



## Population Control in India

*10 mins read*

### At a Glance

- ❖ India is projected to become the world's most populous country by 2024.
- ❖ Currently, India every year adds 15 million people to its population base by far the largest in the world. The problematic aspect is that India accounts for about 17 per cent of the world population worth only 2.2 per cent of the world's land mass.
- ❖ With more than 1.3 billion inhabitants, it stands today as the second most populous country in the world. In other words, every sixth global citizen is an Indian.
- ❖ In the past three decades, India has made significant progress in decreasing population growth. As per the World Bank, the fertility rate in the country has decreased from 4.97 in 1975 to nearly 2.4 in 2015. It is expected in the coming decade the fertility rate in India will soon reach the replacement level of 2.1.
- ❖ Despite the decrease in fertility rate, according to United Nations World Population Prospects report, India is expected to surpass China by 2024 and shall become the most populous country with a population of 1.6 billion populations by 2050.
- ❖ India continues to remain predominantly rural in its characters — where close of 69 per cent population lives across more than 600,000 villages as per the Indian Census 2011.
- ❖ India's population has increased almost four folds during the post independence era (from 361 million in 1951 to 1210 million in 2011). The dramatic increase in the total population size between 1960's to 1990's also marked peak of the average population growth rate of 2 percent per year. Such rapid population growth has been attributed to gradual declining mortality levels and relatively slow change in the fertility levels.
- ❖ Infant mortality rate declined from 225 infant death per 1000 live births in early 1950's to 80 infant deaths per 1000 live births in 1990's, total fertility rate declined from 6.0 children per woman in 1966 to 3.8 children per woman in 1992.

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**D**ear Countrymen, our nation has reached a phase when we should be transparent about everything. Time has now come that we should take challenges head-on. Sometimes decisions are taken keeping in mind political advantage but they come at the cost of growth of future generation of our country. I would like to highlight the issue of population explosion in one Country from the aegis of the Red Fort today.

*This rapidly increasing population poses various new challenges for us and our future generations. In our society, there is a section which is very well aware of the consequences of the uncontrolled population growth. They all deserve accolades and respect. This is also their expression for their love for the nation. Before having a baby, they take a well considered decision whether they will be able to take care of the child's needs and fulfill his/her dreams by playing the role of a responsible parent.*

*Keeping these parameters in mind, this small section of responsible citizens is self motivated to keep their family small. Not only do they contribute to the welfare of their family but also to the good of the nation. They express patriotism. I would like all the people of our society to watch their lives closely and see how much they have served their families by limiting increase in family size. It is about how the family has moved forward in just a generation or two, how the children have got education, how the family is free from disease, how well the family fulfils their primary needs.*

*We should learn from them. Before a child arrives into our family we should think - have I prepared myself to fulfill the needs of the child ? Or will I leave it dependent on the society? Will I leave the child un-nurtured? No parents can continue to give birth to children who are forced to live this type of life and therefore a social awareness is needed. The people who have played this huge role need to be honored, and by setting them as examples we need to inspire the segment of the society who is still not thinking on these lines. We need to worry about population explosion.*

*Governments also have to come forward through different schemes. Be it the State Government or the Central Government - everyone has to walk together to shoulder this responsibility. We cannot think of an unhealthy society, we cannot think of an uneducated society. In 21st century India, the ability to fulfill dreams starts with a person, starts with a family. If the population is not educated, not healthy, then neither the home nor the country can be happy. If the population is educated, empowered, and skilled and has adequate means available to achieve the right ambience to fulfill their wishes and needs, then I think the country can fulfill these things.*

*- Excerpts from Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's speech on Independence Day 2019*

## **1. Introduction**

India is a country which has diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious characteristics. There are around 1.7 billion people in our country which makes us the second-most populous nation after China, nonetheless, it won't be long that we will conquer China and become the most crowded country on the planet. The greater part of Indian society is currently mindful that our population is growing expeditiously and we are in a phase where we need to control it.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, in his address to the nation on Independence Day, 2019 expressed concern over the rapidly rising population of the country and urged both the central and state governments to come up with schemes to deal with the serious issue. While underlining that population explosion is giving rise to new challenges for the future generations, he states that India too will be educated and healthy, if the population is educated and healthy. Stating that keeping a small family is also a form of patriotism; the Prime Minister said India can no longer afford an uneducated society. He urged the general mass to make sure resources are already created before bringing forth children into the world and that it is necessary to educate people about this solemn duty of parents. It has since sparked a keen interest and debate on population control policies.

