Society & Social Justice · GS - I

Critically examine the challenges of demographic transition in contemporary India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Fertility decline, demographic dividend, ageing, regional variation, employment, healthcare, migration, gender imbalance, dependency ratio, urbanisation, human capital, inter-state disparities

Model Answer

India is undergoing a significant demographic transition characterised by declining fertility, increasing life expectancy, changing age structures and substantial regional variations. This transition creates both opportunities and complex policy challenges.

The relatively large working-age population offers a potential demographic dividend through higher productivity, savings and economic growth. However, the dividend is not automatic. Insufficient employment generation, skill mismatches, low female labour-force participation and uneven human-capital development can prevent the working-age population from becoming an economic advantage.

At the same time, declining fertility and rising longevity are gradually increasing the proportion of elderly people. This will create greater demand for healthcare, social security, pensions and long-term care. States are experiencing the transition at different rates, producing an emerging north-south demographic divide. Migration from high-fertility to low-fertility states may also generate pressures on urban infrastructure and public services.

Other challenges include gender disparities, unequal access to reproductive healthcare, changing family structures and rapid urbanisation. Ageing and migration can further alter traditional systems of family-based social support.

India therefore needs differentiated demographic policies rather than a uniform approach. Investment in education, healthcare, skill development, women's economic participation, productive employment and elderly care is essential.

Thus, demographic transition can become an economic opportunity only when India converts demographic change into improved human capital, productive employment and inclusive social security.

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