

An Analysis of Population Growth Trends in Urban Areas

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ABSTRACT

India is the world's most populous country, yet also one of the least urban. It has long been known that India's official estimates of urban percentages conflict with estimates derived from alternative conceptions of urbanization. This paper tries to draw attention on the increasing urbanization trend in India. It tries to highlight that though presently, in absolute terms, the urban population is relatively much lesser than the rural population, still we cannot afford to overlook the shifting rural to urban population trends. The share of urban population of the total is constantly increasing. It is estimated that close to the year 2050 more people in India would live in urban areas rather than rural. This makes the time apt for looking into the urban India challenges separately, strategising afresh, with focus on urban issues and not merely extending the existing development strategies, with less focus on urban issues. Also, this paper tries to explore that if population share of urban is increasing, population in which class of cities are increasing the most? It is expected that this information would help priorities our urban centric development strategies.

1. Introduction

India, the world's most populous country, is also one of the least urban. At the time of the most recent census in 2011, 31% of the country's population lived in urban areas according to the official statistics [1]. Yet by other accounts, this 31% figure is far too low [2-4]. Such disagreements stem from different conceptual models of urbanization—the higher percentages are derived from a “statistical” perspective in which urban-ness is defined in terms of population density, areal contiguity, and the total population of sufficiently dense contiguous areas. This approach stands in contrast to the official classifications for India, which blend the statistical perspective with an alternative view that takes the legal boundaries of urban jurisdictions into account. Both perspectives have merit; but it has proven difficult to reconcile them because the data needed to do so have not been available in the public domain. In recent past, “although the budgetary allocations for urban development have risen substantially (with JNNURM project) still these do not compare with the allocation for schemes and interventions for rural India. The per capita expenditure on the urban sector at Rs. 1,566.00 is significantly lower than the per capita expenditure in the rural sector, which is Rs. 7,433.00 for the current plan

period” (Steering committee on urbanization, Planning Commission, Government of India, 2011). However, though the present rural-urban population divides looks heavily biased in favour of rural, is this snapshot view adequate to define the focus of our development planning for future? An exploration into the rural-urban population trends has been undertaken in following sections, based on available secondary information, to look further into future trends.

2. urban population trends

Urbanisation is a major global trend. Presently, over half of the world's population lives in urban areas (Sivam, 2014). Though compared globally the urbanisation rate in India has relatively been low, nonetheless, it is following and rather picking-up with this global trend. To verify this urbanisation trend, two aspects related to urban population is being looked into, firstly, the decadal growth of urban population vis-à-vis the rural population and secondly, the trend of share of urban population of the total population (urbanisation rate). Table 1 compares the decadal growth rates of population of two decades, the periods 1991-2001 and 2001-2011, respectively, for all India, rural and urban.

Table1: Growth Rate of Population (in %)

	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

Clearly the urban population decadal growth rate is much higher (31.5% and 31.8 %) compared to rural for both of the two periods i.e. 1991-2001 and 2001-2011. Also, when two

decadal growth rates, in each category (rural and urban) are compared, while the urban population growth rates shows an increased growth rate over the previous period, the decadal

growth rate for rural as compared to the previous decade has diminished. Further, if we refer to Table 2, which shows the absolute increase in rural and urban population in the year 2011 with respect to the year 2001, one big change observable

for the first time since Independence, is that the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than in rural areas. This is phenomenal from urban perspective as the base of rural population as compared to urban is huge.

Table 2: Population (In Million)

	2001	2011	Difference
India	1028.73	1210.56	181.83
Rural	742.49	833.46	90.97
Urban	286.11	377.1	90.99

Increased Urbanisation Rate

The urban population is not only increasing discreetly but also its share in the total population of the country (urbanisation rate) has also shown a steady increase. The present urban population of 377 Million is about 31% of India's total population of 1,210 Million. (Census of India, 2011). Its

share in total population as compared to 2001 is up by about 4 percentage points. The urban population in the 2001 was 286 Million which formed about 28% of the total population of the country. Figure 1 depicts the increasing share of urban population of the total from the year 1951 to 2011.

