

WORLD POPULATION DAY 2025 : NATIONAL

NEWS: India's population at crossroads, not a crisis: Population Foundation of India

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

World Population Day 2025 emphasizes addressing declining fertility rates by empowering youth and ensuring rights-based policies for equitable growth and sustainable development. India, with its large youth cohort and declining fertility, aims to leverage its demographic dividend through strategic investments in health, education, and employment amidst an aging population trend.

World Population Day 2025

- **Observed:** July 11
- **Concerns:** Declining fertility rates.
- **Emphasizes:** Youth empowerment, rights-based policies.
- **Goal:** Equitable population growth, sustainable development.

About World Population Day

- **Established:** 1989 by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- **Origin:** "Day of Five Billion" (July 11, 1987) – world population reached five billion.
- **Theme for 2025:** "Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world."
- **Focus:** Youth-centered policies, reproductive rights, informed decision-making.

Objectives of World Population Day

- Raise awareness of population dynamics, family planning.
- Promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).
- Support Youth Aspirations (skilling, healthcare, economic opportunities).
- Advocate for Gender Equality (girls' education, economic inclusion).
- Highlight Environmental Concerns (resource sustainability, climate change).
- Foster Global Cooperation.
- Encourage Data-Driven Planning.
- Align with SDGs: Goals 3 (Good Health), 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 12 (Responsible Consumption).

Global Demographic Trends

- **World Population Prospects Report:**
 - Projected to grow from 8.2 billion (2024).
 - Peak at ~10.3 billion in mid-2080s.
 - Expected to reach 9.7 billion in 2050.
- **Most Populous Countries:** India and China (over 1 billion each), nearly 18% of world population.
- **UNFPA 2025 Report: "The Real Fertility Crisis"**
 - 20% globally unable to realize desired family size.
 - Barriers: Infertility (13%), financial constraints (38%), housing, childcare, unemployment.
 - **Case Example:** South Korea's \$200 billion investment led to 7.3% rise in births (Q1 2025).

India's Demographic Potential

- **Largest Youth Cohort Globally:** 371 million youth (15–29) (UNICEF).
- **Demographic Dividend Window:** 2005–2055.
- **Economic Impact:** Strategic investments can boost GDP by \$1 trillion by 2030 (World Bank, NITI Aayog).
- **Leverage:** Labour market edge over ageing societies (Japan, EU).
- **Catalyst for:** Urban innovation, digital economy, entrepreneurship.
- **Youth-led development:** Can transform India into a global talent and manufacturing hub.
- **UNFPA Report (April 2023):** India overtook China as most populous (over 1.4 billion).
- **Young Population:** 68% in 15-64 years category; 26% in 10-24 years group.
- **Elderly Population:** Increasing from 6.8% (1991) to 9.2% (2016); projected to 19.5% by 2050.
- **Factors for Slow Population Growth:** Increased contraceptive use, spacing pregnancies, healthcare access, family planning, wealth, education.
- **Decline in Fertility Rate (NFHS-5):** TFR decreased from 3.4 to 2 (1992-2021), below replacement level of 2.1.
- **Population Peak:** Expected to continue to rise, hitting 1.7 billion by 2064.
- **Decline in Mortality Rates:** Significant drop, increasing life expectancy.

- **Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR):** Decreased from ~384 (2000) to 80 (2023).
 - On track for national target <100 by 2025 and SDG target <70 by 2030.
- **Mortality Rate for Children under Five:** 70% reduction since 2000; 78% reduction 1990-2023 (UNICEF).
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** Dropped to 27 per 1,000 live births (2021) from 39 (2014) (SRS).
- **Migration and Urbanisation:**
 - Significant rural-to-urban migration (working-age).
 - 40%+ of India's population expected in urban areas by 2030 (Economic Survey 2023-24).
 - EAC-PM report: Migration rate fell from 37.6% (2011) to 28.9% (2023).
 - 58% of urban migrant population (2020-21) moved from rural areas.
- **Other Components:** Public Policy (family, immigration, health, education), Environmental Factors.

Barriers to Realizing Demographic Potential

- **Unmet Reproductive Needs (NFHS-5):** 36% unintended pregnancies, 30% unmet fertility goals.
- **Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy:** Child marriage remains high at 23.3%; 7% adolescent girls experience early pregnancies.
- **Gender Inequality:** Female labour force participation below 25% (patriarchal norms, limited education/employment).
- **Inadequate SRHR Services:** Inconsistent and under-resourced, especially in rural areas.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Stigma, misinformation, lack of youth-friendly services.

India's Policy Responses (Flagship Schemes)

- **National Population Policy (NPP) 2000:** Aimed to stabilize population by 2045, TFR 2.1 by 2010.
- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:** Addresses child marriage, girl education.
- **National Adolescent Health Programme:** Enhances health literacy, reproductive rights.
- **Skill India Mission – PMKVY 4.0 (2023–24):** Targets youth skill training, focus on emerging sectors, gender-inclusion.
- **Anaemia Mukta Bharat & POSHAN 2.0:** Tackles malnutrition and anaemia.

- **SAMARTH Campaign (MoWCD, 2023):** Digital initiative for gender equality, women's empowerment.
- **Digital Health Mission (ABDM):** Facilitates digital health records, expands SRHR access.
- **Tele-MANAS (2022):** Mental health support, free tele-counseling.
- **PM POSHAN Scheme (revamped 2021):** Emphasizes nutritional support, health, school attendance.
- **Mission Vatsalya (2021):** Focuses on child welfare and protection.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Promotes multidisciplinary learning, skill development, early childhood education.
- **Mission Shakti (2020):** Umbrella scheme for women's safety, empowerment, support (Sambal and Samarthya).

Best Practice Models (Indian States)

- **Project Udaan (Rajasthan):** Prevented 30,000 child marriages, 15,000 teen pregnancies; enabled contraceptive access.
- **Project Advika (Odisha):** Created 11,000 child marriage-free villages; stopped 950+ marriages (2022).
- **Project Manzil (Rajasthan):** Trained 28,000+ young women; 16,000 employed; increased financial independence.

Way Forward

- **Empower through Rights and Resources:** Universal SRHR Access.
- **Expand Girls' Education:** Cuts child marriage risk (6% per additional year secondary education).
- **Structural & Behavioural Reforms:**
 - Youth-Centric Skilling (human-centred design).
 - Female Workforce Boost (job dignity, safety, childcare).
 - Normative Shifts (life-skills education, community campaigns).
 - Decentralised Planning (data-driven, locally adapted strategies).
- **Correcting Myths around Population Collapse:**
 - Malthusian Alarmism Is Outdated (population momentum ensures growth).
 - Projection is not Prediction (demographic forecasting uncertain).
 - Collapse Narratives Often Elitist (ignore inequities, choice restrictions).

- **Building Human Capital:** Invest in healthcare, quality education, jobs, skills.
- **Improvement of Health and Nutrition:** Strengthen health infra, address NCDs, increase budgetary allocation.
- **More Job Creation:** Create 10 million jobs/year; promote entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

- World Population Day 2025: Call to shift from control to capability, choice, inclusion.
- India: Leverage youth bulge with integrated investments in education, health, gender equity, economic opportunity.
- Goal: Sustainable, inclusive demographic governance to make population a strategic asset.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-population-at-crossroads-not-a-crisis-population-foundation-of-india/article69799719.ece>