

## Family Planning

Great insult is being hurled at the phrase “Family Planning” for some time now. Family planning, as the name depicts, is to plan having a family, i.e. when to have a child and plans for a number of children couple may want to have during their life together or to plan for a family most suited to their lives. How one achieves this objective, is another matter and should not be equated with the principle of Family Planning (FP). When I searched internet for synonyms, I found FP described as a noun, meaning limiting the number of children born, which is acceptable, but it goes on to list a number of other words or a combination thereof - planning, withdrawal, birth control, pulling out, natural family planning, contraception, contraceptive method, coitus interruptus, onanism, voluntary sterilization and more. Yes, contraceptive measures do play a vital role in FP but it is not an end in itself.

America, obsessed with abortion, defines family planning as deciding the number and spacing of one’s children; through the use of contraception: such as *abstinence, natural planning, or hormonal* birth control. No law can end abortions, however severe its restrictions and however harsh its penalties.<sup>[1]</sup> Taking refuge in abortion, apart from strictly for medical reasons, is the failure of an individual, perpetrator, lawmakers, health workers and the society at large. Irresponsible sex is the root cause of it and those who want to abolish legal abortion must redirect their energies to making society responsible. Balance between rights and responsibility is required.

The Catholic Church believes that artificial contraception is sinful and immoral and may frustrate a divine plan to bring a new life into the world. Instead of using birth control methods such as the pill, IUDs, diaphragms, and condoms, Catholics are asked to use Natural Family Planning (NFP) techniques. Italy, a Catholic country, paradoxically represents in terms of fertility control, a drop to one of the lowest birth rates in the world. (See figure below for contraceptive use in Italy for 2018: 46% condom, 29% pill, CI 10%, other 9% and 6% nothing). There are other religious groups who are instructed to not to use FP methods for different reasons. There are activists on both sides promoting or hindering FP, with all their might and every possible mean.

Whilst woman goes through the pregnancy and its hazards alone, it’s the men who dominate in the decision making about pregnancy and its outcome. Under the pretext of saving an unborn foetus and criminalising abortion, women’s constitutionally protected right is being threatened.<sup>[2]</sup> At the expense of foetus protection, the same groups of people easily expose mother, child and families to serious health risks.

I can never forget a block development officer in India, who himself looked prosperous but his wife was like a walking stick and was carrying her 9th pregnancy, all because the man wanted to father a son and all previous pregnancies ended in girls. Those days, as has been the case ever since, FP was actively promoted and development officers were responsible to pass on the message to limit the size of the family. Whenever the subject of FP programme came up in the meetings of *Gram Sevaks* (community development workers), there used to be a sheepish smile on all faces, as the boss was not practicing what he was preaching. Obsession to keep on trying to have a son at the expense of one’s wife for personal satisfaction is a height of irresponsible behaviour. Mother-in-law’s insistence for daughter-in-law to produce a child within first year of marriage and that too a son, a common practice in India, is another example.

The world's current growth rate is about 1.14%, representing a doubling time of 61 years. It is expected that the world's population of 7.3 billion to become 13 billion by 2067 if current growth continues. The world's growth rate peaked in the 1960s at 2% and a doubling time of 35 years. (see figures below). Rapid population growth leads to the environmental changes. Population growth has

