Module 6

Population of India

Lecture 18: Population Growth in India

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INTRODUCTION

The first question in population sociology of a country is: what is the size of population in that country and at what rate is it changing? As suggested by demographic transition theory the world population remained more or less constant for a long time due to high fertility and high mortality. Then as mortality started improving population size started growing. Eventually population once again gets stabilized when fertility has fallen (largely in response to economic development and improvement in mortality). Indian population history is no exception to this. This module looks at the growth potential of India's population.

POPULATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

The first population census was conducted in 1872 and that too was not synchronous. The first synchronous and nearly complete census was conducted in 1881. We do not have very precise estimates for India's past. Yet, there are some scholarly estimates which are consistent with the theoretical framework of demographic transition theory. Table 6.1 presents the estimates of population of ancient India.

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TABLE 6.1: ESTIMATES OF INDIA'S POPULATION, 300 BC – 1871 AD

Date	Population (in millions)	Source
300 BC	100 -140	Pran Nath
1600 AD	100	Moreland
1800	120	Playfair (adjusted)
1834	130	M'Culloch
1845	130	M'Culloch
1855	175	Statistical Abstract of UK Possessions (adjusted)
1867	194	Parliamentary Papers (adjusted)
1871	255	Census

Source: Davis (1951).

PHASES OF POPULATION GROWTH IN INDIA, 1901-2001

Table 6.2 presents census data on population of India from 1901 to 2001 (Census of India, 2001). The table shows that in 2001 the total population of the country was 1,028,737,436 or 1,028 millions. It was growing at the average annual rate of growth of 2.16 percent. Thus the doubling time of population of India is nearly 32.4 years. This means that in absence of any change in the growth rate the population of India may grow to 2,056 million by year 2033. But the rate of growth would not remain same during 2001-2033. It has not remained same during last one hundred years.

The table also shows that in the last century population of India grew 4.3 times. The major part of the growth occurred in the last three decades. After independence in 1947 the population of India grew nearly three times by the year 2001.

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TABLE 6.2: GROWTH OF POPULATION IN INDIA, 1901-2001

Year	Population	Average annual rate of growth	Multiple of 1901 population
1901	238,396,327		1.00
1911	252,093,390	0.57	1.06
1921	251,321,213	-0.03	1.05
1931	278,977,238	1.10	1.17
1941	318,660,580	1.42	1.34
1951	361,088,090	1.33	1.51
1961	439,234,771	2.16	1.84
1971	548,159,652	2.48	2.30
1981	683,329,097	2.47	2.87
1991	846,302,688	2.38	3.55
2001*	1,028,737,436	2.16	4.32

Note: *The total population and rural population include estimated population of 127,108 for Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur. India's population without the estimated population of these areas is 1,028,610,328 (532,156,772 males and 496,453,556 females)

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Table 6.3 shows the stages of growth in India's population. **On the basis of data one may divide the population history of India into four distinct stages: before 1921; 1921-1951; and 1951-1971; and after 1971.** Before 1921 the population of India had erratic growth rate, sometimes increasing and sometimes decreasing, though growing slowly on long term basis. After 1921 it started growing at a rate more than 1 percent per year. The cause of this increased growth rate was not a rise in fertility but a decline in mortality that set in due to better health facilities, education and overall development. During 1951-1971 the process of improvement in the mortality rate was accelerated and the population started growing at rate above 2 percent. After 1971, though the population still grew at rate above 2 percent, the rate of growth started falling. Increasing success in family planning programme was a major cause of this.

TABLE 6.3: STAGES OF GROWTH IN THE POPULATION HISTORY OF INDIA

Stage	Period	Chief characteristics
Stage I	Before 1921	Population changing at erratic rates: sometimes rising and sometimes falling
Stage II	1921-1951	Population continuously rising at rate more than 1 percent per year
Stage III	1951- 1971	Population rising at rate above 2 percent
Stage IV	After 1971	Population still rising at rate above 2 percent but the decadal rate of growth declining

The October 2009 Bulletin of Sample Registration Scheme shows that for year 2008 the natural growth rate of India is 15.4 per thousand. This means that if we exclude the effect of international migration (which is estimated to be -.0 per 1,000) the growth rate of India's population is 1.54 percent per year. This is much less than the decadal growth rate for 1991-2001 (2.16 percent) indicating a rapid reduction in fertility after 1991.

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SEX RATIO

Next to size and growth rate of population, demographers are interested in sex ratio of population. According to Census of India 2001, **the sex ratio of India's population is 933** females per 1,000 males, showing a relative deficit of females. Table 6.4 shows the changes in sex ratio in India. It shows that in the last century the overall sex ratio of population has declined. This could partly be due to the fact that males were the earlier beneficiary of improvement in mortality. The last census, however, showed an improvement of 4 points.

