

Population Decline in China

What is the issue?

China's National Bureau of Statistics has recently announced that the country's population had fallen by 8,50,000 in 2022.

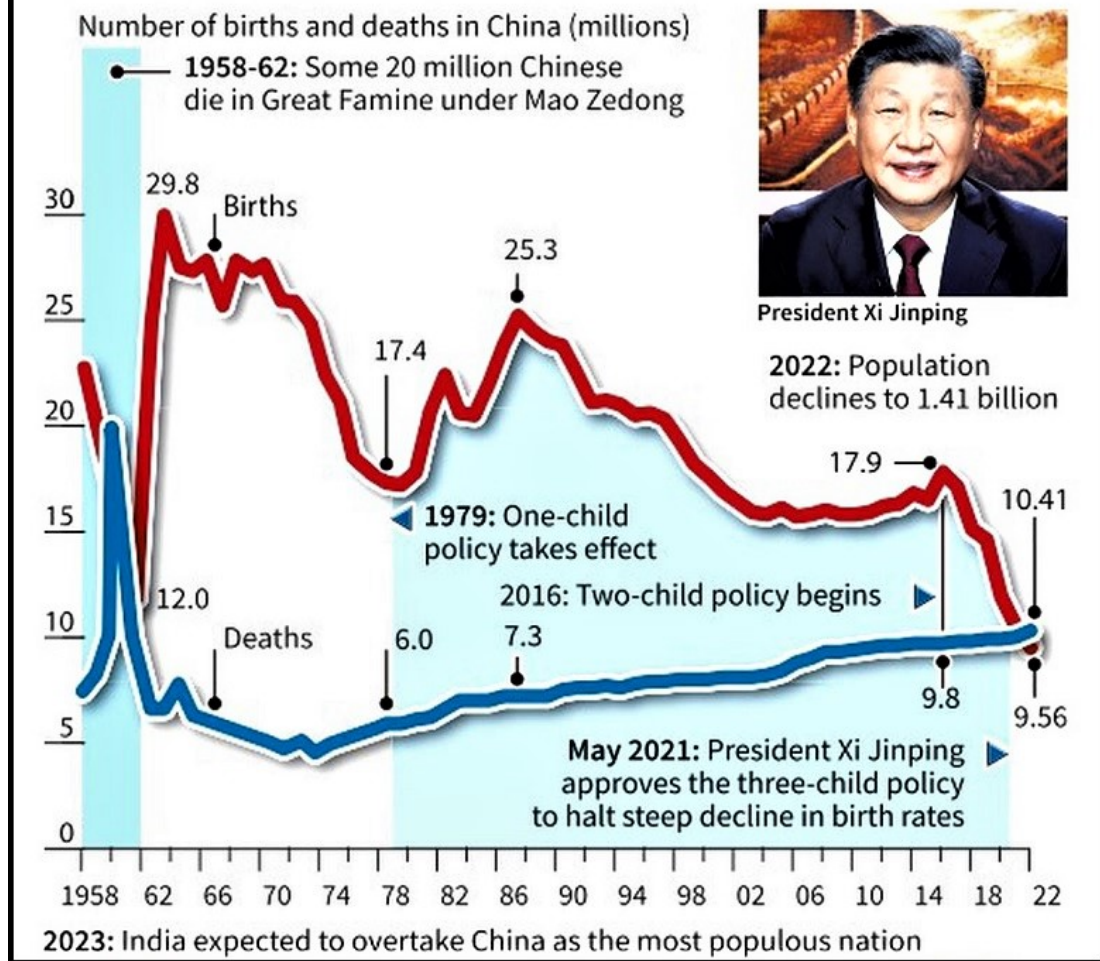
What is the recent trend about?

By the end of the century, the Chinese population is expected to shrink by 45%, according to the United Nations.

- Throughout much of recorded human history, China has boasted the largest population in the world.
- The country has witnessed a population decline, the first decline since 1961 when the country was amid a four-year famine following the failed '**Great Leap Forward**' campaign.
- For the first time in six decades, deaths in the previous year outnumbered births.
- The fertility rate (average number of children born to women) is at 1.3, meaning that population shrinkage is inevitable without immigration.
- By 2040, around a quarter of the Chinese population is predicted to be over the age of 65.
- **Reasons for this trend** - The "one-child policy" introduced harsh measures such as forced abortions and high financial penalties.
- There is a growing preference among young Chinese for getting married later and choosing to have fewer or no children.

Declining strength

China has announced that the country's population had fallen by 8,50,000 in the year 2022. For the first time the number of births fell below the number of deaths, a more than 10% drop from 2021.



How has the Chinese government responded to the population crisis?

- **Scrapping of one-child policy** - Beijing finally abandoned the one-child policy in 2016 and introduced the two-child policy.
- **Introduction of two-child policy** - However, it failed to elicit the desired response which is attributed to high costs of healthcare and education.
- **Introduction of three-child policy** - In 2021, a three-child policy was rolled out including financial inducements for families with three children.
- It has pledged to address the economic factors such as healthcare costs and education expenses, by cracking down on expensive private education companies.

Demographers say that, India is set to become the most populous nation in 2023.

What will be the impact of shrinking population on China?

On Economy


- **Labour availability** - There will be fewer workers able to feed the economy and spur further economic growth.

- **Shift in manufacturing base** - With wages rising, many factories in the lower end of the manufacturing spectrum are already moving out to Southeast Asia and Bangladesh.
- **Aged population** - According to China's National Working Commission on Ageing, healthcare spending on the above-60 population will rise to 26% of the GDP by 2050.

On Society

- **For aged population** - The large number of aging parents with only one child to rely on will need emotional and social support as a result of extended life expectancy.
- **For children** - It will also impose constraints on those children themselves, who will need to fulfill obligations to their career, provide for their own children and support their elderly parents simultaneously.
- **Pension systems** - The social pension systems in China are highly segmented and unequally distributed.

On Politics

- **Status** - Failure to live up to the expectations of the public could result in loss of prestige for the government. 
- **Legitimacy of Communist Party** - Any economic decline could have severe consequences for the Chinese Communist Party.

References

1. [The Hindu | Why is China's population shrinking?](#)
2. [Down to Earth | China's shrinking population](#)