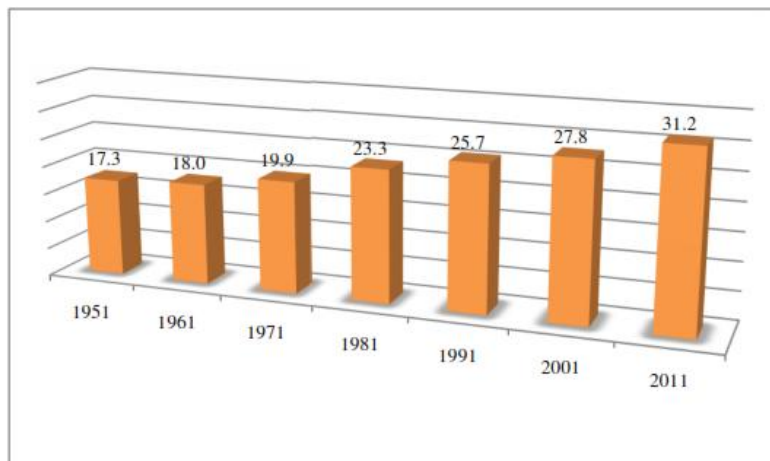


Figure 1: Share of Urban Population in India's total population (%)

Figure 1 shows a steady increase in urbanisation rate in India. The share of urban population to total population which was 17.3 per cent in 1951, increased to 31.2 per cent in 2011. In other words, while in 1951 about 17% of the total population of India lived in urban areas, in the year 2011 over 31% of the total population lived in urban areas. Further, it is estimated that the urbanisation rate by the year 2030 will be 40% or in other words 40% of the total population of India

would live in cities and this urban population is anticipated to be 590 million. (Mckinsey Global Institute, 2010) "The provisional figures from the 2011 Census suggest that there has been a higher than projected growth in urban population, indicating an acceleration of urbanisation in India" (Coelho & Maringanti, 2012). This accelerated urbanisation rates means that in India the urban population is growing at a faster rate than previously estimated (refer to Figure 2).

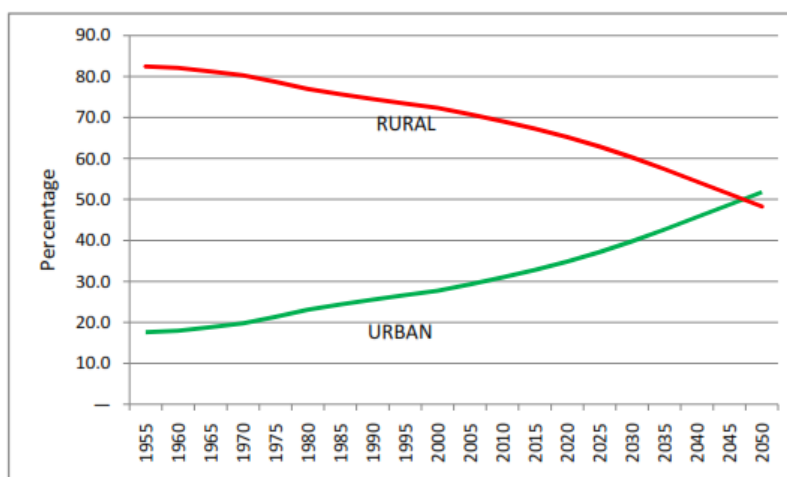


Figure 2: Changing share of Urban and Rural populations in India (%):1950 to 2050.

If we see Figure 2; we can see the comparison how the proportion of urban and rural populations of the total is changing in India. While share of urban population in the total is steadily increasing, that of rural is steadily declining. Future estimations by the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2012, as represented in Figure 2, shows that close to 2050 more people in India will stay in cities rather than villages. This changing population trend calls for an increased attention to understand the issues and challenges related to the urban population and specially the urban poor.

3. Population Census Abstracts

In a welcome departure from previous practice, India's Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner has placed into the public domain a very large collection of detailed, settlement-specific tabulations of 2011 population census data. For the purposes of this research, the key tabulations come in the form of what are termed primary census abstracts (PCAs)—they cover places ranging in size from tiny rural villages to small- and medium-sized towns and upward to the largest of India's municipalities, providing information on the population of each settlement, its number of households, and selected additional characteristics. Complementary spatial data—to be described below—are available for a total of 4041 legally-constituted urban areas (statutory towns), 3893 so-called census towns, and 640,930 rural villages. The statutory towns are further subdivided into wards, with an abstract produced for each ward. Some of these wards are additionally designated as outgrowths. Among all the wards of a statutory town, some can be designated as outgrowths, these being units which hold a type of dual status. An outgrowth is an area of high-density, arguably urban settlement that is spatially adjacent to a statutory town, and which would thus seem to be poised on the threshold of becoming legally urban. However, outgrowths are in fact governed by rural authorities. The ambiguous status of

outgrowths is signified in their PCA identifier codes: outgrowths are assigned both a village code and a code defining the outgrowth as a ward of the statutory town. In India's tabulations of urban population, outgrowths are treated as urban. Much like outgrowths, census towns are legally rural settlements, but they are designated as urban for the purposes of an upcoming census and grouped with statutory urban areas in the official post-census tabulations. The census-town designation emerges in the course of discussions between census authorities and state government officials in the lead-up to each new census. There are specific demographic and socioeconomic criteria that are meant to guide the discussions, but these criteria are evaluated on the basis of data gathered in the previous census, a practice that leaves ample room for misunderstandings of local trends and variations in judgement. Also, there is no requirement that once classified as urban in this specialized way for a given census, a census town must remain so classified for the next decennial census. It seems that the state-specific discussions effectively begin anew in each census round. The census town–statutory town distinction has been in place for many decades, and India's system of identifier codes for settlements has long distinguished the two.