## **2. Population polices in India after Independence:**

In 1951, India turned into the first among the developing countries to come up with a state sponsored family planning programme. The Planning Commission which was set up in 1950, and was given the undertaking to choose the shapes of the family planning programme. In 1952, a populace strategy board of trustees was comprised. This panel had suggested setting up of a Family Planning Research and Programmes Committee. Be that as it may, the approaches outlined in 1951-52 were specially appointed in nature and were fundamentally founded on restraint. So, it was not effective.

### **Camp Approach:**

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1966-74) saw a huge shift with the government receiving a forceful objective-based methodology to battle the quickly rising population, denoting the start of the state-sponsored family planning strategy's advancement into a powerful, practically mechanical program we see today. While the State at first saw financial and social improvement as the best contraceptive and the biggest bulwark against rapid population growth, the Indira Gandhi government-regulated an extreme shift to one side, and the quest for a more perpetual strategy for populace control sterilization.

By the year 1976-77 the family planning programme gained momentum and a lot of people were being forcefully sterilized especially men. Millions of people were sterilized in India under

these coercive and intense measures during, before, and after the Emergency Period. To put it into perspective, it is assessed that more than 6 million individuals were sterilized in 1976 alone more than the number of people sterilized by Nazi Germany before 1939. Because of this political and regulatory push, the quantity of sterilizations rose from 1.3 million out of 1974-75 to 2.6 million out of 1975-76 and afterward shot up to 8.1 million out of 1976-77, a level which has not been reached since. Considering the fear mass sterilization created in the minds of the Indian people and the fact that it caused the Congress Party's failure in the subsequent election, no political party in India was willing to touch the issue of mass sterilization for a few decades at least.

### **Problems:**

- There was a decline in IUD cases, along with a drop in using conventional contraceptives i.e., condoms- from 83.5 % to 74.9%. This shows how forced sterilisation programme assumed control over the whole family planning programme, subsequently basically falling flat as an all-adjusted methodology during the Emergency.
- The raids carried for sterilisation mostly targeted vulnerable segment of the general public.
- The manner in which the sterilizations were performed was rushed, amateurish, perilous, and unsanitary. It had undying effect on the public impression of family planning practices in India. The shaky strategies used to accomplish absurd sterilization quotas discoloured the public's view of health workers.

### **National Population Policy 2000**

Adopted by the government on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2000. This policy had three objectives-

- **Immediate Objective:** Address the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure, and personnel health care. Also, to provide integrated service delivery for basic reproductive and child health care.
- **Medium Term Objective:** To bring Total Fertility Rate to replacements levels by 2010.
- **Long Term Objective:** To achieve stable population by 2045.

### **Problems:**

- Policy had the tight viewpoint as it gave a lot of significance to contraception and sterilization rather than basic prerequisite for population control i.e., poverty alleviation, improving standards of living, and spread of education.
- Policy was not plugged and neglected to produce mass help for populace control.
- We have inadequate framework attributable to absence of prepared staff, absence of sufficient fitness among the staff, and restricted use or abuse of the hardware.

### **Population Regulation Bill, 2019**

The Population Regulation Bill, 2019 was introduced by Shri Rakesh Sinha, Member of

Parliament, in the Rajya Sabha in July 2019, but withdrawn in 2022, after Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Shri Mansukh Mandaviya's intervention. It calls for penal action against people with more than two living children, including debarment from being an elected representative, dismissal of financial benefits and decrease in benefits under the public distribution system. The bill also proposes that government employees should give an undertaking that they will not conceive more than two children.

There are limited ecological and economic resources at hand. Therefore, the justification of the bill held that it is imperative and critical that the provision of necessities of human life, including affordable food, safe drinking water, adequate housing, access to quality education, economic/livelihood opportunities, power/electricity for domestic consumption, and an unharmed living is accessible to all citizens. The draft bill then insists that it is essential to control and uphold the state's population to encourage sustainable development with more equitable distribution.

The criticism of the bill states that it will widen the gap between the poor and the rich. The poor will suffer if benefits under public distribution schemes or other government-funded schemes are taken away from them. Health care facilities and finance for contraceptives are also not available to the lower strata group. Also, without proper education and knowledge, the poor do not understand the importance of small families and further procreation as it implicates more financial burden on them.

### **Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilization and Welfare) Bill, 2021:**

The bill targets advancing two child policy and states that individuals disregarding it in the state will be barred from contesting local bodies' polls, going after government positions, or getting any sort of sponsorship.

