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UK population collapse 'good for the planet' as number of newborns hits 20-year low

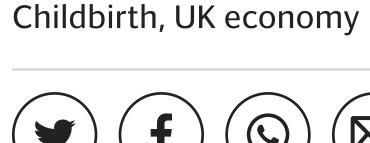
Birth rate slump in West will address overconsumption, former government adviser says

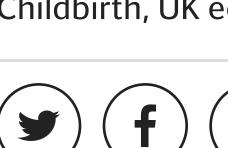
By Eir Nolsøe 17 August 2023 • 6:04pm

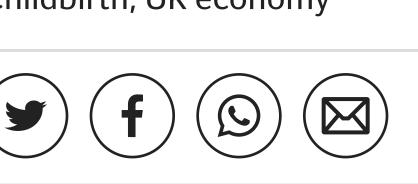
lowest number since 2002.

other developed economies.

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Britain's top demographics expert has said the falling number of babies born in Britain is a "good thing" after new data showed the number of births had hit a 20-year low.

Population Ageing and a former government adviser, said falling birth rates in the West were "good for... our planet". Her comments came after official figures from the Office for National Statistics

Professor Sarah Harper CBE, founder and director of the Oxford Institute of

The total was down 3.1pc compared to 2021 and is part of a long-term decline in the number of births across Britain and the developed world.

(ONS) showed there were 605,479 live births in England and Wales last year, the

Prof Harper told the Telegraph: "I think it's a good thing that the high-income, high-consuming countries of the world are reducing the number of children that they're having. I'm quite positive about that."

The academic said declining fertility in rich countries would help to address the "general overconsumption that we have at the moment", which has a negative impact on the planet.

Prof Harper served on the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology

between 2014 and 2017. She was awarded a CBE for services to demography in 2018. She said the UK's declining birth rate was "inevitable" and in-line with trends in

She said: "We will see smaller populations in high-income countries going forward. It's just going to be a trend of the 21st century and that will actually be good for general overall overconsumption that we have at the moment and our planet."

Research has found that wealthy nations tend to have much larger carbon footprints than poorer countries, as rich people can afford to buy more goods, travel more and do other activities that generate emissions.

Carbon emissions from high-income countries were 29 times larger than lowincome countries on a per capita basis in 2020, World Bank figures show.

While slowing population growth may reduce carbon emissions, analysts have

warned that it also poses significant challenges for economic growth. A shrinking workforce puts pressure on younger generations to pay more tax for the healthcare of older people. It can also lead to worker shortages that can slow

growth. While the overall number of births in Britain is declining, the share of children

Almost one in three children born last year were delivered by mothers born outside of the UK. The number of births by women born outside the UK rose 3,600 year-on-year to account for 30.3pc of all births. The previous peak was 29.3pc in 2020.

born to women from outside of Britain has hit a record high.

When including the father, more than one in three children born last year had at least one foreign-born parent. In London, the figure was two thirds.

The ONS said: "In 2022, India replaced Romania as the most common country of birth for non-UK-born mothers, and Pakistan as the most common country of birth for non-UK-born fathers."

For the first time since records began in 2003, Afghan women were among the top ten most common nationalities for foreign-born mothers.

It comes after Afghan women were granted humanitarian protection by the UK following the Taliban's return to power in 2021.

the year, as population estimates for mid-2022 are yet to be released. The fertility rate sank to a record low of 1.58 children per woman during the first

year of Covid and recovered slightly to 1.61 in 2021.

The number of births is separate from Britain's fertility rate, which measures the

ratio of live births to women of childbearing age. This will be published later in

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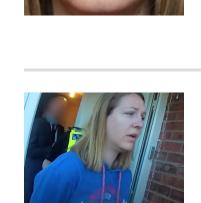
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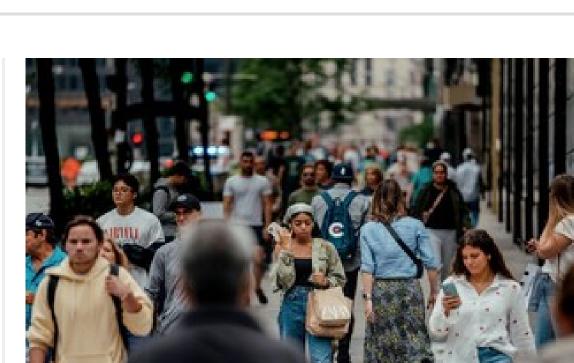
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