

Communication

Rural Demographics of India

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With a mammoth rural population of 833 million, India bids a large rural market. The country's rural market scenario is changing because of increasing literacy, awareness of improved living standards, and modernization in the attitude, outlook and lifestyles of the rural folk, both males and females. Rural demographics serve valuable information to the stakeholders of rural areas and provide useful supplementary input for policy dialogue. This article covers four demographic areas viz., population size, population growth rate, sex ratio and literacy rate. The objective of this paper is to examine the trends, decadal differences and present scenario of selected demographics with emphasis on rural-urban distribution of population in the country.

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Introduction

In a country like India, with multilingual, multiethnic, multicultural and multi-level society, the Census stretches a snapshot of not only the demographic but also the social, cultural and economic profile of the country at a particular point of time. Census serves as a source of primary data at the level of village or town. It provides precious information for planning and formulation of policies by the government and is also used widely by national and international agencies, business persons, industrialists, scholars and many more. In addition, it provides a basic frame for conduct of various surveys in the country. Any informed decision making that is based on empirical data is dependent on the Census. Most of the data in this paper is based on the provisional population totals, Census of India, 2011. Census 2011 is the 15th Census of India since 1872 and the 7th since independence. According to Census 2011, India encompasses 35 States/Union Territories, 640 Districts, 5,924 Sub-districts, 7,935 Towns (4,041 Statutory Towns and 3,894 Census Towns) and 6,40,867 Villages.

Demographic factors such as size of the population, population growth rate, rural-urban pattern, sex ratio, literacy

rate, age composition, ethnic composition, density of population, family size, nature of the family, income levels etc. have significant business implications (Cherunilam, 2009). Peter Drucker emphasizes the tremendous economic and business implications of demographic changes, suggests that any strategy, that is any commitment of present resources to the future expectations, has to start with demographics (Drucker, 1999).

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With a mammoth rural population of 833 million, India bids a large rural market potential. The rural population of India is two and half times bigger than the total population of USA (309 million), about six times bigger than the total population of Russian Federation (140 million), and six and half times bigger than the total population of Japan (128 million). Rural India presents a baffling dichotomy of images – on the one hand persisting poverty and on the other hand corporate giants betting big on the growing potential of rural markets. The fact is that rural India is anything but a homogeneous category (Abusaleh & Pany, 2005). A market comprises people for ex-

change of goods and services (Gandhi, 1995). The size and growth rate of the population, gender segmentation, level of literacy and the speed of urbanization are some of the demographic factors that need to be understood to estimate the extent of marketable opportunities. The huge gap in rural and urban population, changes in rural consumer behavior, size and scattered rural markets, age and gender divisions pose complex problems and marketers need to make diverse strategies to tap the rural markets. Therefore, it is important to understand selected rural demographics of India.

Rural Urban Distribution

Marketing principles are the same for rural or urban markets. It is the approach to applying these principles that requires adjustments according to specific opportunities and constraints resulting from a host of rural conditions in India that a marketer faces (Kazmi, 2007).

Population Size

The size of the population is an important determinant of demand for many products. There are countries with less than one lakh population on the one hand and those with more than thousand million on the other.

Table 1 Rural Urban Distribution of India's Population (million)

	2001	2011	Difference
India	1029 (100)	1210.2 (100)	181.4 (100)
Rural	743 (72.2)	833.1 (68.84)	90.4 (49.72)
Urban	286 (27.8)	377.1 (31.16)	91.0 (50.28)

Note: Figures in brackets are percentages to total.

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

The level of urbanization increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011 whereas the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% in 2001 to 68.84% in 2011.

As per the Provisional Population Totals of Census of India 2011, the total population of India is 1210.2 million. Of this, the rural population accounts for 833.1 million and the urban population 377.1 million. In absolute numbers, the rural population has increased by 90.47 million and the urban population by 91.00 million over the last decade. In percentage terms, the rural population formed 68.84% of the total population with the urban population constituting 31.16% (increase of 3.35%). Himachal Pradesh (89.96%) has the largest proportion of rural population, while Delhi (97.50%) has the highest proportion of urban population. For the first time since independence, the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than in rural areas. The level of urbanization increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011 whereas the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% in 2001 to 68.84% in 2011.

