# Worldbuilding Information


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# General Information

## Infertility Crisis

Worldwide industrialization came with a cost: emissions of bitoxiphosphene. Bitoxiphosphene when breathed from early childhood, especially if exposed in utero, especially especially if your mother was also exposed from early childhood, wrecks havoc on the female reproductive system. Many women are never fertile. Others become infertile at a relatively young age, such as 25 or thirty. Even fertile women will often miscarry or give birth to children with disabilities incompatible with life. (Bitoxiphosphene does not affect animals.)

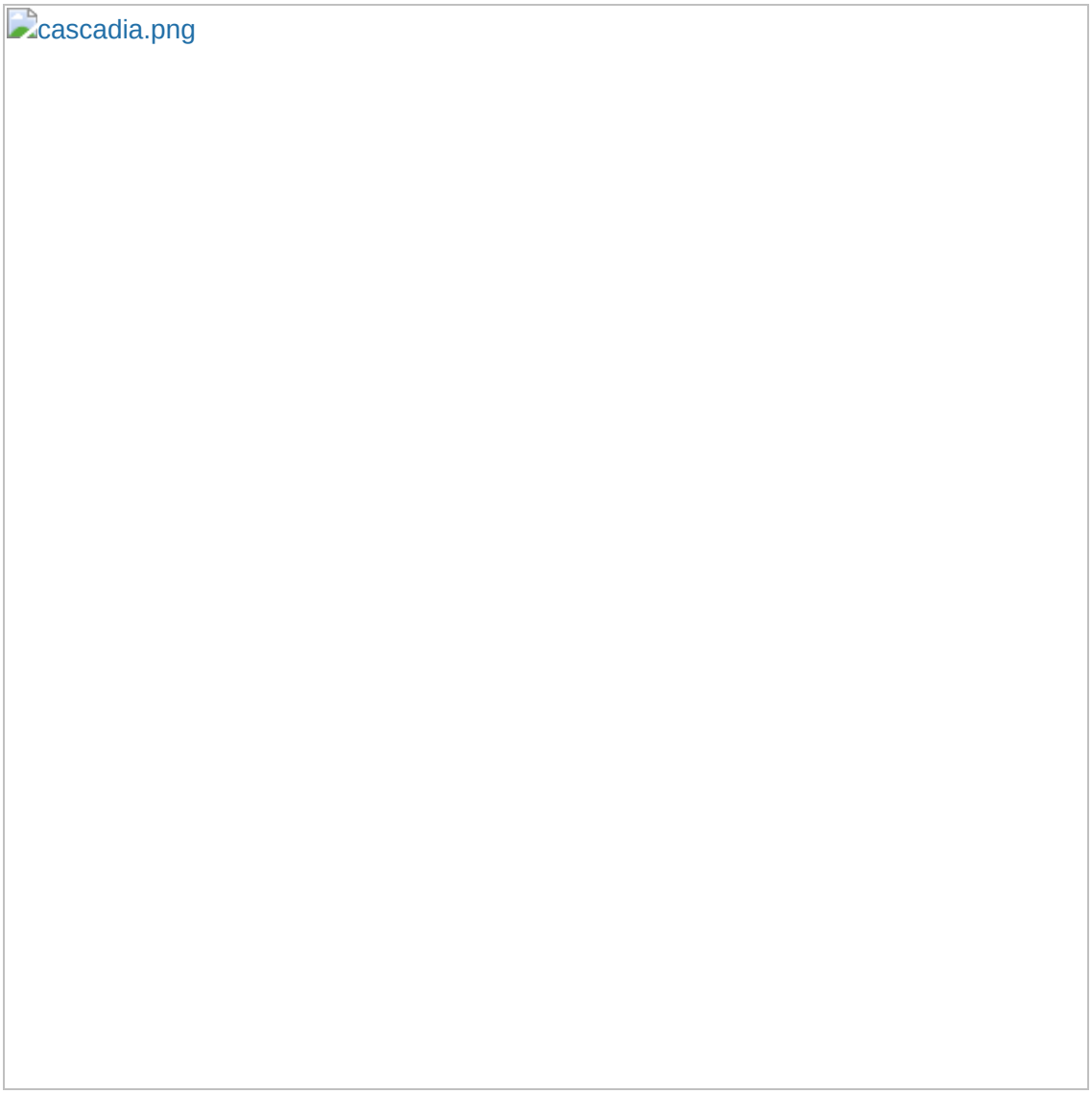
It took decades for bitoxiphosphene to build up to a level where people would notice and decades for the full effects to unfold. By then, the crisis was unstoppable. Even with strict emissions limits, bitoxiphosphene is extraordinarily hard to remove from the atmosphere, with a half-life measured in centuries. Humans are sensitive to very trace amounts. The only hope is the development of an artificial ovary and uterine replicators-- or the destruction of women's rights.

## Technology

Slightly advanced above the present day. In particular:

- Artificial womb technology allows more premature babies to survive.
- Delivery drones instead of mailpeople
- Self-driving trucks on freeways, but no self-driving cars on major roads.
- Excellent VR tech, including touch, sound, and sight (but not taste or smell).
  - VR tech is used for porn, video games, and playing-with-babies simulators.

## Geography




The former USA is divided into Gilead, Cascadia and Deseret, with Mexico having claimed some of the southern states. Alaska is part of Canada and Hawaii is part of Cascadia. For more information on individual countries, see their wiki pages. (Map by Kaylin)

# Timeline

Late 1700s: Industrial revolution. First emissions of bitoxiphosphene.

1940s: Bitoxiphosphene first linked to growing infertility rates.

1960s: Founding of Gileadite sect; rapid growth due to Gileadite belief that surrogacy is sacred

1970s: Widespread acceptance that bitoxiphosphene causes infertility; strict bitoxiphosphene limits imposed

1990s: The Clarence Thomas hearings opportunistically taken advantage of by Gileadites; leads to sexual harassment law that makes it expensive to employ women. Bill Clinton resigns in disgrace after the Lewinsky scandal.

2000s: Half of Americans Gileadite.

2021: Terrorist attack on the State of the Union address; kills President, most of Congress. Gileadite coup. Deseret and Cascadia secede.

2022: Nuclear bombing of Cascadia. Cascadia-Gilead war. In the chaos, Mexico conquers much of the Southwest.

2040-2055: Present day.

## Olympics

The Olympics are permanently in Greece.

## Star Wars

Star Wars is identical until it was bought by Disney. The Force Awakens was the subject of backlash by fans due to its reveal that the Force is an Aslan-like Secret Jesus.

## Tumblr

Tumblr is a Gileadite website intended for art-sharing. However, Tumblr is a badly programmed hellsite in every universe. Specifically, the content filters that are supposed to block porn, information about other religions, etc. don’t work super-well. For this reason, Tumblr has become popular among rebellious Gileadites, as well as Cascadians, Canadians, and Mexicans who’d like to talk with them.

# Canada

Canada is screwing the pooch with regards to the infertility crisis. Surrogacy is illegal for those under the age of 21, because we don't want to coerce teenagers into doing things. Parents strongly frown on girls getting married until they've graduated college at least. Many families where the woman is fertile choose to have only one or two children. Surrogacy is so expensive that most infertile parents can only afford one child. You can have a full-time job as a surrogate.

