

UNIT 2

The Demographic Structure of Indian Society

In This Unit

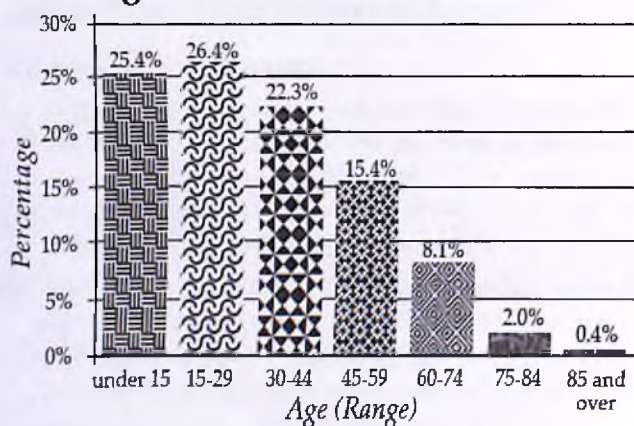
Comprehensive and profound coverage of the following NCERT's chapter:

- ✓ NCERT Class -12th (Indian Society), Chapter -2

What is Demography?

Demography is the **systematic study of the population**. In the field of social science, **demography** examines population trends and processes. This includes analysing changes in population size, birth and death patterns, and migration flows. Demographers also study the structure and composition of a population, focusing on the distribution of characteristics like age and gender.

India age breakdown (2021)



Demography Statistics of India, 2020

Different Varieties of Demography

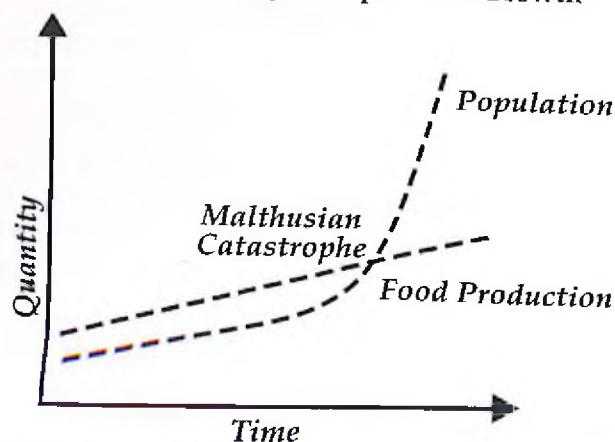
- **Formal demography** is a largely quantitative field. It is primarily concerned with the measurement and analysis of the components of population change.
- **Social demography** focuses on the social, economic or political aspects of populations.

Why Study Demography?

- The study of demography holds particular significance for sociology. Early advancements in demography were instrumental in the establishment of sociology as a recognized academic discipline.
- Demographic information plays a crucial role in **planning and implementing** government policies, particularly those related to economic development and public well-being.

Theories and Concepts of Demography

The Malthusian Theory of Population Growth



Malthusian Theory

- Thomas Robert Malthus gave a **theory of population growth**. He outlined that human populations tend to grow at a much faster rate than the means of human subsistence (such as food, clothing and other agriculture-based products).

