



KEY FINDINGS FOR REPORTERS • OCTOBER 20, 2026

2026 World Population Data Sheet

A quick reference to key demographic findings and the 2026 special focus on gender equality and well-being

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Population, 2026: 8.24 billion | Projected population, 2050: 9.62 billion | Under age 15: 24% | Age 65 or older: 10%

1. LOW FERTILITY IS WIDESPREAD, BUT IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN POPULATION DECLINE.

Over 70% of the world's population lives in countries and territories where the total fertility rate is at or below the replacement level of 2.1 births per woman. Yet 58 of those 121 countries and territories are projected to have larger populations in 2050 than in 2026, reflecting population momentum and, in some places, migration.

2. ONE-THIRD OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION—2.8 BILLION—LIVES WHERE OLDER ADULTS OUTNUMBER CHILDREN.

In 55 countries and territories, people age 65 or older outnumber children under age 15. Japan has one of the widest gaps, with 29% of its population age 65 or older versus 11% under age 15. The threshold has also been crossed in the United States, where the shares are 19% and 17%, respectively.

3. MORE DEATHS THAN BIRTHS DO NOT ALWAYS MEAN A SHRINKING POPULATION.

Deaths exceed births in 44 countries and territories, but migration can change the outcome. In 17 countries—including Germany, Portugal, and Spain—deaths already exceed births, yet populations are projected to be the same or larger in 2035 than today.

4. FOUR COUNTRIES WILL ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 40% OF GLOBAL POPULATION GROWTH THROUGH 2050.

India (+202 million), Nigeria (+154.5 million), Pakistan (+112.7 million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (+101.7 million) are projected to add roughly 571 million people between them. The 10 countries with the largest gains will account for about 63% of global growth.

5. COUNTRIES REACH LOW FERTILITY THROUGH DIFFERENT CHILDBEARING PATHWAYS.

In Germany and Spain, birth rates peak among women in their early 30s, reflecting later childbearing. In Colombia and Thailand, fertility is similarly low even though birth rates still peak in the early to mid-20s. A national fertility rate alone does not reveal how or why fertility has fallen.

6. WOMEN REMAIN FAR FROM EQUAL POLITICAL REPRESENTATION.

Women hold fewer than one-third of parliamentary seats in 127 countries and territories. Only seven have reached or exceeded equal representation, led by Rwanda at 63.8%, Cuba at 57.2%, and Nicaragua at 55%.

7. EDUCATIONAL PARITY CAN COEXIST WITH LARGE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION GAPS.

Among adults age 25 or older, women and men average nearly the same years of schooling in Mexico and Sri Lanka. Among people ages 15 to 64, however, women's labor force participation trails men's by 30 percentage points in Mexico and 37 points in Sri Lanka.

UNITED STATES REFERENCE

Population, 2026: 343.6 million | **Projected population, 2050:** 360.6 million | **Fertility:** 1.6 children per woman | **Net migration:** +4 per 1,000 | **Age 65 or older:** 19% | **Life expectancy:** Women 81, Men 77

WHY REGULAR DATA COLLECTION MATTERS

Recent funding cuts threaten the collection of essential population and health data. Regular censuses, civil registration and vital statistics systems, and nationally representative surveys provide the empirical data needed to understand changes in people's lives and to track emerging needs. They are also critical to develop, validate, and improve the models used to estimate population and health conditions. Without continued investment in these data systems, models increasingly rely on outdated or incomplete information, raising the risk that policymakers will make decisions based on estimates that do not reflect current realities.

USING AND READING THE DATA

Total fertility rate: The number of children a woman would have if current age-specific fertility rates continued throughout her childbearing years. **Projection:** A conditional estimate based on assumptions, not a prediction. **Point-in-time resource:** The 2026 Data Sheet is not designed as a time-series comparison with 2024; differences may reflect revised sources, estimates or methods.

EXPLORE

Data Explorer | Population giants | Population growth | Age structures | Education and fertility