

## FERTILITY AND MORTALITY IN INDIA DURING 1951—1971

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THE 1971 Census of India enumerated 547,949,809 persons (283,936,614 males and 264,013,195 females) on April 1, 1971.<sup>1</sup> This figure has fallen short of the estimated population total by 13 million. The Registrar General of India is of the opinion that the gap between the enumerated and estimated populations is due to the over-optimistic assumptions made regarding mortality by the Expert Committee on Population Projections.<sup>2</sup> He has questioned not only the assumed level of mortality at the initial period, and the possible course of decline for the future date, but also the assumptions regarding fertility. He says, "Besides, it is possible that the impact of Family Planning has been imperceptibly more than what could be assumed by the Expert Committee", and concludes "the age distribution of the population that will be available after the detailed tabulation of the census data will throw further light on this subject."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the users of the census figures doubt the levels of fertility and mortality assumed by the Expert Committee at the initial period which was borrowed from the estimates made by the Census Actuary, as well as the completeness of the census enumeration. If the extent of under-enumeration is the same in 1961 and 1971 censuses, the observed gap between the enumerated and estimated populations will not be far from the actual. In such a case, only the age distributions, the levels of fertility and mortality at the initial period, and the assumptions regarding the course of decline of fertility and mortality are the factors responsible for the gap. In this paper an attempt is made to estimate the levels and trends of fertility and mortality in India during the period 1951-71 assuming the correctness of the census enumeration during the last three censuses.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of India, *Census of India, 1971, Final Population, Paper No. 1 of 1972, Series 1 — India*, Office of the Registrar-General of India, New Delhi, 1972, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Government of India, *Census of India, 1971, Provisional Population Totals, Paper No. 1 of 1971*, Office of the Registrar-General of India, New Delhi, 1971, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.