



DECLINING FERTILITY RATES

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WHAT IS FERTILITY RATE

The fertility rate is the average number of children born to a woman over her lifetime.

A rate of 2.1 is considered the replacement level as this keeps the population size stable without immigration

Australia's rates: 1961 = 3.55 2008 = 2.02 2023 = 1.63

In Western Australia:

- the fertility rate is slightly higher than the national average, at about 1.68 but is still falling
- Regional WA has higher fertility than metro Perth, where costs and lifestyle pressures are greater



WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD?



Many countries are experience a fertility
crisis in 2023:

SOUTH KOREA: 0.92

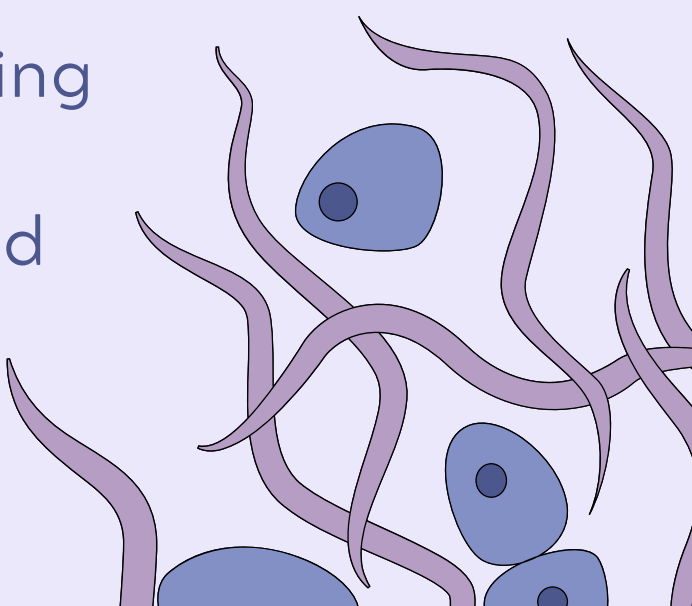
JAPAN: 1.30

ITALY: 1.24

AUSTRALIA: 1.63

WA: 1.68

Why is this happening?

- Delaying childbirth into 30s or 40s
 - Increased access to education and careers, especially for women
 - Worries about housing affordability and cost of living
 - Work life imbalance and long working hours
 - Better access to contraception and IVF options
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HOW DOES THIS EFFECT HUMAN RIGHTS

Fertility is also a human right issue:

- when governments try to influence people's reproductive choices, it can limit individual freedoms
- Pressure to have children may particularly affect women, who already face inequality in pay and caregiving roles
- Policies in some countries have reduced access to abortion and contraception

In Australia/WA

- There's less overt pressure, but economic and cultural pressure still affects choices
- People feel judged for having no kids or just one, especially women

WHAT ARE GOVERNMENTS DOING?

COMMON STRATEGIES

- Baby bonuses or financial rewards for having more children
- Subsidised childcare
- Parental leave (e.g., in Australia: up to 20 weeks of paid parental leave)
- Flexible working arrangements

WA GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

- Supports subsidised early childhood education
- Funding for regional family support programs
- Some pilot programs for workplace-family balance initiatives

However:

- These don't always solve the root issues, like:
- Housing prices (WA median house price: over \$600,000 in Perth)
- High cost of groceries and childcare
- Lack of part-time, flexible jobs

DECLINING FERTILITY

If birth rates stay low:

- The population ages—more elderly than young people
- Smaller workforce, especially in healthcare, teaching, and trades
- Slower economic growth
- More pressure on aged care, pensions, and hospitals

In WA:

- Regional areas may face labor shortages
- Urban sprawl may slow, but cities could also become less dynamic
- Future governments may need to increase immigration to fill gaps

RESOURCE PAGE

<https://www.ibanet.org/Declining-fertility-rates-and-the-threat-to-human-rights>

International Bar Association on Fertility

RightsABS Fertility Trends: <https://www.abs.gov.au>