

PASSIVE OF REPORTING VERBS

◆ Sometimes when you are reporting what people say or believe, you don't know, or you don't want to say, who exactly the 'people' are. So you use an impersonal construction:

People believe that thousands of birds died.

The same idea can be expressed by using the passive in two different ways:

- a) **subject + passive of reporting verb + 'to' infinitive**
Hundreds of thousands of birds are believed to have died.
- b) **It + passive of reporting verb + that + clause**
It is believed that hundreds of thousands of birds died.

○ Some other reporting verbs that can be used in this way are:

calculate, claim, consider, discover, estimate, expect, feel, hope, know, prove, report, say, show, think, understand, etc.

○ With present reference, the passive is followed by the present infinitive:

People think that Johnson is in Cardiff.
Johnson is thought to be in Cardiff.

○ With past reference, the passive is followed by the past infinitive:

People believe that Johnson left Cardiff last month.
Johnson is believed to have left Cardiff last month.

○ Present and past continuous infinitives are also used:

They think that the forger is living in Florence.
The forger is thought to be living in Florence.

People know that the suspect has been dealing with drugs.
The suspect is known to have been dealing with drugs.

○ Passive infinitives can also appear:

People believe that the portrait was painted by Vermeer.
The portrait is believed to have been painted by Vermeer.

They think that the staff are given a bonus whenever they have to work overtime.
The staff are thought to be given a bonus whenever they have to work overtime.

○ The reporting verb can also be past:

People considered the government had spent too much.
The government was considered to have paid too much.