Global Conversation on Depopulation

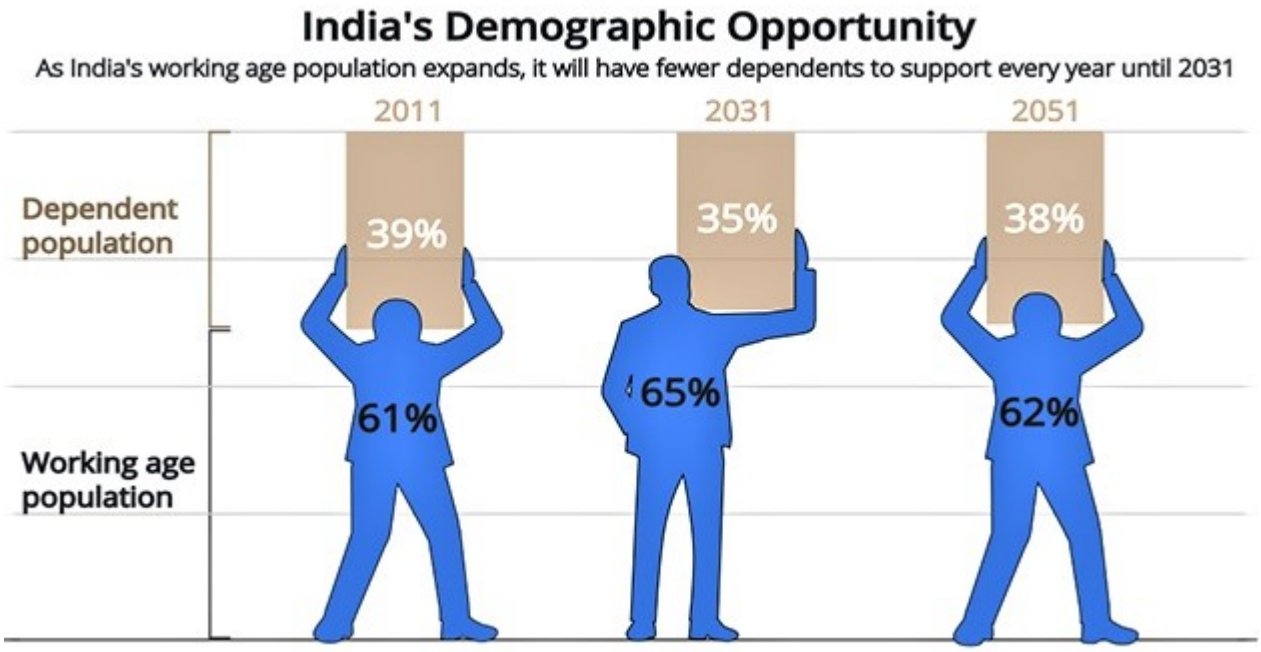
Why in news?

As the world population touched 8 billion, the headlines are focusing India which is expected to surpass China as the world's most populous nation by 2023.

What is the global picture of population?

- **Global picture -** Countries such as Japan, South Korea and Europe, which are experiencing falling fertility and nearing the inflection point of population declines.
- As per the United Nations estimates, the world's population is expected to grow until 2086.
- **India's case** - India's population stands at 1.412 billion in 2022 and is projected to overtake China as the world's most populous country in 2023.
- According to UNFPA, India will have one of the youngest populations in the world till 2030 and the youth bulge will last till 2025.
- India's population will begin to decline only in 2063.

To know about transformation challenges in population growth, click here



What about the fertility rate in India?

- **Fertility rate-** India's total fertility rate (2) is now below the replacement rate of fertility (2.1).
- States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu had already achieved the replacement fertility in late 199os.
- Even though it appear as if these States are facing a surge of migrants from the more populous northern States, both States had negative net migration rates, as of 2011.
- **Consequences** - In the coming years, these states will have an ageing population and a declining workforce.
- Among the female elderly in particular, economic dependence is a serious concern.
- **Need of the hour** – There is a need to re-examine the continued sustainability of low in-migration.

What challenges do India face due to depopulation?

Depopulation refers to substantial reduction in the population of an area.

- **Skewed sex ratio** - As per the latest NFHS, families with at least one son are less likely to want more children than families with just one daughter.
- **Regional disparities** – The southern states already have fertility rates well below replacement levels in contrast to certain northern states.
- There is a mismatch in educational attainment between a rising cohort in the north and the needs of the economy emerging in the south.
- If Parliament were reapportioned according to the 2026 population, the five southern states would send fewer representatives while the four most populous Hindi heartland states would add to the seats.
- **Anti-Muslim tone** - The sharp anti-Muslim tone in the conversation has remained even though fertility between Hindus and Muslims is converging.
- **Missing elements -** The global conversation on depopulation do not talk about
    1. Equitable sharing of housework
    2. Access to subsidised childcare that allows women to have families as well as a career
    3. Lowered barriers to immigration to enable entry to working-age people from countries which aren't yet in population decline

Quick facts

Birth Rate - The total number of births in a year per 1,000 individuals.

Fertility Rate - The total number of births in a year per 1,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years).

Replacement level fertility - The level of fertility at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, i.e., the level of fertility needed to keep the population the same from generation to generation.

Sex ratio - It refers to the number of females per 1000 males.

References

1. The Hindu | It's time to discuss depopulation
2. WSJ | India May Face a Population Implosion

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