



## World Population Day 2025 and India's Youth

**For Prelims:** [World Population Day](#), [Demographic Dividend](#), [National Youth Policy 2014](#), [Startup India](#), [National Service Scheme \(NSS\)](#), [Unemployment](#), [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#).

**For Mains:** Opportunities and challenges related to the youth population in India, Steps needed to empower them.

[Source: TH](#)

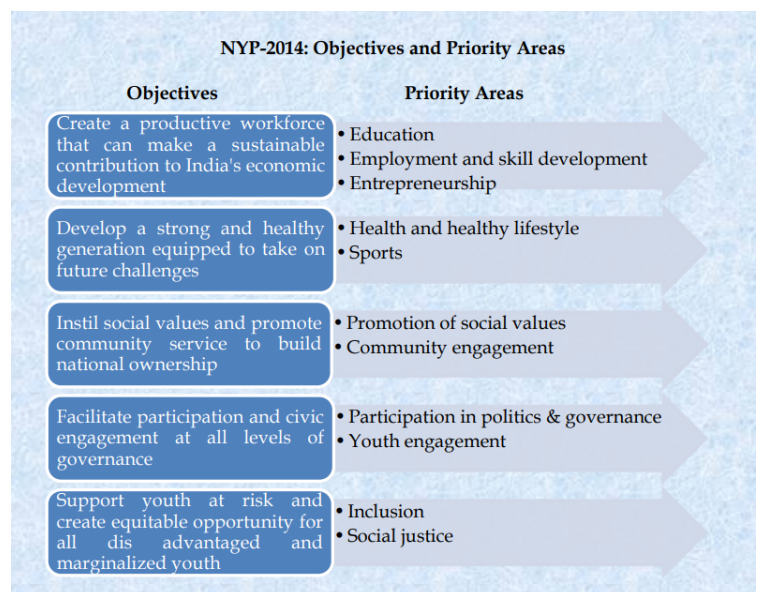
### Why in News?

[World Population Day](#), observed on **11<sup>th</sup> July**, was established by the **UN in 1989** to raise awareness about **population issues** and [reproductive health](#) rights.

- The **theme** for World Population Day 2025 is “**Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world,**” which focuses on **empowering youth** to make informed choices about **sexual and reproductive health**.

### What is the Status of Youth in India?

- **Youth Demographic Profile:** According to [UNICEF](#), India has the **world's largest youth population**, with **371 million** people in the **15 to 29 age group**.
  - As per the **Technical Group on Population Projections (2021)**, **youth (15-29 years)** accounted for **27.2%** of the population in 2021, but are projected to decline to **22.7% by 2036**.
- **Demographic Significance:** A large **youth population** enhances **workforce participation** and reduces **dependency ratios**, creating a [demographic dividend](#) for growth.
- **Policy & Governance:** **Department of Youth Affairs**, under the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, is the **nodal agency** for youth-related policies and programs.
  - Its twin objectives are **personality development** and **nation-building**.
- **Evolution of Youth Policy:**
  - **National Youth Policy, 1988:** It was India's first structured youth policy, stressing their **role in national development** and focusing on **personality and skill development**.
  - **National Youth Policy 2003:** The **National Youth Policy 2003**, replacing the 1988 policy, defined **youth as 13-35 years** and aimed to promote **patriotism, social justice**, and **national integration**.
  - **National Youth Policy 2014:** [National Youth Policy 2014](#) replaced the 2003 policy, defines **youth as 15-29 years**, and envisions **empowering them to realize their full potential** and enable **India to excel on the global stage**. It outlined **5 key objectives** and **11 priority areas**.



- **National Youth Policy 2024:** The Government has updated the **National Youth Policy (NYP) 2014** and released a draft for **NYP 2024**, outlining a **10-year vision** for youth development aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. **Key highlights are:**
  - Roadmap to achieve youth development goals by **2030**.
  - Alignment with **NEP 2020** to enhance **career and life skills**.
  - Promotion of **leadership, volunteering, and technology-driven empowerment**.
  - Focus on **mental and reproductive health, sports, and fitness**.
  - Commitment to **safety, justice, and support for marginalized youth**.