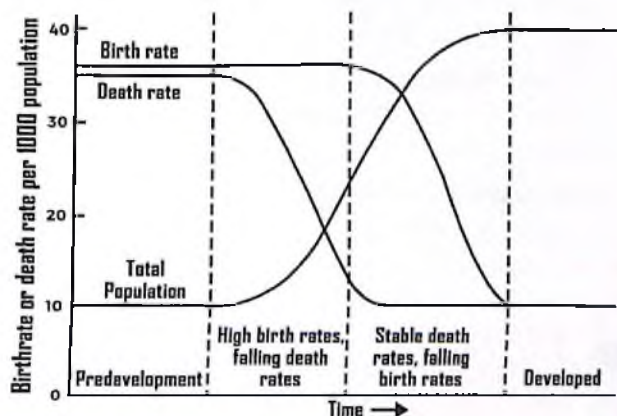
- While the population rises in geometric progression, agricultural production can only grow in arithmetic progression. And hence, humanity is condemned to live in poverty forever because the growth of agricultural production will always be overtaken by population growth. The only way to increase prosperity is by controlling the growth of the population.
- Malthus believed therefore that '**positive checks**' to population growth in the form of famines and diseases were inevitable because they were nature's way of dealing with the imbalance between food supply and increasing population.
- Despite Malthus's claim that population growth drives poverty, critics have countered that resource disparity is the true culprit. They argue that an unequal distribution of wealth, not population pressure, is responsible for societal ills like poverty and starvation. This critique highlights how an unjust social system concentrates resources in the hands of a privileged few, leaving the majority in a state of deprivation.
- The **third (and last) stage** is of low growth in a developed society where both the death rate and birth rate have been reduced considerably and the difference between them is again small.
- Between these two stages is a **transitional stage** of movement from a backward to an advanced stage, and this stage is characterised by very high rates of population growth. This 'population explosion' happens because death rates are brought down relatively quickly through advanced methods of disease control, public health, and better nutrition.

Common Concepts and Indicators

- **Birth Rate:** The birth rate is the total number of live births in a particular area (an entire country, a state, a district or other territorial unit) during a specified period (usually a year) divided by the total population of that area in thousands. In other words, the birth rate is the number of live births per 1000 population.

The Theory of Demographic Transition

This theory posits a connection between population growth and a society's economic development, suggesting a common pattern for population change across societies. The theory identifies three fundamental stages:

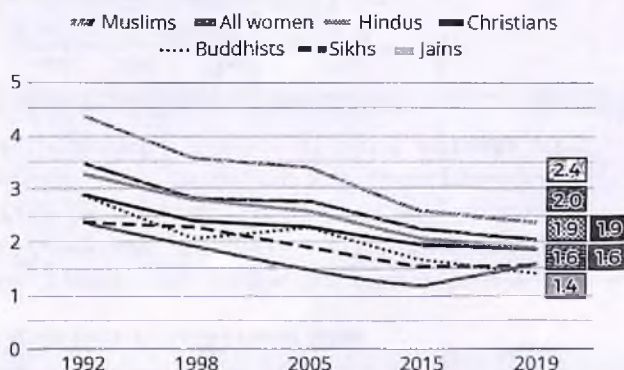


Demographic Transition

- The **initial stage**, characterised by an underdeveloped and technologically limited society, experiences low population growth. High birth rates are counterbalanced by high death rates, resulting in a low net growth rate (the difference between births and deaths).

Fertility Rates in India Fall Across All Religious Groups

Live births per woman in India, by religion

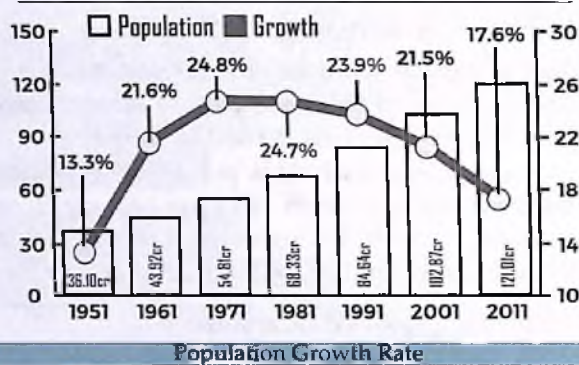


Fertility Rates

- **Death Rate:** It is expressed as the number of deaths in a given area during a given time per 1000 population.
- **Growth Rate of Population:** The rate of natural increase or the growth rate of a population refers to the difference between the birth rate and the death rate. When this difference is zero (or, in practice, very small) then we say that the population has 'stabilised', or has reached the 'replacement level'.

