

Population Trends of the Urban India

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Abstract

This paper tries to draw attention on the increasing urbanisation 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 prioritise our urban centric development strategies. The paper uses the available secondary information sources for carrying out its exploration.

Key Words: Urban Population Trend in India, Rural-Urban Population Trend, Urbanisation, Urban Development, Million Plus Cities in India

The total population of India, as per the 2011 Census of India, was 1.21 Billion of which 833.46 Million, which is about 69% of the total, lives in rural areas while 377.1 Million, which is 31% of the total population, live in urban areas. If we compare this rural-urban population divide, we see that over two-third of India resides in rural areas. While little less than one-third of the total population lives in urban areas. Based on sheer weight of population the focus of development planning in India has largely have had rural focus, which is needed. However, in due course, on urban development got almost neglected and this did not help the cause.

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

Urban population trends

Urbanisationⁱ is a major global trend. Presently, over half of the world's population lives in urban areas (Sivam, 2014). Though compared globally the urbanisation rateⁱⁱ 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

Source:(Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011)

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

Source: (Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011)

Aforementioned facts mentioned suggest an urbanisation trend.

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.

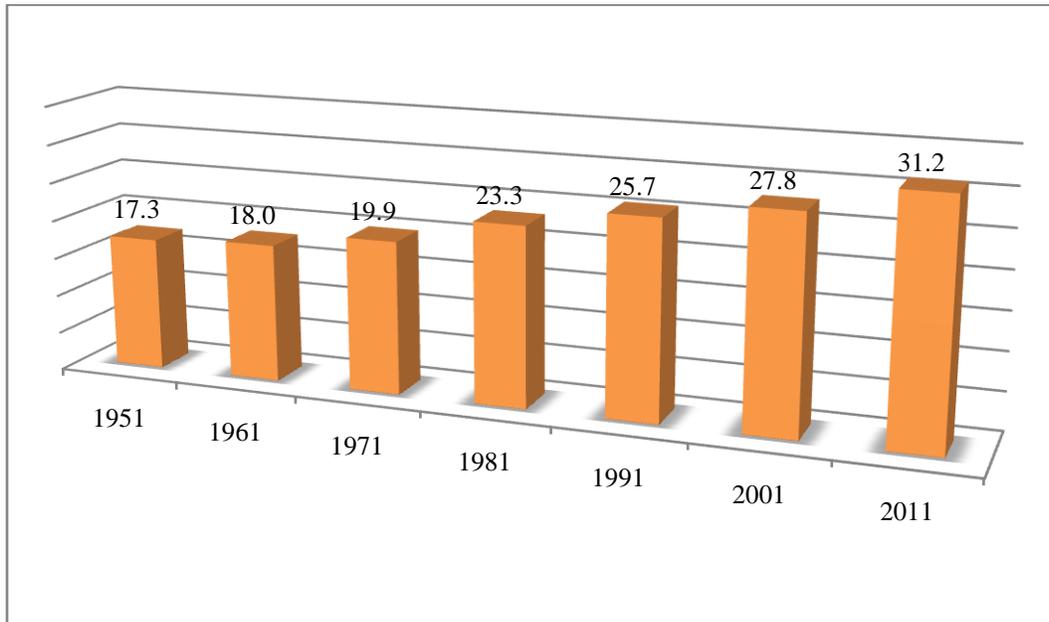


Figure 1: Share of Urban Population in India's total population (%)

Source: Author's construction of Census data obtained from Steering Committee on urbanization; Planning Commission, Govt. of India (2011).

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 rate means that in India the urban population is growing at a faster rate than previously estimated (refer to Figure 2).

