

U.N. issues report on global birth rate crisis

12th June 2025



The United Nations has said the world is experiencing a birth rate crisis. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has released a report called "State of World Population 2025". It highlights how fewer and fewer children are being born all over the

world. At the same time, people are living longer. Falling birth rates and increased longevity are creating many problems. Smaller numbers of workers are having to pay the pensions of older people who have retired. Dr Natalia Kanem, executive director of UNFPA, said: "Many countries are [struggling] with ageing and shrinking populations, labour shortages, and rising healthcare and pension costs. These are real concerns."

The United Nations surveyed over 14,000 people in 14 countries on five continents to make its report. One of the key findings was of the global fertility crisis. The UN said the high cost of parenthood is the biggest reason for women not having children. Many couples want children, but they cannot afford them. Nearly 20 per cent of adults believe they will not be able to have the number of children they want. There were other reasons for falling birth rates. These include low salaries, expensive housing, and worries about the future of our world. The UN said one solution to the crisis is to create "family-friendly policies, such as affordable childcare and paid leave for all carers".

Sources: sky.com / theguardian.com / unfpa.org

Writing

Governments should pay couples to have three or more babies. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

United Nations / birth rate / crisis / report / population / children / pension / concerns / continents / fertility / parenthood / couples / salaries / housing / the future / carers

True / False

- 1) The WHO said there will be a crisis because fewer babies are being born. T / F
- 2) Fewer babies are being born and people are living longer. T / F
- 3) There are fewer workers to pay for the pensions of retired people. T / F
- 4) Many countries are having problems finding workers. T / F
- 5) The U.N. questioned people in 140 countries about having children. T / F
- 6) A key finding of the report was a global virility crisis. T / F
- 7) One in five adults worry they can't have the number of kids they want. T / F
- 8) The U.N. said there should be more paid leave only for mothers. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. crisis | a. questioned |
| 2. released | b. getting smaller |
| 3. longevity | c. pay for |
| 4. shrinking | d. issued |
| 5. concerns | e. strategies |
| 6. surveyed | f. answer |
| 7. afford | g. disaster |
| 8. reasons | h. worries |
| 9. solution | i. causes |
| 10. policies | j. long life |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How expensive is it to have children?
- c) Should the government pay people to have children?
- d) What are the problems of fewer babies being born?
- e) What worries do you have about the future?
- f) Do you worry about bringing babies into this world?
- g) Is there a maximum number of people that can live on Earth?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the United Nations?

Phrase Match

1. the world is experiencing
 2. At the same time, people are
 3. pay the pensions of older people
 4. countries are struggling with ageing
 5. rising healthcare and pension
 6. The United Nations surveyed
 7. 14 countries
 8. the biggest reason for women
 9. worries about the
 10. family-friendly policies, such as
- a. and shrinking populations
 - b. on five continents
 - c. costs
 - d. over 14,000 people
 - e. affordable childcare
 - f. who have retired
 - g. future of our world
 - h. a birth rate crisis
 - i. not having children
 - j. living longer

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you know about the United Nations?
- b) What do you think of the state of the world population?
- c) Why are fewer and fewer babies being born?
- d) Why might it be good if the global population becomes smaller?
- e) Is it a good or bad thing that people are living longer?
- f) What are the problems of people living longer?
- g) Do you worry about your old age?
- h) What will the world be like in 50 years from now?

Spelling

1. reengnpxeci a birth rate crisis
2. eardsele a report
3. Falling birth rates and increased otliveynq
4. Many countries are igtuglgsrn
5. labour geshroast
6. These are real nconsecr
7. The UN uesrvyed over 14,000 people
8. 14 countries on five esticontnn
9. the global rietflyti crisis
10. they cannot daorff them
11. low srlsaaei
12. one otulnsoj to the crisis

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. b	5. h
6. a	7. c	8. i	9. f	10. e

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What U.N. agency is responsible for the report in the article?
2.	What is the name of the report?
3.	What is happening at the same time as falling birth rates?
4.	What do young workers have to pay for?
5.	What does the article say are shrinking?
6.	How many people did the U.N. interview?
7.	What was one of the key findings of the report?
8.	How many adults worry about not having the number of kids they want?
9.	What are young people worrying about the future of?
10.	What kind of policies did the U.N. say needed to be introduced?

Speaking – Having children

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Money
- No sleep
- Safety
- Childcare
- Work-life balance
- Worries about their future
- Non-stop responsibility
- Bad behaviour

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 T	4 T	5 F	6 F	7 T	8 F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.