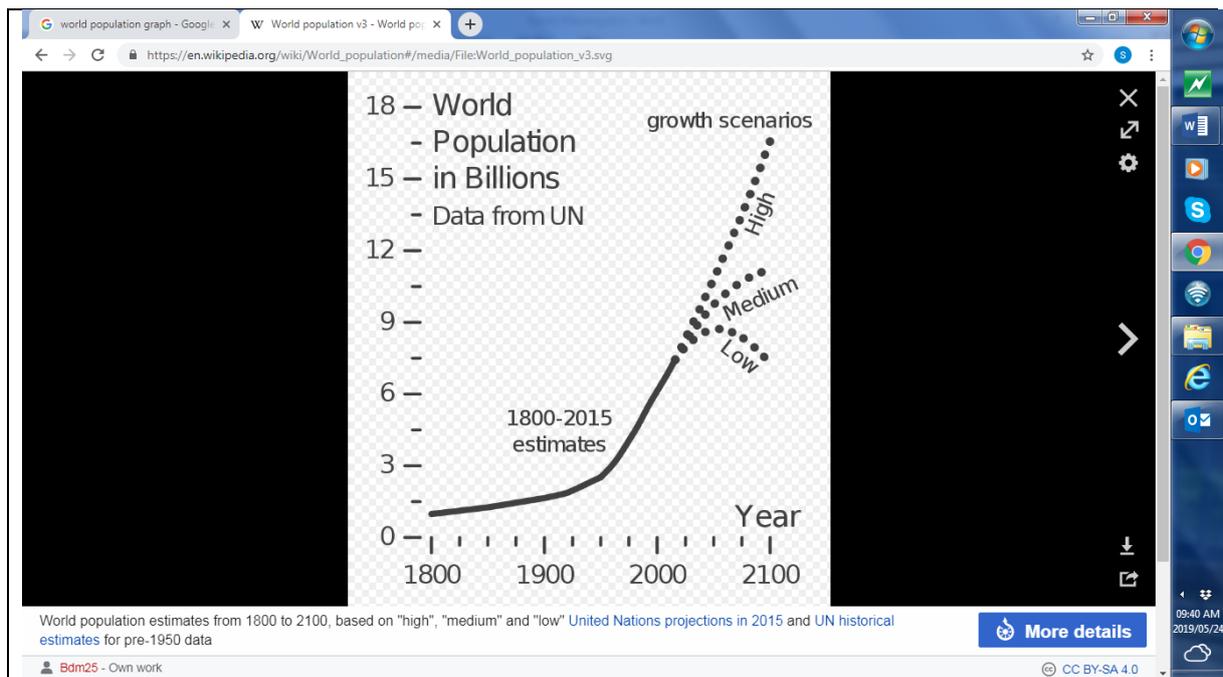
swelled the ranks of unemployed men and women at an alarming rate. Due to this, a large number of people are being pushed in ecologically sensitive areas such as hill sides and tropical forests. Local and international migration of young adults to distant green pastures have emerged into a serious problem.

From health point of view, preventing unintended pregnancy is the most important objective to maintain maternal and child health. Sensible use of contraceptive measures improves the outcome of pregnancy, mother's health and survival of both the mother and the child. FP is essential in securing the well-being and autonomy of women, while supporting the health and development of communities.

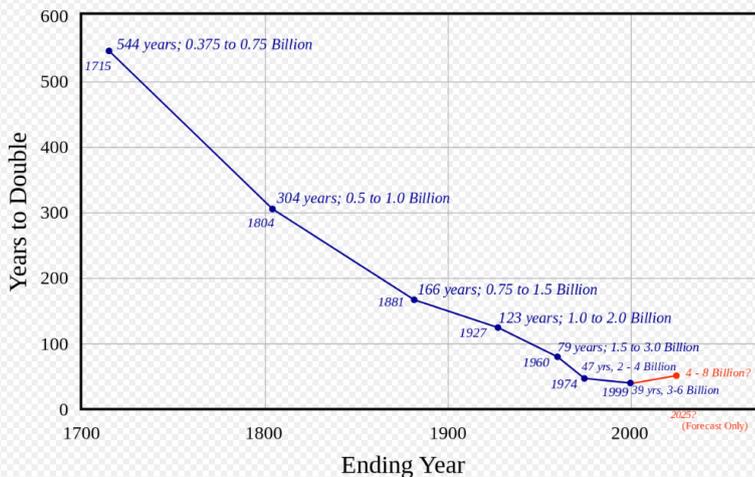
Family Planning is to turn to our sense of *responsibility* – towards each other as man and woman; towards treating women as equal partners; towards the future of children parents bring into this world; towards shunning selfishness; towards environment as the world is about to drown itself with the sheer weight of the number of people on it. FP is a responsibility, no one should be forced into it but one's conscience should compel one to think the urgent need for it.

