



India's Ageing Population

For Prelims: [Working-Age Population](#), [World Health Organization](#), [Dependency Ratio](#), [World Bank](#), [Replacement Level of Fertility](#), [Under-Five Mortality Rate](#) [One-Child Policy](#), [Pension System](#), [Internal migration](#).

For Mains: Concerns associated with the ageing population and population decline, Measures needed to deal with them.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, some politicians of India's **Southern state** expressed concerns about the [ageing and shrinking population](#) and emphasised a **law to incentivise** residents of the state to have **more children**.

- The **ageing population** is a **demographic trend** with an increasing proportion of individuals **aged 65 and older** compared to the [working-age population \(15-64\)](#).

What do Data Say on Ageing and Overall Population Size in India?

- **Overall Population Increase:** India's population is projected to increase by **31.1 crore (311 million)** between **2011 and 2036**.
- **Concentration of Growth:** Almost half i.e., **17 crore** will be added in five states of **Bihar, UP, Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Regional Disparities:** **Uttar Pradesh** is projected to account for **19%** of total population growth, while the five Southern states **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu** will contribute only **29 million**, or **9%** of the total growth.
- **Ageing Population Trends:** The number of individuals aged 60 years and older is expected to more than double from **10 crore (100 million)** in **2011** to **23 crore (230 million)** by **2036**, with their share of the total population rising from **8.4%** to **14.9%**.

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POPULATION BY PERCENTAGE IN DIFFERENT AGE BRACKETS

INDIA	2011	2036 (PROJECTED)
0-14 years	30.9	20.1
15-59 years	60.7	64.9
60+ years	8.4	14.9

Andhra Pradesh	2011	2036	Uttar Pradesh	2011	2036
0-14 years	25.2	15.7	0-14 years	36	22
15-59 years	64.8	65.3	15-59 years	56.7	66.1
60+ years	10.1	19	60+ years	7.3	11.9

Source: Population Projection by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

- **State Variations in Ageing Population:** In **Kerala**, the proportion of individuals aged 60 and older is projected to rise from **13% in 2011 to 23% by 2036**, meaning nearly **1 in 4** individuals will be in this age group.
 - In **Uttar Pradesh**, the share of the **60+ population** is expected to rise from **7% in 2011 to 12% in 2036**.
- **North-South Divide:** The increase in the proportion of people aged 60 and older will be **smaller in Northern states** compared to the South.
 - Southern states **transitioned to lower fertility rates earlier**. E.g., **Uttar Pradesh** is projected to reach the **Replacement Level of Fertility** (2.1 children per woman) in **2025**, over two decades later than **Andhra Pradesh (2004)**.

Note

The above data is based on the **latest population projections from a 2020 report** by a technical group within the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

What are the Causes of Ageing and Shrinking Population?

- **Contraception and Family Planning:** The increased availability of **contraception and abortion** services allows individuals to have greater control over their reproductive choices.
- **Women's Economic Participation:** As women have increasingly entered the workforce, many have chosen to **delay childbirth or forego having children** altogether.
 - This shift is often driven by **career aspirations, financial stability**, and the pursuit of personal goals.
- **Improved Child Survival Rates:** According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, the **under-five mortality rate** (deaths per 1,000 live births) in India declined to **34 in 2019 from 126 in 1990**.
 - Between **1990 and 2019**, India achieved a **4.5% annual reduction** in under-five mortality, decreasing deaths from **3.4 million** in 1990 to **824,000** in 2019.
 - Due to decline in the under-five mortality rate, people are **less likely to give birth** to more children.
- **Urbanisation:** As more people move to urban areas, the **cost of living often rises**, making it more difficult for families to **afford children**. Urban lifestyles may also **prioritise careers** over family expansion.
- **Migration:** Indian migration due to foreign countries like UAE and USA also leads to decline in India's population.

What Concerns are Associated with the Ageing Population?

