# Population Decline in China

## What is the issue?

China's National Bureau of Statistics has recently announced that the country's population had fallen by 8,50,000 in 2022.

## What is the recent trend about?

> *By the end of the century, the Chinese population is expected to shrink by 45%, according to the United Nations.*

- Throughout much of recorded human history, China has boasted the largest population in the world.
- The country has witnessed a population decline, the first decline since 1961 when the country was amid a four-year famine following the failed **'Great Leap Forward'** campaign.
- For the first time in six decades, deaths in the previous year outnumbered births.
- The fertility rate (average number of children born to women) is at 1.3, meaning that population shrinkage is inevitable without immigration.
- By 2040, around a quarter of the Chinese population is predicted to be over the age of 65.
- **Reasons for this trend -** The "one-child policy" introduced harsh measures such as forced abortions and high financial penalties.
- There is a growing preference among young Chinese for getting married later and choosing to have fewer or no children.

## How has the Chinese government responded to the population crisis?

- **Scrapping of one-child policy** - Beijing finally abandoned the one-child policy in 2016 and introduced the two-child policy.
- **Introduction of two-child policy** - However, it failed to elicit the desired response which is attributed to high costs of healthcare and education.
- **Introduction of three-child policy** - In 2021, a three-child policy was rolled out including financial inducements for families with three children.
- It has pledged to address the economic factors such as healthcare costs and education expenses, by cracking down on expensive private education companies.

> *Demographers say that, India is set to become the most populous nation in 2023.*

## What will be the impact of shrinking population on China?

### On Economy

- **Labour availability** - There will be fewer workers able to feed the economy and spur further economic growth.
- **Shift in manufacturing base** - With wages rising, many factories in the lower end of the manufacturing spectrum are already moving out to Southeast Asia and Bangladesh.
- **Aged population** - According to China's National Working Commission on Ageing, healthcare spending on the above-60 population will rise to 26% of the GDP by 2050.

### On Society

- **For aged population** - The large number of aging parents with only one child to rely on will need emotional and social support as a result of extended life expectancy.
- **For children -** It will also impose constraints on those children themselves, who will need to fulfill obligations to their career, provide for their own children and support their elderly parents simultaneously.
- **Pension systems** - The social pension systems in China are highly segmented and unequally distributed.

### On Politics

- **Status** - Failure to live up to the expectations of the public could result in loss of prestige for the government.
- **Legitimacy of Communist Party** - Any economic decline could have severe consequences for the Chinese Communist Party.

### References


1. The Hindu | Why is China's population shrinking?
2. Down to Earth | China's shrinking population



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