



## Population Growth – India's Problem

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### ABSTRACT

Population was one of the most important contributory factors in the 'early development' of Western countries. Increasing population provided additional hands to work and additional pockets to buy the newly produced goods. However, beyond a point, the additional population becomes a drain on our economy's limited resources, more so particularly in the case of underdeveloped countries.

India is the second largest country in the world in terms of the size of population. Rapidly increasing population of India is a result of prevailing high birth rates and a large decline in the death rate in our country. This article highlights the population problem in India and analysis of factors which account for high birth rate and decline in the death rate is done.

### KEYWORDS

Population, Poverty, Birth Rate & Death Rate

### Introduction

Man is the creator of all the wealth, said Karl Marx, and without man, all other resources remain idle. Thus, man is the central focus point of all development efforts. Man produces wealth and wealth is produced for the use of mankind. Hence, population of a country is a crucial factor in the development of its economy. Population was one of the most important contributory factors in the 'early development' of Western countries. Increasing population provided additional hands to work and additional pockets to buy the newly produced goods. However, beyond a point, the additional population becomes a drain on our economy's limited resources, more so particularly in the case of underdeveloped countries. It further depresses the existing low levels of living, leaves no scope for capital formation and adds to ever-growing stream of the unemployed. Hence, the rate of population growth has to be kept under check to achieve any meaningful progress in the overpopulated underdeveloped countries.

### Demographic Trends in India

India is the second largest country in the world in terms of the size of population. It is next to China. India's population constitutes nearly 15 percent of the total world population while her geographical area is only 2.4 percent of the world area. India's national income which is barely two percent of the total global income clearly shows the tremendous strain of population on her economy.

### The Population Census 2011:

According to the 2011 Census Report, the total population of India was around 1210 million (121.0 crore) as against 1028 million (102.8 crore) persons in 2001.

**Table -1**  
Population Growth in India 1901-2011

Year	Population of Indian Union (in million)	Increase or Decrease Over Previous Decade (in million)	Percentage increase or Decrease During the Decade
1901	236.1	--	--
1911	252.1	16.0	5.7
1921	251.3	0.3	(-) 0.3
1931	279.1	27.8	11.1
1941	318.7	39.6	14.2
1951	361.1	42.4	13.3
1961	439.2	78.1	21.5
1971	548.2	109.0	24.8
1981	683.3	135.1	24.7

1991	846.3	163.0	23.8
2001	1028.0	182.3	21.5
2011	1210.2	181.0	17.6

**Source:** Compiled from Census of Population 2011 and earlier reports.

**Table – 1** indicates the population growth during the sixty years, viz., and 1951-2011. India's population has increased by 849 million (84.9 crore) persons. The decade 2001-11 alone recorded the growth in population of about 180.2 million people giving a growth rate of 17.6 percent during this decade as against the previous growth rate of 21.5 percent recorded during 1991-2001.

**Period of Small and Irregular Increase (1901-21):** From the above Table-1 we find that the rate of growth of population was moderate and irregular till 1921. Between 1901 and 1921 India's population grew by less than 16 million persons giving a growth rate of less than 0.2 percent for the entire period of two decades. The main reason for this small and irregular rise was famines and frequent epidemics took of human lives. Kingsley Davis places the total lives lost through influenza during 1918-19 at 20 million.

**Period of Rapid Growth (1921 onwards):** From the year 1921, aptly described by the Census Commission for 1951 as the 'Great Divide', the rate of growth became alarming. The net increase of population during the 30 years from 1921 to 1951 was of the order of 110 million. During the next four decades, i.e. 1951-91, another 485 million people were added to India's population. This abnormal increase of population in India since 1921 was mainly due to a decline in "abnormal deaths" from epidemics and famines and the overall decline in the death rate.

The population growth potential in India is high on two counts: first the base population is large and second, a reduction of death rate without a corresponding decline in the birth rate is highly improbable.

**Table -2**  
Average Annual Birth Rate and Death Rate in India

Year	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Natural Growth Ratio of Population
1901-1911	49.2	42.6	6.6
1911-1921	48.1	48.6	6.9
1921-1931	46.4	36.3	10.1

1931-1941	45.2	31.2	14.0
1941-1951	39.9	27.4	12.5
1951-1961	41.7	22.0	19.7
1961-1971	41.2	19.0	22.2
1971-1981	37.2	15.7	21.5
1981-1991	33.9	12.6	21.3
1991-2001	25.8	8.5	17.3
2001-2011	22.1	7.2	14.9
2013-2014	21.4	7.0	14.4

**Source:** Compiled from Census Report and Economic Survey 2014-15.

**Table- 2** indicates that the annual birth and death rate in India during 1951-61 was 41.7 and 22.0 per thousand resulting in a natural increase of 19.7 persons per thousand of population. During 1961-71, the birth rate remained high at 41.2 per thousand while the death rate declined to 19.0 per thousand, giving natural increase of 22.2 persons per thousand of population. Similarly the decade 2001 to 2011 saw a further decline in birth rate and death rate. While the birth rate came down to 22.1 per thousand persons, the death rate declined marginally to 7.2 per thousand. This resulted in a relatively small increase in the growth rate of population; the national population growth rate being 14.9 per thousand as against 17.3 per thousand in the previous decade. The addition to India's population during the decade 2001-11 was around 18.1 crore persons

Reducing the birth rate however, is a much more complex matter involving radical social adjustment which has hitherto been resistant to change.

