

Abstract

This paper distinguishes two approaches to the economic evaluation of the benefits of population control, the simple cost-benefit approach and the approach through macroeconomic models incorporating the population variable. While indicating some advantages of the second approach, it is suggested that the two approaches have some important common elements and some of the same important limitations. Various criticisms are categorised and reviewed. It is concluded that economists know much less than they think they know about the rate of return on population control expenditures, and that not too much weight or generality can be attached to the rather precise estimates made of the costs and benefits of a prevented birth.