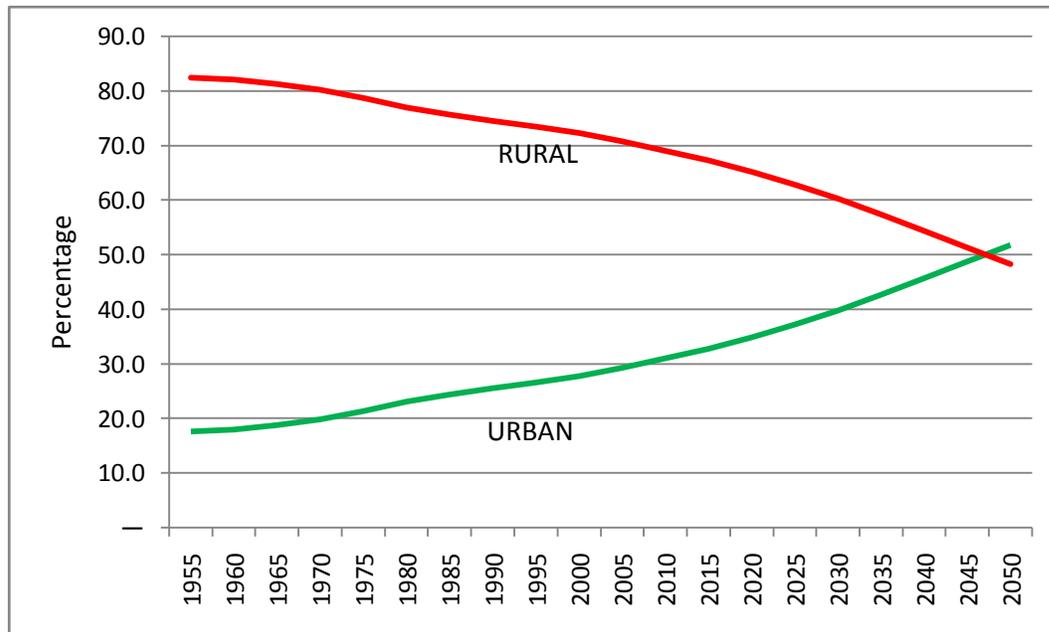


Figure 2: Changing share of Urban and Rural populations in India (%):1950 to 2050.

Source: Reconstructed graph of data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Population Division (2012): World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision (Accessed from www.esa.un.org/unup on 7 July 2014)

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.

Million-Plus Cities of India

The question which arises here is that if the urban population of India is showing an accelerated growth, which urban centres are gaining this population weight?

As per Kundu (2011) "An analysis of the distribution of urban population across size categories of urban centres reveals that the process of urbanisation in India has been top heavy or oriented towards large cities. The percentage of the urban population in 5-million-plus or million-plus cities here is higher than in most other countries of the region and has gone up relatively faster in the last three decades".

As per Census definition, the urban areas constitute of Urban Agglomerations (UA) and/or Townsⁱⁱⁱ. Based on their population these UA/Towns, have been classified in to six different classes^{iv}, from Class I to Class VI.

As per the provisional population totals of 2011 census of India, the total urban population was more than 377 million. Out of 377 million, population of 264.9 million, constituting 70.2% of

the total urban population lives in Class I (100,000+) cities. Hence it is the class I cities which bears the maximum burden of urbanisation and incremental urban population. For better understanding and analysis of distribution and growth of population in class I cities, it could further be reclassified into three sub categories, which are:

Table 1 : Reclassification of Class I cities in to subclasses based on population sizes.

Cities	Reclassified Subclasses	Population Size
Class I	IA	> 5 Million
	IB	1 Million to 5 Million
	IC	1,00,000 to 1 Million

Source: (High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) for Estimating the Investment Requirement for Urban Infrastructure Services, 2011)

Further, population distribution across this re-classified subclasses of class I cities, over the period is presented in Table 4. Which presents the change in numbers of reclassified class I cities and percentage share of urban population in different subclasses of class I cities during 1981-2011.

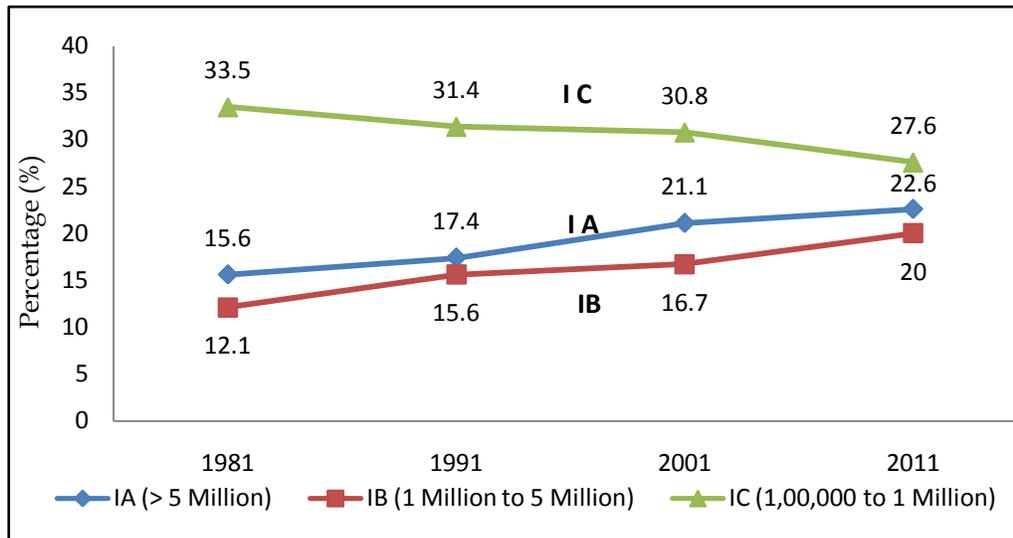
Table 2: Changing mix of Class I cities and their Urban Population share: 1981-2011

Reclassified Subclasses of Class I Cities	Number of Cities under different Subclasses				Share of Total Urban Population (%)			
	1981	1991	2001	2011	1981	1991	2001	2011
IA (> 5 Million)	3	4			15.6	17.4	21.1	22.6
IB (1 Million to 5 Million)	9	19	29	45	12.1	15.6	16.7	20
IC (1,00,000 to 1 Million)	207	276	359	415	33.5	31.4	30.8	27.6

