# CENSUS OF INDIA 2011: SOME HIGHLIGHTS

The Indian census is a remarkable administrative feat. Census 2011 was the largest such exercise in the world. Our census history goes back to 1872 when although a census was conducted, it is not regarded as a regular census as it was not conducted at the same time. Since 1881 India has conducted decennial censuses without any interruption. We should be proud of our census. China conducted a census in 2010 but in terms of scope, coverage and comprehensiveness our census questionnaires go much beyond a headcount. Granted, China's headcount is higher than ours in 2011 but there the ball stops. We have numerous tables on the demographic, social and economic life of the people in this country of great demographic diversity. The first step in the 2011 census was conducting houselisting in 2010 in every village, town and city in India. Along with it a Housing census was also conducted. The questionnaire had as many as 35 questions and collected valuable data. The enumeration of households took place from February 9 to 28, 2011 and the provisional results were declared towards the end of March 2011. In fact a printed monograph running into 189 pages was available for the general reader, apart from the website.

Paper 1 of Census 2011 on **Provisional Population Totals** was released by Dr. C. Chandramouli, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India. In this brief article, I shall give some highlights. But before I do so, I would like to make a comment on the format of data presentation. Usually, all the 35 states are put in an alphabetical order and so also the Union Territories (UTs). In an earlier case, the states and UTs were presented as per geographical regions. This again was not user-friendly.

**Table. Population size, Growth rate and Sex Ratio, 2011**

| | India/State/ Union Territory | Persons | Per cent of India's Pop | Decadal growth rate | Sex ratio (females per 1000 males) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Uttar Pradesh | 199,581,477 | 16.49 | 20.09 | 908 |
| 2 | Maharashtra | 112,372,972 | 9.29 | 15.99 | 925 |
| 3 | Bihar | 103,804,637 | 8.58 | 25.07 | 916 |
| 4 | West Bengal | 91,347,736 | 7.55 | 13.93 | 947 |
| 5 | Andhra Pradesh | 84,665,533 | 7.00 | 11.1 | 992 |
| 6 | Madhya Pradesh | 72,597,565 | 6.00 | 20.3 | 930 |
| 7 | Tamil Nadu | 72,138,958 | 5.96 | 15.6 | 995 |
| 8 | Rajasthan | 68,621,012 | 5.67 | 21.44 | 926 |
| 9 | Karnataka | 61,130,704 | 5.05 | 15.67 | 968 |
| 10 | Gujarat | 60,383,628 | 4.99 | 19.17 | 918 |
| 11 | Orissa | 41,947,358 | 3.47 | 13.97 | 978 |
| 12 | Kerala | 33,387,677 | 2.76 | 4.86 | 1,084 |
| 13 | Jharkhand | 32,966,238 | 2.72 | 22.34 | 947 |
| 14 | Assam | 31,169,272 | 2.58 | 16.93 | 954 |
| 15 | Punjab | 27,704,236 | 2.29 | 13.73 | 893 |
| 16 | Chhattisgarh | 25,540,196 | 2.11 | 22.59 | 991 |
| 17 | Haryana | 25,353,081 | 2.09 | 19.9 | 877 |
| 18 | NCT of Delhi | 16,753,235 | 1.38 | 20.96 | 866 |
| 19 | Jammu & Kashmir | 12,548,926 | 1.04 | 23.71 | 883 |
| 20 | Uttarakhand | 10,116,752 | 0.84 | 19.17 | 963 |
| **Sub Total** | **1,184,131,193** | **97.85** | | | |
| **B. Pop 1-10 M** | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Himachal Pradesh | 6,856,509 | 0.57 | 12.81 | 974 |
| 2 | Tripura | 3,671,032 | 0.30 | 14.75 | 961 |
| 3 | Meghalaya | 2,964,007 | 0.24 | 27.82 | 986 |
| 4 | Manipur | 2,721,756 | 0.22 | 18.65 | 987 |
| 5 | Nagaland | 1,980,602 | 0.16 | -0.47 | 931 |
| 6 | Goa | 1,457,723 | 0.12 | 8.17 | 968 |
| 7 | Arunachal Pradesh | 1,382,611 | 0.11 | 25.92 | 920 |
| 8 | Puducherry UT | 1,244,464 | 0.10 | 27.72 | 1,038 |
| 9 | Mizoram | 1,091,014 | 0.09 | 22.78 | 975 |
| 10 | Chandigarh UT | 1,054,686 | 0.09 | 17.1 | 818 |
| **Sub Total** | **24,424,404** | **2.02** | | | |
| **C. Pop Below 1 M** | | | | | |
| 1 | Sikkim | 607,688 | 0.05 | 12.36 | 889 |
| 2 | Andaman & Nicobar Island UT | 379,944 | 0.03 | 6.68 | 878 |
| 3 | Dadra & Nagar Haveli UT | 342,853 | 0.03 | 55.5 | 775 |
| 4 | Daman & Diu UT | 242,911 | 0.02 | 53.54 | 618 |
| 5 | Lakshadweep UT | 64,429 | 0.01 | 6.23 | 946 |
| **Sub Total** | **1,637,825** | **0.14** | | | |

