

Population Regulation Measures in India

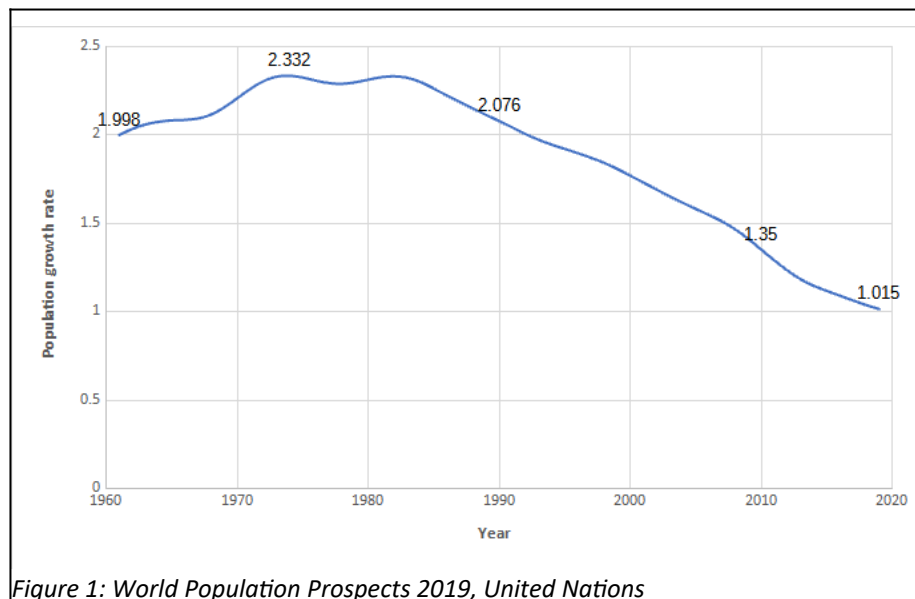
Introduction:

China's 2020 census revealed that its population grew at its slowest in the last decade since the 1950s. [1] With a fertility rate of 1.3 children per woman, it is now on a course similar to other aging societies such as Japan and Italy. China has replaced its One-child policy with a three-child programme, which also seeks to provide supportive measures such as lower educational costs and housing support. [2]

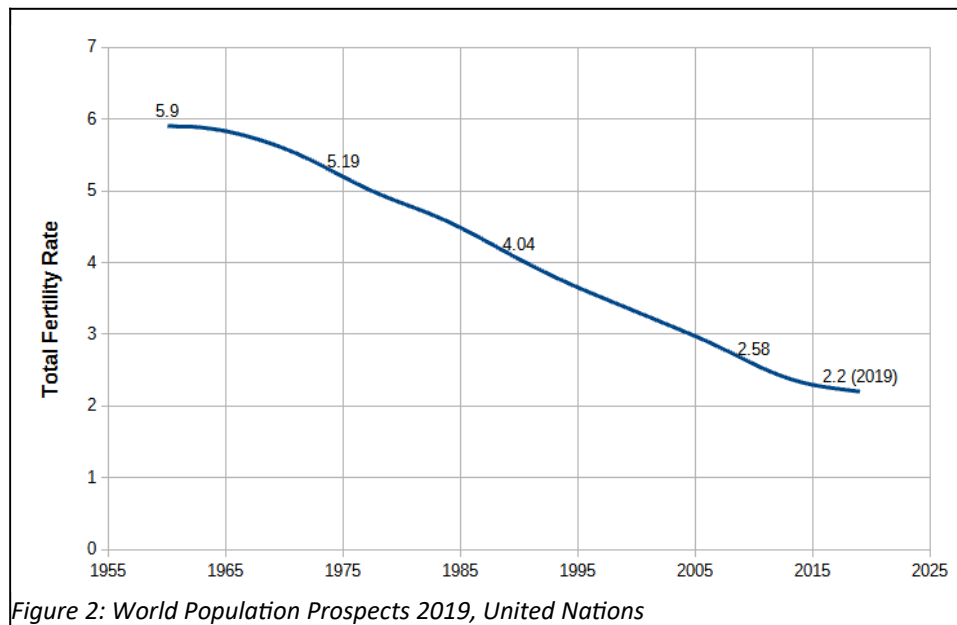
The fear of population explosion still lingers in public discourse in India. A bill was introduced in 2019 by MP Rakesh Sinha which seeks to incentivize families to adopt small family norms, provisions to penalize families that contravene the norm by reducing benefits provided under Government schemes and statutory laws, and implement a Revised National Population Policy. [3] The Government of India, in response to a PIL, rejected the use of coercive steps for birth control. [4]

Facts and Figures:

The annual population growth percentage has fallen from the high of 2.3 in 1974 to 1.01 in 2019.



