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## [Soap Operas Decrease the Number of Children](#)

### *Huge effect in Brazil*

In the end, soap operas seem to be good at something: slowing down the demographical boom. At least in Brazil, they have mitigated the population growth, as signaled by a new research made at the London-based Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR). And this is not simply because Brazilian women spend less time in bed, choosing to watch TV: the model of small healthier families depicted in the soap operas works with the women's mind, making them decide for fewer children of their own. And the effects have been occurring for over 40 years. The Brazilian shows are produced by top commercial network Globo and definitely induced a "sizable but not huge effect" on the number of children in the Brazilian families, signaled one of the authors, Eliana la Ferrara. Official data show that the natality rate in Brazil has decreased from 6.3 children per woman in 1960 to 2.3 children in 2000. The soap operas have impacted especially the poorer, less educated women, who, besides having less access to other information, also made the category with the highest natality rates. "We find that, after controlling for time varying controls and for time-invariant area characteristics, the presence of the Globo signal leads to significantly lower fertility," wrote the authors. The results show that soap operas, beyond ironies and slight in some circles, have a higher effect than ever imagined in influencing less educated women in issues concerning children's education, HIV awareness, and others. This is something not to be neglected by governments in countries with high illiteracy rates. Of course, some effects can be classified from funny to bizarre: Brazilian children are today four times more likely to bear names of soap opera characters. Isaura must have turned into a national name there.