## Literacy Rate

**Table. Literacy Rate by sex, 2011 (per cent)**

| S. No. | India/State/ Union Territory | Persons | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | INDIA | 74.0 | 82.1 | 65.5 |
| **A. Pop 10 M +** | | | | |
| 1 | Kerala | 93.9 | 96.0 | 92.0 |
| 2 | NCT of Delhi UT | 86.3 | 91.0 | 80.9 |
| 3 | Maharashtra | 82.9 | 89.8 | 75.5 |
| 4 | Tamil Nadu | 80.3 | 86.8 | 73.9 |
| 5 | Uttarakhand | 79.6 | 88.3 | 70.7 |
| 6 | Gujarat | 79.3 | 87.2 | 70.7 |
| 7 | West Bengal | 77.1 | 82.7 | 71.2 |
| 8 | Punjab | 76.7 | 81.5 | 71.3 |
| 9 | Haryana | 76.6 | 85.4 | 66.8 |
| 10 | Andhra Pradesh | 75.6 | 75.6 | 59.7 |
| 11 | Karnataka | 75.6 | 82.9 | 68.1 |
| 12 | Orissa | 73.5 | 82.4 | 64.4 |
| 13 | Assam | 73.2 | 78.8 | 67.3 |
| 14 | Chhattisgarh | 71.0 | 81.5 | 60.6 |
| 15 | Madhya Pradesh | 70.6 | 80.5 | 60.0 |
| 16 | Uttar Pradesh | 69.7 | 79.2 | 59.3 |
| 17 | Jammu & Kashmir | 68.7 | 78.3 | 58.0 |
| 18 | Jharkhand | 67.6 | 78.5 | 56.2 |
| 19 | Rajasthan | 67.1 | 80.5 | 52.7 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | Bihar | 63.8 | 73.4 | 53.3 |
| **B. Pop 1-10 M** | | | | |
| 21 | Mizoram | 91.6 | 93.7 | 89.4 |
| 22 | Tripura | 87.8 | 92.2 | 83.2 |
| 23 | Goa | 87.4 | 92.8 | 81.8 |
| 24 | Puducherry UT | 86.6 | 92.1 | 81.2 |
| 25 | Chandigarh UT | 86.4 | 90.5 | 81.4 |
| 26 | Himachal Pradesh | 83.8 | 90.8 | 76.6 |
| 27 | Nagaland | 80.1 | 83.3 | 76.7 |
| 28 | Manipur | 79.9 | 86.5 | 73.2 |
| 29 | Meghalaya | 75.5 | 77.2 | 73.8 |
| 30 | Arunachal Pradesh | 67.0 | 73.7 | 59.6 |
| **C. Pop Below 1 M** | | | | |
| 31 | Lakshadweep UT | 92.3 | 96.1 | 88.3 |
| 32 | Daman & Diu UT | 87.1 | 91.5 | 79.6 |
| 33 | Andaman & Nicobar Islands UT | 86.3 | 90.1 | 81.8 |
| 34 | Sikkim | 82.2 | 87.3 | 76.4 |
| 35 | Dadra & Nagar Haveli UT | 77.7 | 86.5 | 65.9 |

