

# Link between Demography & Entrepreneurial Society: The Indian Case

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*Entrepreneurship society is a reflection of profuse changes in individuals' attitude including career choices and the social contract. These changes emanate from the demographic factors of society. The US witnessed a massive change in people's attitude and demography in the early 1960s. As a result, the US transformed itself into a leading entrepreneurial society. We address the question: can the demographic features of India explain its aspiration to be an entrepreneurial society in comparison with the other leading entrepreneurial societies in the world? We examine country-level demographic data for seven selected countries. Findings indicate that India's demographic factors do not correspond to the same features as that of highly entrepreneurial societies.*

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## Introduction

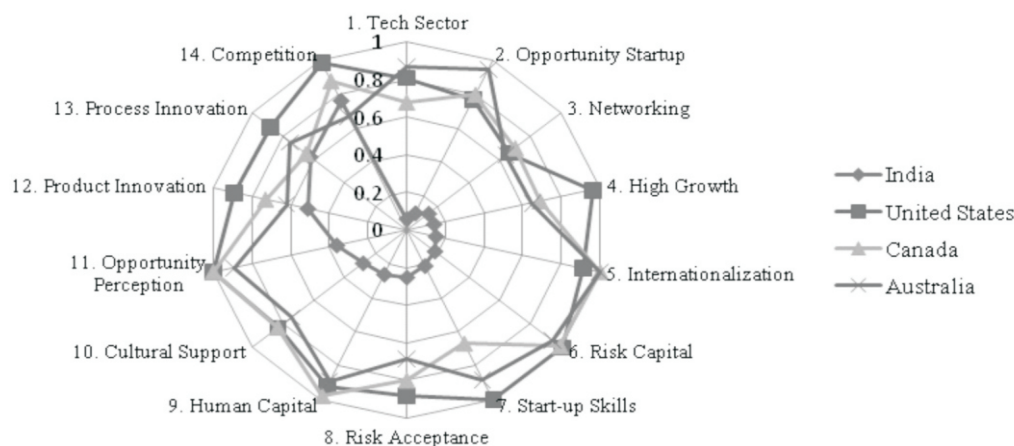
Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) demonstrated the exciting features of entrepreneurial societies. The GEI considered fourteen factors (fig. 1) to assess the entrepreneurial strengths of various countries. As per the report, ten states have qualified the test to be the top class entrepreneurship destinations (GEDI, 2015a). While the USA, Canada, Australia, Denmark, and Sweden occupied the first five ranks, countries such as Taiwan, Iceland, Switzerland, the UK, and France took the next positions from six to ten. We define these nations as entrepreneurial societies. In general, the term refers to “the rise of the entrepreneur... (which) is not just about economics (alone, but)... reflects profound changes in attitudes to everything from individual careers to the social contract. It signals the birth of an entrepreneurial society” (The Economist, 2009).

As India did not feature in the top ten entrepreneurial societies, we attempted to figure out if India has scored high on any of the factors in comparison with the top three entrepreneurship countries in the world. As

shown in fig. 1, India's ability to conduct process innovation (factor no.13) is par with Canada. On the competition factor, India surpassed Australia.

Baring two factors, India has scored poorly on all other elements in comparison with the top three entrepreneurial countries.

**Fig. 1 India's Status against the World's Best Entrepreneurial Societies**

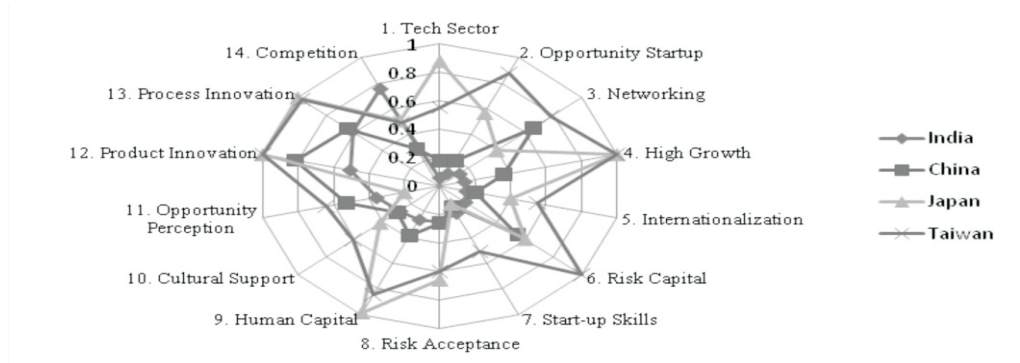


Source: GEDI, 2015b

Given the poor performance of India in comparison with the top entrepreneurship countries, we intended to identify India's position in Asia by comparing it with other Asian nations. India scored high on competition in comparison to all the other Asian industrialised countries (fig. 2). Interestingly, Japan and Taiwan

