

Beckhams a 'bad example' for families

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

irresponsible	role model	sustainable	taboo	notorious	policy
inequality	birth rate	birth control	absurd	densely populated	

1. A _____ is someone whose behaviour is considered to be a good example for other people to follow. (para 1)
2. An _____ person does or says things without thinking about the possible consequences of their actions. (para 1)
3. If something is described as _____, it is completely stupid, unreasonable or impossible to believe. (para 2)
4. A _____ is something that people do not talk about because it is considered offensive or shocking. (para 2)
5. _____ is a situation in which people are not equal because some groups have more opportunities, money, etc. than other groups. (para 2)
6. A _____ is a set of plans or actions agreed on by a government, political party, business or other group. (para 3)
7. _____ is the practice of avoiding becoming pregnant or the methods used for this. (para 3)
8. If something is described as _____, it uses methods that do not damage the environment. (para 4)
9. If a country is _____, it has a lot of people living close together. (para 5)
10. If something is described as _____, it is famous for something bad. (para 7)
11. The _____ is the number of births in a particular place or year. (para 7)

2 Find the information

Look in the text and answer these questions as quickly as possible.

1. How many children do David and Victoria Beckham now have?
2. What is the world's population today?
3. What was the world's population in 1930?
4. What is the world's population expected to be by 2050?
5. Which country has the fastest-growing population in Europe?
6. Which country has a one-child policy?

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Tracy McVeigh
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- 1 David and Victoria Beckham were very happy when their new daughter was born but, according to a group of campaigners, the birth of their fourth child makes the couple bad role models and environmentally irresponsible. The world's population is nearly seven billion, and some people want the UK to have a public debate about how many children people have.
- 2 The Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas, is asking for an end to the "absurd taboo" in discussing family size in the UK. Lucas said: "We need to have a far greater public debate about population, whether it focuses on improving family planning or reducing global inequality. The fact that we do not discuss this issue means most people don't think about the growth of the global population in recent years. In 1930, the world's population was around two billion. Today it is around seven billion, and by 2050 it is expected to rise to nine billion."
- 3 Lucas says that it is interesting that public figures, environmental groups and NGOs in general have avoided discussing population and now it's become a taboo issue. It is very difficult to discuss this subject because of the terrible results of China's one-child policy and of other attempts at birth control. But, she argues, if an issue is a taboo subject that no one talks about, then there's very little chance of finding solutions.
- 4 Simon Ross of the UK-based Optimum Population Trust is asking the government to give child benefits only for the first two children. "That would send a clear message that the government will support sustainable families, but after that you are on your own," he said. "There is a big issue there. Family planning is cheap, but many people don't use it properly and accidental pregnancy rates are very high. Having one or two children is fine but three or four is just selfish."
- 5 "The Beckhams are very bad role models with their large family. Why try to reduce your carbon emissions and then increase them 100% by having another child?" he said. "England is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and the fastest-growing population in Europe. In 15 years, we'll have an extra ten million people here."
- 6 Zoologist David Attenborough said the world's baby-making was damaging the planet. He thinks every country should have a population policy. "Fifty years ago there were about three billion people on Earth. Now there are almost seven billion – almost double – and every one of them needs space. There cannot be more people on this Earth than we can feed," he said.
- 7 The population debate has been made more difficult by China's notorious one-child policy, and also because people don't want to criticize birth rates in underdeveloped countries. But campaigners argue that it is the populations of the developed world who use most of the world's resources.
- 8 Lucas said the Green Party was not afraid to raise the subject because it was "fundamental". "We must learn the lesson from China: controlling population growth in a way that limits personal freedom is dangerous," she said. "We should focus our attention on encouraging birth control, reducing poverty and inequality and improving food security."
- 9 Lucas believes that this is a debate about poverty and inequality, as well as about sustainability – and that strong policies are needed to reduce the huge gap between rich and poor. She says that the UK, as a richer country, faces different population challenges from countries in the developing world. In poor countries, high birth rates are linked to poverty and inequality. "It's an equally important issue for both rich and poor countries – this is a global debate which affects us all," she says.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. According to a group of campaigners, having four children makes the Beckhams bad role models and environmentally irresponsible.
2. The topic of family size is not discussed very often.
3. England is the most densely-populated country in the world.
4. People often criticize birth rates in developing countries.
5. The Green Party believes that population control is an important issue for both richer and poorer nations.

4 Chunks

Find the following words and expressions in the text.

1. a noun meaning *someone who tries to achieve political or social change by persuading other people or the government to do something* (para 1)
2. a noun meaning *a discussion in which people or groups state different opinions about a subject* (para 1)
3. a two-word noun meaning *the practice of controlling the number of children that you have by using contraceptives* (para 2)
4. an acronym meaning *an organization that is not owned by the government but may work with government departments* (para 3)
5. a two-word noun meaning *money given by the government in some European countries to all families with children to look after* (para 4)
6. a two-word noun meaning *carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide in the atmosphere produced by vehicles and industrial processes* (para 5)
7. an adjective meaning *essential to the existence, development or success of something* (para 8)
8. a noun meaning *something that needs a lot of skill, energy or determination to deal with* (para 9)

5 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. role | a. groups |
| 2. public | b. emissions |
| 3. environmental | c. control |
| 4. birth | d. countries |
| 5. carbon | e. model |
| 6. underdeveloped | f. debate |

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6 Word-building

Complete the table.

	adjective	noun
1.	pregnant	
2.	poor	
3.	unequal	
4.	sustainable	
5.		accident
6.		environment

7 Discussion

Should we limit the number of children people can have? Why? Why not?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. role model
2. irresponsible
3. absurd
4. taboo
5. inequality
6. policy
7. birth control
8. sustainable
9. densely populated
10. notorious
11. birth rate

2 Find the information

1. four
2. nearly seven billion
3. around two billion
4. nine billion
5. England
6. China

3 Comprehension check

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T

4 Find the word

1. campaigner
2. debate
3. family planning
4. NGO
5. child benefits
6. carbon emissions
7. fundamental
8. challenge

5 Two-word expressions

1. e
2. f
3. a
4. c
5. b
6. d

6 Word-building

1. pregnancy
2. poverty
3. inequality
4. sustainability
5. accidental
6. environmental