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India's Stabilising Population: NFHS-5

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Why in News

Recent data from **National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5)** shows that India's **population is stabilising** as the **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** is on **decline**.

Key Points

- **Background:**

During **NFHS-3 and 4**, conducted between **2005 and 2016**, there was a **decline in the use of modern methods of contraception** (oral pills, condoms, intrauterine devices) **across 12 of 22 States and UTs**.

While, in **NFHS-5**, **11 of 12 States** where there was a slump earlier, **saw an increase in their use**.

- **NFHS- 5 Data:**

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** The total fertility rate in a specific year is defined as the **total number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years** and give birth to children in alignment with the prevailing age-specific fertility rates.
 - The TFR across **most Indian states declined** in the past half-a-decade, more so among urban women. This implies that **India's population is stabilizing.**
 - **Sikkim** recorded the **lowest TFR**, with one woman bearing 1.1 children on average. **Bihar** recorded the **highest TFR** of 3 children per woman.
 - In 19 of the 22 surveyed states, TFRs were found to be '**below-replacement level**'.
 - **Replacement level fertility** is the total fertility rate that is the average number of children born per woman at which a **population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration.**
 - This rate is **roughly 2.1 children per woman** for most countries, although it may modestly vary with mortality rates.
- **Use of Contraceptives;**
Overall **Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR)** has **increased substantially** in most States/UTs and it is the highest in HP and WB (74%).

- **Implications:**

- The data implies that most States have attained **replacement level fertility.**
- NFHS-5 provides evidence of an **increase in the use of modern contraceptives in rural and urban areas**, an improvement in these demands being met, and a **decline in the average number of children borne by a woman.**

- **Measures for Population Control:**

- **Prime Minister's Appeal:** During his **Independence Day Speech** in 2019, the Prime Minister appealed to the country that **population control was a form of patriotism.**
- **Mission Parivar Vikas-** The Government has launched Mission Parivar Vikas in **2017** for substantially increasing **access to contraceptives and family planning services in 146 high fertility districts with TFR of 3 and above** in seven high focus states.
- **National Family Planning Indemnity Scheme (NFPIS) :** This scheme was launched in the year **2005** under this scheme clients are **insured in the eventualities of death, complication and failure following sterilization.**
- **Compensation scheme for sterilization acceptors -** Under the scheme **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** provides **compensation for loss of wages to the beneficiary** and also to the service provider (& team) for conducting sterilizations from the **year 2014.**

- **Contradiction :**

As the data from NFHS-5 prove that the **country's population is stabilising**, the government's appeal for population reduction and fears over a "**population explosion**" and calls for a "**two child policy**" appears to be misguided.

National Family Health Survey

- **NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round survey** conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.
The **Phase-I** provides data for 22 states/UTs and the fieldwork in the remaining 14 (**Phase-II**) States/UTs is under progress.
- All NFHSs have been conducted under the stewardship of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, Government of India, with the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) Mumbai, serving as the nodal agency.**

Way Forward

- India's population has **already crossed 125 crores and India is expected to surpass the world's most populous nation-China** in the next couple of decades.
- However, **restricted child policy will create a shortage of educated young people** needed to carry on India's technological revolution.
The problems like **gender imbalance, undocumented children, etc.** faced by China (as a result of the one-child policy) might be experienced by India as well.
- The data in NFHS-5 gives **requisite input for strengthening existing programmes and evolving new strategies for policy intervention.**

- The government and authorities should make required changes to the current policies and programs in accordance with the data given by NFHS-5.

Source:TH