stand out as the most dominant entrepreneurship destinations in Asia. India, in comparison to China, scored high on six factors that include competition, process innovation, cultural support, risk acceptance, and startup-skills (fig. 2). However, the overall picture of India, in comparison, appears meek.

**Fig. 2 India's Entrepreneurial Society Status in Comparison with Asian Countries**



Source: GEDI, 2015b

Based on the view presented above, it becomes unclear as to when would a state achieve the status of an entrepreneurial society? So far, there have been two broad arguments to address the question. One is a socio-cultural centric argument (Audretsch, 2007: 3-27) and the other is demography and family-centric (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). For Audretsch, high information societies are likely to attain an entrepreneurial society status. As there is a spread of information, over a period, certain societies evolve from conservative to liberal in their approach to life. It gives rise to open-mindedness, acceptance of social and cultural differences including race, ethnic identities, and multiple sexual orientations. Building on the argument, Audretsch goes on to articulate the case of the US. As a result of opening its trade borders for goods from high-quality manufacturing destinations such as Germany and Japan, in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US invited a massive competition for its domestic automobile companies. Aggressive marketing strategies of the German and Japanese automobile companies forced the US counterparts to reinvent their products. While struggling to remain competitive in the domestic market, the US companies started to lose their global presence. Soon, the automobile space in the US market appeared to be obsolete. Around the same time (the 1960s), the US witnessed a change in people's approach to lifestyle. People started to look beyond an average middle-class life.<sup>1</sup> Quality of

being complacent with the past achievements began to be questioned.

For Audretsch, the change in people's mindset had got not much to do with a general trend (more often argued by economists) of a mature economy, which gradually moves from manufacturing to the service sector. Instead, the pattern was primarily because people of the US realised that the old methods of manufacturing in industrial segments such as automobiles and electronics were obsolete. As a result, people of the US gave birth to computers and computer-based services. In a way, it changed the face of the industrial organisation starting from the 1960s. For Audretsch, the new age business giants such as Dell, Apple, and Microsoft were the offshoots of the change in people's attitude.

**The new age business giants such as Dell, Apple, and Microsoft were the offshoots of the change in people's attitude.**

Quite in line with Audretsch's argument, Aldrich and Cliff (2003) had offered a family-centric view to show that changes in the demographic composition of the population of a country have been the key drivers of entrepreneurship in North America. For Aldrich and Cliff, changing size of family (single person families), marriage age, fertility rate, labor market participation of different gender, and other interrelated demographic features could yield insights on whether an economy is on its path to achieve the status of entrepreneurial society.

<sup>1</sup> Young generation became self-critical of middle class family life where you work eight hours a day and five days a week.

In a nutshell, The Economist (2009), Aldrich and Cliff (2003), and Audretsch (2007) have articulated the idea of entrepreneurial society on the lines of people's attitude and change in approach to life. Mostly, these factors emanate from demographic features. If these factors have explained the changes in the entrepreneurial mindset of the US, can they set a historical context for India's aspiration to be an entrepreneurial society in comparison with the other leading entrepreneurial nations in the world? To address the question, we present country-level data for seven countries under the following demography related subtitles; family size, literacy rate, singulate mean age at marriage, fertility rate, the density of population, urban v/s rural population, and at the end, registration of new businesses in different countries.

### **Family Size**

Aldrich and Cliff (2003) were of the view that family size works as a double-edged sword for entrepreneurship. While the smaller size and single person families encourage people to take up the enterprising activities, the large size families may not be well suited for individuals to become entrepreneurs. It is argued that humiliation to a failed entrepreneur is smaller in a small family circle than in a large family. Also, in a large family, dependency size and family compulsions may compel a young person to earn a stable livelihood than venture into a risky domain like entrepreneurship. On the contrary, member of a small family is most likely to have poor social network support as against large size family.

