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India's Fertility Rate Falls Below Replacement Level: Why It Matters

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India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen to 1.9, dropping below the replacement level of 2.1 for the first time. This means that, on average, Indian women are now having fewer than two children during their lifetime.?

Why is the Fertility Rate Falling?

Several factors have contributed to this decline:

Higher levels of education, especially among women.

Better access to healthcare and family planning services.

Rising costs of raising and educating children.

Increasing urbanisation and preference for smaller families.

Greater focus on careers and financial stability before having children.

Regional Differences

The decline is not uniform across the country:

Delhi has one of the lowest fertility rates at around 1.2.

States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu also have very low fertility rates.

States including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand still remain above the replacement level.

Why is it Important?

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India currently has a large and youthful population, so there is no immediate demographic crisis. However, if fertility remains low for a long period:

The working-age population may begin to shrink.

The proportion of elderly people will increase.

Pressure on healthcare, pensions, and social welfare systems could rise.

Economic growth may slow due to a smaller workforce.

What Does This Mean for India?

Experts believe India's policy focus may gradually shift from population control to:

Improving workforce productivity.

Expanding skill development.

Increasing women's participation in the labour force.

Preparing for an ageing population through better healthcare and social support systems.

In Short

India's falling fertility rate reflects social and economic progress, but it also signals a future challenge: managing an ageing population while maintaining economic growth and a strong workforce.