japanese - the longest-lived nation on earth - experiencing some of the most acute crises. Japan is being forced to open itself up to foreigners.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-birth-rate-latest-number-babies-born-lowest-decade-a8066101.html>

The article warns that once there are tougher restrictions on immigration, we may lose the workers we need to do lower skilled jobs in the UK.

This means that if the Government is successful in its ambition to get net migration down to the 'tens of thousands' by ending freedom of movement, it could mean we find it harder to cope with the burden of an ageing population. It could also mean that your kids may have to take the kind of jobs they were hoping to avoid. Or that we will squabble over a deteriorating civilisation.

This is not some lofty, theoretical debate; it can be experienced everywhere in Britain today. If you find yourself on public transport, in hospital, at school or college you will be unable to avoid the fact that a good proportion of the people you meet, and indeed those driving you, serving you, caring for you, supporting you are...foreigners. They may be teachers, cooks, medical professionals, cleaners, carers or all of the above. We will miss them more than we know.