

# Breed or Die: Inside Pronatalism

Malcolm and Simone Collins say they want people to have more babies. But which people?

By Harry Shukman & Patrik Hermansson | Published Oct. 17, 2024



“If the alarming collapse in birth rate continues,” Elon Musk posted on X in 2022, “civilization will indeed die with a whimper in adult diapers.” The world’s richest man has become one of the most ardent advocates for reversing the decline in western birth rates, claiming it is necessary to avoid societal destruction. [...] “We wanna produce babies in this country,” Donald Trump has said on the presidential campaign trail, promising a “baby boom”. [...]

The best-known activists in the transatlantic pronatalist scene are Malcolm and Simone Collins. Former tech workers and venture capitalists, they are now the de facto spokespeople for the pronatalist movement, and have landed coverage in an impressive number of publications in the UK, the US, and Canada. [...] The overlap that pronatalism has with far-right ideology is the fear that civilisation is tumbling towards catastrophe. The way to fix this, pronatalists say, is by returning to a time when the functions and hierarchies of society were perceived to have been smarter, simpler, and purer — in this instance when women, even though they were confined to the domestic realm, had enough babies to sustain a population. [...] Malcolm and Simone Collins likewise say that low-fertility societies are staring down the barrel. [...] While they are careful to publicly disavow sexism, racism, and prejudice of any kind, they toy with controversial ideas to nudge birth rates in an upward direction. In April 2024, they published a podcast entitled: “Would Taking Away Women’s Right to Own Property Solve the Fertility Crisis?” In the video, the fast-talking couple referred to a study that found women who win the lottery tend to leave their husbands, while men who hit the jackpot stay with their wives. [...] In their videos and writings, the Collinses deride what they think has gone dramatically wrong with today’s world. They rail against the “woke mind virus”, and in one video [comment on] “How DEI Will Kill (More) People”, [...] referring to diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

A key idea that animates the Collinses is that IQ used to be higher in the early 20th century and has been steadily declining ever since, imperilling the future of society. The Collinses described these fears to our undercover reporter. “With IQ declining as much as it is,” Malcolm said, “I’m never going to convince the general population to fix that problem, and I don’t think that there’s an ethical way that you can.” This is in line with their on-record views that not enough smart people are having children. In one August 2024 podcast, Malcolm said:

“These people — the dumb ones — are going to be more and more of the general population as time goes on. And so they will be electing and building bureaucracies that make it harder and harder for the geniuses to do their jobs.”

In the same podcast, Malcolm claims that IQ is falling. [...] Malcolm calls this view “dysgenics”, which is a sister term to eugenics. If eugenics is concerned with desirable traits, then dysgenics encompasses the fear that adverse traits are damaging the gene pool, principally via low-IQ immigration and breeding. Adam Rutherford, the UCL geneticist who has publicly criticised the scientific understanding of the Collinses, told us he has not seen any meaningful data to support a view that dysgenics is occurring, adding that it is “not a term that actual geneticists would use”.

To make his case that IQ is falling, Malcolm cited a study that claims the average IQ of US university students “has been dropping by 0.2 points per year since the mid 20th century”. This, he said, was evidence of dysgenics. However, the actual paper, first published by *Frontiers in Psychology*, says something different. While it does find that IQ scores of US university students were higher in 1939 than 2022, it makes clear that this was a “necessary consequence of college and university education becoming a new norm rather than the privilege of a few”. There were far fewer students in 1940 — approximately 10 percent of young people went to university, compared to 60 percent today. This does not prove IQ is falling, just that more Americans are going to university, lowering the average. [...] The assertions of pronatalists that IQ scores are declining has prompted speculation that the movement is less concerned with the quantity of babies being born, and more with their perceived quality.