



## India to Become Largest Populated Country

**For Prelims:** India's demographic dividend, TFR, Under-five mortality rates, Maternal mortality ratio.

**For Mains:** Demographic Changes of India, Significance of Population Growth.

### Why in News?

It is estimated that around April 2023, India's 1.43 billion people will exceed **China's population**.

- In 2022, China will for the first **time register an absolute decline in its population**.

### What are the Drivers of these Shifts?

- **Mortality and Fertility:**
  - **Crude Death Rate (CDR):** The CDR — the number of persons dying per year per 1,000 population — was 23.2 for China and 22.2 for India in 1950.
    - It fell to single digits for China first in 1974 (to 9.5) and for India in 1994 (9.8), and further to 7.3-7.4 for both in 2020.
  - **Life Expectancy at Birth:** Another mortality indicator is **life expectancy at birth**. Between 1950 and 2020, it went up from 43.7 to 78.1 years for China and from 41.7 to 70.1 years for India.
  - **Total Fertility Rate:** The total fertility rate (TFR) — the number of babies an average woman bears over her lifetime — was as high as 5.8 for China and 5.7 for India in 1950.
    - India's TFR fell to 2 in 2019-2021, from 3.4 in 1992-93.
- **Sustained Lows in TFR:**
  - Populations can keep growing even with TFRs falling. De-growth **requires TFRs to remain below replacement levels** for extended periods.
  - The effects of that — fewer children today becoming parents tomorrow and procreating just as much or less — may reflect only after a couple of generations.
  - China's **TFR dipped below replacement first in 1991**, which was almost 30 years before India's.

### What are the Challenges and Opportunities?

- **Challenges:**
  - Having the most people on the planet could prove to be a **big negative for India unless it can provide food**, education, housing, health services and jobs to its people.
  - The scale of this challenge is gigantic.
  - Across India, water scarcity is a chronic issue. All these **needs are crucial but by far the single most important thing for India to do is to generate jobs**. The scale of this - particular challenge is truly daunting.
    - In 2020, India has 900 million people (67% of the total population) in the working age group of 15-64.
    - This is expected to expand by another 100 million by 2030.

### ▪ Opportunity:

- **Claim for permanent member at UNSC:** If India becomes the largest country, it will give Indians a claim to be the permanent member of the Security Council.
  - New population will push its existing demand for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.
  - The geopolitical reality has changed and new powers have emerged which deserve a place alongside the old – **Russia, the UK, China, France and the United States.**
- **Increase in Fiscal Space:** Fiscal resources can be diverted **from spending on children to investing in modern physical and human infrastructure** that will increase economic sustainability of India.
- **Rise in Workforce:** With more than **65% of the working age population**, India can rise as an economic superpower, supplying more than half of Asia's potential workforce over the coming decades.
  - **Increase in the [Labour Force](#)** that enhances the productivity of the economy.
  - **Rise in [Women's Workforce](#)** that naturally accompanies a **decline in fertility**, and which can be a new source of growth.

## What should be the Strategy of India?

### ▪ Mass Prosperity Strategy:

- India's large remittances from a small population overseas reinforce that our **mass prosperity strategy should be human capital and formal jobs.**
- 0.8 % of software employment workers generate 8 % of GDP.
- This case is **reinforced by remittances from the overseas population of less than 2 % of our resident population crossing USD 100 billion last year.**

### ▪ Qualitative Shift in Employment:

- The qualitative shift during the previous five years from low-skilled, informal employment in Gulf countries to high-skilled formal jobs in high-income countries is significant.
  - In 2021, the US replaced the UAE as the single biggest source country with 23 % of remittances. Our rich forex remittance harvest — roughly 25 % higher than FDI and 25 % less than software exports — **is fruit from the tree of human capital and formal jobs.**

### ▪ Additional Jobs:

- To absorb the influx of young people into the workplace, **India would need to create close to 12 million additional, non-farm jobs every year**, starting in 2023.
- This was triple the four million non-farm jobs created annually **between 2012 and 2018.**
- India would need a growth rate of 10% per annum to be able to invest in industry so that this army of young people can be absorbed.

### ▪ Investments in Education:

- While India is expected to have a **[demographic dividend](#)** from this large workforce, reaping its potential benefits requires significant investments in education.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Years Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. To obtain full benefits of demographic dividend, what should India do? (2013)**

- (a) Promoting skill development
- (b) Introducing more social security schemes
- (c) Reducing infant mortality rate
- (d) Privatization of higher education

**Ans: (a)**

### Mains

**Q.** Critically examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty OR poverty is the main cause of population increase in India. **(2015)**

**Source: IE**

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