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Level 4 – 1st June 2026

Japan's population falls three million in five years

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<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

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Please try Levels 5 and 6. They are (a little) harder.

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THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

Japan's population fell by three million in the past five years. This is the largest drop since records began in 1920. The government released figures for its latest five-yearly census. It shows that the number of people in Japan in October was around 123 million. This is a fall of 2.5 per cent. The census is the third in a row to show a decrease. Japan's government said that the population decline is advancing. It said it would take actions to address it.

A big reason for the decline is very low birth rates. In 2025, there were just over 700,000 births, compared to 2.5 million in the postwar baby boom. Many governments have taken actions to encourage couples to have babies. These include more child allowances and parental leave, and subsidized early years education. Japan is one of the world's oldest societies. Its greying population is putting a lot of stress on healthcare and pensions.

Sources: https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20260529_08/
<https://japantoday.com/category/national/update1-japan's-population-marks-sharpest-drop-to-123-mil.-in-2025-census>
<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20260529-329935/>

PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

PARAGRAPH ONE:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Japan's population fell | a. figures |
| 2. in the past | b. address it |
| 3. the largest drop since | c. five years |
| 4. The government released | d. census |
| 5. its latest five-yearly | e. in a row |
| 6. This is a fall | f. by three million |
| 7. the third | g. of 2.5 per cent |
| 8. take actions to | h. records began |

PARAGRAPH TWO:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. A big reason | a. to have babies |
| 2. very low birth | b. boom |
| 3. in the postwar baby | c. education |
| 4. governments have taken | d. rates |
| 5. encourage couples | e. leave |
| 6. parental | f. on healthcare |
| 7. early years | g. for the decline |
| 8. putting a lot of stress | h. actions |

LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

Japan's (1) _____ three million in the past five years. This is the largest (2) _____ began in 1920.

The government released figures for its latest (3) _____. It shows that the number of people in Japan in October was around 123 million. This is a fall of 2.5 per cent. The census is the third (4) _____ to show a decrease.

Japan's government said that (5) _____ is advancing. It said it would take (6) _____ it.

A big reason for the decline is very (7) _____. In 2025, there were just over 700,000 (8) _____ 2.5 million in the (9) _____. Many governments have taken actions to encourage (10) _____ babies.

These include more child allowances and parental leave, and subsidized (11) _____. Japan is one of the world's oldest societies. Its greying population is putting a (12) _____ on healthcare and pensions.

PUT A SLASH (/) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

Japan's population fell by three million in the past five years. This is the largest drop since records began in 1920. The government released figures for its latest five-yearly census. It shows that the number of people in Japan in October was around 123 million. This is a fall of 2.5 percent. The census is the third in a row to show a decrease. Japan's government said that the population decline is advancing. It said it would take action to address it. A big reason for the decline is very low birth rates. In 2025, there were just over 700,000 births, compared to 2.5 million in the postwar baby boom. Many governments have taken action to encourage couples to have babies. These include more child allowances and parental leave, and subsidized early years education. Japan is one of the world's oldest societies. Its greying population is putting a lot of stress on health care and pensions.

POPULATION DECREASE SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2606/260601-japans-shrinking-population-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about population decrease in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

f) _____

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WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

f) _____