## Discussion

- Among Group A states, the size of population varies from almost 200 million in Uttar Pradesh to 10 million in Uttarakhand.
- This implies that U.P. has 16.5 per cent of India's population while Uttarakhand which is an off-shoot of U.P. claims only 0.8 per cent.
- There are wide variations in the decadal growth rate of population. Bihar has a growth rate of 25.1 per cent during 2001-11 in the Group A states while the growth rate in Kerala is only 4.9 per cent.
- Among Group B states, Meghalaya has the highest growth rate (27 %) while Nagaland has a negative growth rate (-0.5%). This is because the 2001 census was messed up. Excluding Nagaland, the lowest growth rate was is Goa (8.2%).
- Among Group C states, the highest growth rate was in Dadra & Nagar Haveli UT (55.5%) while the lowest growth rate was in Lakshadweep UT (6.2%).
- The figures show the incredible demographic diversity of India. It follows therefore that there cannot be **one population policy** for the whole country. Population policies have to be state and region specific.
- The same story is repeated when we take a good look at literacy figures. Kerala has the highest literacy rate, both for males (96%) and females (92%). At the other end is Bihar where the male literacy rate is 73% while the female literacy rate is 53%. It means that almost half of the female population is illiterate. What education policy can we then formulate for the whole country? The policy must be state and region-specific.

## Worsening Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)

The Child Sex Ratio stands for the number of girls per 1000 boys in the age group 0-6 years. The most disturbing aspect of 2011 census data by far is the growing imbalance between the sexes in the youngest age group (0-6) which is indicative of female foeticide. In short, the girl child is not wanted and therefore not allowed to be born, thanks to the use of modern medical technology.

I believe that the child sex ratio (CSR) for the age group 0-6 is **not** the best way of finding out what is happening to the girl child. A better method will be to calculate the number of girls per 1000 boys **at birth**. But this assumes a good system of registration of births and deaths. In spite of the legal provision for compulsory registration of births, very few people care to register births of children, especially of girls. This is because some people think that if there is a government record of their sons, whatever the property they have will be passed on to their sons, which is a mistaken notion.

The CSR has continuously declined from 976 in 1961 to 914 in 2011. It should certainly be a cause for concern to our leaders of society and the government (see Table 3 and bar chart).

**Table. Decline in child sex ratio (0-6 years), 1961-2011**

| Year | Child sex ratio | Variation (points) |
|---|---|---|
| 1961 | 976 | - |
| 1971 | 964 | -12 |
| 1981 | 962 | -2 |
| 1991 | 945 | -17 |
| 2001 | 927 | -18 |
| 2011 | 914 | -13 |

The figures for variation in CSR are very perplexing. Out of the 20 big states, only in 4 states the CSR has increased. The greatest surprise is the jump by 48 points in Punjab and 11 points in Haryana, states which are notorious for female foeticide. This calls for evaluation of census data and also field work in Punjab and Haryana in particular. My field work in these states does not confirm that the rise in CSR is real.

It is significant that in the urbanised state of Maharashtra, the decline in CSR is of the order of 30 points. Has the urban middle class taken to family planning? On the other hand, in the predominantly rural state of Rajasthan, the decline is high: 26 points. It seems that the rural masses do not want girls. So we have an odd situation where the urban middle class does not want daughters and the rural masses also do not want daughters.

I have an explanation for this which is bound to be controversial. Nevertheless let me put forward my viewpoint. We have had over 50 years of government propaganda about the need for a small family. This has certainly raised the awareness about the small family norm all over India. By small family, earlier one meant 2 or 3 children but over the years the acceptable number came down to 2 children.

For parents there are 3 possibilities: (i) 2 sons only, (ii) 2 daughters only and (iii) 1 son and 1 daughter. The second scenario is the worst. The cost of dowry and marriage has gone up. We are becoming increasingly a consumerist society. Greed has overtaken need. One cannot order a small family with only 2 sons or for that matter, 1 son and 1 daughter, unless one takes recourse to medical intervention or in simple language, finding out the sex of the unborn child and taking to abortion if it is a female child. The government enacted the PCPNDT Act quite sometime back, which prohibits such medical intervention but it is well known that its implementation is very poor. Will the CSR go down further in next census of 2021?