Additionally, there would be endeavours to balance out the populace by giving open answers for impotency or reproduction and diminishing death paces of infant and moms. The strategy is additionally prone to make courses of action to deal with the old, alongside giving better administration, wellbeing, and nourishment to youths between the age gathering of 11 and 19 years.

### **Problem**

- Available data on fertility levels suggests that the brunt of these reformatory estimates will be borne by the oppressed.
- Clause 4 to 7 will go against women as the burden of sterilization for incentives will be loaded on them. As indicated by a report distributed by the National Health Mission, between 2017-18, 93.1% of the sterilizations performed in India were on women.
- Denial of ration under PDS could amount to a violation of the Food Security Act.

### **3. Constitutional challenge of such law if enacted**

The two-child policy has been introduced in Parliament 35 times since independence. If enacted, the law must take into account the rights of divorced couples as well as the Islamic religion. Earlier bills that were introduced lacked these features and were heavily criticized by the general public.

The proposed population control bill would have constitutional repercussions. First, the bill does not consider the case of divorced citizens and Muslim personal laws. A divorced person, who has children with a former partner, cannot bear a child with his/her present spouse. The bill could also infringe the tenets of Islamic laws. Moreover, coercive population control measures would encourage sex-selection and unsafe abortion given the collective desire for a male child. In India, family planning is considered to be the responsibility of women.

However, the current policy is not effective in meeting the demand for family planning. The National Family Health Survey 2015-16 showed that about 13 per cent of women aged 15-49 wanted to prevent or delay pregnancy but were not provided with contraceptives. Women resort to abortions as an alternative, jeopardizing their health and increasing unlawful practices. In India, 15.6 million abortions took place in 2015.

### **4. Measures taken by the States**

Public health in India remains a state subject and some state governments have introduced measures for population control. Several states, including Assam, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have some form of the two-child norm in place for those running for elected government posts or government jobs.

In September 2017, the Assam Assembly passed the “Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam”, which specified that candidates with two children would only be eligible for government employment and the existing government employees were directed to follow the two-children family norm. From January 2021, the state policy that made government jobs out of bounds for people with more than two children in Assam came into force.

In July 2021, Uttar Pradesh Law Commission came up with a proposal where any person having more than two children will be barred from getting government subsidies. The draft bill has been submitted to the state government.

### **5. Cases in Court**

In December 2020, the Centre told the Supreme Court that India is unequivocally against forcing family planning on its people and that any coercion to have a certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions. The submission was made in response to a PIL filed by BJP leader and lawyer Ashwani Kumar Upadhyay challenging a Delhi High Court order that dismissed a plea seeking certain steps, including a two-child norm for

population control.

In March 2018, the Supreme Court had dismissed a plea for issuing directions to the Centre to make the two-child policy mandatory across the country for ensuring strict population control. The public interest litigation said that the government should promote family planning and adopt all such measures to motivate people to follow the two-child policy. The petitions, filed by advocates Anuj Saxena, Prithvi Raj Chauhan and Priya Sharma, said the population explosion, over a period of time, can lead to a “civil war-like situation” and thus needs to be curbed.

## **6. Steps Taken By Central Government:**

The National Family Planning Programme of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is guided by the tenets of the National Population Policy 2000 and oversees its implementation. Under this program the service delivery data is maintained and further the program is regularly reviewed through annual review meetings, supportive supervision visits, common review missions etc.

As a result of the Government’s efforts, the successes achieved are enumerated below:

- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined from 2.9 in 2005 to 2.2 in 2017 (SRS).
- 25 out of 37 States/UTs have already achieved replacement level fertility of 2.1 or less.
- The Decadal growth rate has declined from 21.54% in 1999-2000 to 17.64 % during 2001-11.
- The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) has declined from 23.8 to 20.2 from 2005 to 2017 (SRS).
- The Teenage birth rate has halved from 16 % (NFHS III) to 8 % (NFHS IV).

The Government is implementing various initiatives, few of which are mentioned below:

- i. Mission Parivar Vikas (MPV) is implemented in 13 states for substantially increasing access to contraceptives and family planning services. These states are seven high focus states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Assam) and six North-Eastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram).
- ii. Expanded Contraceptive Choices: The current contraceptive basket comprising Condoms, combined oral contraceptive pills, Emergency contraceptive pills, Intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) and Sterilization is expanded with inclusion of new contraceptives namely Injectable Contraceptive (Antara Programme) and Centchroman (Chhaya).
- iii. Compensation scheme for sterilization acceptors which provides compensation for loss of wages to the beneficiary and also to the service provider team for conducting sterilization.