DECADAL GROWTH RATE

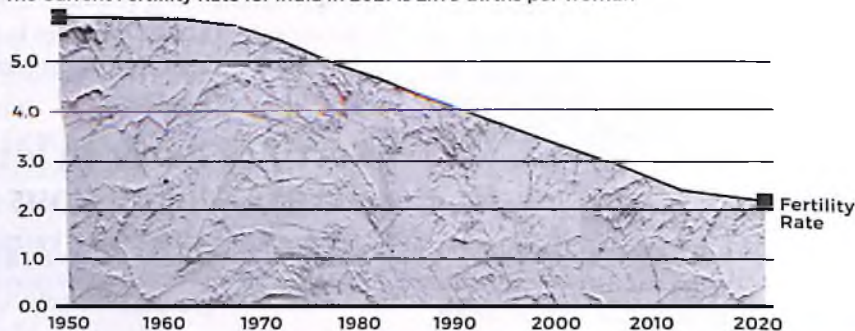
The Total Fertility Rate, which was as high as 6 in the 1950s, came down to 2.0 in 2019-21



- **Replacement level:** It is the rate of growth required for new generations to replace the older ones.
- **Negative Growth Rate:** It occurs when fertility levels fall below the replacement rate, the number of children needed to maintain a stable population. This phenomenon is prevalent in many contemporary countries and regions, including Japan, Russia, Italy, and Eastern Europe.
- **Fertility Rate:** It is a demographic measure indicating the average number of live births per 1,000 women within the childbearing years, typically defined as ages 15 to 49.

India Fertility Rate 1950-2021

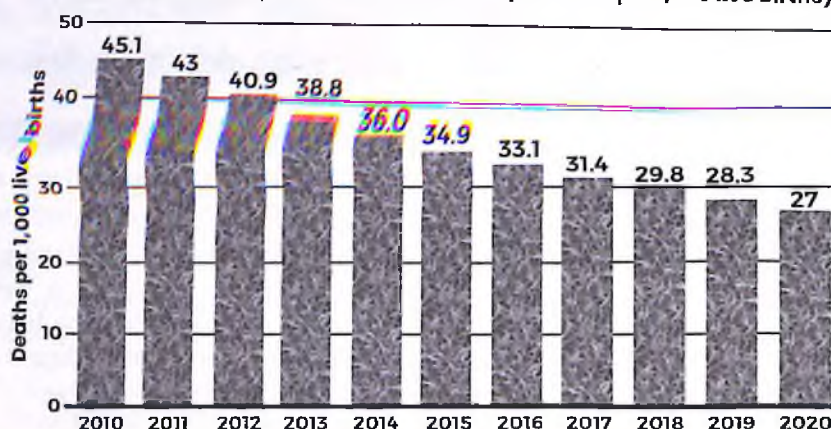
The Current Fertility Rate for India in 2021 is 2.179 births per woman



Fertility Rate in India

- **Total Fertility Rate:** This metric represents the hypothetical number of children a woman would bear throughout her reproductive lifespan if she experienced the average childbirth rate observed for each age segment within that period, as determined by the prevailing age-specific fertility rates within a specific geographical area.
- **Infant Mortality Rate:** It is the number of deaths of babies before the age of one year per 1000 live births.

India: Infant mortality rate from 2010 to 2020 (in deaths per 1,000 live births)



Infant Mortality Rate

- **Maternal Mortality Rate:** It is the number of women who die in childbirth per 1,00,000 live births.
 - High rates of infant and maternal mortality are an unambiguous indicator of backwardness and poverty. Development is accompanied by sharp falls in these rates as medical facilities and levels of education, awareness and prosperity increase.
- **Life Expectancy:** This refers to the estimated number of years that an average person is expected to survive.
- **Sex Ratio:** The sex ratio is a specific measurement expressed as the number of females present in a population per 1,000 males at a designated time and location.
 - Throughout history, it has been discovered that most nations have a somewhat higher proportion of females than males.
 - A decline in sex ratio has been observed in certain countries, China, South Korea, and notably India. This phenomenon is linked to prevailing cultural values that prioritise males, leading to a **preference for sons** and possibly the neglect of female children.
- **Age Structure of the Population:** It refers to distribution of individuals across various age groups.
 - The age structure distribution is susceptible to changes in development levels and average life expectancy.
 - Moreover, high infant and maternal mortality rates also have an impact on the age structure.
- **Dependency Ratio:** It is a measure comparing the portion of a population which is composed of dependents (i.e., elderly people who are too old to work, and children who are too young to work) with the portion that is in the working age group, generally defined as 15 to 64 years.
 - An increasing dependency ratio presents a challenge for nations with aging populations. In such scenarios, a relatively smaller working-age population struggles to support a relatively larger dependent population.
 - Conversely, a declining dependency ratio can lead to economic prosperity due to a

larger workforce compared to dependents. This phenomenon, sometimes termed the “demographic dividend”, signifies the advantage gained from a shifting age structure.