### References:

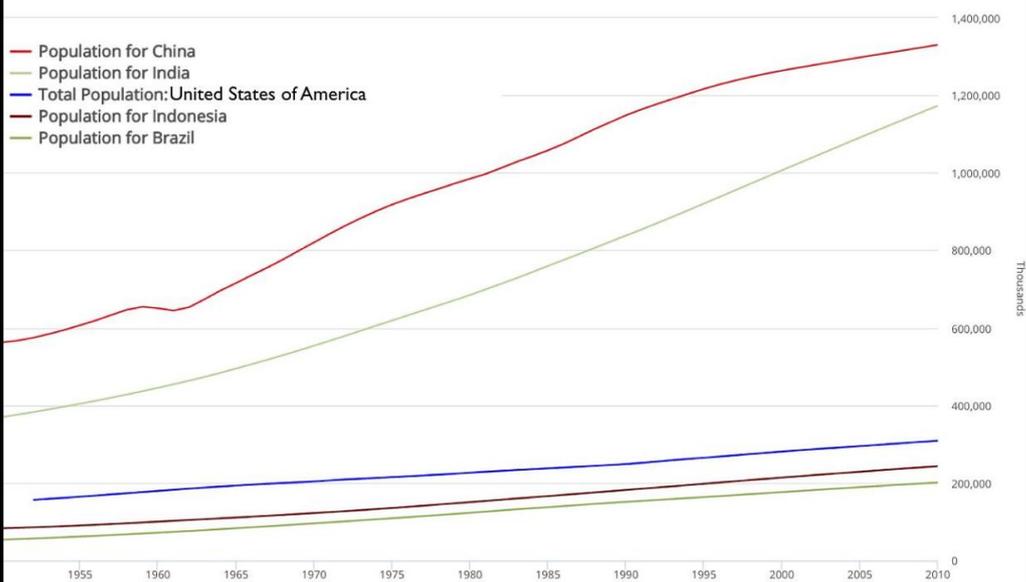
- [1] Editorial. The Guardian view on abortion: protecting a human right. Guardian. 12 May 2019.
- [2] Editorial. [We must all support women in the fight for abortion](#). Lancet 25 May 2019.

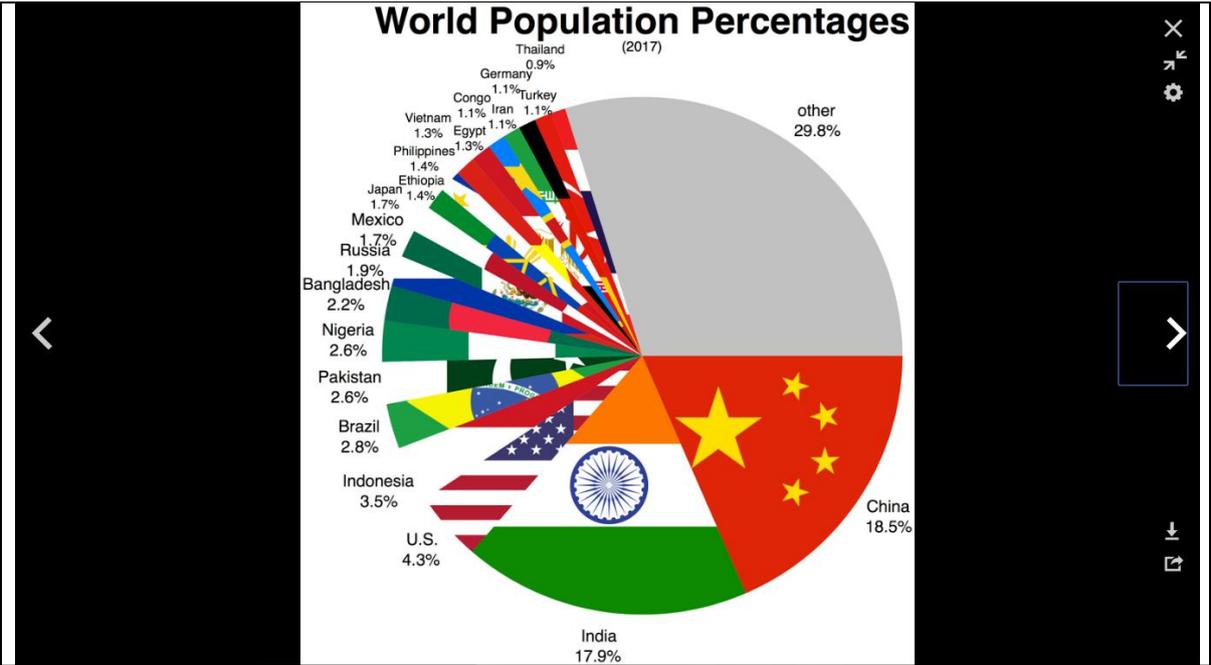


### Years to Double Population



### Top 5 Most Populous Countries





Statista.com

Health & Pharmaceuticals > Pharmaceutical Products & Market > Italy: most used contraceptive methods 2018

## Most used contraceptive methods among women in Italy in 2018

Method	Percentage
Condom	46%
Contraceptive pill	29%
Coitus interruptus	10%
Vaginal ring	5%
Natural methods	2%
Contraceptive patch	2%
Intrauterine device	2%
Nothing	6%

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**DESCRIPTION** SOURCE MORE INFORMATION

In 2018, the condom was the most popular contraceptive method among Italian women. Although this may be true, less than five women out of ten declared to regularly use it. Italian women considered **protection from infections and diseases** one of the main benefits deriving from the use of contraceptives, yet comfort and efficiency were regarded as even more important.

**Sexually transmitted infections and diseases**

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