

BIRTH RATE DECLINING: GEOGRAPHY

NEWS: Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Kerala birth rates declining at twice the rate of national average: Sample Registration System data

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The SRS 2021 report shows India's fertility is stabilizing at a TFR of 2.0, but wide regional variations persist, with southern states showing faster birth rate declines while states like Bihar and UP continue high fertility trends.

Context:

- According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021 released by the Registrar General of India, states like Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Kerala are witnessing a faster decline in crude birth rates compared to the national average, indicating regional divergence in demographic transition.

About Sample Registration System (SRS):

- SRS is the largest demographic survey in India, conducted to estimate vital rates such as:
 - Crude Birth Rate (CBR)
 - Death Rate
 - Infant and Maternal Mortality Rates
- Administered by: Registrar General of India
- Provides annual estimates based on dual recording of continuous enumeration and retrospective surveys.

Definition of Crude Birth Rate (CBR):

- Number of live births per 1,000 population in a given year.
- It is a key indicator of a country's population growth trend.

Key National-Level Findings (2021):

1. Crude Birth Rate (CBR):

- All-India CBR: 19.3 (2021)
- Declined at 1.12% per year from 2016 to 2021

2. Total Fertility Rate (TFR):

- TFR for India: 2.0 (remained constant from 2020)
- A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement-level fertility, needed for population stabilization.

3. Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR):

- India's GRR = 1.0, meaning every woman is, on average, having one daughter who survives to reproductive age.

State-Level Findings:

1. States with Fastest Decline in Birth Rates:

- Tamil Nadu: -2.35% per year
- Delhi: -2.23%
- Kerala: -2.05%
- Other significant declines:
 - Maharashtra (-1.57%),
 - Gujarat (-1.24%),
 - Odisha (-1.34%),
 - J&K (-1.47%)

2. States with Slowest Decline in Birth Rates:

- Rajasthan: -0.48%
- Bihar: -0.86%
- Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand: -0.98%
- Uttar Pradesh: -1.09%

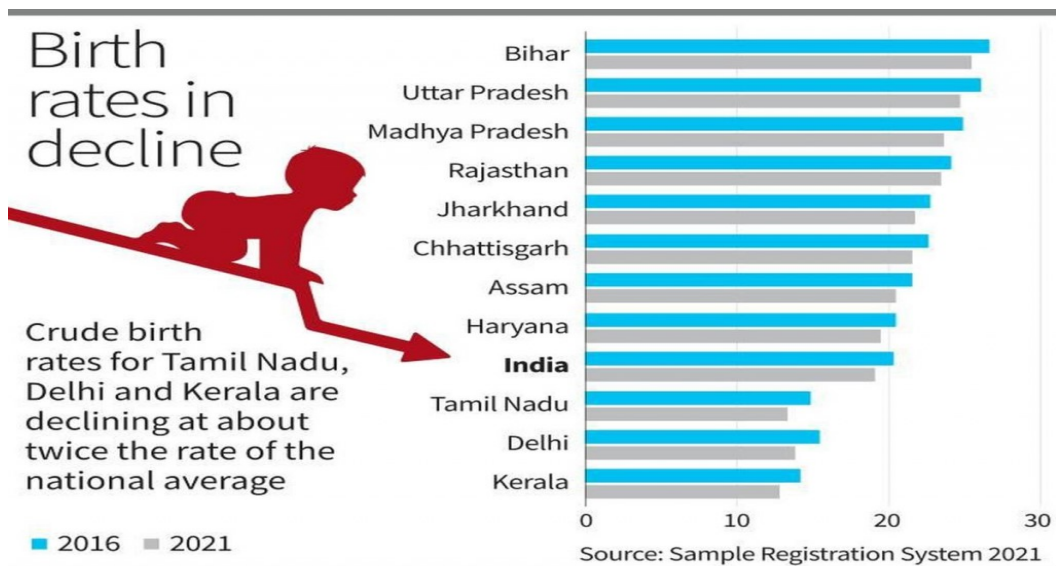
3. States with Increase in Registered Births:

- Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, J&K, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland

4. States with High TFR (Above National Average):

- Bihar (3.0),

- Uttar Pradesh (2.7),
- Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan



Concerns Arising from the Report:

1. Uneven Regional Demographic Transition:

- Southern and western states are nearing or below replacement-level fertility.
- Northern and eastern states like Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan continue with high fertility rates.
- This creates population growth imbalances across regions.

2. Pressure on Resources in High-Fertility States:

- Continued high birth rates contribute to:
 - Strain on public infrastructure,
 - Higher dependency ratio,
 - Limited economic opportunities

3. Aging Population in Low-Fertility States:

- States like Kerala and West Bengal may face:
 - Shrinking workforce
 - Higher old-age dependency

- Need for increased health and pension services

4. Gaps in Reproductive Health & Education:

- High TFR in states like Bihar, UP indicates:
 - Low contraceptive use
 - Lack of awareness
 - Early marriages and limited female education

Way Forward:

1. Strengthen Family Planning & Reproductive Health:

- Improve access to contraceptives, especially in rural and high-fertility regions.
- Promote spacing methods and male participation in family planning.

2. Empower Women Through Education:

- Female education correlates directly with lower fertility.
- Delay age at marriage and first childbirth through awareness programs.

3. Data-Driven Policy Planning:

- Expedite the delayed Census for accurate population estimates.
- Strengthen Civil Registration System (CRS) and SRS for real-time planning.

4. Tackle Aging in Low-TFR States:

- Build pension and healthcare infrastructure for elderly population.
- Create labor migration policies to balance workforce deficits.

5. Address Regional Development Gaps:

- Invest in health, education, and job creation in high-fertility states.
- Promote equitable growth to reduce demographic and economic disparities.

6. Cooperative Federalism in Population Policy:

- Encourage Centre-State collaboration on population stabilization.

- Provide flexible funding, technical support, and performance-based incentives.

Conclusion:

- India is witnessing a dual-speed demographic transition — rapid fertility decline in some states and persistently high birth rates in others.
- A balanced, region-specific policy approach is essential to ensure sustainable population growth, social equity, and economic development.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu-delhi-kerala-birth-rates-declining-at-twice-the-rate-of-national-average-srs-2021-data/article69576011.ece>