One of the reasons Canada limits surrogacy so much is due to cultural trauma. Thousands of First Nations children were removed from their families and adopted out, often advertised on television. Many went to the States, particularly to Gileadite families. The scandals once this came out left Canada permanently leery of anything that smacks too much of baby-selling.

Gilead takes in Canadian refugees who are desperate to have children and willing to mouth things about the evils of homosexuality.

Canada feels very superior to Gilead.

# Cascadia

The former states of Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and North California.

Cascadia was founded when the United States of America was taken over by fundamentalist Christians. Immediately after its founding, Gilead nuked the SF Bay Area, Portland, and Seattle, killing eight million people. This gives them a little bit of a complex.

The two largest Cascadian parties are the Libertarian Party and the Socialist Party. Gay marriage is legal, while poly marriage is controversial. There are no criminal penalties for sex work, and sex workers receive equal protection under the law (e.g. they get unemployment insurance and worker's compensation); sex work is *not* regulated beyond the normal regulations for any industry. Refugees are welcomed. There is a generous welfare state, but the welfare state is constantly overburdened because of radiation sickness and the fertility crisis.

Cascadia is fairly rural, in part because all of its big cities were nuked, and in part because of the trauma resulting from all of its big cities being nuked. It has no capital city, because it fears that a capital city would be too tempting to Gileadite bombing; government business is conducted in encrypted chatrooms.

Cascadia has a surprisingly good college system, because many colleges moved to Cascadia when Gilead took over. MIT moved to Cascadia but kept its name.

Cascadia has a lot of youth-rights-y positions on most issues, in part because many teenagers are having children and that makes it harder to argue that they shouldn't be allowed adult rights. You get the right to vote at 18, or when you have passed a basic civics test. If you have passed the GED test, you can get your high school diploma and begin working.

The right of the worker to unionize is strongly protected. Professions that require a license are rare, and licenses must be narrowly tailored to protect public safety: for example, daycare providers are required to take classes on child safety and first aid, but are not required to have a degree.

## Alcohol and Drug Regulation

There are three classes of illegal drugs. The first, which includes heroin, tobacco, and cocaine, is administrative-penalty drugs. Growing, using, or selling these drugs is an administrative offense, similar to a traffic ticket. You will go before an arbitration board whose purpose is to try to convince you to stop using drugs, and who has available a wide variety of sanctions, including fines, community service, suspension of licenses, removal of your right to carry a gun, bans on visiting certain places or associating with certain people, or requirements to report periodically to to the committee. Sanctions will usually be removed if you can prove you're in treatment. The arbitration board is not intended to be punitive; people have been removed from the board after accusations that they punished people for drug use.

The second-- which includes MDMA, mushrooms, LSD, anabolic steroids and amphetamines, as well as some drugs we'd consider more straightforwardly medical, such as HRT and antidepressants-- is informed-consent drugs. To receive a prescription for one of those drugs, you have to spend half an hour with a nurse, who explains to you the benefits and risks of the drug and certifies that you're not currently psychotic or incapable of understanding the risks of the drug. In some cases, such as amphetamines, you have to return to the nurse once every six months so they can certify that you are not addicted. Illegal distribution of informed-consent drugs goes before the drug arbitration board.

The third is recreational drugs, which includes marijuana, alcohol, and ecigarettes. Recreational drugs are heavily taxed, based on the amount of active ingredient there is in the substance; marijuana is taxed less severely than alcohol or nicotine, and nonalcoholic drinks are subsidized. Recreational drugs must include prominently placed, clearly written information about the risks. There are various nudges to encourage responsible drug use: for example, Happy Hours

are illegal, government-sponsored organizations are not allowed to sponsor bar crawls, and taxes are lower in pubs and bars (to encourage social drug use instead of solitary drug use).

Drug treatment is usually CBT. Drug-assisted treatment for opiates is strongly encouraged. Maintenance heroin is available with a prescription from a doctor for patients for whom methadone has not worked.

# Babies

Teen surrogacy is aggressively encouraged as a responsible course to get your life set up right. Cascadia is gambling that teen pregnancy can be made a responsible decision because the grandparents can be the baby's primary caregivers and it's easier to get government-run schools to all accommodate teen parents than to get workplaces to all accommodate pregnant people. Every high school has a free day care center.

Sex education is like "it is very important you have babies right now and if you don't you'll regret it. Here, listen to our guest speaker, she's seventeen and has three children and is going to MIT."

Guest speaker: "I knew I was ready for sex and babies when I was fourteen but not everyone is! Some people need to wait until seventeen or even nineteen, and some people never want kids at all! Some people are ready for kids and not sex, and that is why we have artificial insemination centers! Be sure to talk to your parents before reproducing! Here are some pamphlets about surrogacy. Please note that if you have two babies before going to college then college is free."

About half of pregnant teenagers are surrogates, while about half choose to raise their children themselves. Some surrogates decide they want to keep the baby after all when they get pregnant and have pregnancy hormones. That's most likely with parents who are enthusiastic about grandkids. There are a nonzero number of grandparents who are like "my sixteen-year-old has a healthy pregnancy! This is my ONE SHOT at grandkids! I am NOT going to give it away to some nice couple!"

Even in Cascadia, teenage pregnancy is not an amazing idea. You are creating a permanent connection between yourself and a guy you were TOTALLY IN LUUUUUURRRRVE with when you were fifteen. You're making a permanent commitment to a huge responsibility at fifteen, which a lot of people do end up regretting. Usually the grandparents end up doing most of the childrearing, but not always. It kind of sucks for the grandparents too, because they totally thought they were done with babies and now they have to deal with night wakings again at age 50. Surrogates sometimes experience birth parent regret. To some extent, Cascadians are taking advantage of the fact that teenagers think they are immortal and nothing bad will ever happen to them to convince them to have babies in spite of the risk that the child will have to be euthanized. Teenage parents are more likely than average to have complicated pregnancies.

Cascadia has a family-lawyer full employment program. The following people have the right to visitation: genetic parents, the gestating parent, and all social parents. A social parent is a person who has played a parental role for at least six months, where "parental role" is defined as things like "how often did you feed the kid? Did you take the kid to doctors' appointments? Were you on the list of people allowed to pick them up from school? Did you financially support the kid?" Paid caregivers cannot become social parents. Child support does not exist in Cascadia; if you don't have child custody, you don't have obligations to the child, just a legally enforceable right to visitation.

The gestating parent gets default custody, although if they were paid for a baby and didn't produce a baby they have to give the money back. If the gestating parent is a teenager, then their parents get default custody instead of the gestating parent. After that, it goes to genetic mother, genetic father, and then social parents in order of how much caregiving they did.

There are, in general, three ways to progress down the list of who gets child custody. The first is to have the person with child custody go "no, I don't want it." A parent can voluntarily relinquish custody at any time. The most common case of this is grandparents giving up custody of ten-year-olds to their twenty-five-year-old children. You can relinquish custody even if you are the only parent; the Cascadian position on the issue is that if you're a shitty enough parent that you want to put your kid in foster care, we definitely don't want you to be a parent.