Out of the child population of 158.8 million in the age group of 0-6 in the country, the rural child population stands at 117.6 million and urban at 41.2 million in 2011. The child population has declined by 5.0 million in the country during the past decade. There is a decline of 8.9 million children in rural

areas, while urban areas has shown increase of 3.9 million. The country has observed a decline in the child population of about 3 percentage points over the decade – rural areas show a decline of about 3% and urban a decline of 2%. The growth rate of child population has been -3.08% in the last decade [Rural (-) 7.04%, Urban (+) 10.32%].

Population Growth Rate

There has been explosive growth of the global population, particularly in the developing countries. The population growth rate has fallen sharply in developed countries and even developing countries are experiencing significant decline in recent years.

The growth rate of population in India in 2001-11 is 17.64%. The growth rate of population in rural and urban areas is 12.18% and 31.80% respectively. Bihar (23.90%) exhibited the highest decadal growth rate in rural population. The slowing down of the overall growth rate of population is due to the sharp decline in the growth rate in rural areas, while the growth rate in urban areas remains almost the same.

The Empowered Action Group (EAG) States are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa. Though the growth rate of population in rural areas of EAG States is nearly three times that in rural areas in non EAG States in 2011, it is for the first time that significant decrease of

Table 2 Decadal Growth Rate of India's Population (%)

	1991-2001	2001-2011	Difference
India	21.5	17.6	-3.9
Rural	18.1	12.2	-5.9
Urban	31.5	31.8	+0.3

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

Table 3 Growth Rate of Population in India (%)

	1991-2001	2001-2011	Difference
EAG	25.0	20.9	-4.1
Rural	23.5	18.7	-4.8
Urban	31.6	29.9	-1.7
Non EAG	18.9	15.0	-3.9
Rural	13.2	5.7	-7.5
Urban	31.5	32.7	+1.2

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

growth rate is seen in the rural areas of EAG States. Whereas Non-EAG States have shown decline in growth since 1971-81, the EAG States have declined only during the last decade. The growth in rural areas in Non-EAG States during 2001-11 has sharply declined to 5.71%. The EAG States have a lower percentage of urban population (21.13%) in comparison to Non-EAG States (39.66%).

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Sex Ratio

Sex ratio represents number of female population available for 1000 male population.

Table 4 Decadal Changes in Sex Ratio in India

	2001	2011	Difference
Overall			
India	933	940	+7
Rural	946	947	+1
Urban	900	926	+26
0-6 years			
India	927	914	-13
Rural	934	919	-15
Urban	906	902	-4

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

The sex ratio in the country has risen from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011, an absolute increase by 7 points. For rural areas in the country as a whole there has been an increase by only 1 point from 946 in 2001 to 947 in 2011. In urban areas there has been an appreciable gain of 26 points from 900 in 2001 to 926 in 2011. Kerala has the highest sex ratio in total (1084), rural (1077) and urban (1091). Rural Chandigarh (691) and urban Daman & Diu (550) show the lowest sex ratio in the country respectively. Eight states namely Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and 1 Union Territory (UT) Lakshadweep show fall in the sex ratio in rural areas and 2 UTs Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli in urban areas.

Census 2011 marks a considerable fall in child sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years and has reached an all-time low of 914 since 1961. It has declined by 13 points from 927 in 2001. In rural areas the fall is significant (-15 points) from 934 in 2001 to 919 in 2011. In urban areas the decline is limited to 4 points from 906 in 2001 to 902 in 2011. Delhi (809) has recorded the lowest and Andaman &

Nicobar Islands (975) the highest child sex ratio in rural areas. Haryana (829) has recorded the lowest and Nagaland (979) the highest child sex ratio in urban areas. Though the urban child sex ratio is far worse than in the rural areas, the fall in child sex ratio in rural areas is around four times that in urban areas. In fact the decline is more gradual in urban areas.

