

## UNFPA STATE OF WORLD POPULATION 2025 – REPORTS

NEWS: India's population has reached an estimated 146.39 crore by April 2025, according to the **United Nations report titled "State of the World Population 2025: The Real Fertility Crisis."**

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

#### India's Current Demographic Status (2025 Report)

- **Most Populous Country:**  
India has officially become the world's most populous country, with a population of **146.39 crore**, surpassing **China's 141.61 crore**.
- **Future Population Trend:**  
India's population is projected to **peak at 170 crore** within the next four decades and then enter a **declining phase**, marking a demographic transition.

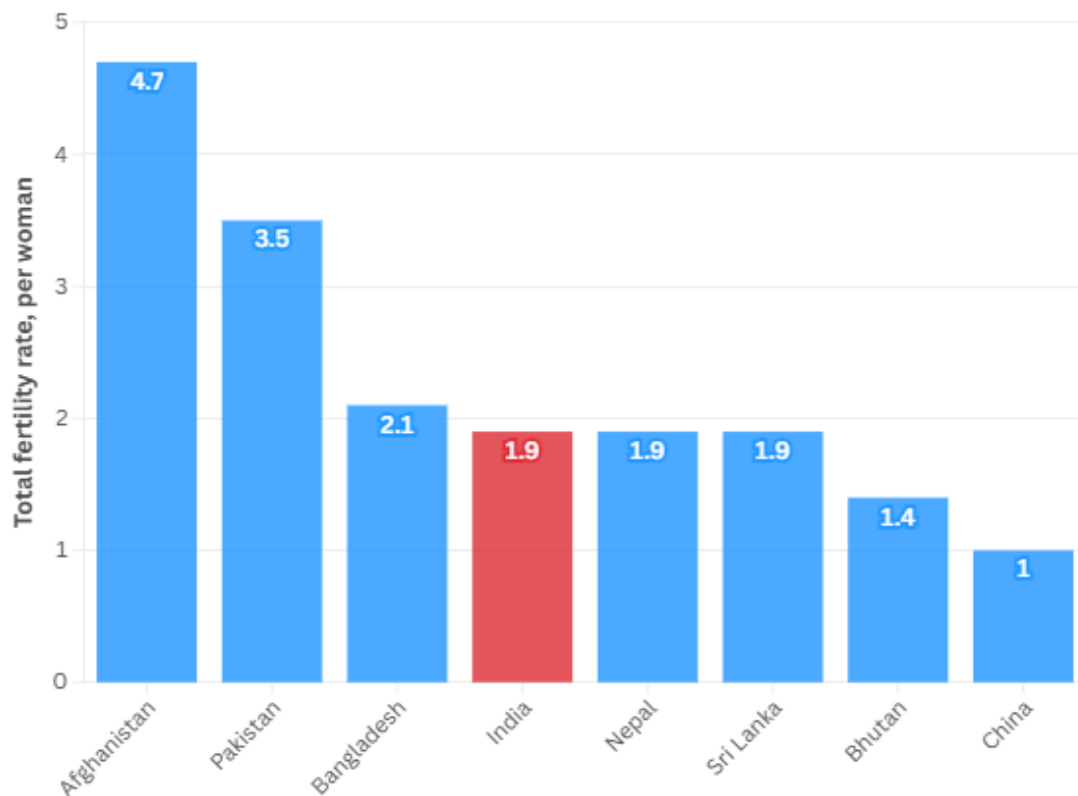
#### Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and Regional Variations

- **Current National TFR:**  
The Total Fertility Rate in India is **1.9**, which is **below the replacement level of 2.1**, suggesting the onset of population stabilization.
- **States with Higher TFRs:**  
Some states continue to exhibit fertility rates higher than the national average:
  - **Bihar:** 2.98
  - **Meghalaya:** 2.9
  - **Uttar Pradesh:** 2.35
  - **Jharkhand:** 2.26
  - **Manipur:** 2.2

#### Age Composition of Population

- **Working-Age Group (15–64 years):**  
Makes up **68%** of India's population, indicating a **large demographic dividend**.
- **Children (0–14 years):**  
Comprise **24%**, reflecting the **youthful character** of the population.
- **Youth (10–24 years):**  
Constitute **26%**, which is vital for **future workforce planning and skilling efforts**.
- **Elderly (65+ years):**  
Currently at **7%**, this group is expected to **rise steadily**, requiring enhanced focus on **geriatric care and pension systems**.

Indian women are having fewer children than needed to maintain the population size across generations.



Source: UNFPA data for 2025

### Understanding the Real Fertility Crisis

- **Beyond Overpopulation and Underpopulation:**  
The core issue is not merely the number of people, but the **lack of reproductive agency**, i.e., the inability of individuals or couples to meet their **desired fertility goals**.
- **Reproductive Agency Defined:**  
It emphasizes **informed decision-making** in matters of sex, contraception, and family planning, especially for women.

### Key Drivers of Fertility Decline

- **Improved Access to Reproductive Healthcare:**  
Wider availability of **contraceptives**, antenatal care, and maternal services has reduced unintended pregnancies.
- **Rising Female Education & Empowerment:**  
Educated women tend to **marry later**, have **fewer children**, and exhibit greater **autonomy** in reproductive choices.
- **Urbanization and Lifestyle Shifts:**  
Urban families are opting for **smaller families** due to **space, cost, and career considerations**.

- **Economic Pressures:**  
High **cost of living**, housing, and education, along with **job market uncertainties**, are leading couples to **delay or avoid childbirth**.

### Positive Impacts of Population Stabilization

- **Environmental and Resource Relief:**  
A stabilized population means **reduced pressure** on **natural resources, infrastructure, and public services**.
- **Better Maternal and Child Health Outcomes:**  
Fewer births per woman result in **lower maternal mortality**, healthier children, and **improved family well-being**.
- **Indicator of Women's Empowerment:**  
Declining fertility often correlates with **higher education, economic independence, and decision-making power** among women.

### Emerging Challenges and Concerns

- **Ageing Population:**  
As life expectancy increases, the share of the **elderly will grow**, straining **pension, healthcare, and welfare systems**.
- **Gender Bias and Skewed Sex Ratios:**  
If declining fertility is not accompanied by **gender-sensitive interventions**, it may aggravate **sex-selective practices**, especially in patriarchal regions.
- **Interstate Demographic Imbalance:**  
Fertility differences between high-TFR and low-TFR states can lead to **uneven migration patterns, resource strain, and sociocultural tensions**.

### Comparative Global Experiences

- **Japan:**  
With a **median age over 48**, Japan is facing **economic stagnation, a shrinking workforce, and rising healthcare and pension costs**.
- **China:**  
The now-defunct **one-child policy (1979–2015)** caused a steep fertility decline, leading to an **ageing crisis and labour shortages**.
- **South Korea:**  
Records one of the **lowest fertility rates in the world (0.78 in 2022)**, creating serious concerns over **economic sustainability and social care**.

### Way forward

- **Demographic Transition as a Marker of Progress:**  
India's declining fertility reflects **advancements in education, healthcare, and gender empowerment**.

- **Need for Policy Reorientation:**

The shift should now be toward **ensuring reproductive rights**, promoting **balanced population growth**, and **preparing for an ageing society**.

- **Strategic Planning Needed:**

India must act proactively to:

- Leverage the demographic dividend through **education and skill development**.
- Strengthen **healthcare and social security** for the elderly.
- Ensure **gender equality** in population policies and discourage **sex-selective practices**.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-population-reaches-14639-crore-fertility-rate-drops-below-replacement-level-un-report/article69679518.ece>