The second is to show to a preponderance-of-the-evidence standard that the person is an unfit parent. Examples of things that will get someone declared an unfit parent: swearing at, insulting, putting down, or humiliating children;

making them afraid that they will be physically hurt; physical violence directed at children; making a kid feel like they are not loved or important; not being able to give a child enough food, clean clothes, sufficient medical care, and a stable housing situation; being in an abusive relationship; being an alcoholic or drug user; being severely mentally ill, including suicide attempts; committing crimes. A controversial issue is whether ordinary disciplinary spanking should cause someone to be considered an unfit parent. The last four are not something that will cause CPS to preemptively take away your children, but if someone says “so-and-so is severely mentally ill and drinks a lot and attempted suicide twice last year, I can provide the child a more stable environment,” you are probably going to lose custody.

The third is to have the child articulate a preference to be raised by a particular parent. Over the age of thirteen, this preference is taken extremely seriously.

One advantage of the Cascadian Full Employment Program for Family Lawyers is that in many situations where in our society the kid would be put in foster care, in Cascadia the child is given to one of their other fourteen parents.

Abortion is legal and easier to obtain than it is in most of the US. Before you obtain an abortion, you are legally required to talk to a counselor, who screens for coercion and informs the patient about the many services available for pregnant people and that she could earn seventy thousand dollars by placing the child up for adoption. Some people think that the counselors should have to tell people that having abortions is morally wrong because of the fertility crisis. This is pretty controversial, because most abortions are for serious mental or physical health issues or because the patient was raped.

Cascadia, as a country, is strongly pro-euthanasia for children with disabilities incompatible with life. If you don’t give permission for the doctor to euthanize the disabled baby as soon as it’s born (as opposed to giving the baby lots of painkillers and letting it live as long as it can), everyone will gossip about how you’re a shitty parent. There are many differences of opinion about “saying goodbye to your baby and leaving” vs. “I want to be cuddling my child at the last minute of their lives” vs. “this is an INDIVIDUAL CHOICE don’t JUDGE IT.”

## Elders and Disabled People

Most elders and disabled people stay inside their homes. This is glossed as trying to preserve independence, but is definitely at least a little bit about trying to get the work to be done by robots and gig economy workers as long as possible. Elder care robots can recognize common health problems and have a simple naturalistic interface. UBI for elderly people exists, even though it is not yet extended to everyone else. Home health care aides are one of the big gig economy jobs. Nursing-home nurses are unionized and well-paid; one political issue is “we should unionize the home health aides” versus “where, exactly, do you think the money for that should come from?”

Euthanasia is legal. While no one will pressure you into it exactly, if you’re expected to, say, have a year to live there’s definitely a sense that the Right Thing To Do is to go into a hospice, wrap up your affairs, and arrange for euthanasia. Euthanasia is also legal for people with severe, incurable disabilities that are compatible with life. Every so often you get articles like “Heartwarming! Area Disabled Man arranges his own funeral! Eulogies were given by all twelve people expected to receive his organs! Restores your faith in humanity!”

# Deseret

Deseret includes the territory formerly known as Utah and all of the darkest-colored counties on this map which are contiguous with Utah, except for the long pokey ones (Navajo, AZ and Rio Blanco, CO) which it has only the nearer half or so of. While it has freedom of religion within the limits of its other laws (for instance, alcohol is illegal throughout Deseret, so good luck holding a communion with wine involved) it is both overwhelmingly and formally a Mormon state. There is a secular government but it doesn't hold secularism as a particular virtue, money flows pretty freely between church and state, the church handles things other countries might handle with public welfare programs, etcetera.

## Migration

Deseret accumulated Mormons from around the world as things trended more dystopian and religiously controlling. While there are still Mormons elsewhere in the world in places that are friendly to religious pluralism, Deseret has thriving expat communities from various South American countries, Canada, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and several European nations. They are happy to accept tourism but tourists get bothered by missionaries A Lot.

It is legal to emigrate from Deseret; however, if you look like you might be leaving permanently and you didn't get your church authorities on board with your plan, especially if you're moving somewhere without much LDS presence, you are obliged to first spend a couple days talking to missionaries about this decision. The missionaries will try to find out what isn't working for you about life in Deseret, and try to hook you up with resources to make things work out for you, and try to convince you that God wants you to live in Deseret.

## Missionaries

Unlike the real life Mormon church, in Deseret sister missionaries are vanishingly uncommon, since women are often married well before the age at which they'd start, but if someone makes it to age 21 without being married yet she can serve a mission. Elders (male missionaries) are slightly less common than in real life, as fewer foreign countries welcome them and they still do the "obey the law of the land" thing. Senior couple missionaries, on the other hand, are more common than in real life - retired married couples jointly performing missionary service. There are proselytizing missionaries, but missionaries may spend some or all of their time on humanitarian work or administrative church tasks. Missionaries also do emigrant exit interviews and some social-work-like functions, including regular meetings with children of non-Mormon families.

## Religion

Non-Mormon religions are tolerated in Deseret. They get bothered by missionaries - a lot - but if you don't mind doing your Shabbat with grape juice and politely turning away a doorbell-ringer twice a week you can be Jewish here, they have a small but robust Muslim demographic, etc. These religions do not enjoy special state protection (the synagogues and mosques have to pay taxes), are not lovingly portrayed in Deseret media, will encounter a lot of ignorance and confusion about their practices, and their adherents are unlikely to ascend to political office (the overwhelming majority votes a straight church endorsement slate, with a few higher-up political offices formally reserved for full-tithe-paying active LDS with temple recommends), but they aren't actively persecuted... unless you count the requirement that they let their kids talk to an LDS missionary pair once a month ages five to sixteen. The missionaries are mostly there trying to convince the kids to join the LDS church, but they double as religiously-discriminatory child protective services where called for - if you ask your visiting missionary to remove you from your house they will whisk you away and place you with an LDS foster family.

LDS offshoots, most notably the FLDS, are also allowed. The FLDS are grudgingly permitted to exist, practice, and do the polygamy thing. The polygamy thing produces a lot of restless teenage boys who have no realistic prospects of getting married since most of the girls have been paired off at age twelve with men in their forties, and these teenage boys are easy pickings for the missionaries. Sometimes the girls are whisked off too if they don't fancy marrying middle

aged men. If current demographic trends continue the FLDS will cease to exist sometime in 2070 as the older members die off and the remainder fail to have enough children to keep up with attrition. The FLDS are mad about it.

The LDS will baptize you after you are dead if they can get enough information about who the heck you were to do that. They have stopped being polite about not doing it to Holocaust victims and suchlike. Some people spend a lot of time being proxies for these baptisms as a church calling.

If you are a member of the church, instead of missionaries you get home teachers (for families) and visiting teachers (by and for women). Most people in the church both teach and are taught in this way but more active members will have a higher number of teachees.

# Names

Deseret families name kids weird things. Biblical names are popular especially where held by Mormon historical figures ("Joseph"), but so are names from Mormon scripture ("Nephi"), popular culture especially Mormon-derived ("Luet" - Orson Scott Card exists and wrote similar books but with modified Earth geopolitics), and inventive syllable jumbles particularly if they have lots of Ys ("Kaydyn"), plus a few individual names of different provenance that happened to take root in the Deseret imagination ("Brighten"). There are also smatterings of foreign names from the expats that have leaked into the surroundings ("Hélio", "Kairi").

