# Nigel Farage proposes marriage tax breaks to tackle UK’s record low birth rates



Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform UK, has ignited a fresh political debate by pledging tax breaks aimed at married couples as a strategy to combat plummeting birth rates in the UK. In a major speech delivered in Westminster, he framed the current situation as an ‘existential crisis,’ asserting that the decline in birth rates poses a fundamental threat to the nation’s economic sustainability and social fabric. Recent statistics reveal that, between 2022 and 2023, women in England and Wales had an average of just 1.44 children, the lowest rate on record. Farage argues that this declining fertility rate directly impacts the country’s labour market, leading to increased reliance on foreign labour to fill workforce gaps.

Farage's proposals include not only the lifting of the controversial two-child benefit cap but also a new marriage tax allowance. Under his plan, one spouse would be exempt from tax on the first £25,000 of their earnings, while the other would enjoy a tax-free allowance of £20,000. This reform could potentially be transformative for families, making it easier to have more children while easing the financial burden associated with child-rearing. Critics, however, point out that the fiscal implications of such tax reforms could be significant; estimates suggest that raising the basic rate of income tax threshold might incur costs exceeding £50 billion.

In an effort to resonate with working-class voters, Farage's announcement comes at a time when Labour is facing internal pressure over welfare spending. Labour's leader, Sir Keir Starmer, has hesitated to firmly commit to similar policies, despite acknowledging the challenges posed by the two-child benefit cap. This hesitation could open the door for Farage to capitalise, further igniting a competitive political climate. The winter fuel payment reinstatement for pensioners, another facet of his proposal, aims to bolster his appeal among older voters, a demographic crucial for both Reform UK and Labour. Critics from Labour have responded by accusing Farage of advocating for ‘fantasy economics,’ highlighting the potential impracticalities of his proposals amidst growing fiscal constraints.

The country’s demographic patterns further complicate the scenario. The current general fertility rate in London contrasts sharply with national trends, particularly among older mothers, due primarily to high living costs and the lengthy pursuit of careers before starting families. In 2023, the fertility rate for London women aged 40-44 rose to 20.9 per 1,000, but the overall rate in London stands at a mere 1.35 children per woman, indicating that while some may delay parenthood, the broader trend remains troubling. Many families are opting for fewer children, influenced by economic pressures and societal changes. Such declines may ultimately have profound implications for public services, as fewer births lead to a shrinking future workforce capable of supporting an ageing population.

The urgency of addressing these demographic shifts is echoed by analysts who warn that continuing trends of low birth rates could lead to a burden on public finances as the proportion of older citizens increases relative to the working-age population. While Farage’s proposals aim to encourage childbearing at home, they inadvertently reflect a deeper societal issue: the need for increased support structures, such as affordable housing and accessible childcare, to empower families to grow. Farage's contention that a strong domestic workforce can alleviate reliance on immigration underscores a broader conversation about population dynamics in an increasingly globalised environment.

As discussions about immigration continue to shape political narratives leading up to the next general election, Farage's stance outlines a clear worldview. He advocates for lowering net migration in favour of fostering domestic family growth, arguing this would alleviate pressures on infrastructure and public services. However, critics argue that a zero-net immigration policy, coupled with low birth rates, may lead to significant labour shortages in industries dependent on foreign workers, further complicating the economic landscape.