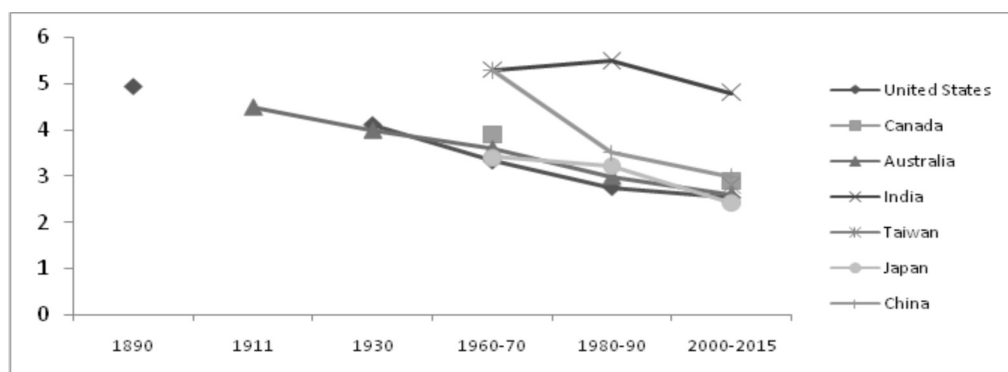
It is evident that smaller the size of a family, greater the entrepreneurial spirit as shown in fig. 3. All the three major industrialised countries in the world, on an average, have less than three members in their families. On the contrary, on an average, India has close to five members living in each family. India's family size is almost comparable to that of the 1890s family size in the US.

**Smaller the size of a family, greater the entrepreneurial spirit.**

One could even argue that India is the second largest populated country (16% of the total world's population) in the world and as a result, each family is likely to have more people. However, despite hosting 19% of the total world's population, China has less than three persons in a family. Fig. 3 demonstrates that countries with more nuclear families are likely to prosper faster than those with amore number of people in a household.

India being a diversified country with a federal governance structure has several states with the difference in political ideologies. As a result industrialisation in the country is not evenly distributed across all the states. Therefore, it is quite intriguing to see whether India's most industrialised states have recorded a different family size in comparison to the national average. As shown in fig. 4, except for Tamilnadu, family size of the other six states is close to the national average. Interestingly, Gujrat and Uttar Pradesh (UP) surpassed the national average (4.8). Difference between the

**Fig. 3 Comparison of India's Family size against Those in the Entrepreneurial Societies**



Source: Compiled by author from various datasets<sup>2</sup>

size of families in urban and rural areas across seven states, though appears to be negligible, are indicative of changes in urban India (fig. 4). India being predominantly an agrarian society, even today, where more than 60% population reside, it appears that it may have a long way to travel to become an entrepreneurial society. In brief, as it stands today, none of the industrialised states in India recorded a family size comparable to the

most entrepreneurial countries in the world.

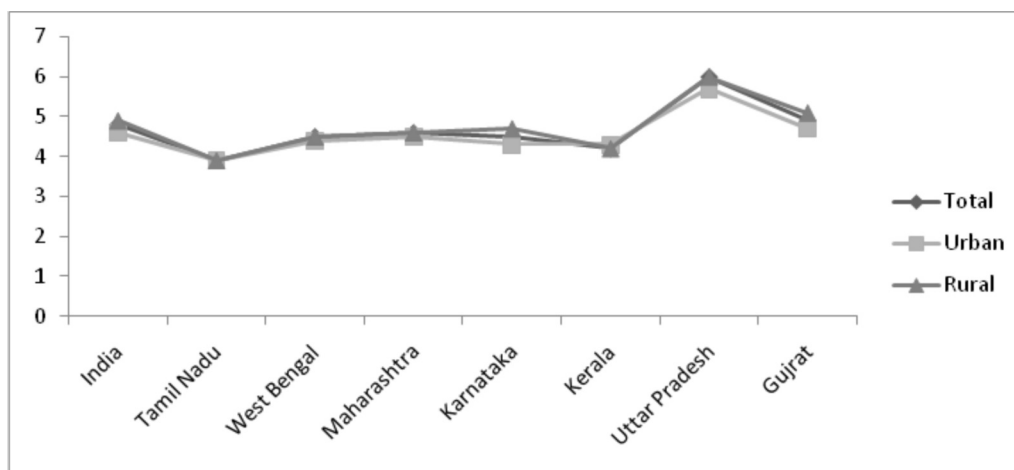
### Literacy Rate

Broadly, literate is someone who knows reading and writing. For developed countries such as the US, Canada,<sup>3</sup> and Australia, the same definition of literate may appear redundant because most people above the age of either seven or fifteen years must have already attained the minimum ability to write and read. If so, what are they now concerned? As it appears, for these countries, quality of education is a prime concern regarding how many people can comprehend the knowledge on various parameters such as prose literacy, documentary literacy, and quantitative lit-

