

## TOTAL FERTILITY RATE: GEOGRAPHY

NEWS: Total Fertility Rate remains constant at 2.0 in 2021: report

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) remained stable at 2.0 in 2021, indicating near population stabilization, but challenges like ageing population and regional demographic imbalance persist.

### Context:

- The Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021, released by the Registrar General of India (RGI), reveals that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has remained stable at 2.0 in 2021, same as in 2020.
- The data was collected from 8,842 sample units across all States, covering around 84 lakh people.

### About Sample Registration System (SRS):

- SRS is India's largest demographic survey system designed to produce reliable annual estimates of vital statistics such as:
  - Birth rate
  - Death rate
  - Infant mortality rate
- **Key Features:**
  - Dual Record System: Combines continuous enumeration by part-time enumerators with retrospective surveys every six months by supervisors to validate data.
  - Sample-Based Model: Operates on selected villages and urban blocks across the country, making it cost-effective and scalable.
  - Used for evidence-based planning and tracking demographic trends.

### Understanding Total Fertility Rate (TFR):

- TFR is the average number of children a woman would bear during her reproductive years (15–49 years).

- A TFR of 2.1 is considered replacement-level fertility, meaning a population is stable (neither growing nor shrinking).

### Key Findings of SRS Report 2021:

#### 1. TFR Trends:

- India's TFR is 2.0, signaling that it is below the replacement level.
- Bihar reported the highest TFR at 3.0.
- Delhi and West Bengal reported the lowest TFR at 1.4.

#### 2. Demographic Changes (1971 to 2021):

- 0–14 years age group dropped from 41.2% to 24.8%, showing a decline in child population.
- 15–59 years (working age group) increased from 53.4% to 66.2%, indicating a demographic dividend.
- Elderly population (65+ years) increased from 5.3% to 5.9%, and 60+ years population rose from 6% to 9%.
- Kerala has the highest elderly population at 14.4%.

#### 3. Age at Marriage:

- The mean age at effective marriage for women has increased from 19.3 years in 1990 to 22.5 years in 2021.

### Significance of Findings:

#### 1. Progress Toward Population Stabilization:

- A TFR of 2.0 shows that India is nearing population stabilization, reducing pressure on:
  - Natural resources
  - Public infrastructure (education, healthcare, housing)
  - Environmental sustainability

#### 2. Demographic Dividend Potential:

- Increase in working-age population (15–59) offers potential for:
  - Higher economic productivity

- Labour market growth
- Lower dependency ratio

### 3. Improved Maternal and Child Health:

- Fewer births per woman leads to:
  - Reduced maternal mortality rate
  - Better quality of prenatal and postnatal care
  - Healthier outcomes for both mother and child

### 4. Women's Empowerment:

- Declining fertility rates reflect:
  - Higher female literacy
  - Greater workforce participation
  - Increased autonomy and decision-making power
  - Delay in marriage and childbirth

## Concerns and Challenges of Declining TFR:

### 1. Ageing Population Burden:

- Rising elderly population increases pressure on:
  - Pension systems
  - Elder care services
  - Healthcare infrastructure
  - Social security mechanisms

### 2. Risk of Skewed Sex Ratios:

- In regions with son preference, declining fertility may:
  - Increase sex-selective abortions
  - Worsen the child sex ratio

### 3. Demographic Imbalance Across States:

- Fertility differences among states like Bihar (high TFR) vs West Bengal/Delhi (low TFR) may cause:
  - Internal migration
  - Regional disparities
  - Resource strain in low-TFR states receiving migrants

### Concluding Remarks:

- India's stabilization of the Total Fertility Rate marks a historic demographic transition toward population control.
- However, it must be balanced with planning for:
  - Ageing population needs
  - Regional parity
  - Health and gender equity
- A forward-looking demographic policy that integrates health, education, workforce, and social protection systems is vital for a resilient and prosperous India.

Source: [https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/total-fertility-rate-remains-constant-at-20-in-2021-report/article69564709.ece#:~:text=The%20Total%20Fertility%20Rate%20\(TFR,\(RGI\)%20on](https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/total-fertility-rate-remains-constant-at-20-in-2021-report/article69564709.ece#:~:text=The%20Total%20Fertility%20Rate%20(TFR,(RGI)%20on)