# Life Script

Deseret citizens can get married as early as twelve with parental consent (it's still not very common), and sixteen without. The Optimally Respectable And Mainstream Life Path for a Deseret girl is to get engaged at sixteen and married at seventeen, to either a boy your age or a returned missionary who will be 20-21. (Either sort of husband is fine but holding out for a missionary is a social climber sort of thing to do.) You move in with one or the other set of parents, or university housing if applicable, till your husband has an established income that lets you move out while still tithing (you can also have a job, especially if you know you're infertile or plan to drop it once you have a baby; this is not expected, especially not if your career takes priority over your husband's in your family decision making, but it's not unrespectable, just irregular and noteworthy). You can go to college but you don't have to and caring too much about it is understood to be kinda classist. You do Relief Society work and whatever other church callings your bishop hands you. You have kids if you can and get grandparent and Relief Society help with them. If you fail at this life path, perhaps because you're picky about husbands or husbands are picky about you, then you can achieve moderate respectability by becoming a sister missionary at age 21 for a year and a half and then trying again to get married. (This is also a good fallback if you kinda don't want kids and want to give the bitoxiposphene another few years to do its work on you.)

The Optimally Respectable And Mainstream Life Path for a Deseret boy is complement to the above - either get married at 17-18, or wait, start a mission at eighteen, come back and do college if you're gonna do college, and marry a sixteen-year-old (or a script-delayed girl your age). You do your church callings, you conduct your career honestly and diligently but don't bring your work home with you, you strive to provide for your family, you try to have kids, you raise your kids to follow their life scripts.

In general it is frowned upon to pursue or express individuality by being queer, wearing clothes unlike what everyone else is wearing, having an unconventional family structure or not cultivating your family life at all, or being differently religious or irreligious. Mainstream Deseretians would say that these are shallow, fake forms of individuality and real individuality comes from engaging deeply with your family and community, and maybe stories that speak to you. Deseretians might seem weirdly Stepfordian and samey to outsiders but consider those outsiders to be settling for a pathetic facsimile of the real thing.

If you fail at your life script, you will get a mix of your neighbors aggressively Practicing Charity And Forgiveness At You in the hopes that they will be a good example, and people shunning you and cutting you off from opportunities of various kinds because they Just Can't Condone That Sort Of Thing. If you fail (or suffer bad luck) in a way that means you need help beyond what the occasional casserole from the Relief Society can manage, there is a kind of Basic Jobs Guarantee: you can work at an unskilled church-owned operation, such as a food storage plant or DI (formerly known as Deseret Industries and now named solely by its initialism; mormon goodwill), and earn a limited but livable wage. If

you can't even do that, you can still get pretty good welfare up to and including free housing if your family can't step in there, at the cost of lots of interaction with churchy people.

# Children

The age of majority is sixteen for everything. When you're sixteen you can legally drive, get married without parental approval, live on your own, etcetera. (There is no drinking age, since alcohol is illegal.) The minimum age for marriage with parental approval is 12.

Deseret has "pro-adoption" policy. Children in questionable circumstances - and "questionable" is a pretty broad brush - can pretty easily be taken away and given to a nice infertile Mormon couple to raise. (They could be given to a fertile Mormon couple but in practice the social services that place the children pray about it and tend to find that Heavenly Father wants the baby to go to a couple who does not have their own children through no fault of their own.) The adoptions are typically closed and can be sealed in the temple, spiritually uniting the adoptee with the parents.

Boy Scouting is popular.

# Laws

Abortion is illegal in Deseret outside of extreme circumstances where church leaders (at least your stake president - determined geographically even if you are not a church member - and possibly higher-ups) agree; they might agree if the mother will otherwise die, or if the child is the product of rape or incest, and every now and then someone can get one for a fetus that won't survive outside the womb but this is even rarer.

Alcohol, recreational drugs including tobacco, and coffee are illegal throughout Deseret. Tea is grayish-market; technically caffeinated tea is illegal but it's easy enough to smuggle around as "chamomile" that you can pretty much get it if you want it. You're unlikely to get in serious trouble over coffee you use to flavor your ice cream or chocolate cake, and you can have all the Mountain Dew you want. They take alcohol and tobacco more seriously.

Divorce is legal with a bishop's recommendation (or higher authority if you are married to the bishop). Most bishops will rubber-stamp it if you were married in a non-LDS context with dubious consent or a plural marriage, especially if you were under 16 at the time and have been removed from your non-LDS home. You can also usually get one for spousal adultery, abandonment, or abuse of you or your kids unless your bishop really ships it and wants you to work it out. It is harder to get a divorce if your marriage has been sealed in the temple, and even if you get one in that case you might not get a cancellation of sealing - women need to have prior sealings cancelled to remarry (even if their husband is in fact dead), but men do not.

Birth control is legal with a bishop's permission. A doctor's note usually suffices, if you have a medical reason to not want to be pregnant; just not wanting kids will get you reminded that some nice childless couple would want your kid and Heavenly Father might be calling you to provide one.

Non-Mormons still technically "have" Mormon bishops, stake presidents, etc., since these are determined geographically, and are advised to know who they are and how to get ahold of them if they need to

Thanks to the FLDS, polygynous (but not polyandrous) marriage is legal. It's socially costly to practice or arrange it, but some people do it anyway, especially if they really want children.

There are modesty laws. Men may not be topless in public. Women may breastfeed but not otherwise be topless in public. You may incur minor fines in Deseret for immodesty comparable to a particularly draconian high school dress code (exposed shoulders, short shorts/skirts, crop tops) if you are noticed by a bored police officer.

Homosexual sex acts are a crime for both sexes. Transition is illegal. Reparative therapy is the usual response to a queer-seeming minor; a queer-seeming adult will get lots of community concern, but unless they actually get caught doing queer things it's not illegal outright. (If someone tried to start a GSA or something that would get shut down smart quick though.) Penalties vary from court-ordered therapy and community service to something like a restraining order

against both participants in the sex from getting near each other or even a few months or years in jail for repeat offenders.

The internet is censored at the federal level for pornography and violent media; there's a small industry of editing same out of foreign films.  Most people in Deseret voluntarily install filters that mince swear words (optionally with color coding or other markings so they can know that whoever they're reading is the sort of person who swears).  "Corrupting" sorts of content from countries which do not allow Mormon missionaries is censored ideologically; however, it is considered important to be able to understand the culture of countries which do allow missionaries, so in practice you can access anything you want through a Cascadian or Canadian proxy.

# Gilead

What's left of the United States.

The Republic of Gilead is run by the Gileadites, an evangelical sect. The Gileadites consider surrogacy to be one of the most sacred things a woman can do. Sixteen-year-olds are strongly encouraged to become surrogates for infertile families. Some stay at home to do surrogacy, while others become Handmaids. A Handmaid lives with a good Christian family who keeps an eye on her, exposes her to more of the world, and gives her a chance to court some eligible boys, in exchange for her giving them a baby. In recent years, fertile female criminals have also become Handmaids to respectable families; the idea is that they rehabilitate her and she gives them children.

An exception to Gilead's general habit of harassing non-Christians is its creepily philo-Semitic attitude towards Jewish people. Jewish people are subject to different regulations, which are set by the ultra-Orthodox advisors to the Gileadite government. For example, ISPs censor different things for Jewish people than for non-Jewish people, and the government funds yeshivas.

