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Q6(c)

Delineate the factors influencing fertility in Indian population

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Demographic profile of India

2. Demographic profile of India-Ethnic and linguistic elements in the Indian population and their distribution. Indian population-factors influencing its structure and growth.

Core demand of the question

- Analyse the factors influencing fertility in the Indian population
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Fertility is shaped by marriage age, contraception, and breastfeeding.

Women's schooling and child survival are the big social brakes.

Son preference and agrarian early marriage slow the decline.

Regional belts differ more than a single national story.

Tribal and poorly served districts may still sit above the mean.

Introduction

Fertility in India is the number of live births a population actually has. It has fallen nationally, but factors still differ by region, class, caste, and tribe.

Body**Proximate factors**

- Age at marriage, contraceptive use, breastfeeding, and pregnancy loss shape the birth interval. **NFHS** rounds track these.
- **Son preference** raises extra births where the wanted boy has not arrived.

Social and economic factors

- **Female schooling** is the strongest regular brake. ST and some rural North Indian groups lag here, so fertility stays higher.
- Child survival reduces the need for extra births. Where infant mortality is still high, fertility stays as insurance.
- Urban jobs, delayed marriage, and nuclear living lower fertility. Agrarian labour and early marriage raise it.
- Caste and religion averages differ, but class and education often explain more than a communal label once they are held constant.

Policy and culture

- Family welfare programmes supply method, not motive. Motive follows women's work and school.

- Kinship systems that need a son for land and rite, as **Karve's** northern zone hinted, slow the fall.
- South and West fell earlier than parts of the Hindi belt. Tribal pockets may sit above the state mean where services are thin.

Caution

- National replacement-level talk hides districts that have not got there, including some ST tracts.

Flow diagram

Female schooling -> Lower fertility
Child survival -> Lower fertility
Early marriage son preference -> Higher fertility
Urban jobs contraception -> Lower fertility

Conclusion

Indian fertility falls with women's education, child survival, and later marriage. **Son preference** and weak services keep it higher in named belts. Policy works when it changes those factors, not when it only names a target.

Facts & figures

NFHS

National Family Health Survey that measures fertility and its proximate determinants.

Son preference

Demand for a male child that can add births after desired daughters.

Female schooling

The most consistent inverse correlate of fertility in Indian data.

Replacement level

About 2.1 children per woman; a national average can hide high-fertility districts.