- iv. Post-partum Intra-uterine contraceptive device (PPIUCD) services are provided post-delivery.
- v. Scheme for Home Delivery of contraceptives by ASHAs at doorstep of beneficiaries.
- vi. Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS): A dedicated software to ensure smooth forecasting, procurement and distribution of family planning commodities across all the levels of health facilities.

**Programs launched by the Government in the country, including rural areas, to create awareness about Family Planning are as follows:**

- i. Family Planning Media Campaign: A holistic media campaign is in place to generate contraceptive demand.
- ii. World Population Day & Fortnight and Vasectomy Fortnight are observed every year to boost awareness across all States/ UTs.
- iii. Under Mission Parivar Vikas Scheme, promotional activities like Mobile publicity vans, Advocacy meetings, Saas bahu sammelans, and NayiPehel Kits are distributed to increase awareness in MPV districts.

As a result of these efforts, the country is knocking on the door of replacement level fertility and is on track to achieve TFR 2.1 by 2025. The amount incurred by the Government for advertisements on Family Planning Programs during the last 3 years and the current year is Rs. 342.54 crore.

**7. Progress in bringing down Birth Rate State/UT-wise**

S. No.	India/ State/ UT	Crude Birth Rate	
		SRS 2017	SRS 2019
	<b>INDIA</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>19.7</b>
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	11.4	11.0
2	Andhra Pradesh	16.2	15.9
3	Arunachal Pradesh	18.3	17.6
4	Assam	21.2	21.0
5	Bihar	26.4	25.8
6	Chandigarh	13.5	13.0
7	Chhattisgarh	22.7	22.2
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23.6	21.9
9	Daman & Diu	20.2	18.6
10	Delhi	15.2	14.4
11	Goa	12.5	12.3



12	Gujarat	19.9	19.5
13	Haryana	20.5	20.1
14	Himachal Pradesh	15.8	15.4
15	Jammu & Kashmir	15.4	14.9
16	Jharkhand	22.7	22.3
17	Karnataka	17.4	16.9
18	Kerala	14.2	13.5
19	Ladakh		14.9
20	Lakshadweep	15.0	14.8
21	Madhya Pradesh	24.8	24.5
22	Maharashtra	15.7	15.3
23	Manipur	14.6	13.6
24	Meghalaya	22.8	23.2
25	Mizoram	15.0	14.5
26	Nagaland	13.5	12.7
27	Odisha	18.3	18.0
28	Puducherry	13.2	13.3
29	Punjab	14.9	14.5
30	Rajasthan	24.1	23.7
31	Sikkim	16.4	16.5
32	Tamil Nadu	17.2	14.2
33	Telangana	14.9	16.7
34	Tripura	13.0	12.8
35	Uttar Pradesh	25.9	25.4
36	Uttarakhand	17.3	17.1
37	West Bengal	15.2	14.9

## 8. Way Forward

- ✓ **Focus on Demographic Dividend:** India needs to focus on exploiting its demographic dividend rather than worry about it. India is poised at a unique moment in history, where it can exploit its demographic advantage to realize its economic goals. According to the government's population projections, 53.6% of India's population in 2021 is under the

age of 29. More than a quarter of India's population is 14 years or younger. Our policy makers will do well to focus on exploiting India's demographic dividend rather than worrying about it.

- ✓ **Upgrading the Skill Set:** Presently, India is nowhere close to guaranteeing the best possible opportunities to young Indians. For Instance, according to All India Survey on Higher Education data found that India's higher education sector is mired in deep structural inequalities. This young population can become extremely productive or unproductive depending on the skill sets it acquires.
- ✓ **Focusing on Women:** Education of women also plays a role, both in case of fertility rates as well as age of mother at the time of birth of first child. Education helps in bringing down fertility and early birth among women.

## 9. Conclusion

Ironically enough, the family planning programme failed to deliver desired results at least till recently. Much of the failure, as is generally suggested, can be attributed to a deep-rooted attitude of preference for a male child and also ignorance of the rural masses about the birth control techniques. Despite all efforts, there is little evidence of our capacity to arrest population explosion. An estimate suggests that about 8,000 persons are added to it every day.

However, in 1971, the average annual exponential growth was 2.20; 2.14 in 1991; 1.97 in 2001; and 1.64 in 2011. It shows population growth has declined, and has been declining. The rate of growth seen between the '60s and '80s has come down significantly. It is a good sign. The total fertility rate has dropped to 2.0 in National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-V. This leads to a scope to cut population growth because India still has a positive growth rate, but our population policy should keep in mind the larger consequences of zero population growth.

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