

Emerging Pattern of Urbanisation in India

R B BHAGAT

According to the 2011 Census, urbanisation has increased faster than expected. This has reversed the declining trend in the growth rate of the urban population observed during the 1980s and 1990s. Also, for the first time since independence, the absolute increase in the urban population was higher than that in the rural population. This has huge implications for providing infrastructure and other civic amenities in urban areas.

Of late, there has been a change in the thinking of policymakers about urbanisation. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan argued that urbanisation should be seen as a positive factor in overall development as the urban sector contributes about 62% of the GDP. There is also a growing realisation that an ambitious goal of 9-10% growth in GDP fundamentally depends upon a vibrant urban sector (Planning Commission 2008). As the country is on the verge of preparing the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-2017), the urban transition is considered one of the major challenges, requiring a massive expansion in urban infrastructure and services. With this backdrop, the results of the 2011 Census assume enormous significance in enhancing our understanding of the magnitude, growth and interstate variation in the levels and tempo of urbanisation in the country.

Demographically speaking, the level of urbanisation is measured by the percentage of population living in urban areas. In order to have a better understanding of the urbanisation process, it would be appropriate to examine which settlements are treated as urban by the Census of India. There is no standard definition of urban; it varies from country to country (United Nations 2009). India's urban areas are defined on the basis of two criteria. First, the state government grants municipal status – corporation, municipal council, notified town area committee or nagar panchayat, etc – to a settlement. Such settlements are known as statutory or municipal towns in the census definition of urban areas. Second, if a settlement does not have an urban civic status, but satisfies demographic and economic criteria, like a population of more than 5,000, a density of 400 persons per square kilometre and 75% male workforce in the non-agricultural sector, it can be declared urban.

Such urban areas are termed census towns. It is important to note that India's urban definition is very broad-based and closely reflects levels of development unlike several other developing countries. For example, in south Asia, Nepal defines urban areas on the basis of population size only: a settlement with a population of more than 9,000 is declared urban. On the other hand, countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan apply only the civic status criterion to declare a settlement urban (United Nations 2009).

In each census, the rural-urban framework is prepared based on the above definition of urban. Many new towns are added and some existing towns revert to rural status if they do not satisfy the criteria. Thus the rural-urban classification used in India is a dynamic process, although there are some limitations to the definition (Bhagat 2005).

Trends in Urbanisation

The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India projected the urban population for the year 2011 to 358 million, and estimated that urban population growth rates would decline from 2.75% per annum observed during 1991-2001 to 2.23 during 2001-2011 (Registrar General and Census Commissioner 2006). Urban experts also believed that India's urbanisation would slow down because of its exclusionary nature and its inability to spur rural-to-urban migration (Kundu 2007, 2011). However, the 2011 Census shows some unexpected results.

According to the 2011 Census, the urban population grew to 377 million showing a growth rate of 2.76% per annum during 2001-2011. The level of urbanisation in the country as a whole increased from 27.7% in 2001 to 31.1% in 2011 – an increase of 3.3 percentage points during 2001-2011 compared to an increase of 2.1 percentage points during 1991-2001. It may be noted that the Indian economy has grown from about 6% per annum during the 1990s to about 8% during the first decade of the 2000s (Ahluwalia 2011). This clearly reflects the power of economic growth in bringing about faster urbanisation during 2001-2011.

R B Bhagat (*rbbhagat@iips.net*) is with the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai.

Table 1 shows that India had an urban population of about 79 million in 1961,

Table 1: Trends in Urbanisation in India (1961-2011)

Census Year	Urban Population (in million)	Percentage Urban	Annual Exponential Urban Growth Rate (%)
1961	78.94	17.97	-
1971	109.11	19.91	3.23
1981	159.46	23.34	3.79
1991	217.18	25.72	3.09
2001	286.12	27.86	2.75
2011	377.10	31.16	2.76

As the 1981 Census was not conducted in Assam, and the 1991 Census was not held in Jammu and Kashmir, the population of India includes projected figures for these states in those periods.

Source: Census of India, various years.

