

Impact of Demographic Transition on Women's Life

Why in news?

The theme of 2023 World Population Day 'Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities' speaks about women empowerment and gender equity.

What is demographic transition?

- Demographic transition is defined as the change in patterns of birth rates and death rates as a city, a country, or a continent transitions through increased industrialization or the industrial revolution.
- Status of demographic transition** - As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) Bulletin of Registrar General of India, life expectancy is 69 years.

Indicator	SRS 2014	SRS 2019	SRS 2020
Total Fertility Rate	2.3	2.1	2.0
Infant Mortality Rate	39	30	28
Under 5 Mortality Rate	45	35	32
Maternal Mortality Rate	130	103	97

Terms

- Life Expectancy** - It refers to the number of years a person can expect to live.
- Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** - It is the probability of the infant dying between birth and one year of age as against 1000 live births.
- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)** - It is measured as the number of maternal deaths that occur for every 100,000 live births.

What good has the demographic transition made for women?

- Low active mothering**- With increase in educational attainment of women and decrease in TFR leads to smaller proportion of women's life in active mothering role.
- Successful family planning initiatives**- The aim is to provide an increasingly comprehensive package of reproductive health services to every potential beneficiary.
- Focus is on the provision of modern short and long-acting reversible contraceptives, permanent methods, information, counselling, and services, including emergency contraception.
- Improvement in social indicators**- Since the beginning, of 2000 India has cut the number of child marriages by half. Teen pregnancies have dramatically decreased.
- Holistic improvement**- Access to vital services, including health, education, and

nutrition is also increased.

What are the major issues faced by women?

- **Son-meta preference-** Social norms, patrilocal kinship patterns combined with lack of financial security reinforce preference for sons.
- The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) found that 85% of women respondents expected to rely on their sons for old age support, while only 11% expected support from their daughters.
- **Sex-selective abortion-** With fewer children, giving birth to a son is reduced and hence sex-selective abortion and neglect of sick daughters is on rise.
- **Early motherhood-** It is due to early marriage and childbearing.
- The lower TFR does not translate into higher labour force participation for women, it is due to the gap in the childcare demand which leads to unskilled work.
- **Widowhood-** Women generally marry men who are older and are more likely to outlive their husbands.
- The 2011 Census shows that while only 18% of men above age 65 are widowed, about 55% of the women are widowed.
- Lack of access to savings and property results in dependence on children, mainly sons, bringing the vicious cycle of son preference to full circle.
- **Lack of physical autonomy-** As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), just 10% of women in India are independently able to take decisions about their own health.
- Moreover 11% of women believe that marital violence is acceptable if a woman refuses to have sex with her husband.

SDG 5 - It is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

What lies ahead?

Harnessing Gender Dividend

- **Developing social infrastructure** - Improvement in the childcare access will result in women empowerment.
- Making crèche employment as an acceptable form under MGNREGA scheme would enhance childcare access.
- **Improving women's labour force participation-** This can be enhanced with safe and affordable childcare, this would break the vicious cycle of gendered disadvantage.

Raising the women's labour force participation by 10 % points might account for more than 70% of the potential GDP growth opportunity.

- **Women Empowerment-** Achieving gender parity in the workforce is the most effective way to improve output and income growth.
- **Investments** - Gender equality can be ensured by making investments in a woman's

life at every stage, from childbirth to adolescence to maturity.

Women's Reproductive Autonomy

- **Right to reproductive choice-** This is vital for both mother and the baby, this would reduce unwanted pregnancies.
- **Expand contraceptive band-** This would reduce the detrimental effects of unspaced pregnancies.
- Improve the new-born's health as well as reduce the major effects on maternal mortality, morbidity, and health-care expenditure.
- **Focus on gender equality-** It helps shift the focus away from the notion of 'population stabilisation' to 'population dynamics' based on reproductive choices people make.
- **Gender Budgeting-** Formulate legislations and policies to empower and assert women's rights, requires investment from childbirth to old age of women.

References

1. [The Hindu| Demographic transition](#)
2. [The Hindu| Reproductive autonomy](#)
3. [PIB| SRS report](#)