Size and Growth of India's Population

- India is now the most populous nation in the world. However, this growth in population has not always been consistent.
- Between 1911 and 1921, a devastating influenza epidemic resulted in a negative growth rate of -0.03% during 1918-19.
- Following independence, India experienced a significant surge in population growth, reaching a peak of 2.2% during the 1961-1981 period.
- Although the annual growth rate has dropped since then, it is still among the highest in the developing world.

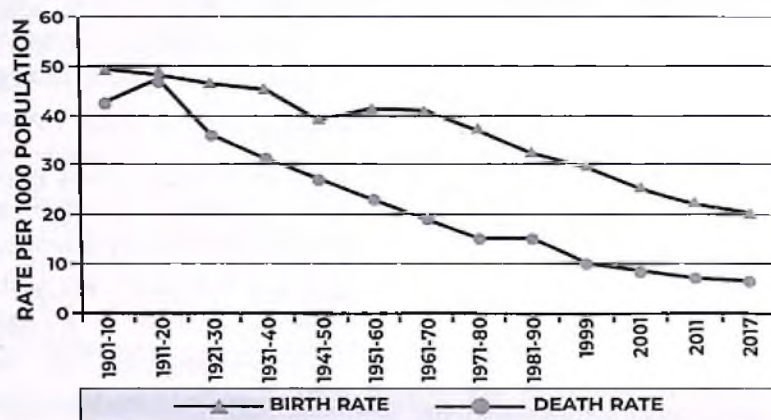
The Population of India & its Growth During the 20th Century

Year	Total Population (in millions)	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	Decadal Growth Rate (%)
1901	238	-	-
1911	252	0.56	5.8
1921	251	-0.03	-0.3
1931	279	1.04	11.0
1941	319	1.33	14.2
1951	361	1.25	13.3
1961	439	1.96	21.6
1971	548	2.22	24.8
1981	683	2.20	24.7
1991	846	2.14	23.9
2001	1028	1.95	21.5
2011	1210	1.63	17.7

Population Growth of India

- Prior to 1931, India experienced **high rates of both mortality and fertility**. This demographic pattern shifted significantly afterwards. While mortality rates declined sharply, birth rates only showed a modest decrease. This decline in mortality can be primarily attributed to advancements in famine and epidemic control. Notably, the 1918-19 influenza pandemic, also known as the “**Spanish Flu**”, was a major contributor, claiming approximately 170 million lives or 5% of India's population at the time.