In summary, Farage's proposals highlight a crucial intersection of family policy, economic strategy, and immigration debates in the UK, as he seeks to challenge the status quo and reposition his party as a viable alternative to the mainstream political spectrum. Whether these measures resonate with voters, given the underlying socio-economic challenges, remains to be seen—but they undeniably signal a shift in the conversation around family and economic policy in the UK.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14751805/Farage-pledges-tax-breaks-married-couples-encourage-bigger-families-help-Britain-reverse-existential-crisis-plummeting-birth-rates.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/03a14332-3048-4bf9-88a8-d965815c34cf)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14751805/Farage-pledges-tax-breaks-married-couples-encourage-bigger-families-help-Britain-reverse-existential-crisis-plummeting-birth-rates.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/5b951d4f-1cd5-4b7a-bd2d-ef4b820de9bf), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/15f5016b-366b-4abf-9869-79d81c15576e)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/30e0469a-900c-4ef1-9af5-ff5902f6e129), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/03a14332-3048-4bf9-88a8-d965815c34cf)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/a450f1f2-c96c-4609-baee-fed1354f3da1), [[7]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-population-projected-reach-725-million-by-2032-2025-01-28/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/03a14332-3048-4bf9-88a8-d965815c34cf), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/a450f1f2-c96c-4609-baee-fed1354f3da1)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14751805/Farage-pledges-tax-breaks-married-couples-encourage-bigger-families-help-Britain-reverse-existential-crisis-plummeting-birth-rates.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/5b951d4f-1cd5-4b7a-bd2d-ef4b820de9bf> - Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, plans to announce the lifting of the two-child benefit cap and full reinstatement of winter fuel payments, measures expected to cost up to £5 billion. This move is aimed at appealing to working-class voters and influencing Labour Party policy, particularly as Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Chancellor Rachel Reeves face internal pressure over welfare spending. Starmer recently reversed a decision affecting winter fuel payments to pensioners, but has not detailed implementation plans. While he is also open to ending the two-child benefit cap, the fiscal implications are significant, with £3.5 billion required by decade's end. Reeves insists such decisions be made during major fiscal events, with the next not scheduled until autumn. Deputy PM Angela Rayner, advocating for tax increases of up to £4 billion on the wealthy to fund societal needs, denies leadership ambitions despite internal tensions. Meanwhile, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch supports winter fuel payments’ principle but questions universal application. Reform UK’s surge in polls underscores the political challenge to the Labour government amid rising borrowing costs and fiscal constraints.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/15f5016b-366b-4abf-9869-79d81c15576e> - The article argues for the repeal of the UK's two-child benefit cap, which limits financial support to families to their first two children. Critics, including the Child Poverty Action Group, identify it as a major contributor to child poverty. The policy undermines Labour's commitments to combat child poverty and is unpopular among many Labour MPs. The author presents a broader justification rooted in demography and state interest: maintaining a population replacement rate, which typically requires an average of slightly more than two children per family. By curbing support beyond the second child, the government effectively discourages necessary population growth. The author advocates for a societal perspective where raising children is a shared responsibility due to long-term economic and social benefits. Moreover, punitive measures against children for parental choices or misfortunes are viewed as unjust. In conclusion, the writer stresses that valuing families with more than two children should be a policy priority, signaling that the state places high importance on children and future generations.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/30e0469a-900c-4ef1-9af5-ff5902f6e129> - In London, birth rates are highest among women over 40 years old compared to other regions in England and Wales. The delay in parenthood is largely attributed to high housing costs and career establishment. London’s fertility rate for women aged 40-44 was 20.9 per 1,000 in 2023, significantly higher than other regions. However, overall fertility rates are low, with London's general fertility rate being the lowest in the country at 1.35 children per woman. Factors contributing to this include high living costs, large student populations, and a trend of postponing childbirth for personal and biological reasons. Additionally, changing immigration patterns post-Brexit have influenced these demographic shifts. Despite more fertility clinics aiding older mothers, the number of births in London has declined by 19% over the past decade. This trend is seen as indicative of broader patterns observed in advanced economies globally, driven by economic pressures and shifting societal norms around family formation.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/03a14332-3048-4bf9-88a8-d965815c34cf> - The birth rate in England and Wales has dropped to its lowest point since records began in 1938, reaching a total fertility rate of 1.44 children per woman in 2023, well below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. This decline, which has been ongoing since 2010, raises concerns about demographic challenges including a shrinking workforce and economic implications. Analysts note that while lower birth rates reduce immediate pressures on services like schools, they pose long-term issues with fewer workers to support an ageing population. Factors contributing to the decline include access to contraception, increased female employment and education, and the high cost of childcare and housing. The ageing population may strain public finances, potentially pushing public debt significantly higher in coming decades. Solutions suggested include increasing labour force participation, improving training for youth, and better health policies for older adults, alongside more government support for fertility treatments and family-friendly policies.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/a450f1f2-c96c-4609-baee-fed1354f3da1> - According to official statistics, immigration has driven the fastest UK population growth in half a century. The British population reached 68.3 million in mid-2023, a 1% increase from 2022, marking the highest annual growth rate since 1971. Although there were more deaths than births for the first time in 50 years, immigration added 677,300 people to the country. A slowdown is anticipated in 2024 due to the normalisation of net migration. This growth has sparked political debates, especially ahead of upcoming elections. Experts indicate that a larger population can benefit public finances but also increases pressure on housing and infrastructure costs.
7. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-population-projected-reach-725-million-by-2032-2025-01-28/> - The UK population is expected to increase to 72.5 million by mid-2032 from 67.6 million in mid-2022, primarily due to net migration, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This growth, driven by a net migration of 4.9 million people, may heighten debates over the impact on public services and the need for foreign workers. Although successive governments, including that of Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer, have aimed to reduce immigration, it remains a significant factor following the Brexit vote and the rise of the right-wing Reform UK party. Births and deaths are projected to be nearly equal, thereby having minimal natural impact on population change. The ONS also assumes a long-term net migration of 340,000 people annually from mid-2028. Last year, UK net migration hit a record of over 900,000, with immigration from countries like India, Nigeria, and Pakistan increasing, largely to fill health and social care roles.