

BEYOND PARENTHOOD: THE EMERGENCE OF DINK HOUSEHOLDS IN URBAN INDIA – A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

Deepa S V

Associate Professor
Dept. of Sociology, GFGC, Yelahanka

ABSTRACT

The Indian family has historically been closely associated with marriage, reproduction, intergenerational continuity and collective responsibility. However, rapid urbanisation, expansion of higher education, changing employment patterns, rising living costs, individualisation and transformations in gender relations are creating new possibilities for organising intimate and household life. One such emerging pattern is the DINK (Dual Income, No Kids) household, in which two partners earn an income and consciously live without children. Although India does not yet have a nationally representative statistical category specifically measuring DINK households, several demographic and social indicators point towards conditions in which such households can emerge, particularly within urban and educated middle-class populations. India's total fertility rate declined from 2.2 in NFHS-4 to 2.0 in NFHS-5 (2019–21), while substantial interstate variations continue to exist.

This article examines the emergence of DINK households in urban India using secondary data from the National Family Health Survey, Time Use Survey, government statistical publications, demographic studies and relevant sociological literature. The study explores the economic, occupational, cultural, gender and lifestyle factors associated with delayed or reduced parenthood. It applies individualisation theory, feminist theory, demographic transition theory, rational choice perspectives and the life-course approach to understand this transformation. The article argues that DINK households should not simply be interpreted as a rejection of family life; rather, they represent an evolving negotiation between partnership, employment, autonomy, consumption, care responsibilities and personal aspirations. At the same time, DINK households remain unevenly distributed across India's social, cultural and geographical landscape.

Keywords: DINK households; Urban India; Childfree couples; Family transformation; Individualisation

INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the most enduring institutions of Indian society. Traditionally, marriage and parenthood have been strongly interconnected, and having children has been regarded not merely as a personal decision but also as a social expectation. Children have historically been associated with emotional fulfilment, continuation of the family line, social status, old-age security and intergenerational obligations.

Contemporary urban India, however, is witnessing important transformations in family life. Higher education, professional employment, migration, urban housing, changing gender roles, consumer culture, digital lifestyles and increasing individual autonomy have altered the way young adults understand marriage and parenthood.

One emerging household form is the DINK household—Dual Income, No Kids. The term generally describes a couple in which both partners earn and who do not have children. Importantly, the

category can include couples who postpone parenthood as well as couples who consciously decide to remain childfree. Therefore, DINK should not automatically be equated with permanent childlessness or infertility.

There is no official Indian census category that directly measures the size of the DINK population. Consequently, it would be methodologically inappropriate to claim that DINK households constitute a particular percentage of Indian households. Instead, their emergence must be examined through broader demographic and sociological indicators.

India's fertility transition provides important contextual evidence. NFHS-5 reported a national total fertility rate of 2.0 children per woman, compared with 2.2 in NFHS-4. Several urbanised and economically developed states have fertility levels below the national average. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Delhi, for example, recorded TFRs of 1.7, 1.7, 1.7 and 1.6 respectively in NFHS-5. By contrast, Bihar recorded 3.0 and Uttar Pradesh 2.4.

These differences demonstrate that family formation in India cannot be understood through a single national model. Regional cultures, economic conditions, education, marriage patterns and women's employment influence reproductive behaviour.

The emergence of DINK households therefore represents a particularly interesting sociological question: What happens when marriage is increasingly separated from the expectation of immediate parenthood?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Indian family transformation has generally focused on declining fertility, delayed marriage, women's education, employment, changing household structures and reproductive behaviour rather than DINK households specifically.

Studies using **National Family Health Survey data** have identified associations between urban residence, women's education, age at marriage and childlessness. Earlier research based on NFHS data observed higher levels of infertility and childlessness among urban women and linked these patterns partly to later marriage and educational attainment.

The demographic transition literature provides another important framework. India has moved from relatively high fertility towards replacement-level fertility, although the transition has occurred at different speeds across states. NFHS-5 demonstrates substantial interstate variation, suggesting that fertility decline is embedded within distinct social and economic contexts.

Research on women's work provides another dimension. **The Indian Time Use Survey** demonstrates that women's lives continue to involve a substantial amount of unpaid domestic and caregiving work. In urban India, women spent approximately 293 minutes per day on unpaid domestic services, compared with 94 minutes for men among participants in the relevant activity category. Women also spent more time in unpaid caregiving.