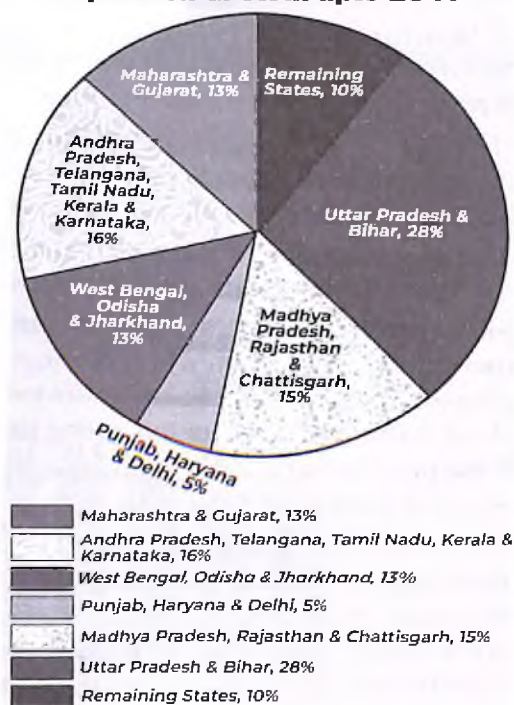
Birth & Death Rate in India 1901-2017



Birth & Death Rate

- Advancements in medical treatments, mass vaccination programs, and improved sanitation practices significantly mitigated the impact of epidemics. However, diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, and dysentery continue to claim lives, albeit at a much lower rate compared to historical epidemics.
- Recurring Famines** presented another major cause of mortality. These were driven by a combination of factors: persistent poverty and malnutrition, an agroclimatic environment susceptible to rainfall variations, inadequate infrastructure (transportation and communication), and insufficient government intervention.
- Scholars like Amartya Sen argued that famines weren't solely caused by food shortages, but also by an "Entitlement Failure," meaning people lacked the means to access available food.
- Significant improvements in agricultural productivity (particularly through irrigation expansion), better transportation infrastructure, and more proactive government relief and preventative measures have significantly reduced famine-related deaths. Unlike mortality, birth rates haven't shown a rapid decline, as they are influenced by socio-cultural factors that take longer to change.
- Significant disparities exist in fertility rates across Indian states. Several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, have achieved a low total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.7 (as of 2016).
- However, states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh continue to exhibit high TFRs, with figures reaching 3.3, 2.8, 2.7, and 3.1 respectively in 2016.
- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar currently hold the highest birth rates (25.9 and 26.4, respectively) and are projected to contribute nearly half (50%) of India's population growth by 2041.

Regional Shares of Projected Population Growth upto 2041



Population Growth

The Age Structure of the Indian Population

- India's population is demonstrably young, with a national average age significantly lower than most other countries. The proportion of individuals under 15 has declined from a peak of 42% in 1971 to 29% in 2011. Conversely, the working-age population (15-59) has grown slightly from 53% to 63%, while the elderly (60+) remain a smaller demographic, though their share has increased from 5% to 7% during this period.
- Similar to fertility rates, India's age structure exhibits significant regional disparities. Kerala, for instance, is approaching an age distribution resembling developed nations, while Uttar Pradesh presents a contrasting picture with a high proportion of young people and a relatively low elderly population.
- The skewed youthfulness of India's age structure is perceived as an advantage, offering a potential "demographic dividend." Similar to the experience of East Asian economies in the past decade and Ireland currently, India is believed to be reaping the benefits of this demographic phenomenon.

Does the changing age structure offer a 'demographic dividend' for India?

- The "demographic dividend" stems from India's position (and projected future) as one of the youngest countries globally. This advantage arises from an increasing proportion of working-age individuals relative to dependents.
- In 2020, the average Indian was only 29 years old, compared to significantly higher averages in China (37), the United States (37), Western Europe (45), and Japan (48). This translates to a vast and expanding workforce, holding immense potential for economic growth and prosperity.
- However, this potential can only be realised through strategic development. A rise in the working-age population must be accompanied by advancements in education and employment opportunities. If new entrants to the workforce lack proper education, their productivity remains low. Similarly, unemployment renders them dependents rather than contributors.

Consequently, a mere shift in age structure does not guarantee benefits; it necessitates well-planned development to harness this demographic advantage.

Declining Sex Ratio in India

- The sex ratio is an important indicator of gender balance in the population.
- India has had a declining sex ratio for more than a century.
- India's sex ratio exhibited a concerning downward trend over the past four decades. From 941 females per 1000 males in 1961, it reached a historical low of 927 in 1991, with only a moderate improvement observed in 2001.
- The 2011 Census of India offered a positive sign, with the sex ratio rising to 943 females per 1000 males.