Table 3 below lists, by state as well as for India as a whole, the spatial inputs that we have used in this research. For statutory towns, census towns, and villages the table gives the number of whole settlements available in the spatial data. Many of these settlements are sub-divided into components that are specific to administrative district or sub district, but here we report only the total number of settlements. Spatial records for outgrowths are also available for the whole of India. However, ward-level spatial data are only available from ML Infomap as separate proprietary products. For a subset of 62 cities, including all cities with a population above 1 million, we collected additional ward-level spatial information, as shown in Figure 3.

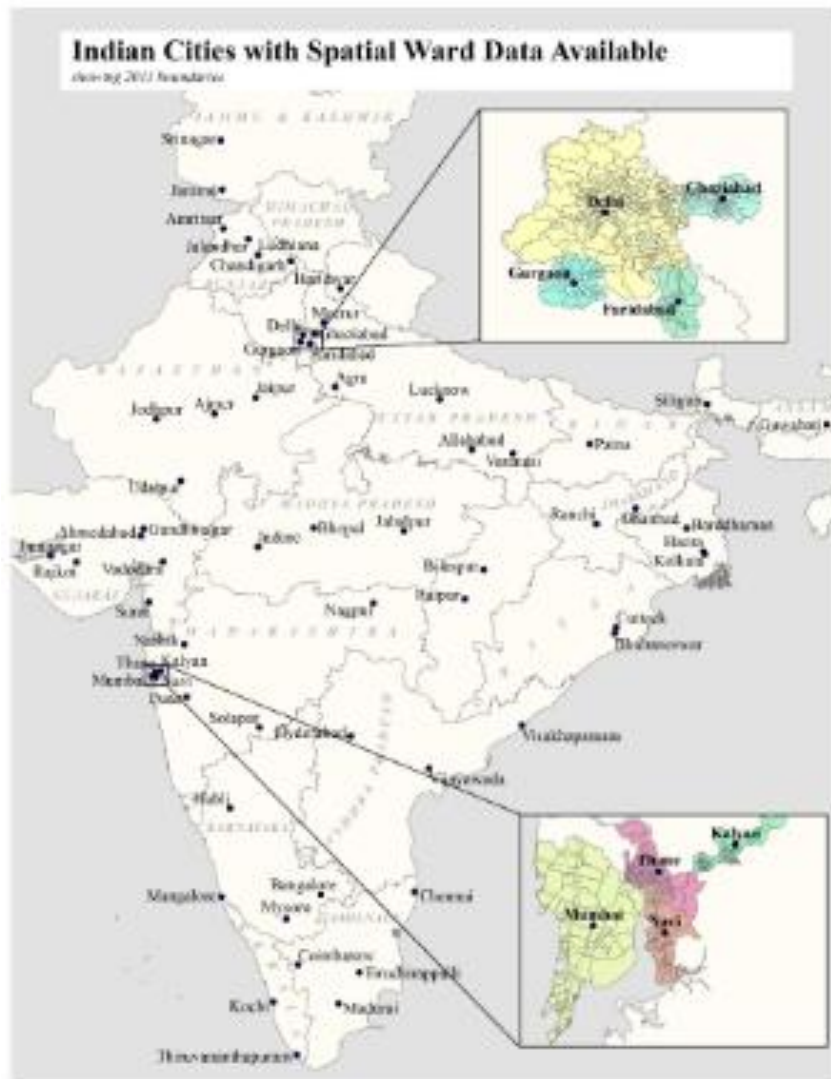


Figure 3. Data for India with indications for which cities we had spatial ward-level data

Indian cities are internally organized in a variety of ways, and as the map in Figure 3 demonstrates, the ratio of settlement-level to ward-level units varies from one city to the next. Mumbai, a city of over 12 million inhabitants, consists of two distinct settlements and 97 wards. Navi Mumbai, a city of just over 1 million in the Greater Mumbai region, is 1 settlement with 89 wards, giving it twice the ratio of wards to

settlements as Mumbai for about one-tenth of the population. The ward-level detail reveals population and density variations within cities and helps to identify uninhabited areas (e.g., large urban parks or reserved land) that would otherwise skew the density estimates. The distribution of population within cities is a very important factor in assessing population exposed to spatially-specific environmental risks, for example, flooding.

