



## EDITORIAL: INDIAN EXPRESS

**GENERAL STUDIES 1: SOCIETY**

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**TOPIC: POPULATION AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES**

### INDIA'S ASSET-LESS, AGEING POPULATION WITH POOR HEALTH IS A CRISIS IN THE MAKING

#### India's Demographic Advantage

##### Current Population Profile:

- India has a large working-age population, with 67.3% of people between 15-59 years old, offering an economic opportunity for the next three decades.
- 26% of India's population is under 14 years old, and only 7% are above 65, much lower than in countries like the US (17%) or Europe (21%).
- By 2030, India will have a larger working-age population, with 68.9% of people in this group, making it the country with the largest workforce globally, with 1.04 billion people.

#### Economic Potential and Challenges

##### Building a Productive Workforce:

- To benefit from this large workforce, India needs high productivity. Sectors like technology, healthcare, IT, and life sciences can absorb this workforce to create wealth.
- Achieving a \$7 trillion GDP by 2030 depends on giving the workforce better education, skills, and health.

##### Focus on Early Development:

- Cognitive and physical development, starting from birth and continuing through childhood, is essential to prepare a skilled workforce for the future.
- Policies must support education and health at every stage of life to build a strong foundation for future growth.

#### Challenges in the Current Workforce (Aged 15-49 Years)

##### Education Gaps:

- Many people in the current workforce have low educational attainment. Only 41% of women and 50.2% of men have completed 10 years of schooling.
- This lack of education limits their ability to contribute effectively to the economy.



## Health and Malnutrition Issues:

- A high percentage of the workforce faces health problems, including anaemia (57% of women, 25% of men) and malnutrition (18.7% of women and 16.2% of men with low BMI).
- Poor health affects productivity, making it harder for people to contribute to the economy.

## Skills Mismatch:

- Despite efforts to skill people, employers still struggle to find skilled workers, and many educated youth remain unemployed, highlighting a mismatch between education and job requirements.

## Future Workforce (Aged 15-24 Years)

### Youth Education Shortcomings:

- Among youth aged 15-24, many haven't completed 12 years of schooling, with only 34% of girls and 35.9% of boys reaching this level.
- This limits their potential to take on skilled jobs in the future.

### Health Issues in Youth:

- Health problems like anaemia affect a large portion of youth, with 59% of girls and 31% of boys suffering from it. Many also have malnutrition-related health issues.
- Poor health impacts their future productivity in the workforce.

### Low Learning Levels:

- Reports show that many young people struggle with basic reading and math. For example, only 77% of 17-18-year-olds can read a Class 2-level textbook, and only 35% can perform basic division.
- These gaps in learning hinder their ability to develop the skills needed for the future.

## Challenges for the Next Generation Workforce (Children Under Five)

### Poor Nutrition in Early Childhood:

- Many children under five suffer from malnutrition, with 35.5% being stunted, 19.3% wasted, and 32.1% underweight.
- Anaemia affects 67.1% of young children, which harms cognitive and physical development.
- Early childhood is critical for brain development, and poor nutrition during this time can limit future learning and skill development.

## Long-Term Implications

## Population Changes Post-2030:





- After 2030, India's working-age population will start to decline, while the elderly population will rise, creating a demographic burden.
- If the population remains poorly educated and malnourished, it could become a drain on the economy rather than a benefit.

## Economic Challenges:

- An under-skilled population with low income will not be able to drive economic growth through consumption.
- Relying on migration of unskilled workers to other countries is not a sustainable solution.

## Call for Policy Redesign

### Real-Time Analysis and Action:

- To make the most of India's demographic advantage, real-time data and analysis are needed to create effective policies.
- The focus should be on improving education, health, and nutrition at all stages of life to prepare people for future job opportunities.

### Investing in Early Development:

- Policies should prioritize early childhood development, quality education, and skill-building programs to ensure India can maximize its demographic potential.

## Conclusion

India's large, young population offers great economic potential, but challenges like poor health, low education, and lack of skills could undermine this advantage. Immediate action in education, nutrition, and health is necessary to turn this demographic advantage into sustained economic growth. Without these interventions, India risks a future of economic instability.

**Source:** <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/indias-asset-less-ageing-population-with-poor-health-is-a-crisis-in-the-making-9728639/>