

RSTV

POPULATION PARADOX



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Context

- The United Nations (UN) in its 2022 edition of the **World Population Prospects** (WPP) projected that India is set to surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2023.

About World Population Prospects

- The 2022 revision of the World Population Prospects marked the **27th edition** of the official United Nations population estimates and projections that is prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- The UN publish the WPP in a **biennial cycle** since 1951. The WPP provides the historic timeline of population indicators since 1950.
- It estimates the past trends in **fertility, mortality and international migration** by taking into account the newly released national data.

Key takeaways of the report

- It took almost hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to grow to **1 billion**. It took another 200 years (by the year 2011) to grow to 7 billion and it will further grow to 8 billion by 2023.
- The population growth is also expected to grow around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and around 10.5 billion in 2100.
- This increase in population growth is largely driven by the increasing number of people surviving to reproductive age, major changes in fertility rates, an increasing number of urbanisation and accelerating migration.
- In the **Asian context**, it is composed of around 61% population with India and China being the most populous of the world.
- More than half of the global population growth between now and 2050 is expected to occur in **Africa**: Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. The population of almost 55 countries, with most of them in Europe, is expected to decrease by 2050.
- The additional population in the coming years will increase pressure and challenges in achieving the UN's **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- The share of **older persons** is projected to rise from 10% to 16% by 2050. In this sense, the report reflected the need to improve the sustainability of the social security, and pension system and also incentivised the idea of universal health care.
- A drop in fertility rates has led to an increase in the **working-age** population in developing countries like India. However, this opportunity of 'demographic dividend is in a time-bound manner which also asks the effective implementation of policies to convert it into a dividend.
- The **international migrations** in the developed countries have exceeded the balance of births over deaths. The net inflow is 80.5 million whereas, births over deaths is 66.2 million.

Population in India

Current India Population 2022	1,388,052,928 (1.38 billion) (138 crore) as of January 2022
Total Male Population	716,790,532 (71.6 million)
Total Female Population	671,262,395 (67.1 million)
Sex Ratio	948 females per 1,000 males
0 to 25 years of age	50% of India's current population
Currently, there are about 51 births in India in a minute	

- Effects of population explosion:
 - To maintain economic growth **investment** must be made. Indian population growing at a rate of 1.8 %, to achieve per capita income, the large investment will be a challenge for India.
 - Out of 138 crores of the total population almost 50% is composed of the working-age population. That means the other 50% composed of women, children and old age are dependent. With a huge number of unproductive populations, **capital formation** is sufficient given India's per capita income.

- The rapid population growth is considered the root cause of **food shortages**. Low availability of food will adversely impact health and productivity which will increase poverty and will also oblige under-developed countries to import food grains.
- Low productivity and low capital lead to a low standard of living (including education) which ultimately lead to **unemployment**. And will force disguised unemployment in the agricultural sector.
- Population explosion also give rise to number of **social problems** like migration to urban areas causing the growth of slum areas. The frustration among youth further leads to evils like robbery, begging, prostitution, murder, etc.

It took almost 200 years for the world to increase its population by seven-fold, whereas in the past 50 years the population increased by three-fold. And the report projects that it will increase further.

What do these numbers signify concerning India?

- India is a **youth economy**, which means it has a younger and working-age population. Hence, it will be obvious that there will be an increase in population once these young people plan to have off-springs.
- The report as well as the past data signify the increase in population numbers. But it also highlights the **decrease in population percentage**, which means the slowing down of population growth for a country like India. From 2.2% in 1950 India has reached a global average of 1% in 2022.
- This dramatic decrease in terms of percentage is due to various initiatives taken by the government in terms of **family planning and women empowerment**. The women's education has proved to be a major reason, as the educated women will be able to empower themselves and once empowered, they will have their say in family planning.
- With the increase in education in society, the youth are moving away from the old societal norms of family planning. They do not wish to have more than **two children** due to the rise in inflation and competitiveness in the world.

