

BORIS, WE REALLY DO NEED MORE BABIES

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him pick out the challenge to modernity nestled amongst the bubblegum pink hues: “[Barbieland] has children, but no babies. It is a parable about the destiny of humanity.”

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In the summer of [Barbenheimer](#), everybody is now a professional movie critic. Even Boris Johnson wrote his own [film review](#) of *Barbie* in the *Daily Mail* last week. As delightfully bemusing as it is to imagine Britain’s former PM scratching his head over the feminist challenges of Miss Plastic Fantastic, I was nevertheless pleased to see him pick out one of the major challenges to modernity nestled amongst the bubblegum pink hues: “[Barbieland] has children, but no babies. It is a parable about the destiny of humanity.”

He’s right. Aside from the fact that plastic dolls have no genitals, the film depicts the war of the sexes which has ultimately contributed to a baby drought. At the start of the movie, when Barbieland is ruled by pure and extreme feminism, the Barbies are the ultimate embodiment of girl power—able to be astronauts, supreme court justices, or mermaids, simply depending on their outfits. The Kens have no place or power in this world. Dejected and emasculated, the Barbies all but ignore them as “wholly unnecessary” accessories. The only committed family unit depicted in the land—Alan, Midge, and their pregnant bump—are depicted as utter weirdos, jibed at for being ‘discontinued.’ Marriage and babies simply aren’t cool in this #girlboss dystopia.

On the flip side, when the Kens claim rule over ‘Kendom,’ the Barbies are demoted to “long-term long-distance low-commitment girlfriends.” Married Alan & Midge, and their bump, remain as misfits. Neither scenario is ripe for societal stability nor child rearing. Extreme feminism or extreme patriarchy (now more commonly depicted as red pill in internetland) both ultimately champion one sex to the detriment of the other. Society

shouldn't be a zero-sum game. It's complementarianism we need, empowering each sex to flourish according to their own unique capacities.

Boris relates the baby drought in Barbie to that in the current world. Indeed, just like in Barbieland, our UK marriage rate is perilously low. According to the last census, adults in 2021 were 44% less likely to be married today than adults in 1991. And findings from the *British Medical Journal* reveal that British adults are having less sex than ever before—both within and outside of marriage.

Where marriage and babies used to be the norm, we now find ourselves beyond the cliff-edge of a demographic precipice. Replacement fertility rate is at 2 babies per person. Our current fertility rate in the UK is 1.5 and tanking fast. Last month research from Oxford emerged that childbirth in England and Wales had fallen to its lowest recorded level in the last decade across all educational groups.

Family First

But Boris makes light of this fact in the *Mail*: "Now you or I might think that after the demographic explosion of our lifetimes ... it was positively good news that, at least in some places, we are finally beginning to reduce the sheer weight of humanity and all the destruction that we bring." He blames the movie's fertility message on Mattel's capitalist hunger for more baby customers. But here's what Boris misses: the decline in population is one that should matter deeply to all who care about our country. It's going to bring an agonizing strain on our health service, our welfare state, and our individual well-being.

Why is it so hard to get a doctor's appointment? Why is the care system such an appalling mess? The answer is simple: the welfare state is a ponzi scheme that requires many healthy young people at the bottom to support the top of the aging pyramid. People are living longer and building up more morbidity, but our upturned demographic pyramid means that there are fewer young people to look after them or to pay taxes to fund those

who look after them.

Boris is wrong to prize environmental concerns over population growth. Overpopulation alarmists frequently calculate a monstrous carbon footprint for each growing human being, forgetting that as population expands over time, so does technological innovation. For example, while "too many humans" are often blamed for famine and food shortages across the world, in fact, poverty and malnutrition have dramatically fallen globally over the last few decades. Although world population has doubled since the 1960s, food production did so long before. Humans are the problem-solvers, not the problem. And babies in any case are worth far more than the sum of their carbon footprint.

The danger of Boris' rhetoric on this is that the Conservative government has not taken the need to support and encourage family growth seriously. Policies to support mothers have put GDP first by focusing on getting women back into the workplace as soon as possible, outsourcing childcare labour to the state or to a commercial profiteer.

Empowering couples to have children, and to have the time and resources to invest in raising them, will have more benefits than simply propping up the aging population (as necessary as that is). Families make a huge contribution to a stable and thriving society. Supporting them would reduce social costs in other areas. According to the UK's Office for National Statistics, getting married makes people happier with their lives than earning big salaries does, and married people report higher life satisfaction than singles or cohabiting couples.

Children who live with married parents report better mental health. Fathers in the home are one of the strongest safeguards against adolescent poverty and crime. Women who are married are significantly less likely to be the victims of violent crime. Men who are married are less likely to perpetrate violent crimes.

It's sad that it takes a movie about a doll to highlight what conservatives should know instinctively—that family units, not wars of the sexes, serve and support individuals,

communities, and society as a whole. The government should be doing far more to enable and encourage more Midges, Alans, and Bumps. We know Rishi went to see the movie too, as per his relatable photo op on Twitter. Let's hope he took this point a whole lot more seriously than BoJo.