Source: Census of India data 1981-2011; (High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) for Estimating the Investment Requirement for Urban Infrastructure Services, 2011)

In Table 4 we find that during last four decades that is from 1981 to 2011, the number of cities in all subclasses of class I cities viz. IA, IB and IC have increased. However, the rate of increase in number of cities has been highest for IB (1 Million to 5 Million) cities. The number of IB cities increased from 9 in 1981 to 45 in 2011, which is a fivefold increase. This is followed by increase in IA (5 Million-Plus) cities the numbers of which increased from 3 in 1981 to 8 in 2011, which is almost a threefold increase. While the IC (100,000 to 1 Million) cities made a twofold increase from 207 to 415.

Next, if we look into the trend of changing share of population within these different subclasses of Class I cities over the years; as shown in Figure 3. We find that the share of 5 million-plus (IA) and 1 to 5 million (IB) cities have increased steadily, while that of class IC cities (100,000 to 1 million) have declined steadily during the period 1981 to 2011.



Source: Author's construction of data from Table: 4

This trend also shows that though IC cities has the maximum share within class I cities, its population share is showing a diminishing trend while those of IA and IB cities are showing an increasing trend.

Amongst the trend lines of IA and IB cities we can see that the steepness of the trend line is more for IB cities (specially during the time periods 2001-2011), indicating that the urban population share of IB cities is increasing at a higher rate than IA cities.

As per one of the estimates of the High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) of M/O Urban Development, Govt. of India published in its report on *Indian Urban Infrastructure and Services (2011)* "The population of urban India is expected to reach 598 million by 2031, equivalent to 40 per cent of the Indian population. Over the same period, the population of Class IA cities (with population above 5 million) is estimated to double, from 61 million in 2001 to 126.8 million in 2031. The population of Class IB cities (with population between 100,000 and 1 million) is expected to record the highest absolute increase from 88 to 172 million over the 20-year period. However, the share of Indian urban population residing in Class IC cities is expected to decrease from 31 to 29 per cent over the period 2001-2031.

This suggests that the trend depicted in figure 3 is expected to continue and this further indicates that the IB and IA are the cities where there is going to be the major convergence of urban population in future.

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.

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.

Notes

ⁱ Urbanisation is a process characterised by more and more people living in urban areas. (JNNURM Directorate, M/O Urban Development and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), 2011)

ⁱⁱ Urbanisation rate is defined as ratio of urban to total population based on census definition of urban areas; population >5000, density > 400 persons per square km; 75% of male workers in non agricultural sectors and other statutory urban areas (Mckinsey Global Institute, 2010)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Urban Agglomerations (UAs)/ Towns:*

For the Census of India 2011, the definition of *urban area* is as follows;

- All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc.
- All other places which satisfied the following criteria: (i) A minimum population of 5,000; (ii) At least 75 per cent of the male main working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and (iii) A density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

The first category of urban units is known as *Statutory Towns*. These towns are notified under law by the concerned State/UT Government and have local bodies like municipal corporations, municipalities, municipal committees, etc., irrespective of their demographic characteristics as reckoned on 31st December 2009.

The second category of Towns (as in item 2 above) is known as *Census Town*. These were identified on the basis of Census 2001 data.

Urban Agglomeration (UA): An urban agglomeration is a continuous urban spread constituting a town and its adjoining outgrowths* (OGs), or two or more physically contiguous towns together with or without outgrowths of such towns. An Urban Agglomeration must consist of at least a statutory town and its total population (i.e. all the constituents put together) should not be less than 20,000 as per the 2001 Census.

**Out Growths (OG):* An Out Growth (OG) is a viable unit such as a village or a hamlet or an enumeration block made up of such village or hamlet and clearly identifiable in terms of its boundaries and location. Some of the examples are railway colony, university campus, port area, military camps, etc., which have come up near a statutory town outside its statutory limits but within the revenue limits of a village or villages contiguous to the town. While determining the outgrowth of a town, it has been ensured that it possesses the urban features in terms of infrastructure and amenities such as *pucca* roads, electricity, taps, drainage system for disposal of waste water etc. educational institutions, post offices, medical facilities, banks etc. and physically contiguous with the core town of the UA. Each such town together with its outgrowth(s) is treated as an integrated urban area and is designated as an 'urban agglomeration' (*Source: Census of India*).

^{iv} Population based classes of Urban Agglomerations/ Towns in Census of India: have been classified in to six classes in Census of India as per the population sizes. These classes are:

Class I: Urban areas having a population of 1, 00,000 persons or more; Other classes being: Class II: with population of 50,000 to 99,999; Class III: 20,000 to 49,999; Class IV from 10,000 to 19,999; Class V from 5000 to 9,999; Class VI below 5000 (*Source: Census of India*).

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