

Newcomb Institute Executive Director contributes to UNFPA State of the World 2025 Report

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Globally and nationally, including here in Louisiana, women are contending with their ability to control whether they can have children, the timing of pregnancies, and the support they need to meet the needs of the children they have or want to have.

This issue was recently a point of focus in the United Nations Population Fund's influential and much anticipated [2025 State of the World Population Report](#) in which Dr. Anita Raj, Executive Director of Newcomb Institute is a co-author and researcher.

This annual report shines a light on emerging issues in the field of reproductive health and explores the challenges and opportunities they present in international development, providing in-depth analysis, policy recommendations and significant data with authoritative and credible sources of information.

"This report specifically highlights that, while we are seeing a dramatic decline in birth rates in many country contexts including the United States, most women and men still want to have children but are facing economic, social, medical care access, and physiologic constraints affecting their ability to achieve their fertility goals and support healthy families," said Raj, who is a professor at the Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University.

Unfortunately, in many countries, policies are adding to rather than helping manage these constraints and place pressures or limitations of women to control their fertility.

“These approaches are neither beneficial in addressing declining birth rates nor in supporting the health of women, mothers, and families,” said Raj. “This report seeks to change the conversation around population and fertility, which is often framed as a crisis in which people are having too many or too few children. Instead, this 2025 report points to the real fertility crisis: the inability of so many people to exercise true, free and informed choice when it comes to sex and reproduction.”

According to Raj, the report is a call to action for governments and policymakers to understand and advance reproductive agency for all people.

“Prof. Raj’s expertise in reproductive rights informed every aspect of this report, including the core set of recommendations around creating new measures to capture and understand reproductive agency,” said Rebecca Zerzan, the editor of the report and senior editor at UNFPA. “Developing a new, holistic measure for reproductive agency is essential to creating accountable systems and policies that advance the autonomy and welfare of all people.”

Newcomb Institute and the Weatherhead SPHTM will launch the report in context to Louisiana at Tulane University in fall 2025.