

Population of older people to surpass number of children

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words and phrases from the text.

ageing carer burden census landmark challenge unprecedented retirement pensioner life expectancy

1. _____ is the length of time that someone is likely to live.
2. A _____ is an occasion on which government officials count the people who live in a country and record other information about them.
3. An _____ person is one who is becoming old.
4. A _____ is something that requires a lot of skill, energy and determination to deal with.
5. A _____ is a serious or difficult responsibility that people have to deal with.
6. A _____ is someone who has reached the age when they are officially old enough to stop working.
7. _____ is the time when you stop working because you have reached the age when you are officially too old to work.
8. An _____ situation is one that has never happened or existed before.
9. A _____ is someone who looks after a person who is ill or is unable to look after themselves.
10. A _____ is a major event that marks an important stage in a process.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible.

1. Which two countries have the highest life expectancy in the world?
2. Which country has the lowest life expectancy?
3. What will the world's population be in 2050?
4. How many of the world's 25 oldest countries are in Europe?
5. How long, on average, do women live longer than men?
6. By 2040 how many Europeans will be at least 65?

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Population of older people set to surpass number of children, report finds

Ed Pilkington,
20 July, 2009

- 1 The world's population is about to reach a landmark of huge social and economic importance, when the proportion of the global population 65 and over outnumbers children under five for the first time. A new report by the US census bureau shows a huge shift towards an ageing population, with enormous consequences for both rich and poor nations. The transformation will bring challenges for families and policymakers, ranging from how to care for older people living alone to how to pay for unprecedented numbers of pensioners – more than one billion of them by 2040.
- 2 The report, *An Ageing World: 2008*, shows that within ten years older people will outnumber children for the first time. It forecasts that over the next 30 years the number of over-65s is expected to almost double, from 506 million in 2008 to 1.3 billion – an increase from 7% of the world's population to 14%. Already, the number of people in the world 65 and over is increasing at an average of 870,000 each month.
- 3 The rate of growth will shoot up in the next couple of years, with both overall numbers and proportions of older people rising rapidly. The change is due to a combination of the high birth rates after the Second World War and more recent improvements in health that are bringing down death rates at older ages. Separate UN forecasts predict that the global population will be more than nine billion by 2050.
- 4 The US census bureau was the first to sound the alarm about these changes. This is its ninth report using data from around the world since it first focused on the trend in 1987. Its latest forecasts warn governments and international bodies that this change in population structure will bring widespread challenges at every level of human organization, starting with the structure of the family, which will be transformed as people live longer. This will in turn place new burdens on carers and social services providers, while patterns of work and retirement will have huge implications for health services and pensions systems.
- 5 "People are living longer and, in some parts of the world, healthier lives," the authors conclude. "This represents one of the greatest achievements of the last century but also a significant challenge as proportions of older people increase in most countries."
- 6 Europe is the oldest continent, with 23 of the world's 25 oldest countries. European dominance of the regional league table will continue. By 2040, more than one in four Europeans are expected to be at least 65, and one in seven at least 75.
- 7 The UK comes in at number 19 in the list of the world's oldest countries. Number one is Japan, which recently replaced Italy as the world's oldest major country. Its life expectancy at birth – 82 years – is matched only by Singapore, though in western Europe, France, Sweden and Italy all have life expectancies of more than 80 years. In the UK it is 78.8.
- 8 The contrast in life expectancy between rich and poor nations is huge. The report shows that a person born in a developed country can expect to outlive his or her counterpart in the developing world by 14 years. Zimbabwe holds the unfortunate record for the lowest life expectancy, which has been cut to 40 through a combination of Aids, famine and dictatorship.
- 9 But an important finding of the report is that poorer countries are also experiencing the phenomenon of an ageing population. More than 80% of the increase in older people in the year up to July 2008 was seen in developing countries. By 2040, the poor world is expected to be home to more than 1 billion people aged 65 and over – as much as 76% of the world total.

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- 10 Ageing will put pressure on societies at all levels. One way of measuring that is to look at the older dependency ratio, or ODR, which shows the balance between working-age people and the older population that must be supported by them. The ODR is the number of people aged 65 and over for every 100 people aged 20 to 64. It varies widely, from just six in Kenya and seven in Bangladesh, to 33 in Italy and also Japan. The UK has an ODR of 26, and the US has 21.
- 11 Countries with a high ODR are already struggling with the burden of paying for prolonged retirement for their older population. Life expectancy after retirement has already reached 21 years for French men and 26 years for French women. Though retirement ages have begun to rise in developed countries, as governments encourage people to continue working, this still puts an extreme burden on public pensions funds.
- 12 Socially, too, there are pressures for both individuals and families. With women living on average seven years longer than men, more older women are living alone. Around half of all women 65 and over in Germany, Denmark and Slovakia are on their own and loneliness and access to care are major problems.
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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

- By 2018 there will be more pensioners than children under five.
- Over the next 30 years the number of pensioners will increase from 7% to 14% of the world's population.
- By 2040 one in seven Europeans will be at least 65 years old.
- The life expectancy of someone born in a developed country is on average 40 years longer than someone born in a developing country.
- By 2040 76% of the world's old people will live in developing countries.
- Half of all women in Germany live alone.

4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

- A verb meaning *to be more than*. (para 1)
- A two-word phrasal verb meaning *to increase rapidly by a large amount*. (para 3)
- A three-word expression meaning *to inform people about a danger*. (para 4)
- An adjective meaning *happening or existing in many places and affecting many people*. (para 4)
- A verb meaning *to live longer than*. (para 8)
- A verb meaning *to be different in different situations*. (para 10)
- An adjective meaning *continuing for a long time*. (para 11)
- A two-word expression meaning *money that a government or organization uses to pay people's pensions*. (para 11)

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5 Prepositions

Complete the phrases from the text using prepositions.

1. consequences _____ both rich and poor nations
2. challenges _____ families and policymakers
3. new burdens _____ social services and carers
4. focused _____ the trend
5. _____ every level of human organization
6. huge implications _____ health services and pensions systems
7. more than one _____ four Europeans
8. put pressure _____ societies

6 Word building

Complete the table.

verb	noun
retire	
achieve	
improve	
imply	
expect	
transform	
dominate	
find	

7 Discussion

At what age do men and women retire in your country?

Do you think people should work longer instead of receiving a pension?