<sup>2</sup> Data for China: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-05/15/content\\_17508456.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-05/15/content_17508456.htm) and <http://www.statista.com/statistics/278697/average-size-of-households-in-china/> accessed on 05th August 2016. Data for Australia: <https://aifs.gov.au/facts-and-figures/households-australia/households-australia-source-data#size2011> accessed on 05th August 2016. Data for the USA: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/183648/average-size-of-households-in-the-us/> accessed on August 05, 2016 Data for Canada: [http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011003\\_2-eng.pdf](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011003_2-eng.pdf) accessed on August 05, 2016 Data for Japan: <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/c0117.htm> accessed on 06 August 2016. Data for Taiwan: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=c147a0127a414b4198387e269e173937> accessed on 06 August 2016 Data for India: Census 2011.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, Canada did not conduct any official literacy survey after 1987. In the later years, Canada became interested in studying level of education in people (<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/literacy/> accessed on 06th August 2016). Therefore, UNESCO also does not report any literacy data for Canada.

Fig. 4 Household Size in Selected Indian States as per the Percentage Distribution of Establishments with 10 or More Workers



Source: Economic Census, 2016 & Population Census, 2011

eracy.<sup>4</sup> According to recent reports, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at least 50% adults in the US, about 45% in Australia,<sup>5</sup> and little over 40% in Canada<sup>6</sup> have low literacy skills. It means that developed societies are looking beyond just

the writing and reading skills of their citizens. Perhaps developed societies seemed to emphasise on overall cognitive skills to assert the level of learning amongst their citizens.

<sup>4</sup> 1. Prose literacy: the ability to understand and use information from texts such as editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction. 2) Document literacy: the ability to locate and use information from documents such as job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and graphs. 3) Quantitative literacy: the ability to perform arithmetic functions such as balancing a cheque book, calculating a tip, or completing an order form. An average of the results from these three literacy categories is used in the Conference Board's ranking system" (Source: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education/adult-literacy-rate-low-skills.aspx> accessed on 06 August 2016).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Chapter6102008> accessed on 06th August 2016.

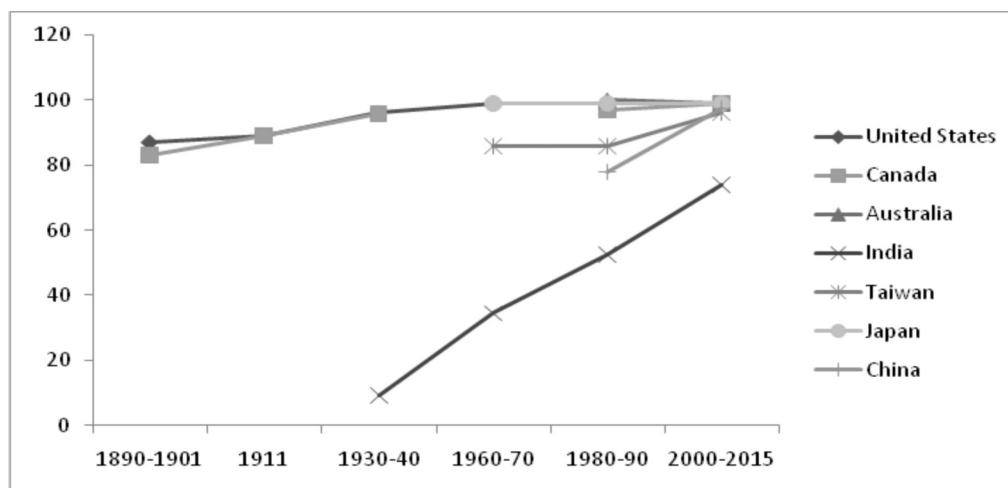
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.literacy.ca/literacy/literacy-sub/> and <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/Statcan/89-617-X/89-617-XIE2005001.pdf> accessed on 06 August 2016.