Table 2: Urban-Rural Population Growth Differentials (1971-2011)

Decade	Rural	Urban	Urban-Rural Growth Differentials (Annual Exponential Growth Rate, in %)
1971-81	1.76	3.79	2.03
1981-91	1.80	3.09	1.29
1991-2001	1.69	2.75	1.06
2001-2011	1.15	2.76	1.61

Source: Census of India, various years.

which constituted about 18% of the total population. The average growth rate of the urban population was 2.32% during 1951-61 which accelerated up to 3.79% during 1971-81. This was the highest urban growth since independence. After 1981, the urban growth rate decelerated to 3.09% during 1981-91 and further declined to 2.75% during 1991-2001. However, the declining growth rate was slightly reversed during 2001-2011.

It is worthwhile to note that urban population growth alone cannot speed up urbanisation. More importantly, if urbanisation has to occur, the urban population growth rate needs to be higher than the rural population growth rate. Thus, it is the urban-rural population growth differential that is critical to the process of urbanisation. Table 2 shows that urban-rural growth differentials increased from about 1% per annum during 1991-2001 to 1.61% per annum during 2001-2011. It is also evident from Table 2 that the rural population growth has declined much faster during 2001-2011 compared to earlier decades. Note that the urban-rural population growth differential is a product of the differentials in the natural increase between rural and urban areas (births-deaths), net rural-urban classification and net rural-to-urban migration.

The urban-rural natural increase growth differentials remained almost constant (4 per 1,000 population) during 1991-2000 to 2001-2010. Therefore, it was the net rural-urban classification and net rural-to-urban migration that were responsible for higher urban-rural growth differentials and the speeding up of urbanisation during 2001-2011.

Components of Urban Growth

The natural increase, net rural-urban classification and rural-to-urban migration are components of urban population growth. An assessment of their relative contributions is very important to understanding the dynamics of urban population growth. Figure 1 shows that the contribution of net

rural-urban classification and rural-to-urban migration has increased from 42% in 1991-2001 to 56% in 2001-2011. The available data from the 2011 Census at the moment does not allow for the separation of these two factors, but it does show the emergence of a large number of new towns in 2011. The number of towns at the national level increased from 5,161 to 7,935 – a net addition of 2,774 towns (2,532 census towns and 242 statutory towns) in 2011 compared to the 2001 Census.

As there has been no change in the definition of the urban between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, this has contributed significantly to faster urbanisation in spite of several metropolitan cities showing a huge decline in their growth rates (Kundu 2011). On the other hand, the contribution of natural increases in urban population growth has declined from a peak

of 62% during 1981-91 to 44% during 2001-2011. Yet the natural increase added a huge population of about 40 million in the urban areas during 2001-2011. In the study of India's urbanisation, the contribution of natural increases has not received as much attention as rural-to-urban migration. This has led to the popular belief that the urban population is increasing solely due to migration.

State-Level Patterns

At the state level, the pattern of urbanisation is very diverse, but economically advanced states more or less show higher levels of urbanisation (Figure 2). All the southern

Figure 1: Components of Urban Population Growth (1971-2011, in %)

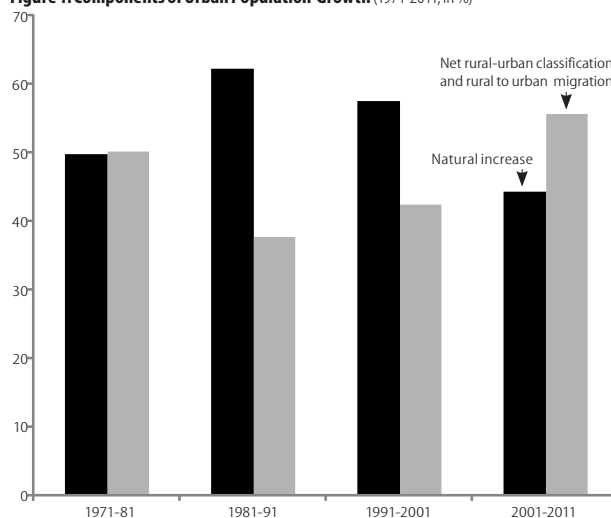
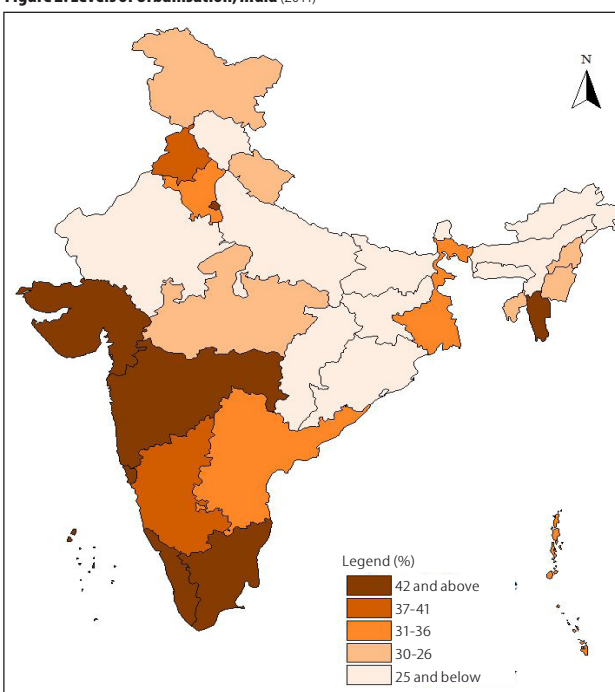


