Lowest Fertility Rate in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

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Why in News?

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the lowest fertility rate in India, according to the National Family Health Survey-6 recently released by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Key Findings for Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) Trajectory**
  - **Current Status -** The Union Territory's TFR has plummeted to **0.9**, which is less than half of the standard replacement level benchmark.
  - **Historical Trend -** This represents a steep decline over the last decade, falling from **1.4** in NFHS-4 (2015-16) and **1.3** in NFHS-5 (2019-21) to its current historic low.
- **Shift in Age Structure & Demographics**
  - **Declining Child Population -** The share of children under 5 years of age has dropped to **3.7%** in NFHS-6 from 5.3% in NFHS-5.
  - Similarly, children under 15 years now constitute just 17.5% of the population, down from 20.8%.
  - **Ageing Population -** Conversely, the proportion of individuals aged 60 and above expanded from **11% to 12.6%**, signalling a rapid demographic transition toward an older populace.
  - **Preschool Enrollment Contraction -** Paralleling the reduction in early childhood cohorts, preschool attendance among children aged 2 to 4 years witnessed a sharp reduction, dropping from **88.5% to 66.2%**.
- **Underlying Determinants of the Decline**
  - **Socio-Economic Framework -** The islands function largely as a middle-class society characterized by high literacy rates, low structural unemployment, and prominent women's education.
  - **Economic Independence -** Enhanced female labor-force participation and financial autonomy have delayed marriages and

reshaped reproductive choices.
- **Family Planning Access -** Widespread, frictionless access to modern family-planning methods and a cross-generational socio-cultural shift preferring single-child households.

Quick Facts
• **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) -** The average number of children a woman would give birth to during her childbearing years (typically periods spanning ages 15–49) based on current age-specific fertility rates.
• **Replacement-Level Fertility -** The specific TFR level at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next without migration. Globally, this benchmark is established at **2.1** children per woman.

Reference

Down to Earth | India’s lowest fertility rate

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