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Q4(b)

Elucidate the role of demographic and social factors for population growth in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · 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

- Separate demographic from social factors in India's population growth
- Show how they work together historically
- Use census, fertility transition and policy (including recent scheme language) without turning the answer into slogans

Revision summary

- **Demographic factors:** falling mortality, delayed fertility decline, young age structure and momentum.
- **Social factors:** early marriage, son preference, class and region, women's education and work.

NFHS shows convergence, with remaining high-fertility pockets.

NPP 2000, Mission Parivar Vikas and girls' education are the humane policy line; Emergency coercion is the warning.

Javed (2003) allowed two-child rules for panchayat office; the social cost is still debated.

Introduction

India's population growth is the gap between births and deaths, plus a young age structure that keeps adding mothers even when each woman has fewer children. **Demographic** factors are those vital rates and age pyramids. **Social** factors are marriage, son preference, caste, class, religion as lived practice, and the state of women. They are not two separate engines.

Body

Demographic factors

Mortality fell from the mid-twentieth century through public health, antibiotics, smallpox eradication and later immunisation. Fertility fell later and unevenly. The **crude birth rate** stayed high while death rates dropped, producing the classic **population explosion** of the 1951-1991 censuses. A **youthful age structure** still adds numbers through **population momentum** even as the **total fertility rate** of many states sits near or below replacement (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra, later Bengal and others). High-fertility outliers remain in parts of the Hindi belt, though **NFHS-5** showed those too declining.

Urbanisation, later female marriage where education rises, and contraception prevalence are counted as demographic because they change rates. **Migration** redistributes people (Kerala

Gulf, Bihar to Delhi) but does not by itself raise national totals.

Social factors

Early and near-universal marriage historically kept fertility high. **Son preference** and the **marriage squeeze** sustain extra births and, where sex selection occurs, a skewed child sex ratio - a social fact measured demographically. Joint family and kin pressure, and the use of children as old-age security where pensions are thin, work in the same direction.

- **Caste and class:** poorer ST and some OBC groups show higher fertility in NFHS tables, largely through education and health access, not through a mystic "tribal fertility". Muslim fertility has been higher in some rounds and is converging; **Sachar** treated this as development, not as a separate biology.

Women's schooling, property and paid work are the strongest social brakes. **Panchayat reservation for women**, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, **POSHAN**, **Mission Parivar Vikas** in high-fertility districts, and now a political language of **supportive not coercive family planning** after the memory of Emergency sterilisation, are the policy surface.

The **National Population Policy 2000** set a TFR-2.1 goal. Several southern states now worry about **ageing**, not explosion. Any national "two-child norm" for panchayats or jobs, as some states have tried, collides with **reproductive rights** and with **Javed v. State of Haryana** (2003), where the Court allowed a two-child disqualification for panchayat office - a judgment still argued in gender and minority debates.

- **Anthropology adds:** fertility is household strategy. A land-poor household may want fewer children once school fees bite; a pastoral household may still want labour. Growth is therefore **regionally social**, not a single Indian rate.

Flow diagram

Death rate down -> Growth
Young age structure -> Growth
Marriage son preference -> Fertility
Women school work -> Fertility
Fertility -> Growth

Conclusion

Death control without birth control produced growth; age structure prolongs it. Marriage, son preference, women's schooling and class decide how fast fertility falls. Policy works when it is health and education, not panic.

Facts & figures

Population momentum

A young age pyramid keeps births high for decades after the total fertility rate falls, because more women enter reproductive age.

National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5)

Showed many Indian states at or below replacement fertility, with remaining higher fertility in parts of the north and among less-educated groups.

Javed v. Haryana 2003

Supreme Court upheld a state two-child disqualification for panchayat members, a legal peg in population-policy debates.

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