In the case of India, the overall literacy (concerning just writing and reading skills) stands at 74%. As per recent reports, at least, 50% of 5<sup>th</sup>-grade children could not read a book of a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and only 45% could compute two digits second-grade subtraction problem<sup>7</sup> (Mbiti, 2016). It translates itself into a scenario where lack of knowledge in formal segments forces a large chunk of people to resort to low skilled casual wage earning.

Fig. 5 is indicative of a level of educational attainment (concerning just writing and reading skills) in high entrepre-

<sup>7</sup> Pratham (2014), Annual Status of Education report (ASER) 2013. New Delhi. India.

Fig. 5 Historical Adult Literacy Rate for Selected Countries (%)



Source: Author's compilation based on data from various sources<sup>8</sup>

neurial societies. The US and Canada, between 1930 and 1940, had attained 96% of literacy. It must have fueled entrepreneurial thinking amongst the people of these two countries. In particular, the US became more conscious of the competition of economic goods and services

<sup>8</sup> US Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/literacy/> accessed on 06 August 2016. Canada Data: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/literacy/> accessed on 06 August 2016. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002898EB.pdf> accessed on 06 August 2016. <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=ca&v=39> accessed on 06 August 2016. China Data: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/271336/literacy-in-china/> accessed on 07 August 2016. Data Australia: <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=as&v=39> accessed on 07 August 2016. India Data: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002898EB.pdf> accessed on 07 August 2016. [http://populationcommission.nic.in/content/933\\_1\\_LiteracyRate.aspx](http://populationcommission.nic.in/content/933_1_LiteracyRate.aspx) accessed on 07 August 2016. Data Taiwan: <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=tw&v=39> accessed on 07 August 2016. Data Japan: <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=ja&v=39> accessed on 07 August 2016.

towards the 1960s (Audretsch, 2007:3-27). By this time, the US had attained almost 99% of literacy. Around the same period, Japan had also achieved the highest literacy rate; it established itself as a manufacturing superpower in the world. As per the available data, Australia reached the highest literacy rate by 1990. Interestingly, China attained almost 98% of literacy by the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 1960-70s, though, Taiwan appeared to have struggled in comparison with China, it seemed to be following almost the same pattern as that of China in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Unfortunately, India's literacy rate, as it stands today (as per 2011 census), is not even comparable with the trends in the US during 1890-1901. The US, then, seemed to have achieved more than 87% of literacy. Since then, it took six decades (1960-70) to produce close to

the total literacy in the country. Comparatively, China's achievement appears to be commendable as they achieved the highest level of literacy in two decades (78 - 98%).

**Higher comprehending skills and learning abilities amongst the literate may continue to be a concern.**

While the US and Canada had attained the highest possible literacy rate (96%) during 1930-40, India had a minimum literacy rate (9%) in those decades. From there, it took almost seven decades to achieve 74% literacy. In other words, India has added one percent of literacy rate every year to its total stock. Going by the trend, India is going to take another twenty-six years to achieve the highest literacy. If that is the case, by 2031 census, India will have accomplished little above 90% literacy. However, higher comprehending skills and learning abilities amongst the literate may continue to be a concern.

#### **Singulate Mean Age at Marriage**

Arguably, the industrious way of life brings changes to various aspects of human life including a shift in age at first marriage. We wonder what if it has inverse causation. In other words, delayed and postponed marriages due to a rise in literacy and awareness, might cause industrial activities in society. Fig. 6 depicts the changing singulate age for seven nations. While Japan, Australia, Canada, and Taiwan, during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attained thirty years of age for both

men and women, China, and the US stood at twenty-five years of age at first marriage. This scenario presents an inconclusive picture about the impact of delayed marriages on entrepreneurial activities.

