

Fertility levels drop in many Asian nations

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Recent News

Some hospitals in China are stopping their services for newborn delivery due to declining birth rates and low fertility rates in East and Southeast Asian countries.

Key Points

- Between 1950 and 1970, fertility rates in various regions varied from 3.5 to 7.5 children per woman.
- South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan have particularly low fertility rates, with some women only having one child or none at all.
- **Current Fertility Rates**
 - **South Korea:** The fertility rate has plummeted to a global low of 0.72 in 2023.
 - **Japan:** The country is grappling with societal challenges due to declining birth rates.
 - **China:** The population has declined for the first time in six decades, with India overtaking it as the most populous country.

Contributing Factors for Drop in Fertility Rate

- **Economic Pressures:** Enhanced work prospects for women and the high price of rearing children have discouraged women from having children. Both child-free women and those who have them later in life. The economic influence of maternity in professions is another strong factor as well.
- **Educational Opportunities:** The outbreak of better education and the affiliated expenses have also caused delays in family starting, as people are eager to make sure that they have their education and job established first.
- **Family Planning Policies:** In cases such as South Korea and Singapore, strong family planning policies introduced before had resulted in smaller families.
- **Social and Cultural Shifts:** Family life has changed a lot and now there is more freedom and values than there used to be. It means that individuals rather than family become the centre of life and personal satisfaction and financial independence come above traditional family roles.
- **Ageing Population:** An ageing population has in the past and will continue to occur where the percentage of people who are older is more than the number of people of reproductive age, thus leading to a decrease in birth rates.
- **Delayed Life Milestones:** Nowadays, the babies are born by women who give birth at later ages and more women remain single. That way, the world has fewer births.
- **Contraception and Family Planning:** Most proponents of this view associate increased use of contraception and abortion with a chance of having less children.

Impacts of Low Fertility

- **Urbanization and Lifestyle Changes:** Urbanisation has been found to show the relationship between low fertility rates and the preferences of each person that they have in urban areas to have fewer children due to lifestyle choices and high expenses of living.
- **Gender Roles and Employment:** The fallout in viviparity is being brought along with the alteration of the role of gender, specifically, the growing number of women who pursue higher education and employment opportunities. Multiplication of these choices in turn frequently results in the postponement for marriage and childbirth.
- **Policy Responses:** The Asian governments in addition have come up with several policies inclusive of financial incentives for families, improved child care facilities and flexible working hours to counter the dropping fertility rates.
- **Cultural Shifts:** Individualism is gaining momentum and the values in society are changing at a rapid pace, where personal independence and financial success win over conventional family roles.
- **Environmental Impact:** On the one hand, reduced fertility rates may bring to a decrease in environmental stress as a dwindling population requires less natural resources and less garbage is produced.

Conclusion

The drop in fertility levels below one in many Asian nations is a complex issue influenced by a multitude of factors, including economic pressures, educational opportunities, and lifestyle

choices. The implications of this trend are far-reaching, affecting the population structure, economic stability, and societal norms. Governments and policymakers are tasked with addressing these challenges through innovative and supportive measures to ensure a balanced demographic and sustainable future.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Mains practice Question

Q. Discuss the challenges and implications of declining fertility rates below the replacement level in Asian countries. Evaluate the socioeconomic, demographic, and policy implications of this trend, and propose strategies for addressing the associated challenges while ensuring sustainable population growth and development.