The report reflected the disparity in the growth of population among the countries. For example, African countries are projected to have maximum growth in population in the next 25-30 years while European countries will witness a reduction in population by almost 10% during the same period.

With such huge disparities what could be the major challenges?

- There are two major concerns:
 - First, whether the Earth have enough **carrying capacity** to support 8 billion people or around 11 billion by the end of this century?
 - There are two contradicting theories regarding this; first, that the Earth can support 8 billion and another saying that the Earth has a capacity of supporting around 16 billion people. This means we are not sure about Earth's actual capacity.
 - Second, major African countries and India will be contributing more population in the coming years, whereas, many European countries will experience a reduction in population in absolute numbers. The crucial thing here is the huge difference in **consumption patterns**.
 - 80% of the countries are ecologically deficit as 80% of the resources are consumed by 20% of the world population. Hence, the consumption pattern will be the second major problem here.

As per the report, the population numbers will increase and the rate of growth will slow down but there are already inherent challenges that need to be addressed.

How big is this issue and what should be done to address these challenges?

- The countries which are projecting a higher set of population growth in the next decades are Indonesia, Uganda, Nigeria, etc. Being developing countries they are already facing a set of problems like inequality, food security, energy crisis, higher to moderate levels of malnutrition among the children, etc. So, the increase in population will further exacerbate these problems.
- In **India's context**, the Southern states have already achieved below replacement fertility level, but the major population contribution is from the Northern states.
- Hence, the policymakers must **develop linkages** between population dynamics and the SDGs and then formulate and implement effective strategies to address challenges.

How can we address the challenge of consumption patterns?

- This problem will be majorly faced by developing countries across the world along with the problem of food security. Hence, it is a **global issue** which needs assistance from the developed world. For example, assistance in agricultural production and strengthening the supply chain mechanism will be a step forward.
- At the domestic level, investment should be made in **educating girl children**. As per data, if a girl has 12 years of schooling, she is likely to have two or fewer than 2 children. While a girl not been to school is likely to have an average of three children. Hence, governments majorly in developing countries should invest more in girls' education.
- India has to use its **soft diplomacy** to help African countries in addressing these challenges of food security and girl education. This will also strengthen India's bilateral relations in the region's strategic foreign policy.
- **Science & technology** is another area where the world needs attention, especially in increasing not just the availability of **contraceptives** but also the awareness of to use in developing countries.

The projected population growth in terms of absolute number in developing economies shall need global assistance. Focusing on social issues like women's empowerment and access to contraceptives especially in the least developed countries (LDC) will help resolve these issues.

What other sets of problems need to be addressed?

- The **environmental challenges** have raised other sets of problems like depleting water resources and food security due to soil erosion. Recent events also raised the issue of the energy crisis in developing countries that need a shift from non-renewable to renewable energy. However, the lack of support from the developed world will exacerbate the issue.
- In the health context, rising **non-communicable diseases** is a huge challenge for developing countries like India.
- On the **societal front**; low literacy, women empowerment, access to contraceptives and family planning are major challenges that need effective policy implementation.

The developed countries will focus more on consumption patterns, whereas, the developing countries will have to focus more on the social aspects.

What more could be done from India's end?

- In the **Third World Population Conference** held in Bucharest, Romania in 1974, given the message that development is the best contraception. Hence, social development in terms of education & empowerment of women, gender equality and economic development is required that would facilitate the demographic transition.
- India also needs to address infant mortality and under-five mortality, as to control the birth rate we first need to control the **death rate**.
- There should be effective implementation at the district level by involving local government as they are more connected to the people. This will **generate awareness** among society about the importance of family planning.

The holistic approach is the need of the hour including all the stakeholders in terms of tackling the challenges of increasing population numbers. The population in absolute numbers are set to rise exponentially but the population growth is on the expected lines. Though there is a paradox where we will see certain parts of the world will experience an increase in population and few will experience a decrease in population numbers. To address issues of consumption patterns, countries will have to adopt the best practices from each other and focus more on social issues of development.

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