## Academia

Homeschooling is strongly encouraged, but many women don't homeschool. The Gileadites preserved the public school system, but changed it. Gileadite schools are Creationist, teach mandatory theology classes, teach abstinence-only sex education, and only let students read books that depict good moral character. Schools no longer teach the atheist lie of set theory.

Gilead has removed all government funding (including e.g. Pell grants) from colleges that teach heresies. Some schools, such as Harvard, stopped taking government funding. Some closed. Others moved to Cascadia, Canada, or (if a Catholic institution) Mexico. Still others, such as most state schools, accepted it and stopped teaching heretical things.

Censorship wasn't actually a large change for many schools. Teaching evolution in biology class was already iffy for any school that relied heavily on adjuncts, because all your students would give evaluations like "0/10, teaches heresies" if you tried. The humanities barely noticed the change, because it offered so much scope for "I'm just not going to teach a book that upsets all my students."

Biology departments are not allowed to teach about evolution. Essentially nowhere in Gilead has a good biology department; they teach Basically Medicine, Basically Agriculture, and Basically Wildlife Management. The land-grant universities have a renewed prominence.

In theory, mathematicians are not allowed to teach about infinities or set theory. In practice, while there are sincere finitists, mathematicians renamed infinities "Tao numbers" and kept going. Eyes do not generally understand math well enough to notice that this is happening. Every so often, an Eye asks about it, and the mathematician is like "no, infinities and Tao numbers are totally different, because Axiom of Choice Banach-Tarski discrete geometry Hilbert space," and the Eye backs away slowly and decides not to ask any more questions. There are sometimes whistleblowers, but the Eyes don't care that much and 98% of mathematicians are totally fine with being left alone and will swear up and down that Tao numbers and infinities are totally different. (Of course, you have to be careful talking about this with first-year PhD students-- they might have a crisis of faith.) There is a fair amount of math happening in Gilead, because the government will leave you alone.

If you are a Gileadite woman and want to become an academic, you marry a male academic. Ideally, you marry a male academic in your field, but it's not at all uncommon for a math professor to "publish philosophy" on the side. Gilead has a very strange number of polymaths! No one knows why! Sometimes people do better work in the field they aren't teaching in! Probably it is because of interdisciplinary research. As such, it is surprisingly important for Gileadite male academics to marry smart women and to be able to give talks on fields they don't actually know anything about.

Universities have adopted the policy that when academics go overseas for conferences the university posts the vacation fee.

# Authoritarianism

Gilead has widespread censorship. People under 18 cannot access information about other religions from their own perspective, nudes including artistic nudes, information about sex, instructions about how to commit crimes, evolutionary biology textbooks, etc. Adults are not permitted to access pornography, non-Gileadite information about sex, information about contraception or abortion, instructions about how to commit suicide, etc. The Internet content filters are somewhat better than our universe's content filters-- they can tell if you're looking for information on breast cancer-- but stuff regularly slips through and sometimes an adult will have to complain to their ISP about not being allowed to see Michelangelo's David.

The Eyes of God ("Eyes") are the secret police. Eyes typically investigate crimes like treason and espousing heresy. They have a very good reputation, but in reality are kind of evil. The media reports their prosecutions as "brave Eye uncovers Cascadian resistance!", but actually a lot of their prosecutions are "Eye entraps an innocent person" or "politician framed for political reasons." All Commanders and other high-level executives have a secret Eye assigned to their staff.

Believing heretical things is not illegal. Publicly espousing heresy is illegal. Being an atheist or saying "I'm an atheist" is not illegal, but atheists cannot testify in court or run for political office. It is illegal to try to convince other people to be atheists. Certain publishing companies sell books that are basically the God Delusion, except that the last chapter is "...and also we know all of these are Atheist Lies because of the wisdom of the Bible, Amen."

If you try to leave Gilead, you have to post a vacation fee, which will be repaid when you come home; this is to prevent illegal emigration. Vacation fees range from the nonexistent (missionaries, politicians) to the nominal (unmarried men without particularly useful skills) to the exorbitant (fertile women). Most people get short-term loans for the vacation fee, which can be denied if the bank thinks you're going to try to emigrate. Gileadite financial systems are linked with the rest of the world's and can still hound you if you're not paying up.

# Gender

Women working is not technically illegal. However, Gileadites have made many laws to 'protect' women: stringent sexual harassment law, limitations on how many hours women can work, requirements that women not have to lift more than fifty pounds, etc. These regulations are stringently enforced in gender-non-conforming professions and lightly enforced in gender-conforming professions. Nurses and gynecologists are almost universally female; many teachers and secretaries are female; many 'gig workers' are female. Middle-class to upper-middle-class women typically have home businesses, particularly if they have few or no children. Examples include teaching piano, writing fiction, tutoring, freelance journalism, programming, running a home daycare, and running an Etsy store. If you can imagine doing it remote, there's probably a Gileadite woman doing it.

Gilead has a surprisingly strong programming industry that is all remote work. It has finally solved the women in STEM pipeline problem.

Women are not supposed to teach men about theology; women are not allowed to write books about theology or preach. Women can teach children (in schools or at Sunday school). Women can teach non-theology subjects to men, but occasionally new converts or highly scrupulous people go overboard.

Homosexuality is illegal. Very affectionate homosociality, particularly if it is male, is usually viewed with suspicion. LGBT people are generally sent to inpatient ex-gay therapy. Ex-gay therapy typically includes individual and group therapy, prayer, Bible study, trauma work, family therapy (especially with adolescents), encouragement of nonsexual same-sex affection, training in heterosexual courtship, and explicit teaching about how to obey gender roles. Aversion therapy is uncommon but sometimes practiced, particularly for adolescents.

# Race

The Gileadite sect was fully integrated by the 1980s (it turns out black people want babies as much as white people do). There are both historically-black and historically-white congregations, which have different preaching styles and use different hymns. Gilead has the normal range of opinions on race for Americans, ranging from “but what about black on black crime?” to “racism is the original sin of America.” Gileadites typically believe that racism and belief in evolution are deeply linked, even Gileadites who otherwise read as very liberal to us.

# Mexico

Mexico, plus the former states of southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

Mexico is Catholic. As such, birth control is illegal; abortion is prosecuted as murder. Church and state are heavily integrated; practicing non-Catholic religions is legal, but excludes you from many normal social and civic functions. Mothers and children are strongly supported both socially and financially.

## Marriage

Legal marriage and marriage-by-the-Catholic-definition are isomorphic (so non-Catholics can be legally married, but it's inconvenient for them to prove it, because they don't have a marriage certificate on file with their parish).

Marriage is legal at 15 with parental permission, and 18 without it. Premarital sex is discouraged as seriously sinful, but acknowledged to be a thing that happens when teenage hormones are in play; it does not result in social ostracization or a ruined life if you're caught, just normal teenage amounts of being in trouble. If an unmarried girl gets pregnant and makes a reasonably plausible claim as to who the father is, and he's unmarried, there's massive social pressure for him to marry her; if he refuses, she can take him to court, and if she can prove he's the father he will be required to marry her.

