

CONTEXT

Over the years, demands for coercive measures of population control have intermittently kept coming up in the Indian public discourse. This is despite the fact that India's made steady progress over the years in trying to stabilize its population, with its Total Fertility Rate coming down from 6.0 in the 1950s to less than the replacement level of 2.1. Demands for China-esque one-child and two-child policies are recurrent despite the fact that China itself has abandoned these policies due to their harmful consequences. Population Foundation of India tracks such developments and actively engages with media and other key stakeholders to ensure that the discourse on population does not veer from a rights-based approach. Population Foundation of India compiles and constantly updates evidence from credible sources to highlight India's progress on population and fertility indicators. We argue that population has more to do with people than numbers. If we focus on overall socio-economic development—with a special focus on girls' education, access to health services and quality of care—a decline in fertility rate would be a natural corollary.



IMPACT TIMELINE

July 2019

The Population Control Bill, 2019, introduced by a member of the upper house of the parliament, proposed stringent population control measures. Population Foundation opposed the bill by writing extensively against it. The bill was withdrawn in 2022.

July 2021

The Law Commission of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India, presented the Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilization and Welfare) Bill, 2021, seeking strict steps to control the state's rising population.

August 2021

The Minister of State, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, in the Parliament argued for a rights-based approach to family planning. Her remarks echoed some of the arguments we had made in our notes and media statements.

February 2022

Two elected representatives we had strategically engaged with countered the demands for a coercive two-child norm in parliamentary debates.

December 2021

The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced, which sought to increase the minimum age of marriage for females to 21 years. Population Foundation of India promoted a rights-based approach to delay age-at-marriage.

July 2022

The United Nations' World Population Prospects, 2022, report was released, which projected India would overtake China in population numbers by 2023. Population Foundation of India helped make sense of the report's findings and ensure they were not taken out of context.

July 2021

Between July and August 2021, we were quoted in about 20 articles across national and international media. We authored op-eds, participated in podcasts, and appeared in 14 panel discussions and TV programs, including CNN International.

November 2021

The National Family Health Survey V was released, revealing that India had attained the replacement fertility rate. Population Foundation of India was the leading voice in making sense of the survey for the domestic and international press.

February 2022

In July 2022, we were quoted in more than 20 articles, authored two op-eds and appeared on five television panels in national and international media.

July 2022

After the release of the NFHS-V, Population Foundation of India was quoted in more than 120 articles across national and international media. Our experts appeared on eight television panels, authored three op-eds and appeared on two different podcasts.

Lessons

Invest in strategic engagement

Engagement with thought leaders and policy-makers is a time-consuming exercise. For leaders to see an organisation as a source of up-to-date evidence, policy analysis, research findings requires proactive engagement. This not only helps build the credibility of the organization but also the knowledge and capacity of the influencers.

Build a wide media network

Creating a database of reporters and editors is essential for improving media engagement. These journalists could be newsroom decisionmakers or reporters who cover relevant issues. Investing in these relationships has helped Population Foundation of India become a credible source of information on sexual and reproductive health issues.

Leverage the news cycle

It is essential to understand the needs of media which needs quick, accurate and reliable information in responding to events. Putting out statements and timely communication with the media can go a long way in building good media relationships and ensuring wide dissemination.

Evidence-backed communication

Research, evidence and data are the cornerstones of not only Population Foundation of India's programmes but also all its communication. We have a knowledge-management team that works towards generation and collation of up-to-date research that is then disseminated through our media network.