This gendered division of labour is sociologically significant because parenthood may involve considerable career, emotional and domestic responsibilities. Feminist scholarship has long argued that women's participation in paid employment does not necessarily eliminate their responsibility for household labour.

Recent research using Indian time-use data similarly identifies substantial gender differences in unpaid care work in both rural and urban India.

The 2024 Time Use Survey also indicates continuing changes in women's participation in employment-related activities. Among people aged 15–59, female participation in employment-related activities increased from 21.8% in 2019 to 25% in 2024, while men's participation increased from 70.9% to 75%. Female participants' average time spent on unpaid domestic services also declined from about 315 minutes in 2019 to 305 minutes in 2024.

These developments do not prove the existence or growth rate of DINK households, but they provide an important context for understanding why dual-income couples may negotiate parenthood differently.

The UNFPA's 2025 analysis of fertility aspirations further emphasises that economic insecurity, housing constraints, job insecurity and childcare difficulties can affect reproductive decisions. Its India-focused discussion highlights the importance of understanding fertility as a matter of reproductive agency rather than simply population numbers.

Thus, the literature suggests that the DINK phenomenon should be located within a wider transformation of work, gender, fertility, consumption and family relationships.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has five objectives:

1. To examine the sociological factors contributing to the emergence of DINK households in urban India.
2. To understand how employment, education, urbanisation and changing gender relations influence decisions regarding parenthood.
3. To apply major sociological theories to the changing relationship between marriage and parenthood.
4. To examine the possible social and economic consequences of DINK households across different geographical regions of India.
5. To identify research gaps and suggest directions for future sociological research on childfree and voluntarily childless households.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based entirely on secondary data.

Relevant information has been drawn from:

- a. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4 and NFHS-5)
- b. Time Use Survey 2019 and 2024
- c. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reports
- d. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation publications
- e. International Institute for Population Sciences publications
- f. UNFPA reports
- g. Census-related demographic information
- h. Peer-reviewed academic literature on fertility, family, gender and urbanisation.

The analysis is descriptive and interpretive rather than causal. Since official Indian datasets do not currently provide a standard national indicator for DINK households, the article does not estimate the prevalence of DINK households. Instead, it examines the social conditions that facilitate their emergence.

This distinction is important: declining fertility does not automatically mean an increase in DINK households. Fertility decline may result from smaller desired families, delayed childbearing, infertility, contraception, economic constraints or other factors.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS

Individualisation Theory (Ulrich Beck & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim)

Individualisation theory helps explain the movement from socially prescribed life trajectories towards individually negotiated biographies.

Earlier, **the sequence of education → marriage → children → family responsibilities** was relatively standard. Urban educated couples increasingly have greater opportunities to negotiate the timing and meaning of these stages.

DINK households can therefore be interpreted as an expression of biographical choice, where couples construct household arrangements according to career aspirations, lifestyle preferences and personal values.

Feminist Theory (Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Ann Oakley and others)

Feminist theory is particularly useful because parenthood is not socially experienced equally by men and women. Although both partners may earn income, women frequently continue to perform greater amounts of domestic and caregiving labour. India's Time Use Survey demonstrates a substantial gender difference in unpaid domestic and care work. From this perspective, choosing to delay or avoid parenthood may sometimes represent a response to anticipated inequalities in domestic labour, career interruption and caregiving expectations.

DINK households therefore provide an important lens through which to examine the relationship between gender equality and reproductive decisions.

Demographic Transition Theory (Warren Thompson (1929); later developed by Frank W. Notestein (1945))

Demographic Transition Theory explains the movement from high fertility and mortality towards lower fertility and mortality. India's TFR of 2.0 in NFHS-5 demonstrates the country's transition towards replacement-level fertility.

The Second Demographic Transition theory by Dirk J. van de Kaa & Ron Lesthaeghe, explains declining marriage and fertility, cohabitation, postponement of parenthood and increasing individual autonomy in advanced societies.

However, DINK households represent something more specific: not simply fewer children, but potentially a separation between marriage and reproduction.

Rational Choice Perspective (George C. Homans, James S. Coleman; in fertility economics, Gary Becker)

From a rational-choice perspective, couples may evaluate the perceived costs and benefits of parenthood. Urban couples may consider: housing costs, education expenses, Childcare, career progression, leisure, financial independence, retirement planning, lifestyle preferences and emotional

readiness. This does not mean that DINK decisions are purely economic. Emotional and cultural factors remain equally important.

