

UN: World Population Expected to Reach 10.3 Billion in 2080s

2080年代、世界の人口は一つの大きな節目を迎える — そんな見通しを国連が示しています。遠い未来の話に聞こえるかもしれませんが、人口の増減は、食べ物や住まい、働き方など、私たちの暮らしと深く結びついています。人が増えることそのものが課題なのでしょうか。それとも、社会の仕組みのほうを見直す必要があるのでしょうか。人口の変化は、これからの世界や私たちの生活に、どんな影響を与えると思いますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

The United Nations is **predicting** the world's population will reach 10.3 billion in the 2080s.

The prediction appears in a new U.N. report. The report also suggests that the population will then slightly decrease to about 10.2 billion by the end of the century.

John Wilmoth is head of the U.N. Population Division, which prepared the report. He told The Associated Press (AP) that there is a high probability that the world's population will reach its height, or peak, within the current century. He said the **probability** of that happening is about 80 percent. Wilmoth described that estimate as "a major change" compared to predictions from 10 years ago. At that time, the estimated probability was about 30 percent.

U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development Navid Hanif recently spoke about the report at a briefing. He said the expectation that the world's population in 2100 will be lower than previously thought has “important policy [implications](#) for the [sustainability](#) of our planet.”

The world's population has continued to grow during the past 75 years, from an estimated 2.6 billion in 1950 to 8 billion in November 2022. Since then, it has increased about 2.5 percent to 8.2 billion.

The report notes the population has already [peaked](#) in 63 countries and territories. These include China, Germany, Japan and Russia. Within this grouping, the total population is estimated to drop 14 percent over the next 30 years.

In another 48 countries and territories, the population is predicted to peak between 2025 and 2054. Those countries include Brazil, Iran, Turkey and Vietnam.

For the remaining 126 countries and territories, the population is expected to increase through 2054. The countries in this grouping include the United States, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan. The report said these areas would see their populations peak in the second half of the century or later.

For nine of these nations, the U.N. estimates the populations will double between 2024 and 2054.

Wilmoth said these differences are notable. But he said, “it's important to understand that all populations are following a similar path.”

The U.N. report suggests the earlier population peak is predicted for several reasons. These include lower fertility levels in some of the world's largest countries, especially China. Estimates for China suggest the country's population will drop sharply, from 1.4 billion in 2024 to 633 million in 2100.

The report noted that worldwide, women are having an average of one less child than they did in 1990. In addition, the average number of live births per woman is below 2.1 in over half of all countries and territories. This is a level experts have identified as being necessary for a country's population to keep its size without migration.

Wilmoth said the report shows that nearly 20 percent of the world has “ultra-low” fertility, with women having fewer than 1.5 live births. In China, the current number is about one birth per woman.

The Associated Press reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. predict (v.) to say or guess what will happen in the future

The weather center is predicting rain for the picnic this weekend.

2. probability (n.) the chance that something will happen

There is a high probability that the cricket match will not finish early.

3. implication (n.) possible effect or result

The new law has implications for how we use our phones at work.

4. sustainability (n.) the ability to continue without damaging the environment

The city planted more trees to improve environmental sustainability.

5. peak (v.) to reach the highest point

The flu season peaked this year in the beginning of February.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. In which countries has the population already reached the maximum?
2. In which countries is the population going to keep growing until the middle of the century?
3. According to the report, why has the world's population been dropping?
4. How do you think changes in population size will affect daily life where you live?
5. How should countries prepare for future shifts in population trends?