TABLE 6.4: SEX RATIO IN INDIA, 1901-2001

Year	Sex ratio
1901	972
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	929
2001	933

There are urban rural differences in sex ratio, mostly indicating male selectivity in rural-urban migration. The urban sex ratio is 900 and the rural sex ratio is 946. There are also state wise differences. Kerala with a sex ratio of 1,058 has the highest sex ratio. At the bottom is Haryana which has a sex ratio of 861. Sex ratio in age group 0-6, called child sex ratio, is of special interest.

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To quote JSK:

Sex Ratio is a sensitive indicator that displays the status of women. Concerted efforts are needed to create equal regard and affection for the girl child. The sex ratio among children (0 to 6 years) is showing a continuous decline in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Gujarat. Many families willfully decide to remove the female foetus in a quest for sons. Unfortunately this happens in the more educated and affluent localities. The motivation is primarily to protect property, family business and to avoid giving dowry. If there has to be a change in mindset, leaders in society have to show the way. Otherwise the population will become skewed leading to a host of societal problems like increased crime against women.

It is estimated that during 1991-2001 child sex has declined from 945 to 927; from 948 to 934 in rural areas and from 935 to 903 in urban areas. This **large decline in child sex ratio has been attributed to the practice of female feticide**. Table 6.5 shows ten districts with extreme child sex ratios.

TABLE 6.5: DISTRICTS WITH EXTREME CHILD SEX RATIOS

District with highest sex ratios	Sex ratio	District with lowest sex ratios	Sex ratio
East Kamang (Arunachal Pradesh)	1035	Fatehgarh Sahib (Punjab)	766
Pulwama (Jammu & Kashmir)	1033	Kurukshetra (Haryana)	771
Kupwara (Jammu & Kashmir)	1021	Patiala (Punjab)	777
Dantewada (Chhattisgarh)	1014	Ambala (Haryana)	782
Upper Siang (Arunachal Pradesh)	1010	Mansa (Punjab)	782

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AGE COMPOSITION OF POPULATION

Table 6.6 shows the age composition of population of India. It shows that India has a young age structure with 35 percent population of India in the age group 0-14 years. The percentage of old (60+) is only 7.8. Earlier it was higher. A thumb rule states that **in the pre-transitional society, marked by high birth rate and high death rate nearly 40 percent population is found in the age group 0-14.** Thus the data show that as a result of fall in birth rate the percentage population in age group 0-14 has somewhat declined.

TABLE 6.6: AGE DISTRIBUTION, 2001

Age group	Total	Males	Females
6 years and below	163,819,614	84,999,203	78,820,411
Proportion to total population (%)	15.9	16	15.9
7 to 14 years	199,791,198	104,488,119	95,303,079
Proportion to total population (%)	19.4	19.6	19.2
15 to 59 years	585,638,723	303,400,561	282,238,162
Proportion to total population (%)	56.9	57	56.9
60 years and above	76,622,321	37,768,327	38,853,994
Proportion to total population (%)	7.5	7.1	7.8
Age Not Stated	2,738,472	1,500,562	1,237,910
Proportion to total population (%)	0.3	0.3	0.3

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MARITAL STATUS

In India marriage is early and universal. So around the age of 15 girls start getting married. NFHS 3 (2005-06) data show that by the time they reach age group 25-29 the percentage of never married women drops to 5.8; and by the next age group 30-34 it drops to 1.8 percent. NFHS reported that for women in the age group 20-49 average age of marriage is 17.2 years. Median age is 17.7. This means that more than half of the women are still marrying below the age of 18, the legal minimum age of marriage. Among men the percentage never married is found to be 29.4 in the age group 25-29, and 8.7 in 30-34. Then it drops to 3.0 in age group 35-39, and further to 1.9 in 40-44.

CASTE /TRIBE

There are no authentic data on OBC population. NFHS 3 data provides useful information on this. The censuses give data on SC and ST only. **NFHS 3 data shows that nearly 19 percent population of India belongs to SC, 8 percent to ST, 39 percent to OBC, and the rest to others.**

WEALTH INDEX

NFHS 3 data divides population in five categories according to wealth index. It shows that 27.7 percent rural population belongs to lowest quintile, 26.1 to second, 22.8 to middle, 16.0 to fourth and only 7.4 to highest quintile. This indicates the widespread urban-rural disparity in the country with only 7.4 percent of the rural population being in the highest wealth quintile according to national (i.e., combined urban-rural) standards of wealth. NFHS 3 data produces data on housing characteristics, specifically, type of house (kachcha, semi-pucca and pucca), persons per room and cooking fuel. It also gives data on household possessions, ownership of agricultural land, house and farm animals, and reach of media. For those pursuing work in structural characteristics of India’s population these data can be of immense use.