Life-Course Perspective (Glen H. Elder Jr.)

The life-course approach emphasises timing and transitions. For many urban couples, parenthood may be postponed until educational, professional and financial milestones are achieved. Some couples may eventually become parents, while others may remain childfree. Therefore, DINK status should be understood as potentially temporary, transitional not permanent.

EMERGING REASONS FOR DINK HOUSEHOLDS IN INDIA

- a. Increasing Educational Attainment:** Higher education can extend the period before marriage and parenthood. Educated individuals may prioritise postgraduate education, professional qualifications and career establishment before considering children.
- b. Dual-Career Aspirations:** The growth of professional occupations has created households where both partners have demanding careers. Parenthood can introduce additional care responsibilities, particularly where workplace flexibility and affordable childcare are limited.
- c. Rising Cost of Urban Living:** Housing, education, healthcare, transportation and childcare can be expensive in metropolitan India. Economic considerations may therefore influence the timing or desirability of parenthood.
- d. Changing Gender Expectations:** Young women increasingly expect marriage to coexist with professional identity and personal autonomy. Where couples perceive unequal domestic responsibilities, parenthood may be postponed or reconsidered.
- e. Individual Lifestyle Aspirations:** Urban middle-class culture increasingly values travel, experiences, personal development, leisure and financial independence. Childfree living can sometimes be incorporated into this lifestyle.
- f. Housing and Spatial Constraints:** Apartments in metropolitan cities are often smaller and more expensive than family homes in smaller towns. Housing constraints can affect decisions about family size.
- g. Concerns about Work–Family Balance:** The difficulty of combining intensive professional employment with parenting can influence reproductive choices. UNFPA's recent analysis identifies job insecurity, housing constraints and lack of reliable childcare among factors that can make parenthood difficult to achieve.
- h. Reproductive Autonomy:** Improved access to contraception and reproductive health information enables couples to exercise greater control over when—or whether—to have children.
- i. Environmental and Future Uncertainty:** Some urban couples express concerns about climate change, social instability and the future environment in which children would grow up. Such motivations require further empirical investigation rather than being assumed to characterise all DINK couples.
- j. Changing Meaning of Marriage:** Marriage is increasingly capable of being understood as a partnership based on companionship, emotional intimacy and mutual support rather than solely as an institution for reproduction.

CONSEQUENCES OF DINK FAMILIES IN RURAL AND URBAN SETTINGS

DINK (Dual Income, No Kids) refers to households in which both partners earn an income and do not have children. In the Indian context, DINK families should not be viewed simply as couples who "do not want children." Some couples postpone parenthood because of education, careers, financial circumstances, housing constraints or personal priorities, while others consciously choose a childfree life. Therefore, the consequences of DINK families need to be understood within the wider social, economic and cultural context of India.

The experience of a DINK household can be quite different in an urban metropolitan city compared with a rural community. In cities, DINK couples may find greater social acceptance and institutional support for independent lifestyles, whereas in rural settings they may encounter stronger expectations concerning marriage, reproduction and continuity of the family.

1. Economic Consequences

Urban setting: The most visible consequence of a DINK household is the possibility of greater financial flexibility. With two incomes and no children, couples may have greater disposable income after meeting basic household expenses.

They may invest in: Housing and property, Savings and mutual funds, Travel and leisure, Professional education, Retirement planning, Health insurance and Entrepreneurship.

For example, a dual-income couple in Bengaluru, Mumbai or Hyderabad may decide to invest in an apartment, travel internationally or pursue additional professional qualifications instead of allocating a substantial proportion of household income to childcare and education. However, urban DINK households also face high living costs. Expensive housing, transportation, healthcare and lifestyle expenses can reduce the financial advantage associated with having two incomes.

Rural setting: The economic implications can be different in rural areas. A childfree couple may have greater capacity to invest in: Agricultural land, Livestock, Small businesses, Education and skill development, Agricultural technology and Savings and community activities.

At the same time, children traditionally contribute to family labour in many rural households. Therefore, a childfree household may have to depend more heavily on hired labour or mechanisation where children would traditionally have participated in agricultural or household activities.

2. Impact on Gender Relations

DINK families can potentially transform traditional gender roles. In a conventional family model, women are often expected to combine paid employment with cooking, cleaning, childcare and eldercare. When there are no children, one major source of unpaid care work is removed. This can give couples greater opportunity to negotiate household responsibilities.

