

Emergence of Fertility Differentials as Evidence of Fertility Decline In India

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A review of major studies on fertility concludes that it is only from the late 1960s that movement from the stage of uncontrolled fertility to the stage of controlled fertility leading to the emergence of socio-economic differentials in fertility seems to have really gotten underway in India. This process appears to have been accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s. This indicates that the onset of fertility decline has begun in India and the transition towards a regime of increasingly controlled fertility has been occurring at different rates among different socio-economic groups. These findings have important implications for population policies and programmes.

Introduction

The study of fertility differences by socio-economic variables is an important area of demographic research. Information about such differences is useful in assessing the factors and prospects of change in the composition of the population in various sub-groups. It also helps to identify the major determinants of fertility. The study of socio-economic differences in fertility also provides clues regarding the future trends in the overall birth rate of the population.

The study of fertility and fertility differences acquires special importance to a developing country like India where fertility transition is underway. During the initial stages of fertility decline, fertility does not decline uniformly across various socio-economic groups. In general, the decline commences among the upper social and economic strata of the urban population, and gradually spreads to other intermediate status groups, and then finally reaches the rural population. Therefore, in countries where fertility has been declining significant socio-economic differences in fertility are likely to emerge.