

Answers

A) Match the phrases to the definitions

Based on the context of the article, can you match the words in the box to the definitions listed below? Then add the word into the example sentence. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the meaning of the sentence.

to obtain/acquire	to draw on	a ballpark figure	to skew
in the region of	to account for	to factor out	to be in alignment with
constitute	scrutinize	is made up of	to stem from the fact that

- To not include something in your calculations or analysis of data: **to factor out**

*"If we **factor out** the 2 years under covid lockdowns, the data shows that the country's tourism industry is really booming."*

- An approximate number: **a ballpark figure**

*"If you don't have the exact data, you can give us a **ballpark figure**."*
*"As a **ballpark figure**, the company made around \$1.2m last year in profits."*

- To use data as a resource: **to draw on**

*"I would like to **draw on** last year's figures in order to prove my point."*

- To be caused by: **to stem from the fact that**

*"Our poor results from the previous quarter **stem from the fact that** we didn't plan the roll-out of the new product effectively."*

- To be the same as or similar to something else: **to be in alignment with**

*"Thankfully, our figures from the previous quarter are **in alignment** with our targets."*

- To get something: **to obtain / to acquire**

*"We have managed to **obtain / acquire** a lot of data regarding our customer preferences."*

- To distort something from its true value, to make something inaccurate: **to skew**

*"I think that last week's poor performance has **skewed** the results a little bit. Overall we are performing very well and improving every week."*

- To explain the reason for something: **to account for**

*"It is difficult to **account for** the very poor figures that we have seen over the past months."*

*"The loss of our CEO **accounts for** our poor sales last month."*

9. Approximately: **in the region of**

*"Losing our main client has cost us **in the region of** \$50 000."*

10. To be part of a whole: **to constitute**

*"Women **constitute** 50% of our staff."*

*"Online sales **constitute** 70% of our revenue."*

11. To be represented by (as a percentage): **is made up of**

*"60% of our workforce **is made up of** temporary workers on part-time contracts."*

12. To look at something very carefully: **to scrutinize**

*"Make sure that you **scrutinize** all the figures, because we can't afford to make any mistakes in our calculations."*

B) Key Words in a New Context

Declining Birth Rates in Japan: Are there any Solutions?

Japan is facing a significant demographic challenge as birth rates continue to decline. According to data **obtained** from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, the number of newborns in Japan hit a record low of 840,832 in 2020, a decline of over 25% from a decade ago.

To obtain accurate data on Japan's birth rates, we can draw on statistics from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare. In recent years, birth rates have been **in the region of** 1.4 to 1.5 children per woman, which is significantly below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman required to keep the population the same. If this trend continues, the population of Japan is projected to decrease by around 16 million people as a **ballpark figure** by 2045.

One factor that **accounts for** the declining birth rates is Japan's ageing population. Japan already has a high population of elderly people. Those over 65 **constitute** 28% of the Japanese population, which means that there are relatively few young people to have children and support them. This figure is expected to increase from 28% to 38% by 2050.

Japan's declining birth rates also **stem from the fact that** Japan is experiencing economic difficulties. The cost of raising children in Japan is high, and many couples are struggling to balance work and family life. Japan's gender gap is also a concern, with women often facing barriers to career advancement and limited access to affordable childcare. The highest management positions in Japan are mainly **made up of** men.

Japan's traditional values emphasize hard work and academic achievement, which can discourage young couples from starting families. Moreover, the stigma associated with being a single parent or raising a child outside of marriage may also play a role. Many want to be **in alignment with** cultural norms.

So what can be done to solve this problem? The Japanese government has recently introduced policies aimed at supporting families and encouraging childbirth, such as subsidies for childcare and longer parental leave. However, it remains to be seen as to whether these policies will be enough to reverse the trend. There is no doubt that other governments in the Western world will be watching closely. South Korea, Portugal, Spain, Germany and the UK will all need to **draw on** the experience and data obtained from the Japanese government's policies in order to put together their own "rescue" plans, as their populations are also set to decrease dramatically in the next 30 years if they take no action.

C) Comprehension Questions

5. What is the significance of the number 2.1 in the article?
2.1 is the 'replacement level'. It is the average number of children that a woman needs to have in order to keep the population numbers the same in the next generation.
6. What are 4 potential reasons why couples in Japan are choosing not to have children?
The cost of raising children is high; many couples are struggling to balance work and family life; Japan's traditional values emphasise hard work and achievement; there is a stigma around single-parent households.
7. What are 2 ways in which the Japanese government is attempting to encourage couples to have more children?
They are trying to offer money for those who choose to have children. They have also offered longer periods of leave for parents.
8. What will the governments of South Korea, Portugal, Spain, Germany and the UK do and why?
The article says that the governments of these countries will keep an eye on the results of the Japanese government's measures, because their populations are also set to decrease dramatically within the next 30 years.