

World prospects, 2019

population

June 25, 2019

Manifest pedagogy

Population and associated issues has to be studied from the following perspectives

1. Indian Society
2. Indian Geography
3. Indian Economy

The following report is an important topic from the point of Mains this year

In news

- **United Nations (UN) has released World population prospects, 2019.**

Placing it in syllabus

- Population and associated issues.

Static dimensions

- **Demographic dividend**

Current dimensions

- Key highlights of the report
- Demographic dividend and India

- What should India do to reap demographic dividend

Content

The **World Population Prospects 2019** is published by the Population Division of the **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)** and provides a comprehensive overview of global demographic patterns and prospects. The report estimates that the next 30 years will see the global population add an extra 2 billion people to today's figure of 7.7 billion. India is expected to show the highest population increase between now and 2050, overtaking China as the world's most populous country, by around 2027.

Demographic dividend

Demographic dividend means, **“the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older)”**. (Definition by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)). It stated that, “A country with both increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility has the potential to reap a demographic dividend”.

The existence of some kind of demographic transition is widely accepted in the social sciences because of the well-established historical correlation linking dropping fertility to social and economic development.



Demographic dividend occurs when the proportion of working people in the total population is high because this indicates that more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to the growth of the economy. In order for economic growth to occur the younger population must have access to quality education, adequate nutrition and health including access to sexual and reproductive health.

Key findings of the report

- The world's population continues to grow but at a slower pace than at any time since 1950 due to reduced levels of fertility. From an estimated 7.7 billion people worldwide in 2019, the medium-variant projection indicates that the global population could grow to around 10.9 billion in 2100.
- Countries of sub-Saharan Africa could account for more than half of the growth of the world's population between 2019 and 2050 and in contrast, populations in Eastern and South- Eastern Asia, Central and Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and Northern America are projected to reach peak population size and to begin to decline before the end of this century.
- Continued rapid population growth presents challenges for sustainable development. The 47 least developed countries are among the world's fastest growing – many are projected to double in population between 2019 and 2050. For many countries or areas, including some Small Island Developing States, the challenges to achieving sustainable development are compounded by their vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and sea-level rise.
- More than half of the projected increase in the global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just nine countries the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and the United States of America.
- In most of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in parts of Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, recent reductions in fertility mean that the population at working ages (25 to 64 years) is growing faster than in other age groups, providing an opportunity for accelerated economic growth.

- In 2018, for the first time in history, persons aged 65 years or over worldwide outnumbered children under age five. Projections indicate that by 2050 there will be more than twice as many persons above 65 as children under five. By 2050, the number of persons aged 65 years or over globally will also surpass the number of adolescents and youth aged 15 to 24 years.
- Total fertility has fallen markedly over recent decades in many countries, such that today close to half of all people globally live in a country or area where lifetime fertility is below 2.1 live births per woman.
- Some countries, including several in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, continue to experience high levels of adolescent fertility, with potentially adverse health and social consequences for both the young women and their children.
- Life expectancy at birth for the world's population reached 72.6 years in 2019, an improvement of more than 8 years since 1990.
- In some countries, international migration also has become an important determinant of population change. For many of these, losses of population due to migration are dominated by temporary labour movements, such as for Bangladesh (net outflow of -4.2 million during 2010-2020), Nepal (-1.8 million) and the Philippines (-1.2 million). In others, including Syria (-7.5 million), Venezuela (-3.7 million), and Myanmar (-1.3 million), insecurity and conflict have driven the net outflow of migrants over the decade.
- Countries where a decline in fertility is creating an opportunity for a demographic dividend need to invest in human capital by ensuring access to health care and education at all ages and opportunities for productive employment. Countries with ageing populations should take steps to adapt public programmes to the growing proportion of older persons. All countries should take steps to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration

for the benefit of all.

- The quality of population estimates and projections hinges on the collection of reliable and timely demographic data, including through civil registration systems, population censuses, population registers, where they exist, and household surveys.
- The 2020 round of national population censuses, which is currently under way, will provide critical demographic information to inform development planning and to assess progress towards the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

Demographic dividend and India

A study on demographic dividend in India by United Nations Population fund (UNFPA) throws up two interesting facts.

- The **window of demographic dividend opportunity in India is available for five decades from 2005-06 to 2055-56**, longer than any other country in the world.
- It is the fact that this demographic dividend window is **available at different times in different states** because of differential behaviour of the population parameters.

This advantage can create the space needed to increase investments in enhancing human capabilities, which, in turn, can have a positive influence on growth and development.



At present,

Age group
Proportion of Indian population

0 - 14
30%

15 - 59

62.5%

60 plus
8%

The working-age population will reach the highest proportion of approximately 65% in 2036. The demographic dividend is not available in all the states at the same time. This is because different states have behaved differently in the past and are projected to behave differently in terms of population parameters in future also.

When all the states in India are mapped in terms of fertility levels, one sees a predominantly youthful north and a maturing south and west. Some states, especially in southern India, started seeing the fertility decline earlier than other states, especially the states in the hinterland. In brief, it could be said that the **demographic transition in India is staggered**. As a result, India will enjoy a longer span of demographic dividend because, as the window closes in some states, it will open in other states.

What should India do to reap demographic dividend?

UNFPA advocates a differential approach in forward-looking policymaking and programme planning to harness the demographic dividend opportunity.

- Fine-tuning the planning and implementation of schemes and programmes by factoring in population dynamics leads to greater socio-economic impact and larger benefits for people.

E.g. The focus in the states where the window is closing soon will have to be on ageing and migrant-friendly policies and programmes, while the focus in the states where the window is open and will close in the next 10-15 years will have to be on empowering girls and women, provisioning of health, education and skill development for young people and employment

generation.

- Recent research shows that the **demographic dividend is an education-triggered dividend**. Young people need the chance to gain knowledge and experience to succeed in a competitive global workplace, which demands more skills, education and technical expertise than ever before.
- According to the **Employment Unemployment Household survey** conducted by Labour Bureau in 2015-16 shows that unemployment rates are increasing with education levels. A disproportionately large share are self-employed. Additionally, over 40 per cent of the youth were employed in the agricultural sector in 2015-16 whereas only 13 per cent were employed in manufacturing.
- India should promote manufacturing sector which has the high potential to generate employment.
- Reforming the education and skill development sector, increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship and taking steps to increase female labour force participation rate.
- Upgrading health system and reducing child and maternal mortality rate.

Demographic data are essential for development planning and for assessing progress towards the achievement of development goals. For this reason, the United Nations recommends that national governments commit to take a census at least once per decade. Proper policy implementation plays a key role in reaping benefits of demographic dividend in a country like India which is blessed with valuable human resource. Utilising this resource in a right way helps India achieve the SDGs and have inclusive growth.