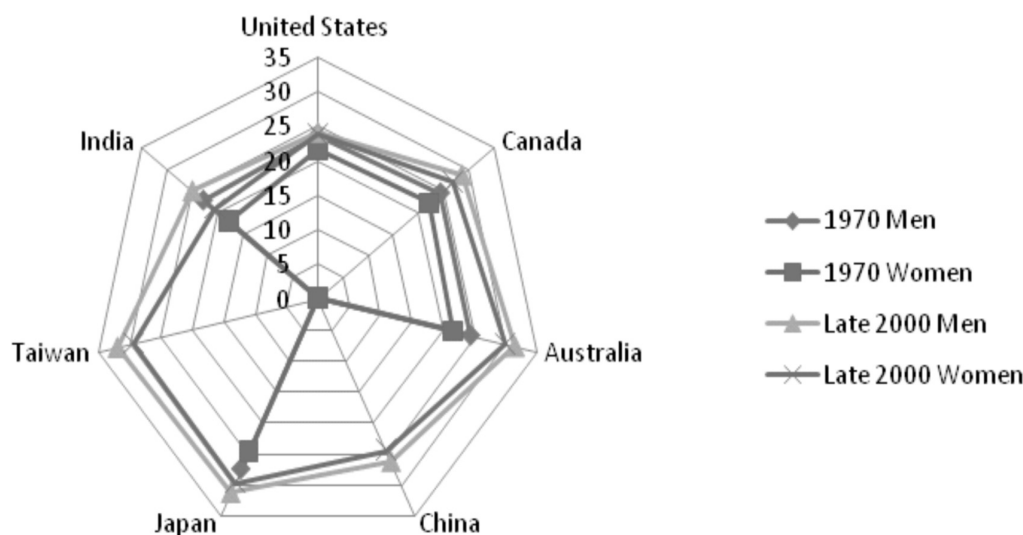
In the case of India, unlike the other countries, there is a gap in singulate mean age between men and women. On an average, while women get married at the age between 20 and 21, men get married at 24-25. Since 1970, there has been a gradual increase in the age of women at their first marriage. The average age of marriage for women was less than 18 years before the 1970s.

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It could be argued that postponement of marriage might reflect a scenario where people may have fewer dependents to feel pressurised to opt for a job or comprise on dream profession. For an individual, early marriage implies series of responsibilities that includes urgency to settle down with a livelihood option. Why should it not imply something to the tune that while dependents focus on entrepreneurship, the 'breadwinner' works for fixed hours? However, if it is a nuclear family, the dependent member has a role to play in household-work and childcare. If it is a large size family, the dependents also have a job as elderly care givers besides household chores. Early marriage also means incompleteness of basic education that might result in poor skill

formation. Briefly, entrepreneurship or industrious way of visualising one's life takes a back seat if people opt for early marriage.

Fig. 6 Singulate Mean Age at Marriage for Selected Countries



Data source: <https://esa.un.org> accessed 08 August 2016<sup>9</sup>

### Fertility Rate

As shown in fig. 7, in the early 1960s, Australia, Canada, and the US had a fertility rate between 3 and 4. As these countries continued to grow entrepreneurially, the fertility rate started declining quite sharply. As it stands today, the fertility rate for these countries is between one and two. It is quite difficult to argue whether the decline in fertility rate

boosted the entrepreneurial efforts or increased industrial activities impacted the fertility rate. A country like China consciously effectuated policy changes to bring fertility rate down. China had brought down fertility rate to 2.6 in 1980 as against 5.9 in the 1960s (fig. 7). Therefore, in the case of China, entrepreneurship played no role in bringing fertility rate down.

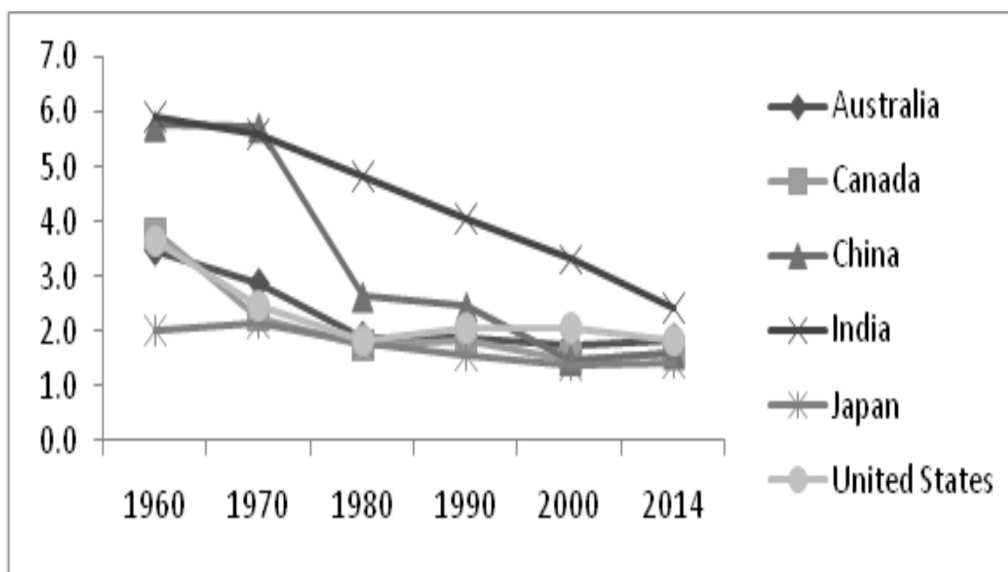
Trends in the western countries and Japan in the east support the argument that entrepreneurial transformation of society might impact fertility rates and in turn further impact enterprising attitudes of people. However, the case of China does not fit into the same argument. Perhaps China's strict one-child