Reasons for Declining Sex Ratio

- A lack of adequate care for girl children resulted in disproportionately high mortality rates in this demographic.
- The practice of aborting foetuses based on gender preference prevented the birth of girls.
- The killing of newborn girls due to cultural or religious beliefs tragically suppressed the female population.
 - **Female infanticide** has been documented across various regions in India. The Economic Survey of the recent year revealed a concerning trend: states with high per capita income, such as Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi, also exhibit a low child sex ratio.
 - Research suggests a possible link between economic prosperity and skewed child sex ratios. As families choose to have fewer children, the desire for a son, coupled with the availability of ultrasound technology, might lead to sex selection.
 - However, the government has passed strict law known as the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, banning this practice.
 - Long-term solutions for combating gender bias against girls rely more heavily on societal

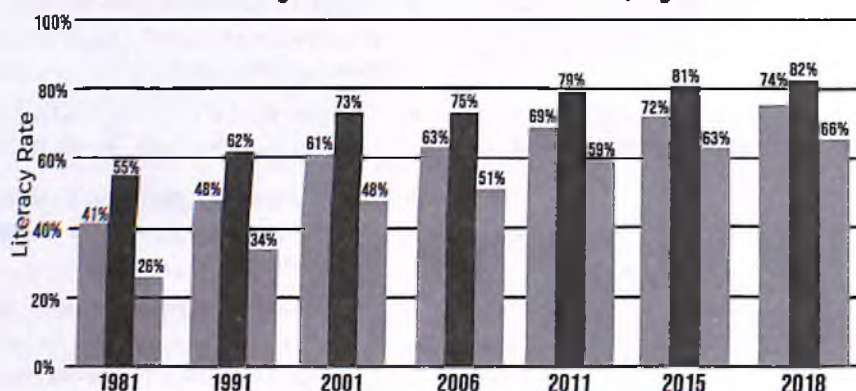
attitudinal shifts, although legal frameworks can also play a supportive role.

- The Indian government's "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" program has the potential to be a significant policy in improving the child sex ratio in the country.

Literacy

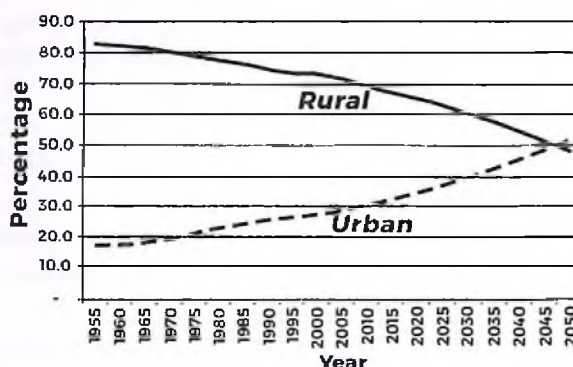
- Literacy serves as a tool for empowerment in education.
- An increasingly literate population fosters greater awareness of career paths and participation in the knowledge economy. Additionally, literacy promotes health consciousness and facilitates deeper engagement in the community's cultural and economic well-being.
- Since gaining independence, India has witnessed significant progress in literacy rates, with nearly two-thirds of the population now literate. However, this progress struggles to keep pace with the nation's rapid population growth.
- Literacy levels exhibit significant disparities across gender, region, and social groups. Notably, female literacy has shown a faster rise (10.4%) compared to males (7.6%) between 2001 and 2011. Geographically, states like Kerala boast near-universal literacy, while others like Bihar lag behind. Furthermore, historically disadvantaged communities, including Scheduled Castes and Tribes, demonstrate lower literacy rates, particularly among women.
- These inequalities in literacy rates are particularly concerning as they tend to perpetuate social and economic disparities across generations. Illiterate parents face significant challenges in ensuring their children receive a quality education, thereby potentially solidifying existing inequalities.