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. Assuming no net migration and unchanged mortality, a total fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman ensures a broadly stable population. [5] India's estimated TFR was 2.2 according to the NFHS-4 (2015-16). Several states have already achieved replacement and sub-replacement level fertility. [6]



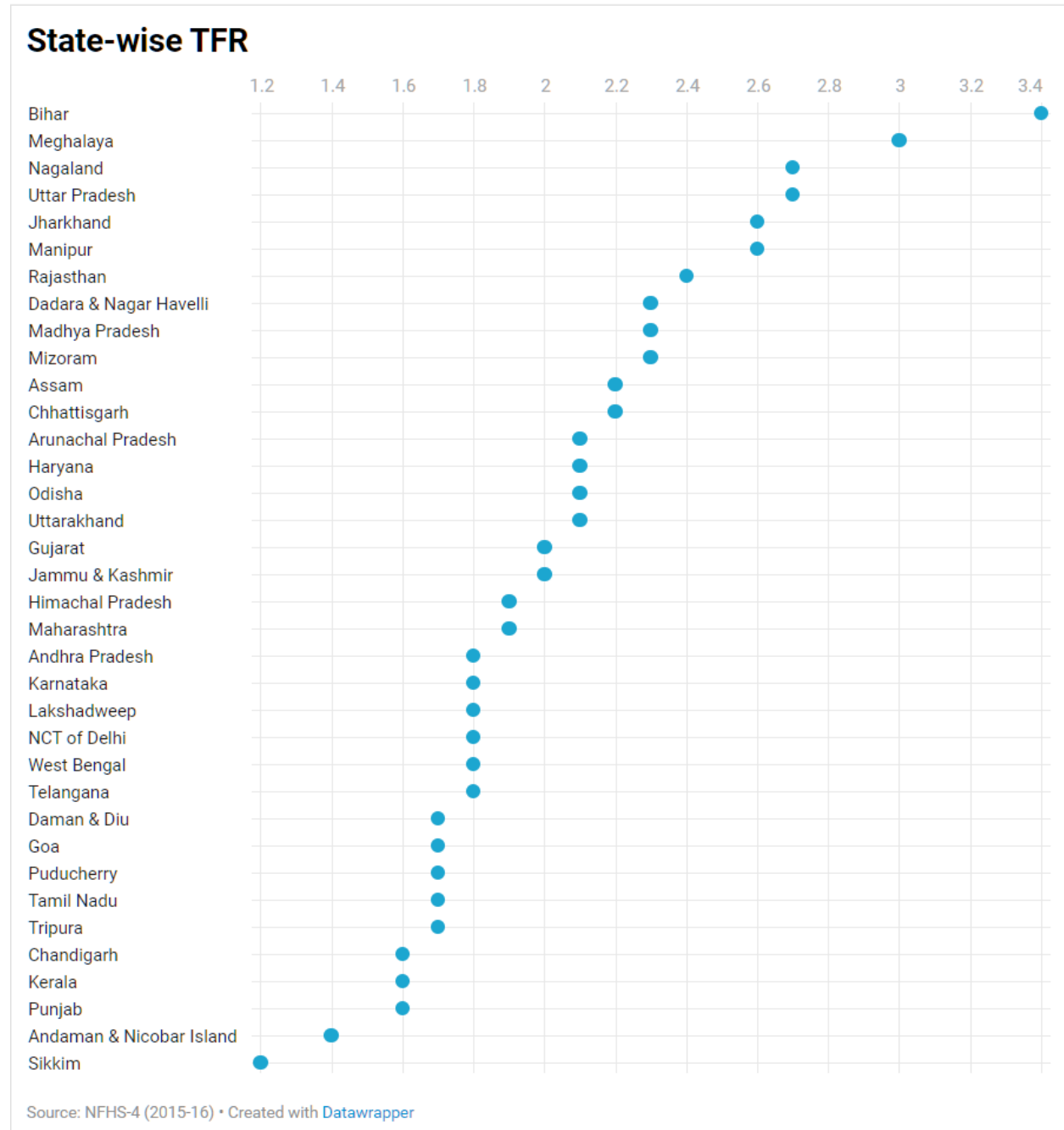
Existing Measures

The Government of India launched a National Health Policy in 2000 and a National Population Stabilization Fund in 2005. It provides for basic reproductive and child healthcare services, advisory and contraception for family planning through voluntary and informed choice, target-free approach. [7]

Several states have implemented or are looking to implement targeted approaches to family size control. Uttar Pradesh Law Commission proposed a draft bill that seeks to incentivize sterilization, and disincentives such as ineligibility for government jobs, subsidies and welfare benefits for those who contravene the policy. [8]

Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act 1994 does not allow people with more than two children to contest panchayat elections. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttarakhand also use similar measures.

