

South Korea's fertility rate falls to record low

The total fertility rate measures the average number of children a woman will have in her lifetime. In 2018, this dropped to 0.98 in South Korea.

This record low puts South Korea near the bottom of lowest fertility rates in the world. To put that into perspective, the 2018 fertility rate was 1.72 in the United States. In some African countries, which see the highest fertility numbers in the world, the rate can go up to 5 or 6.

This isn't just a fluke for South Korea — its demographic crisis has been building for a while. The 2017 rate of 1.05 was also a record low at the time, while the **mortality rate** jumped to a record high.

mortality rate 死亡率

All the while, the population continues to age.

Korea isn't alone in facing this problem — Japan, too, has struggled for years with an aging population, shrinking workforce, and low birth rates.

There are similar reasons behind this decline in both countries. A major one is the demanding and often unhealthy work culture that makes it difficult for people to balance careers with family life.

The Japanese government has launched various initiatives to try to reverse this trend. In 2017, the government announced a 2 **trillion** yen (\$18 billion) spending package to expand free preschool and cut waiting times at day care centers.

trillion 万亿

Meanwhile, the South Korean government lowered maximum working hours from 68 hours a week to 52 hours last year, with some experts pointing to the declining fertility rate and its economic consequences as a motivator.