Divorce is not legal. Annulments can sometimes be obtained, especially by immigrants from Gilead who can present a reasonable case that they were pressured into the marriage, or immigrants from Cascadia who can present a reasonable case that the marriage did not conform to Catholic definitions of marriage (e.g. was explicitly intended not to be lifelong, not to involve children, or to be open).

Different tribunals vary in how permissive they are in granting annulments. You can only apply to the tribunal of wherever you live. People absolutely do move in order to get access to a tribunal known to grant annulments more readily. There are definitely a few tribunals in border dioceses that just rubber-stamp annulments for people escaping from Gilead.

The expected thing for women with abusive husbands is that they take the children, go move in with their mother/sister/friend/parish lady that their priest suggests to them, and appeal for a protective separation. That's judged to a preponderance-of-the-evidence standard, and if the judge finds that the woman or her children were being abused, she automatically gets a restraining order against the guy, full custody of the children, 2/3 of the shared property, and a note on the marriage certificate so that, like, if she ends up in the hospital the guy can't go "I'm her husband let me in." All of this is in theory also available to male abuse victims, but in practice there are similar biases at work to those in real life.

Someone with a protective separation can't remarry; in practice, plenty of them end up with open secret boyfriends or girlfriends, which is regarded as a vice but not more so than, like, a gambling habit or a tendency to skip mass and watch the superbowl.

## Education

Most children attend parochial schools, which vary in quality by location but are overall academically solid. Most of the rest are homeschooled. At 15, all but the most academically inclined students start spending half-days at school, with the other half spent in some kind of apprenticeship (usually but not exclusively boys) or in helping run the home (usually but not exclusively girls). The most academically inclined students instead start intensive (college-like) study in their field of interest.

## Censorship

Printed books are lightly censored, by virtue of the fact that all publishing houses are Catholic. (You won't get into any kind of legal trouble for smuggling in a censored book from elsewhere; they just aren't printed.) Obscene books won't be printed, for a basically reasonable definition of obscene -- descriptions of sex intended to titillate, except in the case of literary classics with redemptive artistic value. For books on most topics, that's the only filter. Books on matters of "faith and morals" have to receive a *nihil obstat* ("nothing impedes it") from the local Church authority, certifying that they're not actively promulgating anything contrary to Catholic doctrine, before the printing houses will publish them. It's common to further apply for an *imprimatur* ("let it be printed") from the local bishop, which authorizes the text for use in churches and schools.

Most ISPs censor outright pornographic content, and websites expressly promulgating beliefs contrary to Catholic teaching. The latter runs off a list compiled based on reports and screened by very bored priests, and does not even remotely keep up with new online content popping up; scarleteen is censored, but some random wordpress blog is not. The former is done by machine. You can apply to your priest for dispensation from either, and if they think you have a good reason (e.g., you're a theologian who wants to write counter-arguments to anti-Catholic teachings), they'll write a letter to your ISP asking them to lift the censorship for you.

# Immigration

Christian immigrants are broadly welcomed; non-Christian immigrants from countries where Catholicism is freely practiced are screened, and must seem like reasonably good neighbors willing to cohabit peacefully and refrain from corrupting the youth. Immigrants from countries where Catholicism is oppressed, and especially from Gilead, are *strongly* welcomed; helping them is considered to be a major Christian duty, and there are huge cultural institutions for it.

Anyone who makes it across the border from Gilead can expect to be promptly set up with a host family, provided with necessities, have lots of locals stopping by to welcome them, and be offered counseling, childcare help, medical treatment, and so forth, as appropriate. This extends to people who would otherwise be stigmatized to one degree or another (e.g. atheists, gay people, etc). A significant number of Mexicans are involved in actively smuggling people across the border; this is considered heroically virtuous, despite the fact that it's most often a gang activity, and the smugglers are often taking drugs the other direction.

In the other direction: if you are pregnant and travel to a country that offers abortion and come back no longer pregnant (and without a baby in hand) you are very likely to get prosecuted for murder. This provides a pretty major incentive not to travel to such countries at all while pregnant, because if you have a miscarriage the presumption is going to be much less in your favor.

In general, no one's going to *stop* you emigrating to Gilead-or-wherever, but if you have minor children you are in fact not legally allowed to emigrate to a non-Catholic country. For legal procedures here, think "divorced couple with shared custody, except the Catholic Church is one of the parents." That is, if you want to travel to a non-Catholic country with minor children, you're going to have to get notarized approval from a Church official, who will want to have an interview with you and be convinced that you're not going to run off with the kids and never come back.

# LGBT

Homosexuality *per se* is not condemned, but any kind of homosexual activity is. Gay people are told they're called to a life of celibacy; the official word is that you shouldn't become a priest just because you're gay, and that gay priests should be discouraged in general, but in practice gay guys become priests all the time and everyone knows it. It's officially permissible to live chastely "as brothers" or "as sisters" with a member of the same sex, so long as you do it quietly to avoid giving scandal; in practice, you can only get away with this if you're sufficiently devout and active in your parish that everyone is confident you really are living chastely together.

Bisexuality is basically not acknowledged as a thing; trying to explain it would be met with confusion ("but ... why wouldn't you just marry a [member of opposite sex], then?"). Asexuality similarly ("you're free from temptations to lust? That's wonderful!") Trans people are considered to be mentally ill, delusional, and self-harming. (On the other hand, mentally ill people are generally well-treated and integrated into the community. So there's that.)

# Women

Women in Mexico are allowed to work outside the home, and many of them do. The general reaction is not “how COULD you” but “oh, you poor thing, I’ll pray to St. Jude for you to fall pregnant soon.” A woman working when she has a child under about two is heavily socially stigmatized (“why would you do that? what’s WRONG with you??”); getting to stay at home with a child younger than that is considered a basic necessity like having a roof over one’s head, and if you can’t afford it yourself, your parish will pitch in and support you. A woman working (full-time, outside the home) when she has school-age children is still unusual, but the reaction is milder (“are you okay? are you *sure?*”).

# Children

All hospitals are of course Catholic. Because of the very high infant mortality rate from bitoxiphosphene, it’s standard practice for the hospital chaplain to baptize all babies immediately after birth, regardless of the parents’ religion or preferences. The parents are thereafter required to bring the child to Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, to provide it with Catholic religious instruction (either by sending it to a parochial school or by some other means), and generally not to interfere in its being raised Catholic; if the local pastor reports that they’re not complying, and an investigation confirms this, the child will be removed and given to Catholic foster parents.

15 is the age of legal adulthood for most purposes. You can marry at 15 (although you need parental permission until 18). Most people start attending only half-days of school at 15, and spending the other half in an apprenticeship or helping out at home. You don’t generally move out at 15, but in fact most people don’t move out until they get married, and sometimes not even then; living with extended family is common. You can vote at 15, and be tried as an adult. Catholics are confirmed at 15. Girls have a huge party (*quinceañera*) for their 15th birthday.

# Calendar

The civic calendar follows the Catholic calendar. Civic holidays include: all of Holy Week (the week leading up to Easter); Christmas (Dec 25); Dia de los Muertos, All Saints’ Day, and All Souls’ Day (Oct 31-Nov 2nd); and the feasts of Mary the Mother of God (January 1st), the Ascension (40 days after Easter), the Immaculate Conception (Dec 8th), Corpus Christi (moveable, between May 21st and June 24th), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec 12th), and Christ the King (movable, between November 20th and 26th).