For example:

"Who earns more?" may become less important than "How should we divide our household responsibilities?"

Urban DINK couples may therefore develop more negotiated forms of domestic partnership. However, DINK does not automatically mean gender equality. Women may still perform more cooking, cleaning, emotional labour and care for elderly parents. This is why feminist sociology is important when studying DINK households.

3. Career and Professional Development

One potential consequence of DINK living is increased flexibility in professional life. Without childcare responsibilities, couples may find it easier to: Work longer or irregular hours, Relocate for employment, Accept overseas assignments, Pursue higher education, Start businesses, Change careers and Attend professional training.

This may be particularly relevant to professional women because pregnancy, maternity and childcare can affect career trajectories. However, this should not be interpreted as meaning that parenthood necessarily prevents career advancement. Rather, DINK households offer one alternative arrangement through which couples negotiate work and family life.

4. Housing and Urban Lifestyle

DINK households can influence housing preferences. A couple without children may prefer: Smaller apartments, Gated communities, Central urban locations, Proximity to workplaces, Smart homes and better recreational facilities.

A family with children may prioritise schools, playgrounds and larger living spaces. Consequently, DINK households may contribute indirectly to changing patterns of urban consumption and residential choices.

5. Social Relationships and Family Pressure

This is one of the most important consequences in the Indian context. Although urban lifestyles are changing, marriage and parenthood remain strongly connected in many communities.

A DINK couple may therefore face questions such as:

"When are you planning to have children?"

"Who will look after you when you are old?"

"What about continuing the family?"

"Don't your parents want grandchildren?"

Such questions may appear harmless, but repeated questioning can create emotional pressure. The experience may be particularly pronounced in smaller towns and rural communities where family networks are closely interconnected.

6. Rural–Urban Difference in Social Acceptance

There is likely to be a significant difference between rural and urban settings.

Urban areas: Metropolitan cities generally provide greater exposure to diverse lifestyles. Couples may encounter other childfree households, unmarried professionals, cohabiting couples and dual-career families.

This can create a sense that:

"We are not the only couple making this choice."

Anonymity and social diversity in cities can also reduce direct community surveillance.

Rural areas: Rural communities often have stronger kinship networks and closer social interaction. Marriage may continue to be viewed as closely connected with reproduction and continuation of lineage.

Consequently, childfree couples may experience greater questioning or social pressure. However, rural India is not culturally homogeneous. It would be incorrect to assume that every rural community rejects childfree living.

7. Consequences for Intergenerational Relationships

Traditionally, children have been important in maintaining intergenerational relationships.

In many Indian families, adult children provide: Emotional support, financial assistance, Healthcare assistance, Companionship and Support during old age.

DINK households may therefore require alternative strategies for later-life support.

Couples may increasingly depend on: Retirement savings, Pension systems, Health insurance, Professional eldercare, Community networks, Friends and peer groups and Assisted-living facilities.

This raises an important sociological question:

If family-based care becomes weaker, who will provide care in an ageing society?

The growth of childfree households could therefore have implications for India's future care economy.

8. Consequences for Population and Fertility

If DINK households become more common, they could contribute to further fertility decline. However, it is important not to make a direct causal assumption.

India's declining fertility has many causes, including: Increased education, delayed marriage, Greater contraceptive use, Women's employment, Urbanisation, Declining desired family size, Improved reproductive autonomy and Economic considerations.

Therefore:

Low fertility $\neq$ DINK households.

A decline in fertility does not necessarily mean that more couples are permanently childfree.

9. Consequences for Rural Family Structure

In rural India, the consequences could be particularly significant where families traditionally depend on children for maintaining household continuity.

A reduction in family size could contribute to:

Large extended family → smaller family → couple-centred household

This transformation may influence: Agricultural labour arrangements, Inheritance patterns, Land fragmentation, Kinship networks, Care of elderly parents and Village social participation.

For farming households, fewer children may also mean fewer potential successors to the family occupation. At the same time, smaller families can reduce pressure on household resources and potentially allow greater investment per family member.

10. Psychological and Emotional Consequences

DINK life can provide couples with: Greater personal freedom, More time together, Opportunities for travel, Reduced childcare stress, Greater control over daily routines and Greater opportunity for personal development.

But there can also be challenges. Some couples may experience: Social isolation, Pressure from relatives, Anxiety about ageing, Uncertainty regarding future caregiving, Regret in later life in some cases and Difficulty finding social spaces that accommodate childfree lifestyles.

