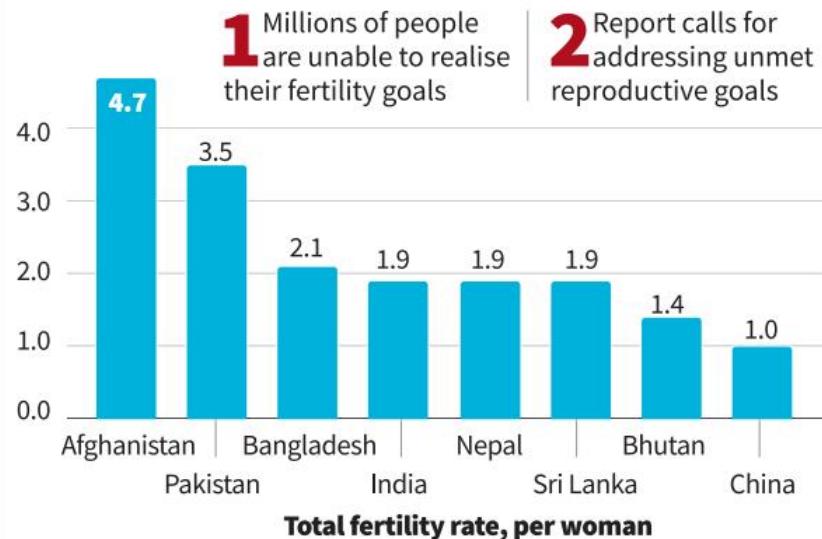


India's Population Peaks Amid Falling Fertility Rate: UNFPA Report

Context: India's population has reached 146.39 crore in April 2025 as per the UNFPA's "State of the World Population 2025" report, with Total Fertility Rate (TFR) dropping to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1.

Below replacement

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



Source: UNFPA data for 2025

1. Current Population Status

- As per a UN demographic report, India's population is estimated at **146.39 crore** as of April.
- India has overtaken China as the **world's most populous nation**.

2. Fertility Trends

- India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined to **1.9**, falling **below the replacement level of 2.1**.
- The **replacement level TFR** (needed to maintain population size) has been nationally achieved, per the Registrar General of India's 2021 report.

3. Future Population Projection

- India's population is expected to **peak at 170 crore** over the next **40 years**, after which it may begin to **decline**.
- Life expectancy as of 2025 is projected to be **71 years (men)** and **74 years (women)**.

4. Census and Data Accuracy

- The **decennial Census**, delayed since 2021, is now scheduled for **completion by March 2027**.

- Latest UN projections align closely with India's **2019 Technical Group Report**.

5. Demographic Structure

- **Youth Population:**
 - 24% are aged 0–14
 - 17% are aged 10–19
 - 26% are aged 10–24
- **Working-age Population (15–64 years):** 68%
- **Elderly (65+ years):** 7%, expected to rise as **life expectancy improves**.

6. The Real Fertility Crisis

- The UN highlights a "real" **fertility crisis**: many individuals are **unable to achieve their desired family size**.
- The core issue is **not overpopulation or underpopulation**, but the **lack of reproductive agency**.
- It calls for ensuring **informed choices about sex, contraception, and family planning**.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen public awareness** on reproductive rights and access to health services.
- **Ensure timely Census data** to enable informed policymaking.
- **Harness the demographic dividend** by investing in youth education, skills, and employment.
- Prepare for **population ageing** by planning sustainable elderly care systems and pension support.

Conclusion

India stands at a demographic crossroads — with a large working-age population, falling fertility rates, and an ageing future. The focus must now shift from controlling population size to **empowering individuals** through **reproductive autonomy, healthcare access, and socioeconomic support**, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

Rankers Guidance Academy