## What Opportunities Does India's Youth Population Present?

- **Demographic Dividend Advantage:** A **youth-dominated population** leads to a **lower dependency ratio** and more **economically active citizens**, which can boost **GDP growth** and **per capita income**.
  - According to the [World Bank](#) and [NITI Aayog](#), tapping this potential could add **up to USD 1 trillion to India's GDP by 2030**.
- **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Driven by **young entrepreneurs**, India's **startup ecosystem** has flourished, with the [Startup India](#) initiative playing a key role in promoting a **youth-led culture of innovation**.
- **Global Workforce Advantage:** India's **youth workforce** can address **global talent shortages** in sectors like **tech, healthcare, and engineering**, while **competitive labor costs** position the country as a prime hub for **manufacturing and services**.
  - E.g., Facing an ageing population, **Germany** and **Japan** are turning to **India** to fill its **labour gap** with **skilled workers**.
- **Social & Cultural Influence:** Indian **youth are challenging stereotypes**, advancing **gender equality**, and leading **social change**, while also expanding **India's soft power** globally through **films, music, and digital content**.
  - E.g., Youth-led movements like **Pinjra Tod** (Break the Cage) fight for women's rights and freedom.
- **Strengthening Democracy:** Engaging **youth** through initiatives like the [National Service Scheme \(NSS\)](#) fosters **civic awareness, leadership, and strengthens democratic accountability**.
  - E.g., Through [Swachh Bharat Abhiyan](#), the **Prime Minister** mobilized **youth** as key drivers of **cleanliness, behavioural change, and community leadership**.

## What are the Key Challenges Faced by Youth in India?

- **Sexual & Reproductive Health Issues:** India faces a **high rate of unintended pregnancies (36%)** and **unmet reproductive goals (30%)**, with **23% experiencing both**.  
◦ Though **child marriage has declined**, it still exists at **23.3% nationally (NFHS-5)**.
- **Gender Inequality:** Patriarchal norms limit **young women's autonomy** in **education, employment**, and decision-making, with many lacking access to **gender-sensitive workplaces, skills training**, and **financial independence**.
- **Mental Health Crisis:** Youth are facing a **mental health crisis** marked by **increasing stress, anxiety, and depression**, along with a **lack of accessible support** and **persistent stigma**.  
◦ In **2020-22, India** recorded over **60,700 deaths** due to suicide in the **15-29 age group**, the highest in the world.
- **Employment Crisis:** A **skill mismatch** between **education and job market needs** has led to **rising unemployment** among **educated youth**, while many are forced into **unstable gig economy jobs with limited benefits**.
- **Substance Abuse:** Youth are increasingly vulnerable to **drug addiction**, driven by **peer pressure** and **stress**, with a **lack of adequate rehabilitation facilities** worsening the issue.

## Government's Initiatives Related to Youth

- [National Youth Policy-2014](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)
- [YUVA: Prime Minister's Scheme For Mentoring Young Authors](#)
- [PM-DAKSH \(Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi\)](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana](#)

## What Steps Should Be Taken to Empower Youth in India?

- **Education Revolution:** Promote **critical thinking, creativity**, and **problem-solving** by overhauling rote learning under the [National Education Policy 2020](#), ensure **digital literacy**, and integrate **vocational training** into school curricula.
- **Job-Linked Skill Development:** Encourage **apprenticeship opportunities** in large companies under [PM National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme \(PM-NAPS\)](#), launch **upskilling missions** in emerging sectors, and promote **youth entrepreneurship** through financial support.
- **Healthcare Access:** Establish accessible **mental health support**, ensure **nutrition security** through fortified meals, and enhance **reproductive health services with free contraceptives in rural areas**.
- **Sports & Arts Infrastructure:** Expand **sports and arts infrastructure** by strengthening rural training facilities, offering **financial support to young artists**, and promoting **international cultural exchange programs** for talented youth.
- **Digital Empowerment:** Bridge the **digital divide** by expanding internet access, building **youth digital skills**, and strengthening **Digital India** for inclusive digital growth.

## Conclusion

India's **youth**, the world's **largest**, offer a transformative **demographic dividend**. To harness this potential, India must address challenges like **unemployment, mental health**, and **gender gaps** while boosting **education, skills**, and **innovation**. Strategic **policies** and **inclusive growth** can empower youth to drive India's **global rise**, ensuring **sustainable development** and **equitable progress**.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the challenges faced by India's youth in realizing their full potential. Suggest measures to convert these challenges into opportunities.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims**

**Q. Disguised unemployment generally means (2013)**

- (a) large number of people remain unemployed
- (b) alternative employment is not available
- (c) marginal productivity of labour is zero
- (d) productivity of workers is low

**Ans: (c)**

### **Mains**

**Q. Most of the unemployment in India is structural in nature. Examine the methodology adopted to compute unemployment in the country and suggest improvements. (2023)**

**Q. The nature of economic growth in India in recent times is often described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favor of your answer. (2015)**

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