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Literacy Rate

The number of literates in India is 778.5 million in 2011 of which 493.0 million are in rural areas and 285.4 million in urban areas. There has been an increase of 217.8 million literates over the decade 2001-11. Out of this, rural areas account for 131.1 million and urban areas 86.6 million. The highest number of rural literates has been recorded in Uttar Pradesh (88.4 million). Maharashtra (40.8 million) has recorded the highest number of literates in urban areas.

Table 5 Literacy Rate in India (Total) (%)

	2001	2011	Difference
Overall			
India	64.8	74.0	+9.2
Rural	58.7	68.9	+10.2
Urban	79.9	85.0	+5.1

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

The literacy rate of India is 74.04% in 2011. In rural areas the literacy rate is 68.91% and in urban areas it is 84.98%. The decadal change works out

to 9.21 points overall and –10.17 points in rural areas and 5.06 points in urban areas. The improvement in literacy rate in rural areas is two times that in urban areas during the decade 2001-11. The urban literacy gap which was 21.2 percentage points in 2001 has come down to 16.1 percentage points in 2011.

Table 6 Male Female Literacy Rate in India (%)

	2001	2011	Difference
Males			
India	75.3	82.1	+6.8
Rural	70.7	78.6	+7.9
Urban	86.3	89.7	+3.4
Females			
India	53.7	65.5	+11.8
Rural	46.1	58.8	+12.7
Urban	72.9	79.9	+7.0

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

The male literacy rate which is 82.14 (Rural:78.57, Urban: 89.67) is higher than the female literacy rate 65.46 (Rural:58.75, Urban,79.92). The increase in female literacy rate is significantly higher in all areas i.e., total (11.79 points), rural (12.62 points) and urban (7.06 points) in comparison to corresponding male literacy rates – total (6.88 points), rural (7.87 points) and urban (3.40 points) over the decade. It is significant to note that the gap in literacy rate among males and females has reduced to 16.68 in the country. The gap is 19.82 points in the rural areas and 9.75 points in urban areas. Kerala (92.92) ranks first in rural areas whereas Mizoram (98.1) ranks first in urban areas. As far as male literacy rate is concerned, Kerala (95.29) ranks first in rural areas whereas Mizoram (98.67) ranks first in urban areas. There has been a consistent increase in both male and female literacy rate in urban areas. Rajasthan (46.25) has recorded lowest female literacy rate in rural areas,

whereas, Jammu & Kashmir (70.19) has the lowest female literacy rate in urban areas. The steady increase in the female literacy rate has reduced the gender gap significantly. Lowest male literacy rate in rural areas has been recorded in Arunachal Pradesh (68.79) and in urban areas in Uttar Pradesh (81.75).

Rural Population in States

As per Census 2011, Uttar Pradesh has the largest rural population of 155.11 million (18.62% of the country's rural population) followed by Bihar 92.07 million (11.1%) and West Bengal 62.21 million (7.5%). Contrary, Sikkim has the least rural population of 0.45 million (0.1% of the country's rural population) followed by Mizoram 0.52 million (0.1%) and Goa 0.55 million (0.1%) reared at bottom line of the country's rural population.

Growth in rural population of India is steadily declining since 1991. It has

Table 7 Rural Population in Indian States

	Absolute	Share (%)
Top Three States		
Uttar Pradesh	155.11 million	18.6
Bihar	92.07 million	11.1
West Bengal	62.21 million	7.5
Bottom Three States		
Sikkim	0.45 million	0.1
Mizoram	0.52 million	0.1
Goa	0.55 million	0.1

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

been recorded at 12.18% during 2001-11. Meghalaya (27%) and Bihar (24%) witnessed largest growth among the States in 2001-11. Further, four States viz., Kerala (26%), Goa (19%), Nagaland (15%) and Sikkim (5%) recorded decline in rural population during the same period.

