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Does early childbearing and a sterilization-focused family planning programme in India fuel population growth?

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Abstract

Recent stagnation in the reduction of infant mortality in India can arguably be attributed to early child bearing practices and the lack of progress in lengthening birth intervals. Meanwhile, family planning efforts have been particularly successful in the southern states such as Andhra Pradesh, although family limitation is almost exclusively by means of sterilisation at increasingly younger ages. This paper examines the population impact of the unprecedented convergence of early childbearing trajectories in India and quantifies the potential implications stemming from the neglect of strategies that encourage delaying and spacing of births. The effects of adopting a 'later, longer and fewer' family planning strategy are compared with the continuation of fertility concentrated in the younger age groups. Results from the cohort component population projections suggest that a policy encouraging later marriage and birth spacing would achieve a future total population which is about 52 million less in 2050 than if the current early fertility trajectory is continued.

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