It is important not to assume that DINK couples are automatically happier or unhappier. Individual experiences differ considerably.

11. Consumer Culture and Lifestyle

DINK households may become important participants in urban consumer culture. With two incomes and fewer child-related expenditures, couples may allocate greater resources towards: Restaurants, Travel, Technology, Fitness, Entertainment, Home improvement, Personal development, Pets and Experiences.

This can create a distinctive form of urban middle-class lifestyle. However, this should be understood as a tendency rather than a universal characteristic of DINK families.

12. Consequences for the Care Economy

One of the most significant long-term consequences may be the changing demand for professional care. If more couples remain childfree, demand may increase for:

- a. Professional eldercare
- b. Retirement communities
- c. Home healthcare
- d. Nursing services
- e. Financial planning
- f. Assisted living
- g. Community-based support systems

This could gradually shift some responsibilities traditionally performed within families towards formal institutions and market-based services.

IMPORTANT SOCIOLOGICAL CAUTION

A particularly important point for research in India is that DINK should not become a label for every childless couple.

There are at least four different categories:

- a. Temporarily childless couples – postponing parenthood.
- b. Voluntarily childfree couples – consciously deciding not to have children.
- c. Involuntarily childless couples – wanting children but unable to have them.
- d. Circumstantially childless couples – postponing or avoiding parenthood because of economic, occupational, health or family circumstances.

These categories can have very different experiences. Therefore, future research should ask couples why they have no children rather than simply counting couples without children.

THREATS AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH DINK FAMILIES

DINK (Dual Income, No Kids) families represent an emerging household pattern in which both partners earn an income and consciously or circumstantially remain without children. Their emergence reflects changing aspirations, career priorities, gender relations and ideas about family life. However, the growing visibility of DINK households also raises several social and demographic challenges.

One important concern relates to **old-age security and caregiving**. In Indian society, adult children have traditionally provided emotional, social and sometimes financial support to ageing parents. DINK couples may therefore need greater dependence on retirement savings, health insurance, professional caregiving and community-based support systems. They may also experience concerns about social isolation, particularly where social networks are strongly centred around children and parenthood.

DINK couples can face **family and intergenerational pressures**, especially when parents and relatives expect grandchildren and continuation of the family lineage. Differences between generations may create emotional tensions as younger couples prioritise careers, financial independence, personal freedom and lifestyle choices.

At the demographic level, widespread voluntary childlessness could contribute to lower fertility and, over time, population ageing and changes in the size of the working-age population. In rural areas, reduced family size may also influence agricultural labour, inheritance and continuation of traditional occupations.

Finally, DINK households may participate strongly in urban consumer culture because of greater disposable income, although this varies by socioeconomic status. Overall, DINK families should not be viewed as a threat in themselves. Rather, they represent a changing form of family life that challenges traditional assumptions about marriage, parenthood, kinship, ageing and social support. Their emergence highlights the need for society and social policy to adapt to increasingly diverse household arrangements.

ANALYTICAL INTERPRETATION

The emergence of DINK households can be interpreted as part of a broader transformation from the family as an institution of obligation towards the family as a negotiated relationship. However, this transformation should not be overstated.

First, India continues to be a strongly family-oriented society. Parents and extended relatives continue to exert considerable influence over marriage and reproductive decisions.

Second, not every dual-income childless couple is voluntarily childfree. Some may be postponing parenthood, experiencing infertility, facing economic barriers or dealing with health-related circumstances.

Third, DINK households are likely to be socially selective. They may be more visible among educated urban middle-class and professional groups than among economically vulnerable households.

Fourth, the Indian context differs from Western societies where the DINK concept has been discussed for several decades. Indian DINK households remain embedded within extended kinship networks, cultural expectations and intergenerational obligations.

Thus, the sociological significance of DINK households lies not simply in the absence of children but in the changing negotiation of adulthood, marriage, gender, work and family responsibility.

DISCUSSION

One of the most significant implications of DINK households is the changing relationship between paid employment and unpaid care. The Time Use Survey reveals that unpaid domestic work remains highly gendered. In urban India, women spent substantially more time than men on unpaid domestic services and caregiving. This raises an important sociological question: Does remaining childfree provide greater opportunities for gender equality, or do traditional gender inequalities continue within DINK relationships?

The answer cannot be assumed. A childfree household may reduce childcare responsibilities but does not automatically eliminate domestic inequality.