<sup>9</sup>For ex: to extract data for the US the following link was used: <https://esa.un.org/ffps/Index.html#/marital>Status>Data> Similarly, for each country search was carried out. Data for Taiwan could not be found on esa.un.org, instead data was found on <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2013/05/27/379657/Average-marriage.htm> accessed on 08 August 2016.

policy had brought relief to the economy as a whole by reducing people's high dependency ratio over the limited resources. Artificially created fertility features led China to attain high economic growth surpassing all the other

countries in the 1980s, and 1990s. The case of India appears to be different. India's fertility rate has been declining at a steady pace. It is quite likely that India's fertility rate might fall well below two by 2050<sup>10</sup>

Fig. 7 Fertility Rate of India & Renowned Entrepreneurial Societies



Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?Accessed on 07 November 2016>.

### Density of Population

Another feature that explains the enormity of social and economic well-being of a nation is population density. Going by a general perception that higher density lessens the development of people, we examine it for the seven countries. As shown in Table 1, despite having the largest population in the world, China has a lower density of people owing to its large size of geopolitical space. Canada and Australia present a very different picture of being the least populated countries.

**The density of population has very little implication on entrepreneurial society.**

India's density of population falls between Japan and Taiwan. From Table 1, it is clear that the density of population has very little implication on entrepreneurial society. The USA, Canada, Australia, and China present a

<sup>10</sup><https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Graphs/Probabilistic/FERT/TOT/> accessed on November 7, 2016.

case of higher proportion of geopolitical area for each person in the country. On the contrary, Japan and Taiwan have higher density of population. Despite such a large dependency over resources, Japan and Taiwan have at-

tained entrepreneurial society status. Unfortunately, India has not been able to transform the gigantic size of its population (world's second largest) into industrious or productive enough in the modern economy.

**Table 1 Density of Population (People per sq. km of Land Area)**

Year	World and selected countries							
	World	USA	Canada	Australia	China	Japan	Taiwan	India
1961	24	20	2	1	70	259	296	154
1990	41	27	3	2	121	339	571	293
2015	57	35	4	3	146	348	660	441

Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/> accessed 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016. Data for Taiwan, accessed from <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/taiwan-population/> on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2016

### Urban v/s Rural Population

Does the urbanisation explain the entrepreneurial way of living in some countries? Fig. 8 offers initial answers to the question. During 2015, close to 55% of the population lived in urban locations in the world. Some of the most industrialised economies surpassed the average mark significantly. Japan occupies the first place in the world as the most urbanised country with its 94% population living in urban locations followed by Australia with close to 90% population in urban areas. The US and Canada with 84% of people in cities occupy the third rank. It is clear that higher the urbanisation, higher would be the industrial growth in an economy.

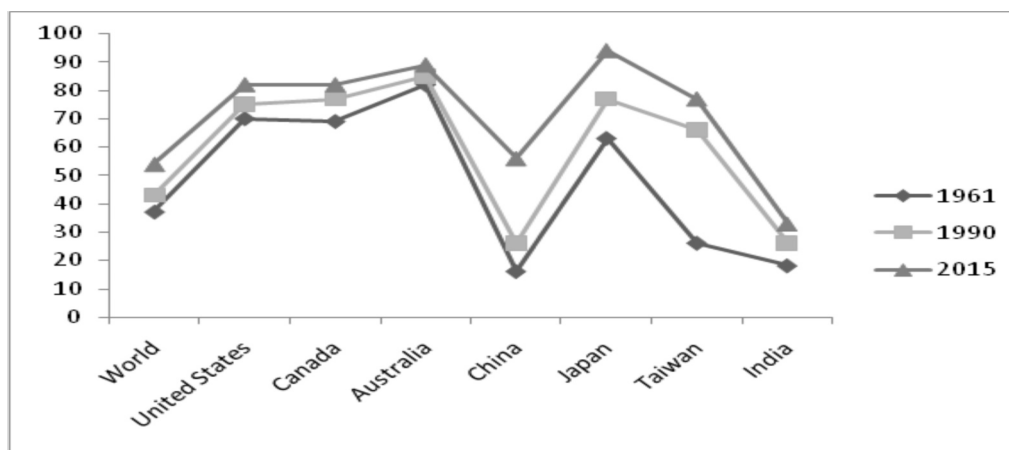
In Taiwan, close to 77% of its population resides in cities. China, though, not as remarkable as Taiwan or the other world's best entrepreneurial societies, it is close to the world's average with its 56% of people living in cities. Amongst all the seven countries, in fig. 8, India is

