



Deutsche Welle

## Women's '*career or kids*' problem causes low German birth rate

6 March 2015

Elderly Germans are dying faster than German babies are being born. Of course, this means the German population is shrinking. This problem is happening in other countries, too. But Germany now has the lowest birth rate in the world.



<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germanys-birth-rate-lowest-in-the-world-according-to-study-10286525.html>

Stephan Sievert is a researcher with the Berlin Institute for Population and Development. According to Mr. Sievert, the only reason there are still enough workers in Germany is because so many immigrants have moved there. Sievert said that if the immigrants stop coming, Germany's population will shrink 20 million (20,000,000) people by 2060. This would be a disaster for Germany's economy.

This is not a new problem. Germany's fertility rate – the number that shows how many children the average woman has in

her lifetime – has been low for decades. It has been at around 1.4 since 1970.

An average fertility rate of about 2 children per woman is needed just to keep a population steady.

Much of this low birth rate can be explained by choices women had to make for many decades. They could have a career **or** they could have kids. It was very difficult to have both. Around 1970, more women chose to work instead of having kids. Today in Germany, not having any children at all is considered completely normal.

To change this, families will need more help. Germany's government should have helped them long ago, and it will be hard to fix this problem now.

For parents who want to take time off with a new baby, they need to be able to go back to their old jobs when they are ready. Many people wonder if they will even be able to find a good job

after taking time off with a baby. Many people will not risk having a baby if they have to worry about getting a job later. So their jobs need to be protected while they take time off with a child.

A huge problem is that Germany doesn't have enough daycare for young children. The German government needs to provide good daycare and needs to help pay for it. Even if Germans have enough good daycare centers, people won't have children if daycare is too expensive for them.

Another thing parents need is a chance to work part-time instead of full-time. Many parents want to work, but they also want to spend more time with their babies and toddlers.



According to Mr. Sievert, if Germany is going to have enough workers, there are only two choices: **more children** or **more immigrants!** Germans are complaining about how many immigrants are coming to Germany. But these immigrants are needed to fill jobs. Even if Germany's birth rate jumps soon, it will take 20 years before the new babies are old enough to work. Mr. Sievert asks, "What are we going to do until then? With or without more babies, we will need immigrants to help Germany keep a strong economy."

Adapted from <http://www.dw.com/en/womens-career-or-kids-dilemma-drives-german-baby-drought/a-18300620>