Another important issue concerns intergenerational relationships. In traditional Indian families, adult children frequently provide emotional and material support to ageing parents. If smaller family sizes become more common, families may have fewer adult children available for intergenerational caregiving. At the same time, this could stimulate growth in:

- a. professional eldercare
- b. retirement communities
- c. community-based care
- d. private insurance
- e. digital care technologies
- f. social security systems.

Therefore, DINK households could indirectly influence India's emerging care economy. There is also a cultural dimension. Parents and relatives may perceive childfree marriage as incomplete, especially in communities where parenthood is closely associated with adult identity. Consequently, DINK couples may experience social pressure, questioning or stigma. The phenomenon therefore represents not merely demographic change but also a negotiation over social norms.

FUTURE RESEARCH GAPS

Several important research gaps remain.

- 1. Lack of nationally representative DINK data:** India needs a clear statistical definition and measurement strategy for DINK households.
- 2. Limited qualitative research:** In-depth interviews could reveal why couples choose childfree living and how they negotiate family pressure.
- 3. Gender differences:** Research should examine whether DINK decisions are equally desired by husbands and wives.
- 4. Class differences:** The meaning of childfree living may differ dramatically between affluent professionals and economically vulnerable households.
- 5. Caste and community:** Caste, religion and kinship norms may influence acceptance of childfree marriages.

6. Regional comparison: Comparative studies of Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune, Kolkata and smaller cities could reveal significant variations.

7. Longitudinal research: Researchers should distinguish between couples who delay parenthood and those who permanently choose not to have children.

8. Ageing and care: Future research should investigate how DINK couples plan for old age and who provides care when partners become elderly.

9. Workplace policies: Research should explore whether parental leave, childcare and flexible working arrangements influence couples' decisions regarding children.

10. Mental health and wellbeing: Rather than assuming that DINK households are either more satisfied or less satisfied, empirical research should examine relationship quality, social support, loneliness and life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of DINK households represents an important but still insufficiently researched dimension of family transformation in urban India. India's fertility transition, increasing educational attainment, changing employment patterns, urbanisation, reproductive autonomy and evolving gender relations create social conditions in which marriage and parenthood can increasingly become separate decisions. Nevertheless, DINK households should not be understood as evidence that the Indian family is disappearing. Rather, they demonstrate that the meaning of family is becoming more diverse.

The sociological significance of DINK households lies in the changing balance between individual autonomy and collective expectations, career and care, partnership and parenthood, consumption and responsibility. Available demographic evidence confirms declining fertility and considerable regional variation, while time-use data reveal continuing gender inequalities in unpaid domestic and care work. These developments provide the broader structural context within which DINK households can emerge, but they cannot by themselves establish how many DINK households exist.

The future of Indian family sociology therefore requires moving beyond the simple question of whether couples have children. It must ask how couples understand marriage, what they expect from family life, how they negotiate work and care, and how social institutions respond when parenthood becomes a choice rather than an unquestioned expectation.

DINK households thus offer a valuable sociological window into India's transition from a predominantly prescribed model of family life towards increasingly negotiated and diverse forms of intimate life.

REFERENCES

1. International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS). (2022). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India report. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
2. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. (2023). Health and family welfare statistics in India 2023. Government of India.
3. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (2020). Time use in India–2019. Government of India.
4. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (2025). Time use survey (TUS), 2024. Government of India.
5. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (2023). Women and men in India 2023. Government of India.

6. National Statistical Office. (2019). Time Use Survey, January–December 2019. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
7. Sahu, D. (2023). Gendered patterns of unpaid care work distribution in India: An empirical exploration from first large scale Time Use Survey 2019. *Artha Vijñāna*, 65(3).
8. Sinha, A. A. N. (2024). Exploring time use patterns and influences on unpaid work: Findings from the 2019 Indian Time Use Survey. *Economics, Business, Accounting & Society Review*, 3(1).
9. UNFPA India. (2025). State of world population report 2025: The real fertility crisis. United Nations Population Fund.
10. UNFPA India. (2025). India's real fertility crisis is about choice, not numbers. United Nations Population Fund.
11. UNFPA India. (2026). Lives, choices and futures: Demographic Futures Survey. United Nations Population Fund.
12. United Nations Population Fund. (n.d.). Epidemiology of infertility in India. UNFPA India.
13. Women's work in India: Evidence from changes in time use between 1998 and 2019. (2023). *World Development*, 161, 106107.