Table 3. Overview of Number of Spatial Units by Format and Urban Classification Type

States & Union Territories	Format		Urban Classification *				Village
	Polygon	Point	Statutory Town	Census Town	Ward	Outgrowth	
Andamans & Nicobars	-	560	1	4	-	-	555
Andhra Pradesh	26,927	2090	125	228	287	209	27,800
Arunachal Pradesh	-	5616	26	1	-	-	5589
Assam	22,746	4137	88	126	89	29	26,395
Bihar	45,159	0	139	60	76	4	44,874
Chandigarh	38	0	1	5	28	2	5
Chhattisgarh	18,528	2255	168	14	110	40	20,126
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	71	0	1	5	-	-	65
Daman & Diu	27	0	2	6	-	-	19
Delhi	256	0	3	110	-	-	112
Goa	414	0	14	56	7	7	334
Gujarat	19,040	0	195	153	377	127	18,225
Haryana	7080	0	80	74	83	15	6841
Himachal Pradesh	13,103	7693	56	3	8	8	20,689
Jammu & Kashmir	6766	241	86	36	232	93	6553
Jharkhand	32,884	0	40	188	111	1	32,394
Karnataka	30,232	0	220	127	459	69	29,340
Kerala	1871	0	59	461	173	16	1018
Lakshadweep	-	27	-	6	-	-	21
Madhya Pradesh	56,346	0	364	112	295	86	54,903
Maharashtra	45,926	0	256	278	898	3	43,665
Manipur	493	2170	28	23	7	7	2582
Meghalaya	-	6861	10	12	-	-	6839
Mizoram	-	853	23	-	-	-	830
Nagaland	-	1454	19	7	-	-	1428
Odisha	53,283	0	107	116	171	57	51,311
Puducherry	101	0	6	4	1	1	90
Punjab	13,055	0	143	74	261	61	12,581
Rajasthan	45,287	0	185	112	291	39	44,672
Sikkim	484	0	8	1	-	-	451
Tamil Nadu	17,450	0	721	376	373	14	15,979
Tripura	917	0	16	26	-	-	875
Uttar Pradesh	108,336	0	648	267	593	63	106,774
Uttarakhand	16,835	293	74	41	49	19	16,793
West Bengal	41,482	0	129	781	286	13	40,202
Total	625,137	34,250	4041	3893	5265	983	640,930

The original spatial data from ML Info map were thoroughly cleaned and subjected to multiple rounds of topological correction. In the course of cross-validating the ML Info map spatial data with census information and open-source settlement information, we uncovered numerous although generally minor flaws in these proprietary data. As described below, we made alterations only where necessary to achieve a match to the PCA records, and only if authoritative boundary information lent support to the changes. (Many additional alterations could have made to the original boundary data but were not due to inconsistencies and deficits in authoritative boundary records in India.) Furthermore, because district-level boundary data from ML Infomap are used in other 1-km gridded data products (such as GPW v.4), we decided to make the fewest alterations possible, systematically adjusting only the settlement polygons that were misaligned with district or state borders. The ward-level spatial data supplied by ML Info map for Delhi, New Delhi, and certain cities in Andhra Pradesh do not always respect the fine partitions by administrative sub-district that are found in the PCA census records. We hope to resolve this problem in future research, but in the present data collection we have chosen to represent such problematic statutory towns spatially by their outer settlement boundaries and use whole-settlement PCA summaries to account for their populations.

4. Less Focus On Urban Development

Rapid urbanisation trend accompanied with latent untapped potential of urban centres (IB and other smaller cities) to be the growth engine of nation's economy, calls for more focus on urban development. Nearly 31% of India's current population lives in urban areas and contributes 63% of India's GDP (Census 2011). As is estimated, the urban centres are going to be the major growth drivers for India. McKinsey & Company estimates that by year 2030 cities could produce more than 70% of GDP of India; could drive fourfold increase in per capita income for whole nation; could generate 70% of net new jobs (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010). To realise this aforementioned potential more focus is required on urban development. Early development of urban centres will hamper its chances to achieve its growth potential and this would also affect the growth of nation. Hence it becomes very important to address the issue of urban development as early as possible. Though Government of India's announcement to build 100 smart cities is a welcome step (Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, 2015), Other than this, till now Apart from Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) [Since 2015, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)] there is no big urban development flagship programme at national level. Also, not much initiative has been taken by any of the state Governments. Urban development has remained merely as an add-on subject for the Governments at national and state levels in India. This has certainly not helped the cause and is not the way forward.

5. Conclusion

Rapid urbanisation, accelerated population growth, and promises to lead the way as growth engine of nation's economy by urban centres calls for more focus on urban development. The sheer importance of urban centres for welfare of population, poverty reduction, inclusive growth and sustenance of nation's economy, makes the time apt for

looking into the urban India challenges separately, strategising afresh, with focus on urban issues and not merely extending the existing development strategies, with less focus on urban issues. These new India urban development programme needs to be implemented parallel to rural development programmes for holistic development of the nation.

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