Table 8 Urban Population in Indian States

	Absolute	Share (%)
Top Three States		
Maharashtra	50.8 million	13.5
Uttar Pradesh	44.4 million	11.8
Tamil Nadu	34.9 million	9.3
Bottom Three States		
Sikkim	0.15 million	Negligible
Arunachal Pradesh	0.31 million	0.1
Mizoram	0.56 million	0.1

Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals - India

Urban Population in States

As per Census 2011, Maharashtra has the highest urban population of 50.83 million (13.5% of country's urban population) in the country followed by Uttar Pradesh 44.4 million (11.8%) and Tamil Nadu 34.9 million (9.3%). On the other hand, the states Sikkim (0.15 million), Arunachal Pradesh (0.31 million) and Mizoram (0.56 million) stood at bottom line with negligible to 0.1% share of the

urban population. Thus, the state Sikkim claims that it has least rural population of 0.45 million as well as least urban population of 0.15 million in absolute figures.

More than 30% growth in urban population in States such as Sikkim (153%), Kerala (93%), Tripura (76%) is significant.

There has been a spurt in growth of population in urban areas in the country, which could be due to migration, natural increase and inclusion of new areas under 'Urban'. More than 30% growth in urban population in States such as Sikkim (153%), Kerala (93%), Tripura (76%) is significant.

Trends in Rural Urban Distribution

If the population trends go on like this, it takes two more centuries to achieve cent percent urbanization.

The rural population in India has been declining gradually from 89.2% in 1901 to 82.7% in 1951 to 68.8% in 2011. The urban population has been moving in a progressive way from 10.8% in 1901 to 17.3% in 1951 to 31.2% in 2011. These trends specify that a three-fold develop-

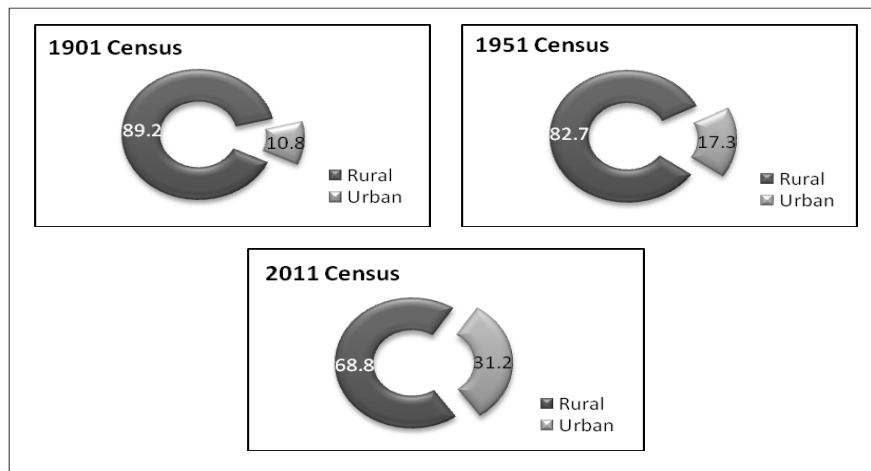
ment in the process of urbanization recorded in the country during the period 1901-2011. If the population trends go on like this, it takes two more centuries to achieve cent percent urbanization.

Conclusion

The rural population of India is number of times bigger than total population of many countries in the world.

India has a very large rural market potential besides saturated urban markets. The rural population of India is number of times bigger than total population of many countries in the world. Rural demographics serve a basic structure for conduct of various surveys in the country. There is large demarcation between the rural and urban population in terms of size, growth, sex and literacy levels in

Fig. 1 Trends in Rural Urban Distribution of Population in India (%) (1901, 1951, 2011)



Source: Census 2011 - Provisional Population Totals – India

the country as well as in different states. The country observed a threefold development in urbanization since 1901. This clearly depicts a considerable change in attitude of rural population towards modernization and urbanization in the era of global village.

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