India: Literacy Rate from 1981 to 2018, by Gender



Literacy Rate in India

Rural-Urban Differences



Rural & Urban Divide

- Despite a historically agrarian society, India's demographics are shifting. While 68.8% of the population remains rural, a significant 31.2% of it now resides in urban areas. This rural majority, though heavily reliant on agriculture, faces a decline in the relative economic value of their output. Rural people are increasingly engaged in non-farm rural occupations like transport services, business enterprises or craft manufacturing.
- Mass media and communication channels have permeated rural areas, exposing residents to urban lifestyles and consumption patterns. This exposure fosters familiarity with urban norms and aspirations for a consumerist lifestyle, even in remote villages. Improved transportation and communication networks are effectively bridging the gap between rural and urban spheres. While rural areas have always interacted with market forces, their present integration into the consumer market is more pronounced.
- The rapid urbanisation trend signifies the magnetic pull that cities exert on rural populations. Individuals unable to secure adequate employment in rural areas migrate to cities in search of better opportunities.
- Furthermore, the continuous decline of communal resources like ponds, forests, and grazing lands, which were vital for the survival of the rural poor, has exacerbated this rural-urban flow. These resources previously provided a safety net for impoverished villagers with minimal landholdings.
- Sometimes the city may also be preferred for social reasons, especially the relative anonymity it offers. For marginalised groups like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, urban anonymity offers a degree of protection from the routine humiliation they might face in their villages due to their caste identity. Conversely, anonymity in the city allows underprivileged members of socially dominant rural groups to pursue occupations considered low-status, which would be unacceptable in their villages.
- While urbanisation is widespread, the most significant growth is concentrated in large metropolitan centres. These metros attract migrants from rural areas as well as from small towns.

Population Policy in India

- For over half a century, India has had an officially established population policy. In 1952, India was perhaps the earliest country to explicitly state its policy.
- **The national family planning programme** has been used as to try to influence the pace and pattern of population growth in a socially desirable way.
- At the beginning, it was important to slow down population growth by promoting various methods of birth control, improving public health standards and raising awareness about issues related to populations and health.
- The program initially focused on slowing population growth through birth control promotion, public health improvement, and raising population-health awareness.
- During the National Emergency of 1975-76, the Family Planning Programme experienced a setback. In this period, the government tried to intensify efforts to reduce population growth by introducing a compulsory sterilisation programme.
 - The term "**sterilisation**" describes medical treatments that stop conception and delivery, such as vasectomy for men and tubectomy for women.
 - A large number of individuals, primarily the impoverished and the helpless, were forced to get sterilised, and lower-level government personnel, such as office workers or school teachers, were under intense pressure to bring people to the camps set up for this purpose.
- Soon after the Emergency, the National Family Planning Programme was renamed the National Family Welfare Programme, and coercive measures were discontinued.
- As part of the **2000 National Population Policy**, a new set of regulations was developed. The **National Health Policy of India** was released by the government in 2017.
- While the state can take many steps to attempt and create the conditions for demographic change, most demographic variables—especially those

pertaining to human fertility—are ultimately concerns of economic, social, and cultural change, as the history of India's National Family Welfare Programme reminds us.

Important Goals of National Health Policy 2017

- By 2025, the government should **raise health spending** as a share of GDP from the current 1.15 percent to 2.5 percent.
- By 2025, **increase the life expectancy** at birth from 67.5 to 70 years.
- By 2022, establish **regular monitoring of the Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) Index** by key categories as a gauge of the burden of disease and its trends.

- Aiming for a national and subnational total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1 by 2025.
- **Lower the rate of infant mortality** to 23 by 2025 and the rate of maternal deaths from present levels to 100 by 2020.
- Objectives By 2025, **bring down the stillbirth rate** to a “single digit” and reduce neonatal mortality to 16.
- By 2025, **reduce the premature death rate** by 25% from chronic respiratory illnesses, cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disorders.
- By 2025, **increase the use of public health facilities** by 50% compared to existing levels.
- **Reduction of 40% in the prevalence of stunting of under-five children** by 2025.

TEST YOURSELF

Model Questions for Main Examination

- Q1. Explain the Malthusian theory of population growth.
- Q2. Elaborate how demographic transition is linked to economic growth of a country.
- Q3. Why do some of the most prosperous regions of India have an adverse sex ratio for women? Give your arguments. (UPSC 2014)

- Q4. How do you explain the statistics that show that the sex ratio in Tribes in India is more favourable to women than the sex ratio among Scheduled Castes? (UPSC 2015)
- Q5. “Empowering women is the key to control population growth”. Discuss (UPSC 2019)
- Q6. Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. (UPSC 2021)