- **Small Representation in Parliament:** Southern states with an ageing population and consequently **smaller populations** fear they could end up getting **penalised by way of fewer seats in Lok Sabha** for having made the demographic transition before the North.
 - **Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh** might gain more political representation at the **expense of Southern states**, affecting policy priorities.
- **Slowing GDP Growth:** An ageing population often leads to a **decline in the growth rate of GDP** primarily due to a decrease in the **labour force**.
 - Eg. In the US, the growth of the 20 to 64-year-old population is expected to decrease from **1.24% per year (1975-2015)** to only **0.29% (2015-2055)** leading to a **corresponding decline** in the growth rate of **GDP** and **aggregate consumption**.
- **High Dependency Ratio:** As the population ages, there will be a **higher ratio of dependents (both elderly and children)** to working-age individuals which increases the **burden** on the working-age population (15- to 64-year-olds).
 - According to the **World Bank** collection of development indicators, India's current age **dependency ratio of 47% in 2023** is expected to rise significantly.
- **Higher Public Expenditure:** The cost of public programs for **health care, pensions, and long-term care** will increase significantly as populations age.
 - Governments will need to **raise taxes or cut benefits** to manage these rising costs.
- **Intergenerational Equity Issues:** Younger populations might feel **unfairly taxed** to support the older generation, leading to potential societal divides and a **sense of injustice** regarding resource allocation.
- **Pressure for Institutional Reform:** As the population ages, there may be growing calls for reforms in **retirement age, social security benefits, and healthcare systems**.

Shift from Population Explosion to Population Shrinkage

- Roughly **five decades ago**, the main **concern** facing India was **rapid population growth**, fuelled by **high levels of fertility** (births per woman).
- Over the decades, India has been able to **arrest the pace** of population growth which has been **led by several Southern states**.
 - **Andhra Pradesh** achieved the Replacement Level of Fertility in **2004**, making it the **5th Indian state** to do so after **Kerala (1988), Tamil Nadu (2000), Himachal Pradesh (2002), and West Bengal (2003)**.
- **Andhra Pradesh** used to have a law that **barred people from contesting in local polls** if they had more than two children. The law was later repealed.
- Despite lower fertility levels in individual states, India is the **most populous country** in the world.

How do Countries Respond to Ageing Population?

- **China's Three-Child Policy:** In **2016**, China moved to allow its citizens to have **two children** and in **2021**, China announced that families are permitted to have **three children**.
 - From **1980 to 2016**, China imposed a **one-child policy**, which slowed population growth.
- **Japan's Parental Leave:** It includes mandating **twelve-month parental leave**, offering direct financial aid to parents, and investing heavily in **subsidised childcare**.
- **Extended Retirement Age:** Some countries, such as **France and the Netherlands**, extended the retirement age or the age at which people are eligible for **pension benefits** to alleviate pressure on **pension systems**.
- **Open Immigration Policy:** **Australia, Canada**, and other countries have adopted more **open immigration policies** to counter labour shortages due to their declining populations.

What can be done to Arrest Ageing and Shrinking Population?

- **Pro-Natalist Policies:** Scandinavian countries have demonstrated that **family support, childcare, gender equality**, and parental leave policies can help maintain fertility rates.
 - Proper **government funding of child healthcare and education** can motivate people to have **more children**.
- **Leveraging Internal Migration:** **Internal migration** between the more **populous Northern states and the more developed Southern states** can bring in working-age individuals, mitigating the impact of an ageing population.
 - States receiving migrants would benefit from an **immediate influx** of labour **without** the need to invest in **education and upbringing** for young families.
- **Promoting Gender Equality:** Gender equality initiatives promoting **shared parenting responsibilities** can potentially lead to increased fertility rates.

Drishiti Mains Question:

Discuss the causes of shrinking populations in certain states of India. What are the potential socio-economic implications of this demographic shift?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Mains

- Q.** Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. **(2021)**
- Q.** "Empowering women is the key to control the population growth." Discuss. **(2019)**
- Q.** Critically examine whether the growing population is the cause of poverty or poverty is the main cause of population increase in India. **(2015)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/india-s-ageing-population>