

# **Declining Fertility**

Posted at: 17/04/2024

#### **Context:**

Recently, a Lancet paper showed global population trends are changing, with declining birth rates instead of overpopulation.

### **Background:**

Regardless of the exact timing of peak world population, it will likely begin declining in the second half of the century, with dramatic geopolitical, economic and societal consequences.

# Major findings on global population trends in the Lancet:

- 1. The Lancet paper projects a significant decrease in the global population. Most countries, including India, are expected to see lower birth rates.
- 2. By 2100, China's population might drop by up to 50%.
- 3. Sub-Saharan Africa is the exception, likely to experience population growth.
- 4. The decline in birth rates suggests a future with more elderly people and fewer young ones.
- 5. The change could affect job markets, healthcare, and social systems, as there will be more old people needing care but fewer young people to support them.

#### Factors behind declining fertility:

- 1. Higher education levels and increased empowerment among women lead to smaller family sizes.
- 2. The high cost of child-rearing and lack of job security discourage having children. This trend is observed even in wealthy countries with generous parental support policies.
- 3. Young people are reluctant to bring children into a world threatened by environmental issues like climate change.
- 4. In India, 90% of the youth are in low-paying, informal jobs, contributing to uncertainty about the future.
  - 5. India's extreme wealth inequality, with the richest 1% owning 40% of the wealth, creates societal instability. India's low ranking in the World Happiness Report and concerns about its democratic status further impact decisions about starting a family.

# Way Forward:

- 1. Policies should focus on instilling hope in young people about their future.
- 2. Enhancing education and ensuring job security can address economic uncertainties.
- 3. Implement progressive taxation and improve social security systems to create a more equitable society.
- 4. Universal health coverage should be provided, especially for long-term care of chronic conditions.

- 5. Tackling issues like climate change can alleviate young people's fears about the future world of their children.
- 6. Improving the democratic health of a country can positively impact societal outlook and stability.

