



## India's Falling Fertility Rate

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 [drishtias.com/printpdf/indias-falling-fertility-rate](https://drishtias.com/printpdf/indias-falling-fertility-rate)

India's total fertility rate (TFR) is declining. It is now **2.2 per woman**, nearing the replacement rate of 2.1, according to the latest government data.

- The government's Sample Registration System in 22 states shows that TFR for India declined to 2.2 in 2017 after being stable at 2.3 between 2013 and 2016.
- The 2017 figure is just 10 basis points more than the replacement level of 2.1%.

**TFR** indicates the average number of children expected to be born to a woman during her reproductive span of 15-49 years.

**The replacement level** is the number of children needed to replace the parents, after accounting for fatalities, skewed sex ratio, infant mortality, etc. Population starts falling below this level.

### Key Points

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- The total fertility rate has **more than halved in both urban and rural areas**, falling even below the replacement level in the former where it is 1.7, down from 4.1 in 1971.
  - In rural areas, TFR has fallen from 5.4 to 2.4 during the same period.
  - For rural areas, it varies from 1.6 in Delhi and Tamil Nadu to 3.3 in Bihar.
  - For urban areas, the variation is from **1.1 in Himachal Pradesh to 2.4 in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
  - Of the 22 states, **only six have a TFR of 2 or more in urban areas**. There are 10 states where TFR is below 2 in rural regions.
- In different age groups, **the 25-29 age is the most fertile**, except in Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, where it peaked between 20 and 24. Only J&K hits the peak after 30.

- TFR goes below 2 in both urban and rural areas, where **girls complete schooling** and reduces further as they pass college.  
**Bihar, with the highest TFR of 3.2**, had the maximum percentage of illiterate women at 26.8%, while Kerala, where the literacy rate among women is 99.3%, had among the lowest fertility rates.
- As more cities come up, people move for jobs and employment tenure gets shorter, TFR may fall further.

## Reasons Behind Falling TFR

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- Higher education
- Increased mobility
- Late marriage
- Financially independent women and
- Overall prosperity

## Implications for Policymakers

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- India has entered a **37-year period of demographic dividend**, which could spell faster economic growth and higher productivity.
- As such, the government needs to **engineer its policies to harness the opportunity**.
- It must also formulate policies to **take care of higher medical costs** as the population ages and productivity shrinks.
- India will also need to have an **affordable social security system** that provides pension to the elderly and takes care of their daily needs and medical expenses.

Source: Mint