#### Causes of Population Increase

Rapidly increasing population of India is a result of prevailing high birth rates and a large decline in the death rate in our country. Thus analysis of factors which account for high birth rate and the factors that have contributed to a large decline in the death rate is to be done.

#### The main causes for high birth rate are:

- The practice of early marriage is one of the main cause of the rapid increase in population. This gives wider reproductive period.
- Poverty of the masses in poor villagers is the another reason.
- India's tropical climate making for earlier puberty, her joint family system, the institution of polygamy is also responsible for rapid growth of population.
- Lack of conscious family planning had also kept birth rate in India very high.
- The age and sex composition of the population and the fertility of women during the child-bearing age in India are most helpful for rapid growth of population.

#### The main causes for decline in death rate are:

- Widespread and improved medical and health facilities.
- Controlled spread of famines in India due to development of the means of transport and communications.
- Control on dreaded diseases like malaria and TB and diseases like small pox, chicken pox etc. have been completely eradicated.
- Improvements in hygiene in both rural and urban areas and supply of pure drinking water.
- Improvements in overall economic conditions of the masses have contributed to the sharp fall in the death rate.

It is clear from the above discussion that India is presently passing through a period of 'Population Explosion' due to her continuing high birth rate and a sharp decline in the death rate.

#### Theory of Demographic Transition

This theory of Demographic Transition explains the effect of economic development on the size and growth rate of popu-

lation of a country. The theory refers to the rate of population growth at various stages of economic development.

According to this theory, there are three distinct stages of population growth with the advancement of an economy which are caused by the changes in the birth rate and death rate according to the changing socio-economic condition.

- I. High birth rate and an equally high death rate that causes slow growth of population.
- II. High birth rate and steeply falling death rate which causes population explosion.
- III. Birth rate also falls to match the low death rate that slow down population growth rate.

#### Population Explosion – An Obstacle to India's Economic Development

India today is grossly overpopulated. The Census of Population 2011 shows that we are now having over one billion people in India. This means that the country has to support over 16 percent of world population on just about 2.4 percent of total world area. And as country is short of capital and technology to fully exploit its resources, it means that most of the Indians live in poverty, face unemployment and suffer from ill health. No wonder that in spite of half a century of development, over a fourth of India's population lives below poverty line.

In the underdeveloped countries of today, increasing population is more of a hindrance to the development of the economy. It is now universally agreed that an effective control of population growth is necessary if our development efforts is to yield any result.

#### Major Problems Created by Growth of Population in Development of an Economy in India

Following problems arise due to population explosion.

- Increasing population has eaten up much of the additional income that has been generated in the economy during the period of the Five-Year Plans. As against a eighteen fold increase in national income, the per capita income has gone up barely fivefold over this period of five decades.
- Population explosion in India has resulted in a serious food shortage in the country. In spite of the fact that more than seventy percent of the working people are engaged in agriculture, Indian people still do not get even the minimum necessary amount of food.
- Increasing population with the growing number of children adds more to the unproductive population of the country.
- In India, due to population growth, by the end of 2009-10, the number of unemployed persons was estimated to be over 66 million. The present estimate of unemployment in India by many economists is nearly 80 to 90 million persons.
- Population growth hampers the growth of capital formation and reduces volume of savings
- Increase in population reduces per capita income and lowers the standard of living of the masses; it makes the people less efficient.
- Rural areas have become the worst sufferers. The problems faced by the rural areas are lower per capita, availability of land; increased subdivision and fragmentation of land holdings, disguised unemployment, increase in indebtedness etc., which all contribute to reduced efficiency and poverty in rural areas.

#### Conclusions

In India rapid population growth has thus hampered economic growth and this prevented any substantial reduction in poverty of the masses. To conclude, population explosion aggravates the poverty, worsens the unemployment situation, reduces per capita income and increases proportion of unproductive people, hampers capital formation and makes the people inefficient.

Therefore, an all out effort has to be made to reduce birth

rate through a comprehensive programme of family planning so that sufficient resources are released for the economic development of the country. It is found that in India Poverty itself is also the main cause of rapid population growth. Poverty prevents better education and better living standard. Thus, population explosion is both a cause and an effect of poverty.

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