# Government

Church officials don’t technically have any civic power, but the *structures* of church and state are deeply entangled. The political organizational structure follows that of the Church: the smallest political unit is the parish, parishes are organized into dioceses, dioceses are organized into provinces, provinces are organized into the *Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano* (Episcopal Conference of Mexico). You’re registered with the parish of wherever you live (again, this causes complications for non-Catholics), vote in the parish hall, and so forth. (A parish ranges in size from “neighborhood” to “city”; a diocese from “greater metropolitan area” to “half a state”; a province from “half a state” to “several states,” all depending on the local population density of Catholics.)

Non-Christians cannot take legal oaths, which excludes them from testifying in court or holding most public offices. Baptismal, Confirmation, and marriage certificates, respectively, serve the social/legal/bureaucratic functions of birth certificates, driver’s licenses (as proof of adulthood), and marriage records; so people lacking those will find themselves in frequent bureaucratic quandaries. It is both legal and fairly common to be nominally Catholic but varying levels of devout/practicing; children are usually pushed to be more practicing than their parents, partly so that they can obtain the above Sacraments, but dropping off a bit after 15 is not unusual.

# Catholicism

Violations of Catholic teaching, like extramarital sex, eating meat on Fridays, or skipping Mass, aren’t generally *illegal.* In theory, “obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin” can result in your priest refusing to give you Communion, at which point you are no longer a Catholic in good standing and lose the various privileges associated with Catholicism. In practice, this is enforced unevenly: it will happen if you keep getting caught having gay assignations, it won’t happen if you keep skipping Mass whenever the Superbowl is on. There are also scandal laws, with penalties ranging from

fines to a few months in prison, applied similarly. In practice, though, if you're willing to keep "repenting" after each incident, the worst consequence is going to be social ostracization.

There aren't actually legal penalties for apostasy, and even on an ecclesiastical level it's handled very gently. The primary case of apostates they're dealing with is Catholics from Gilead who converted under tremendous pressure, and no one really wants to give them a hard time.

Popular devotions include but are not limited to:

- Christ the King (*Cristo Rey*) and Bl. Miguel Pro
  - Associated with: a Catholic state, freedom to practice Catholicism
- Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego
  - Associated with: the Americas, the rights of indigenous peoples
- St. Elizabeth, Sts. Anne and Joachim
  - Associated with: infertility, hoping for children in old age
- Saint Gianna Beretta Molla
  - Associated with: pro-life movement, dangerous pregnancies
- St. Joseph
  - Associated with: workers, fathers, children, families, raising children not biologically one's own
- St. Gerard Majella
  - Associated with: pregnancy, childbirth
- Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin
  - Associated with: choosing marriage and children over the religious life; the loss of infants
- St. Jude
  - Associated with: hopeless causes
- Marian devotions in general
  - Associated with: miraculous pregnancy, teenage pregnancy, the gift of children, unmarried mothers

Unofficial devotions, generally discouraged by the Church but still widely practiced, include but are not limited to:

- Juan Soldado
  - Associated with: illegal immigrants
- Jesús Malverde
  - Associated with: drug traffickers
- Teresa Urrea
  - Associated with: insurgents, resistance fighters
- Santa Muerte (strongly condemned by Church; very popular)
  - Associated with: death, oppressed people, criminals, LGBT people

# Other Religions

It is legal to practice any or no religion, though it may make your life varying levels of inconvenient.

Other religions in Mexico and what it's like to practice them:

- Judaism:
  - In Spanish-speaking areas: somewhat ghettoized but not otherwise generally badly treated; general attitude is "weird foreign people" but not "evil."
  - In English-speaking areas: ranges from attitudes similar to those in Spanish-speaking areas, to outright holocaust-denying antisemitism. (The latter is associated with influence from the SSPX, which in this timeline did not schism; for further inside-baseball details, see Wikipedia.)
  - In general: not going to have stones thrown at them in the street, but definite social outsiders. Getting Saturdays instead of Sundays off from work is often possible (no one *else* wants to work Sundays!) but not always. Giving birth at a hospital means your baby gets baptized and you're legally required to raise them Catholic, so lots of homebirths.
- Gileadism:

    - Not uncommon in the border areas, for obvious reasons (not all escapees immediately deconvert). Mostly treated as “you poor thing, we’ll keep exposing you gently to Catholicism until you get over the brainwashing.”
- Atheism:
    - Most atheists just put up with attending Mass and catechesis until age 15, get their Sacraments, and proceed to be not-very-practicing nominal-Catholics who attend Mass on Christmas and Easter because their grandmother hassles them about it. Explicit atheists are much rarer, and generally assumed to be amoral and Corrupting The Youth; it doesn’t help with that assumption that, for the most part, the only people who are going to *bother* being explicitly atheist here are fundamatheist types.
- Miscellaneous Protestants:
    - I think you mean HERETICS. Not going to be burned at the stake; totally going to be referred to as HERETICS, harassed about the obvious error of their ways, kept away from impressionable children, turned down for jobs, etc. There are not a lot of miscellaneous Protestants in Mexico.
- Santeria:
    - Very popular; third most common religion in Mexico. Constantly condemned from the pulpit. This does not stop anyone. Lots of people are nominally Catholic and actually practice Santeria, or consider themselves devout practitioners of both, or are mostly Catholic but have a few Santeria practices they picked up from their grandmother, or anywhere else along that spectrum. (Basically the whole point of Santeria, after all, is being able to practice it when Catholicism is being forcibly imposed on you.)
- Santa Muerte:
    - Very, *very* popular; second most common religion in Mexico, after Catholicism. In a similar situation to Santeria: constantly condemned from the pulpit, commonly practiced alongside Catholicism with varying degrees of devotion to each. Stigmatized as blasphemous, Satanic, idol-worship, criminal, perverted, etc. etc. etc. Somehow this doesn’t stop anyone either.

# Abortion

Abortion is prosecuted as murder. In practice, women are very rarely convicted of abortion; it’s too hard to prove that it *was* an abortion, given how common miscarriages are. Back alley abortion providers are convicted rather more often. In either case, it’s invariably a huge media circus, with lurid anecdotes and public outrage.

Mexico really doesn’t want fertile women to end up spending their lives in prison, so penalties for a first-offense abortion are relatively light, despite the fact that it’s a murder conviction. If you repent convincingly and have living children and your husband and parish priest show up and look like good upstanding people and promise to keep you on the right track, you’re likely to get parole with a hefty suspended sentence, for the sake of the children not having to be motherless. If you don’t have living children, you get a sentence on the order of decades; women’s prison for nonviolent offenders is basically “go live with these nuns who signed up to effectively run a low-security prison,” and after a few years if you have convincingly Turned Your Life Around, you’re very likely to have the nuns start introducing you to Nice Young Men (if you’re unmarried), and eventually get paroled to get married/return to your loving husband.

Repeat offenders, and abortion *providers,* are eligible for the death penalty; the former is moderately controversial, and it’s not uncommon for judges to take extenuating circumstances into account and give the woman life in prison instead. (The latter is uncontroversial.)