lagging behind the world average with only 33% of its population residing in urban areas. With this explanation, we might end up getting into a dilemma, 'the chicken or the egg'. In other words, whether cities were built, and then entrepreneurs came to cities, or businesses came into existence, and then it gave impetus to form cities? The question needs to be answered using anecdotal examples and case studies. However, from the fig. 8, it becomes clear that countries with higher urbanised population attract a higher number of entrepreneurs to come and register their businesses there (Table 2).

**Countries with higher urbanised population attract a higher number of entrepreneurs to come and register their businesses there.**

Recent data on registration trend of limited liability corporations in selected countries provides insights into the emergence of an entrepreneurial society.

**Fig. 8 Urban Population (% of Total Population)**



Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS> accessed 12 August 2016.

Comparatively, highly urbanised economies such as the US and Australia (fig. 8) recorded an increased number of enterprises registered over a period (Table 2). Though, for the US, businesses registered are not grown exponentially, the size at which registration took place is a reflection of stability in entrepreneurship in the country. In the case of Australia, the numbers almost doubled over the last few years (from 2004 to 2014). It appears that Japan with 94% of urbanisation hit the pinnacle of economic prosperity leaving very little space for new entrepreneurship (Table 2). Probably the phe-

nomenon also reflects a slowdown in a traditional manufacturing-centric economy like Japan, which is yet to attain critical mass in computer technology and service industries in comparison with the US. As shown in fig. 2, a fewer number of registration of companies is a reflection of japan’s reduced score on opportunity perception and start-up skills in the country. Quite surprisingly, Canada, with almost the same amount of urbanisation in comparison with the US, seemingly has not done well in attracting more registration of enterprises from year on year (Table 2).

**Table 2 Number of Newly Registered Limited Liability Corporations Over the Past seven Years**

	United States	Canada	Australia	Japan	India
2004	653,887	18953	121986	na	36900
2010	560,588	24661	160615	87688	64900
2012	631,817	25723	185009	91751	99600
2014	652,780	30904	231920	11886	98000

Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.BUS.NREG?locations=IN> accessed 12th August 2016, and for US Data we accessed on [http://www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/bdm\\_chart1.htm](http://www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/bdm_chart1.htm) on accessed on 12th August 2016.

Quite surprisingly, India has been attracting attention from the entrepreneurs. With these elements, some rudimentary comparison can be made here. Regarding the size of new business registration, India's total enrollment of new businesses is just one-sixth of the US, and less than half of Australia. However, if compared to Japan and Canada, India is ahead on the count of enterprises registered (Table 2). As per 2014 data, India's number of new businesses is eight times more than of Japan, and three times better than of Canada. This simple comparison is indicative of a booming entrepreneurial culture in India.

### Conclusion

Entrepreneurial society is comprised people who position themselves as creative, competitive, and adventurous. The population possesses abilities to transform and discover resources. In the context of uprising entrepreneurial advancement, in the article, we attempted to identify socio-demographic connections to the industrialisation efforts of India. In comparison with the other leading entrepreneurial countries in the world, India seems to be on its track to achieve what the other developed countries have already completed. In this context, demographic features, though do not give us a conclusive picture, are indicative of what possibly might happen in a couple of decades later.

On the one hand, demographic features get influenced by the entrepreneurial efforts of a country, on the other hand, they effectuate overall entrepreneurial attitude of people. Further research is warranted to trace whether similar trends can be located in other developing countries. Research is also warranted to address the question; is it necessary to invest inessential amenities such as education, and reduction of family size, thereby allowing the gradual emergence of entrepreneurship on its terms?

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