

Japan's new births fall to record low in 2023 as demographic woes deepen

TOKYO, Feb 27 (Reuters) – The number of babies born in Japan fell for an eighth straight year to a fresh record low in 2023, preliminary government data showed on Tuesday, underscoring the daunting task the country faces in trying to stem depopulation.

The number of births fell 5.1% from a year earlier to 758,631, while the number of marriages slid 5.9% to 489,281 — the first time in 90 years the number fell below 500,000 — foreboding a further decline in the population as out-of-wedlock births are rare in Japan.

Asked about the latest data, Japan's top government spokesperson said the government will take "unprecedented steps" to cope with the declining birthrate, such as expanding childcare and promoting wage hikes for younger workers.

"The declining birthrate is in a critical situation," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters. "The next six years or so until 2030, when the number of young people will rapidly decline, will be the last chance to reverse the trend."

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