Figure 2: Levels of Urbanisation, India (2011)



states, along with Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal, have higher urbanisation levels than the national average, but small states like Goa continue to top the list among states (62% urban), followed by Mizoram (51.5%). Among the major states, Tamil Nadu continues to be ahead of the others, with levels of urbanisation at 48.4% in 2011. States which lag behind are Himachal Pradesh at the bottom with a 10% level of urbanisation, followed by Bihar (11.3%), Assam (14%) and Orissa (16.6%). Other states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand also continue to have lower levels of urbanisation than the national average.

Although the reversal in the declining trend in urban population growth rate at the national level is a major feature revealed by the 2011 Census, there are only 15 states and union territories which show an increased urban population growth rate during 2001-2011 compared to 1991-2001. Among them, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand are the major states. A very high urban population growth has occurred in the

states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh; urban population growth rates have increased to 6.5% per annum in Kerala and 3% per annum in Andhra Pradesh during 2001-11 compared to just about 1% per annum during 1991-2001. In both Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, as well as in West Bengal and Gujarat, a large number of new towns have emerged as a result of rural-to-urban classification in 2011.

Conclusions

The declining trend in the urban population growth rate observed during the 1980s and 1990s was reversed at the national level, and the level of urbanisation increased faster during 2001-2011. The urban population grew from 286 million in 2001 to 377 million in 2011 – an increment of 91 million, which is larger than the rural population increment of 90.5 million for the first time since independence. A substantial increase in the urban population is due to a net rural-urban classification and rural-to-urban migration. A huge number of new towns emerged during the last decade, contributing significantly to the speeding up of urbanisation. On the other hand, although the

contribution of the natural increase in urban growth has declined in terms of proportions, its share in absolute numbers (about 40 million) continues to be huge due to the large base of the urban population. This has implications not only for providing urban infrastructure and civic amenities, but also for reproductive and child health services in urban areas.

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Government of India

Ministry of Human Resource Development

Department of Higher Education

Chairperson, University Grants Commission – Call for nominations

The University Grants Commission (UGC) is a statutory body with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, entrusted with the task of determination, coordination and maintenance of standards in University education. A Search-cum-Selection Committee constituted by the Government is seeking nominations for selection of a new Chairperson who can energetically and imaginatively steer the higher education sector along the path of competitive excellence for promoting access, equity and quality towards inclusive development.

Eminent persons with substantial experience in academics, governance and/ or professional management with proven track record of dynamic, idea centric leadership in institution building, flair for innovations and global outlook in higher education, commensurate with the responsibility and prestige of the position may be nominated by their peers. Nominees should be preferably below the age of 60 years. Nominations along with the nominees' *curriculum vitae* may be forwarded so as to reach the **Director (UGC), Ministry of HRD, Room No. 221 'C' Wing, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi – 110115, within 30 days from the date of advertisement.** The Committee reserves the right to consider persons of eminence outside the list of such nominations. In accordance with the procedure evolved by the Committee, nominees would be short-listed based on agreed parameters and the short-listed nominees may be invited for interaction with the Committee. No self nominations will be accepted.

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