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# World Population Prospects 2024

## Summary of Results

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*The demographic landscape has evolved greatly, with rapid fertility declines in populous countries likely causing the global population to peak within this century (80 per cent probability), contrasting with a decade ago when the probability was around 30 per cent. The report uses the analytical framework of the demographic transition to explore population trends and offers policy recommendations for adjusting to changing population sizes, age structures, and distributions. The earlier and lower population peak has significant implications for sustainability, aligning with the 1994 ICPD's goals to reduce population growth, poverty, and unsustainable consumption.*

*The following key messages are based on **World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results**, prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).*

## Ten key messages

### 1. The world's population is likely to peak within the current century.

The world's population is expected to continue growing for another 50 or 60 years, reaching a peak of around 10.3 billion people in the mid-2080s, up from 8.2 billion in 2024. After peaking, it is projected to start declining, gradually falling to 10.2 billion people by the end of the century.

### 2. One in four people globally lives in a country whose population has already peaked in size.

In 63 countries and areas, containing 28 per cent of the world's population in 2024, the size of the population peaked before 2024. In 48 countries and areas, with 10 per cent of the world's population in 2024, population size is projected to peak between 2025 and 2054. In the remaining 126 countries and areas, the population is likely to continue growing through 2054, potentially reaching a peak later in the century or beyond 2100.

### 3. Women today bear, one child fewer, on average, than they did around 1990.

Currently, the global fertility rate stands at 2.3 live births per woman, down from 3.3 births in 1990. More than half of all countries and areas globally have fertility below 2.1 births per woman, the level required for a population to maintain a constant size in the long run without migration.

### 4. Early childbearing has harmful effects on young mothers and their children.

In 2024, 4.7 million babies, or about 3.5 per cent of the total worldwide, were born to mothers under age 18 – and some 340,000, to girls under age 15 – with serious consequences for the health and well-being of both the young mothers and their children. Investing in the education of youth, especially girls, and increasing the ages

at marriage and first childbearing in countries where these milestone events tend to occur early will have positive effects on women's health, educational attainment and labour force participation.

#### **5. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, global life expectancy is rising once again.**

Globally, life expectancy at birth reached 73.3 years in 2024, an increase of 8.4 years since 1995. Further reductions in mortality are projected to result in an average longevity of around 77.4 years globally in 2054. Since 2022, life expectancy has returned to pre-COVID-19 levels in nearly all countries and areas.

#### **6. The main driver of global population increase through mid-century will be the momentum created by growth in the past.**

The number of women at ages 15–49 is projected to grow from nearly 2 billion in 2024 to a peak of around 2.2 billion in the late 2050s, driving continued growth even if the number of births per woman falls to the replacement level. Today's youthful age structure, which is a product of past growth, will account for 79 per cent of the population increase through 2054, adding about 1.4 billion people.

#### **7. Countries with youthful populations and declining fertility have a limited time to benefit economically from an increasing concentration of population in the working ages.**

In about 100 countries or areas, the working-age population (between 20 and 64 years) will grow through 2054, offering a window of opportunity known as the demographic dividend. To capitalize on this opportunity, countries must invest in education, health, and infrastructure, and implement reforms to create jobs and improve government efficiency.

#### **8. By 2080, persons aged 65 or older will outnumber children under 18.**

By the late 2070s, the global population aged 65 and older is projected to reach 2.2 billion, exceeding the number of children under 18. By the mid-2030s, those aged 80 and over will outnumber infants (1 year of age or less), reaching 265 million. Countries that are at more advanced stages in the process of demographic ageing should consider the use of technology to improve productivity at all ages. They should also design more opportunities for lifelong learning and re-training, support multigenerational workforces and create opportunities to extend working lives for those who can and want to continue working.

#### **9. For some populations, immigration will be the main driver of future growth.**

In 50 countries and areas, immigration is projected to attenuate the decline in population size due to sustained low levels of fertility and an older age structure. However, in 14 countries and areas already experiencing ultra-low fertility, emigration is likely to contribute to reducing population size through 2054.

#### **10. Gender equality and women's empowerment help to counter rapid population growth or decline.**

Discrimination and legal barriers limit women and adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health services. Raising the legal marriage age and integrating family planning into primary health care can enhance women's education, economic participation, and reduce childbearing. In countries where populations have peaked already or are likely to peak in the next three decades, policies providing paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements, supporting affordable, high-quality childcare, providing comprehensive care for an ageing population; and encouraging an equal distribution of caregiving and household responsibilities between men and women can improve women's labor participation, support families, encourage childbearing and increase economic security for men and women at older ages.



Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). These key messages are based on the report *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results*.

More work of the Population Division is available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/>.