# Birth Control

Birth control is illegal; you’ll get a prison sentence for possessing it, and a much heftier prison sentence for dealing, or for possessing amounts that make it look like you’re dealing it. This applies to all forms of birth control, including the Pill, implants, condoms, etc.

It may be possible to obtain birth control from your friendly local drug dealer; you have about a 50/50 shot on whether he’s far too Catholic to dream of such a thing. If he *will* sell it to you, it’s still subject to all the usual pitfalls of illegal drugs: it’s expensive, you have to talk to sketchy people to obtain it, your supply might be suddenly interrupted, you can’t be sure of what you’re getting, and so forth.

You may also be able to get birth control shipped illegally from countries where it’s legal; customs and border control will search for it, but of course some manages to slip through.

In theory, it’s possible for an unmarried woman to travel to Cascadia once every two years and get a shot of long-lasting birth control. This is *illegal,* of course, but Cascadia’s Planned Parenthoods are hardly going to share records with Mexico, so it’s very hard to get a conviction. In practice, the downside is that someone is likely to notice this -- border crossings are public record -- and guess what you’re doing, and then you’re going to be a social pariah and definitely no one is ever going to marry you.

(If a *married* woman tries this, her husband can go in front of a judge and produce border crossing records and point out that she’s not getting pregnant, and he’s likely to be able to pull together enough probable cause to get her banned from travelling to countries that offer birth control for a number of years.)

Condoms are somewhat easier to obtain than hormonal birth control, but typically of *very* iffy quality. (Do *you* want to use a condom that’s been smuggled hundreds of miles through the baking desert heat in the back of a drug dealer’s van?)

# The Rest of the World

## Ireland

Just as in real life, the Troubles occurred, and Ireland split into Northern Ireland (part of Britain) and the Republic of Ireland (which is its own country). The Republic of Ireland is extremely Catholic; if you imagine ‘basically Mexico, but smaller and Irish’, you won’t be too far off. Northern Ireland has a bit more of a complicated situation.

### Paramilitaries

Since the end of the Troubles, instead of paramilitaries being on the decline in Northern Ireland, they have continued to grow due to the social unrest caused by the fertility crisis. While Northern Ireland is *in theory* run by the British government, in practice all areas are controlled and run by local paramilitaries. While each paramilitary does try to present a unified front ideologically, it is not uncommon for the people running a branch of a paramilitary in a particular town to primarily set the rules to be most convenient to them, with the views of the ‘cause’ being an afterthought.

The three major paramilitaries are the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). The UVF and UDA are both violently Protestant, but the UVF primarily supports Ulster loyalism while the UDA primarily supports Ulster nationalism. PIRA is violently Catholic and supports a united Republic of Ireland. In almost all parts of Northern Ireland (particularly touristy spots, or spots where police frequently patrol, will avoid this), posters making vague threats about what will happen if you disobey the local paramilitary in any way are common.

People from Northern Ireland will never use ‘Northern Ireland’ when talking about where they’re from, except in school assignments; they will instead use either ‘Ulster’ (if they are Protestant) or ‘Ireland’ (if they are Catholic), and when being more specific about regions, they will refer to ‘UDA/UVF/PIRA territory’ as opposed to geographical markers.

### Ulster loyalism

The Ulster British are attached to ‘Ulster’ (Northern Ireland) being a part of the UK. They support the British Government and monarchy, and support Ulster being a part of it. They tend to enforce British laws, so as long as you’re Protestant, living in a UVF-controlled area is not super different from living in Britain (other than the method of enforcement, since it is ‘secret paramilitary vigilante justice’ instead of ‘cops’). If you’re Catholic, you or your loved ones are a likely target of violence.

### Ulster nationalism

In real life, the UDA considered Ulster nationalism for a time before rejecting it; in this history, due to people’s mixed opinions of the British government’s handling of the fertility crisis, the UDA embraced it. The Ulster nationalists tend to believe that the British government it completely incompetent and that they should be running Ulster as an independent country; defenses range from ‘the paramilitaries are *already* doing all of the policing and law-making, just informally and secretly’ to ‘the british government isn’t bombing the catholics, clearly it’s not doing enough to protect us’ to ‘i think the UDA’s policies on the handling of the fertility crisis would be better for me than British ones’.

UDA territory tends to be more dangerous to live in. The laws that they make and enforce are sometimes wildly different from the British laws, so that people are often forced to choose between potentially getting in trouble with the police or the UDA. They are also typically more harsh on Catholics, ‘potential Catholics’, and ‘Catholic supporters’ than the UVF is.

### Catholicism

While Catholicism is a minority in Northern Ireland, PIRA is the largest of the three paramilitaries (though it is not larger than the other two *combined*). However, they are shrinking quickly and steadily, as Catholics convert or emigrate to the much safer Republic of Ireland. Most land near the border is PIRA-controlled, and PIRA helps people in these border areas with emigration to the Republic of Ireland. People in PIRA territory also face the same dilemma as those in UDA territory, when dealing with a situation where they can either obey British law or PIRA law. PIRA tends to see themselves and their fellow Catholics as being heavily persecuted underdogs; however, Protestants in PIRA territory are in significant danger, just as Catholics in UVF/UDA territory are.

## Social Issues

While Northern Ireland is religious, much of UVF and UDA territory is in fact less religious than most areas in Mexico or Gilead. It is not dangerous to be a ‘Christmas-Easter Christian’, so long as you’re passionate about being a Protestant and not a Catholic; similarly, while abortion and same-gender partnerships are illegal, it is not uncommon or dangerous to take a day trip to another part of the UK and “miscarry”, and homosexuality itself is not illegal, nor will people have to fear for their lives from the paramilitaries if they are open about being LGBT+, though they may face serious harassment and hate crimes from less official channels. PIRA territory can be modeled essentially as Mexico or the Republic of Ireland, with increased risk of terrorism, persecution, and issues with the law, but also with increased freedom of movement and reduced censorship and totalitarianism.

Censorship is not really a thing in Northern Ireland about most topics, mostly due to the lack of a competent central authority and strong freedom of movement; however, everyone self-censors when talking about the paramilitaries unless they are highly anonymized, for fear that a paramilitary member might hear them and mark them as a target

## Other Religions

Muslims are a small but extant minority; they are mostly overlooked on the basis of ‘nobody can figure out if they should count as Protestant or Catholic’. Atheists are typically seen as either Protestant or Catholic socially on the basis of their political beliefs (whether they think Northern Ireland should continue as it is, join the Republic of Ireland, or become its own country), but also on the basis of who their family is. Neither atheism nor Islam are particularly dangerous to believe, but both will definitely attract weird looks and potential social repercussions; however, if you are particularly militant about it, then you may make a good target for the local paramilitary groups, though no more so than with most other traits that make you stand out as strange.

# Everywhere Else

## China

China has a Eugenics Policy instead of a One-Child Policy; it basically runs on a permissions system (for men). Women who are capable of live birth are co-opted by the government to bear IVF children by sperm donors selected for scoring well on various measures of their fitness. The women who raise their own children are called ‘princesses’ and get a government-provided house, budget, and live-in handler. The women who don't want to raise their own children (or aren't allowed to, e.g. prisoners) are called ‘flowers’ and get a stipend but not the other things. Heavy sex selection means that upwards of 90% of the population is female.