

A newsletter from East View highlighting census data from around the world

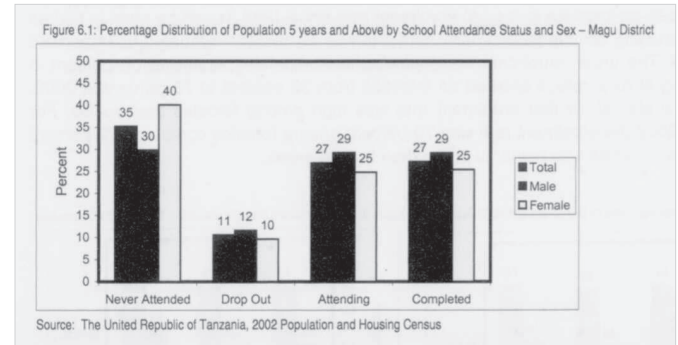
IS SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION DECLINING AROUND THE WORLD?

Declining fertility rates in many high- and middle-income countries do not only bring challenges associated with an aging population; they also cause complications in public education and educational policy. Across Europe, East Asia, and North America, birth rates have fallen below replacement level, leading to fewer children entering school each year. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Italy, China, and the United States have all reported shrinking primary and secondary school enrollments. The shrinking of the school-aged population has major implications for education systems, workforce pipelines, and long-term economic planning.

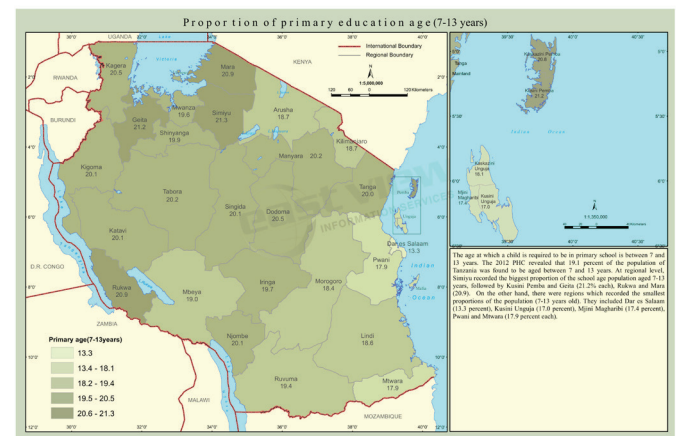
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Recent research indicates that enrollment in schools in the U.S. is declining, even for suburban districts and private schools. This decline causes budget shortfalls that lead to employment cuts, school closures and consolidations. In Japan, the number of births fell to a record low of 720,988 in 2024, continuing a nine-year decline, forcing many rural communities to merge or close schools.

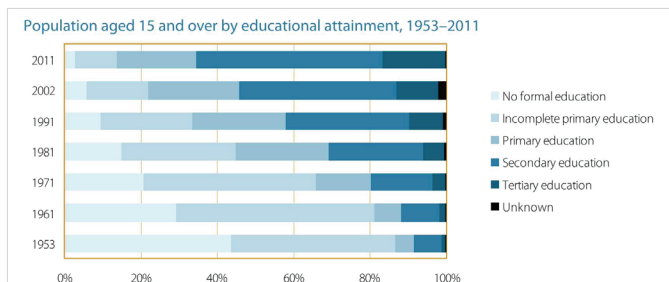
Similarly, the government of South Korea projects that the number of elementary, middle, and high school students will fall below 5 million, down from over 10 million at its 1980s peak, while the number of first-grade students is projected to drop to just 220,481 by 2031. In 2026, first-grade enrollment fell below 300,000 for the first time, and more than 150 schools closed or merged between 2021 and 2025 due to declining enrollment.



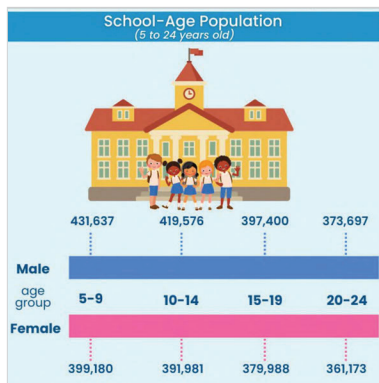
Excerpt from Tanzania, 2002. Census Results. v.04. District Profile. Magu, p. 37. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2518308B0.1.52>



Tanzania, 2012. Socio-Economic Atlas, p. 12. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2464346.1.12>



According to a policy brief by the Department of Economic Affairs of the United Nations, global school-age population will peak before 2035 in most regions except for Africa and Western Asia. Data shows the largest increase in primary, secondary, and tertiary education age cohorts between 2022-2050 will occur in sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently, policy makers in the region will have to prepare for increased spending on education. These diverging demographic trajectories underscore the importance of multidisciplinary research that integrates population studies, economics, urban planning, and labor market analysis to better understand how shifting age structures will shape education policy in different regions of the world. Global Census Archive, with its historical and contemporary censuses, invites researchers to dive into demographic data from around the world in a user-friendly platform.



Above: Excerpt from Serbia, 2011. Census Atlas, p. 39. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2472877BO.1.40>

Left: Excerpt from Philippines, 2020. Infographics. Central Visayas. Household, Sex, School, Age. <https://gca.eastview.com/CENSUS-2658824BO.1.1>

Further reading on school-age populations:

- "Japan's births fell to record low in 2024," Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-new-births-fall-9-straight-years-record-low-2024-2025-02-27/>
- "Number of schools graduating fewer than 10 students to exceed 2,000 by 2030, data shows," Korea JoongAng Daily: <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/2026-02-19/national/socialAffairs/Number-of-schools-graduating-fewer-than-10-students-to-exceed-2000-by-2030-data-shows/2526456>
- "Population Changes and Emerging Challenges to Global Primary Education Provision," Population and Development Review: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/padr.70059>
- "School-age populations as a percentage of total population, by age group and country: Selected years, 2005 through 2017," National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_601.30.asp
- "UN DESA Policy Brief No. 152: Population, education and sustainable development: interlinkages and select policy implications," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: <https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-152-population-education-and-sustainable-development>
- "U.S. Schools Face a Crisis as the Number of Children Drops," The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/08/upshot/public-schools-enrollment-crisis.html?searchResultPosition=1>



The East View **Global Census Archive**® (GCA) is an innovative program to collect official data and publications issued by the national census authorities of more than 200 countries, from the early 19th century to the present day, providing a key resource for scholars and analysts to find current and historical census data to support critical research into our changing world. GCA provides a single platform experience to explore the world's census publications: all countries and regions, the complete depth of published census materials, including original census publications in e-book form, as well as modern tabular data in Excel format and GIS files for advanced users.