

To Boost Population Growth, Improve Young People's Income

夕方の駅前。仕事帰りの人たちが行き交い、カフェには若い社会人の姿も見えます。それぞれが忙しい毎日を送りながら、自分の将来や生活について考えているのかもしれませんが。日本では今、人口減少が大きな社会問題となっています。最近では、この問題を考えるうえで「若い世代の収入」に注目する声もあります。暮らしの安心と人生の選択は、どのようにつながっているのでしょうか。あなたは若者の収入と社会の未来の関係をどう考えますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Preliminary population figures show that the number of children born in Japan in 2025 fell to a new low of 705,809. Moreover, that number includes foreign residents.

It was also the 10th consecutive year in which the number of newborns dropped. This demographic snapshot is according to vital statistics released by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Data for the total number of births among Japanese nationals is released by the Ministry each June. For 2024, it showed 686,061 new births. That was the first time the number of Japanese newborns had fallen below 700,000. It is widely believed that the number fell further in 2025.

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1. Article

The "natural decrease" in population is calculated by subtracting the number of births from the number of deaths. For 2025, it was 899,845 — the largest **decline** ever.

The current situation, in which both the declining births and population decline continue unabated, must be taken seriously.

It will be difficult to reverse the downward trend in births because the number of women of childbearing age is declining. Rather, the more pressing priority should be to find a way to slow the rate of declining births. That would help buy time and **ensure** that Japan does not become a nation of immigrants. It is essential that the homeland's social functions be maintained and that people sense they have an opportunity for prosperity.

To that end, the government should focus most on improving young people's **income**. Low wages and unstable employment deter many individuals from getting married, having babies, and raising children. That sense of economic anxiety must be eliminated to create an environment where more young people are willing to take those steps.

Further work style reform is also necessary. The **burden** of childcare still tends to fall largely on women. This hinders the attempts by women to advance in society and enhance their income. It is also a factor that discourages women from having children. Men must be **encouraged** to get involved in child rearing.

In December 2023, the Japanese government drew up its "Future Strategy for Children." Following that blueprint, the government is promoting measures such as expanding child allowances and childcare leave benefits.

And this April, the "Child and Childcare Support Fund" system will take effect. Designed to implement those policy measures, it is funded by levies collected on top of public health insurance premiums.

The subsidy is mocked on social media as a "tax on singles," reflecting dissatisfaction that single people and households without children are not likely to directly benefit from the subsidies. Therefore, the government must carefully explain the impact of declining births and population decline on society as a whole. The public needs to understand the full significance of the subsidies.

Any decline in the working population and aging of society will affect the benefits and burdens balance under the social security system. Even now, Japan is suffering from an acute labor shortage. Depopulation in rural areas has worsened local finances, while aging infrastructure and declining government services are also problems.

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1. Article

In her recent policy speech, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stated that Japan's falling births and population decline "are eroding the vitality of our country."

Moreover, she announced her intention to formulate a comprehensive strategy to deal with these problems. Hopefully, the government will soon unveil population targets and a vision for the future of the country.



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[Japan Forward](#)

本教材は、一般社団法人ジャパンフォワード推進機構、株式会社産経デジタルより許諾を得て、産経ヒューマンラーニング株式会社が編集しています。
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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

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

1. **decline** 減少

The **decline** in the number of visitors to the museum continued during the winter.

2. **ensure** 確実にする

Please double-check the address to **ensure** the package arrives safely.

3. **income** 所得

Many artists earn extra **income** by teaching classes on weekends.

4. **burden** 負担

Carrying heavy bags all day can be a **burden** on your back.

5. **encourage** 促す

Teachers should often **encourage** students to ask questions in class.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What major economic factor discourages young people from marrying and having children?
2. What government program will help fund childcare-related policies?
3. What concern do some people have about the Child and Childcare Support Fund?
4. Why do you think stable income may influence people's decisions about marriage or children?
5. Do you think governments should spend more money to increase birth rates? Why or why not?

4. 出生数最少 若者の所得底上げ確実に

令和7年に生まれた外国人を含む子供の数は速報値で70万5809人となり、10年連続で最少を更新した。厚生労働省の人口動態統計で分かった。

厚労省が例年6月に発表している日本人に限った概数では6年は68万6061人で、初めて70万人を下回った。7年はさらに減るとの見方が強い。

死亡数から出生数を差し引いた人口の「自然減」は89万9845人で、減少数は過去最大だった。少子化、人口減ともに歯止めがかかっていない現状を深刻に受け止めねばならない。

出産適齢期の女性が減少傾向にあるため出生数の反転は難しい。重要なのは、少子化の速度を緩やかにして時間を稼ぎ、人口減でも移民国家にならずに、社会機能を維持し、豊かさを実感できる国にすることだ。

政府が最も注力すべきは、若年層の所得の向上である。賃金が低く、雇用が安定しないために結婚、出産、子育てをためらう人は多い。結婚して子供を産み育てる人を増やすには、経済的不安の解消が欠かせない。

一層の働き方改革も必要だ。子育ての負担が女性に集中する傾向は依然ある。このことは女性の社会進出や収入増を妨げ、出産意欲を低下させる要因にもなっている。男性の育児参加をもっと促したい。

政府は5年12月に「こども未来戦略」を策定し、児童手当や育児休業給付の拡充などを進めている。今年4月から対策の財源となる「子ども・子育て支援金」制度が始まる。公的医療保険料に上乗せして徴収する。

支援金についてSNS上では「独身税」と揶揄（やゆ）されている。独身者や子供のいない世帯は直接的な恩恵を感じにくいという不満からだ。政府は、少子化とそれに伴う人口減少が社会全体に与える影響や支援金の意義を丁寧に説明すべきである。

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4. 出生数最少 若者の所得底上げ確実に

現役世代の減少と高齢化は社会保障制度の給付と負担の在り方に影響を与える。人手不足も深刻だ。地方の過疎化で地方財政は悪化し、インフラの老朽化や行政サービスの低下も問題となっている。

高市早苗首相は施政方針演説で少子化と人口減少について「わが国の活力を蝕（むしば）んでいく」と述べ、総合戦略を策定する考えを表明した。この中で人口目標と将来の国家像を示してもらいたい。