States such as Maharashtra, Assam and Madhya Pradesh also mandate government employees to follow the two-child norm. [9]



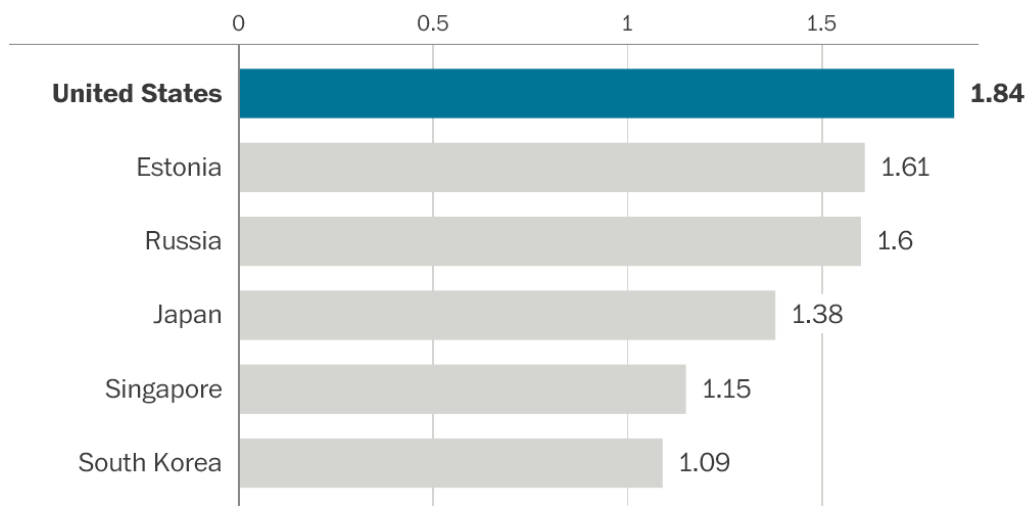
The Demographic Transition Theory

It is a model that describes the observed pattern of demographic changes in countries around the world. It is a sequence of five stages. [10]

- Stage 1 involves high mortality and high birth rates. There is little to none population growth in this stage. The population pyramid (distribution of population in age-groups) is broad only at the base.
- In stage 2, mortality falls but birth rates are still high. This is due to improvement in health conditions, usually due to economic development. This is where population growth is rapid.
- In stage 3, mortality stays low and birth rates fall. Population growth begins to decline. Parents have fewer children once the perception of low mortality takes hold, structural changes to the economy and empowerment of women, among other factors, lead to decline in fertility rates.
- In stage 4, mortality and birth rates stay low and population growth slows down to a trickle or turns negative.
- In stage 5, there may be a reversal in fertility at very high levels of development. However, the population either stabilizes or grows very slowly. [11]

Experience in other countries

Birth rates in the United States declined for the sixth year in a row and underwent its largest drop in nearly 50 years, according to provisional data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The United States is facing a dilemma with which many wealthy nations in Europe and Asia have long grappled. Some governments have tried subsidizing fertility treatments, offering free day care and generous parental leave, and paying thousands of dollars in cash grants to parents, but evidence of improvements on a large-scale is thin. [12]



By Abhin

Source: CIA World Factbook

ANTONIA FARZAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Conclusion

In 1994, India joined the global consensus to become a signatory to the Programme of Action of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development. It can be stated that the country is already in Stage 3. Therefore, it may not be necessary to employ measures that violate the India's international obligations, not to mention the undermining of Fundamental Rights enshrined in Article 14 and Article 21 (Right of Intimate Personal Choice, Justice KS Puttaswamy v. Union of India). Also, as evidenced by demographic distortions caused by China's One-child policy and difficulties in reversing the trend of declining fertility rates across countries, it may not be prudent to do so for the future of India's development. High TFR in some states and districts can be addressed using methods underlined in the National Population Policy, 2000.

References:

- [1] [China demographic crisis looms as population growth slips to slowest ever | Reuters](#)
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- [6] NFHS-4 (2015-16) rchiips.org/nfhs/nfhs-4Reports/India.pdf
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- [8] Draft Uttar Pradesh (UP) Population Control, Stabilisation and Welfare Bill, 2021 [Bill07072021.pdf \(upsdc.gov.in\)](#)
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- [11] Myrskylä, M., Kohler, HP. & Billari, F. Advances in development reverse fertility declines. Nature 460, 741–743 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature08230>
- [12] The U.S. birthrate is falling. Here's how other countries have tried to persuade people to have more children. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/05/05/birth-rate-us-japan-korea/>