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Population Growth in India (1951-2011): A Study

Dr. Susmita Paul

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Jagannath Singh College, Udharbond, Cachar, Assam, India

Abstract:

Rapid growth of population has become a major concern for the developing countries like India. Pressure of heavy population contains balanced and inclusive growth along with sustainable development. India experienced heavy population growth in the twentieth century. This particular study tries to examine the population growth in India along with the decadal growth rate for the period 1951-2011. This study also tries to examine the variation in the trends in growth of rural and urban population in India and also the changes in the density of population in India for the same period. The study uses secondary data available in Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23. The study uses tools like tables, graphs, etc. for analysing the data. The study finds that the decadal growth rate of population in India had increased from 21.51% during 1951-1961 to 24.80% during 1961-1971, but gradually declined to 17.70% during 2001-2011. In absolute terms India's population increased from 361088 thousand in 1951 to 1210855 thousand in 2011, i.e., more than 3 fold increase. The increase in urban population is found to be more than double the increase in rural population during the study period. The study found that there was a tremendous increase in the density of population in India in 2001 and even more in 2011.

Keywords: Population growth, decadal growth, rural population, urban population, density of population.

Introduction: Rapid growth of human population is one of the major concerns of the world today because the resources of the earth are limited and it does not increase with the increase in its population. The resources of the earth need to support all the species. Overpopulation in one species depletes the resources for other species. More people means increased demand for food, water, housing, health care facilities, consequently leading to climate change, environmental degradation, heavy pressure on agricultural land and many more problems. The pressure of heavy human population has made the ability to maintain ecological balance or carry on sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth a major challenge today. The major reasons behind population growth are rise in birth rate, fall in mortality rate and migration.

India is currently the highest populated country in the world. The high rate of growth of population since independence has become a major obstacle in the path of India's rapid development. The population of India has been growing since 1921 and the growth has been particularly fast during the period 1951 to 2001, having a decadal growth of over 20 percent. The decade of 1991 to 2001 showed a little fall in the growth rate and the rate declined below 20 percent during the period 2001-2011.

Considering the high rate of population growth and its consequences the Government of India and also the State Governments are implementing different policies from time to time to control the population. India became the first country in the world to launch a national programme in 1952, emphasizing family planning to the extent essential for reducing birth rates for stabilizing the population at a level which is consistent with the need of the nation's economy. With the fast depleting resources it has become necessary to control the population within limits so as to ensure better life for the future generations.

This particular study makes an attempt to analyse the growth of population in India during the period 1951-2011 based on data available in the Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23 which is available in the Reserve Bank of India's website. This study also tries to analyse the variation in the growth in rural and urban population in India, the decadal growth of population in India and the changes in the density of population in India.

Review of Literature: Since independence, life expectancy of Indians has more or less doubled from about 32/33 years to 62 years in 1997 (Adlakha,1997). The growth of population in India occurred due to a welcome reason, which is decline in mortality (Kulkarni, 2021). India's population is projected to continue to grow for several decades. As per the United Nations' newest projections, India's population is expected to reach its peak size around 2064 and is expected to decline gradually afterwards (Hertog et al., 2023). The population of India is likely to go up from 121.1 crores to 152.2 crores during the period 2011 to 2036, i.e., an increase of 25.7 percent at the rate of 1 percent per year. As a result the density of population is likely to go up from 368 to 463 persons per square km. (National Commission on Population 2020). The world's population increased three fold during the twentieth century from 2 billion to 6 billion, and during the same period the population of India increased nearly five fold from 238 million to 1 billion (National Population Policy 2000). Stabilization of Population growth is an important requirement for sustainable development with more equitable distribution. Population growth in India continued to be high on account of the large size of the population in the reproductive age group, higher fertility due to unmet need for contraception, high wanted fertility due to high infant mortality rate, etc. (National Population Policy 2000). To slow down the growth of population, Indian Government took different policies including its national family welfare programme which started in the 1950s. However, as the state governments were able to set their own policy priorities under India's federal structure, the impact of the programmes were different in different parts of the country. (Hertog et al., 2023). In India, fertility stalled through the late 1970s to the mid -1980s, but since then there started a smooth decline. In 1971 the total fertility rate was more than 5 children per woman, which came

down to 2.3 by 2016, close to achieving the replacement level (UNFPA India, 2018). Rural-Urban composition of people is an important indicator of socio-economic characteristics of a nation. Out of the total number of villages in India, the number of inhabited villages is 597608 (Census 2011). The urban population of India is expected to increase to 38.2 percent by 2036 from 31.8 percent in 2011. The growth in urban population would account for about three fourths of total population growth by 2036. Out of the total population growth of 31.1 crores during the period from 2011 to 2036 in India, the share of increase in urban population is expected to be 21.8 crores (National Commission on Population 2020).

Objectives of the Study:

- 1) To examine the trends in growth rate of population in India since 1951 to 2011.
- 2) To examine the variation in the trends of growth of rural and urban population in India since 1951 to 2011.
- 3) To examine the changes in the density of population in India for the period 1951-2011.

Methodology: This particular study is based on secondary data. The study uses data available in Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23 which is available in the Reserve Bank of India's website. For analyzing the data, tools like tables and graphs have been used.

Results and Discussion:

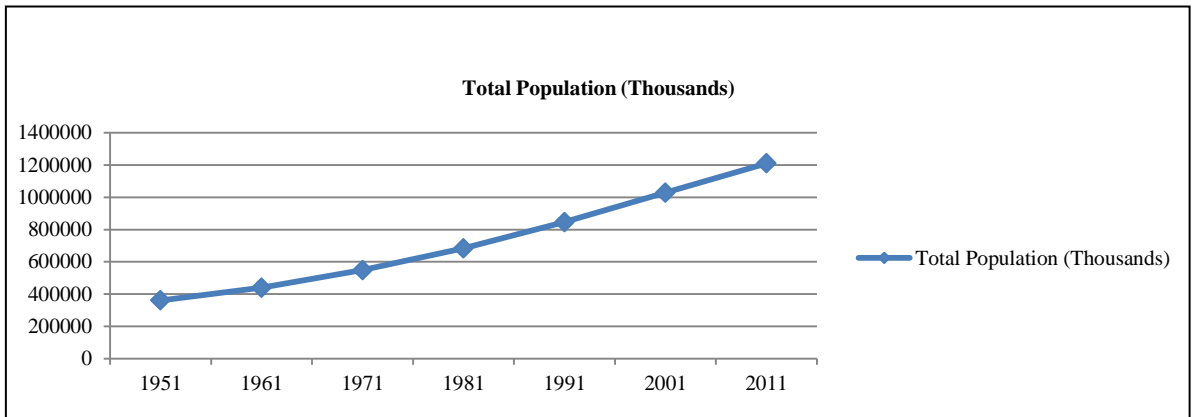
Population Growth in India (1951-2011): Population growth means the change in the total number of people residing in a specific area between two different points of time. The growth may be natural or induced or a combination of both. The natural growth is measured by assessing the birth and death rates while the induced growth rate is measured by inward and outward movement of people in any specific area.

Table 1: Total Population in India (1951–2011)

Year	Population (thousands)	Decadal Change	
		Absolute (thousands)	Percentage
1951	361088	-	-
1961	439235	(+)78147	(+)21.64
1971	548160	(+)108925	(+)24.8
1981	683329	(+)135169	(+)24.66
1991	846421	(+)163092	(+)23.87
2001	1028737	(+)182316	(+)21.54
2011	1210855	(+)182118	(+)17.70

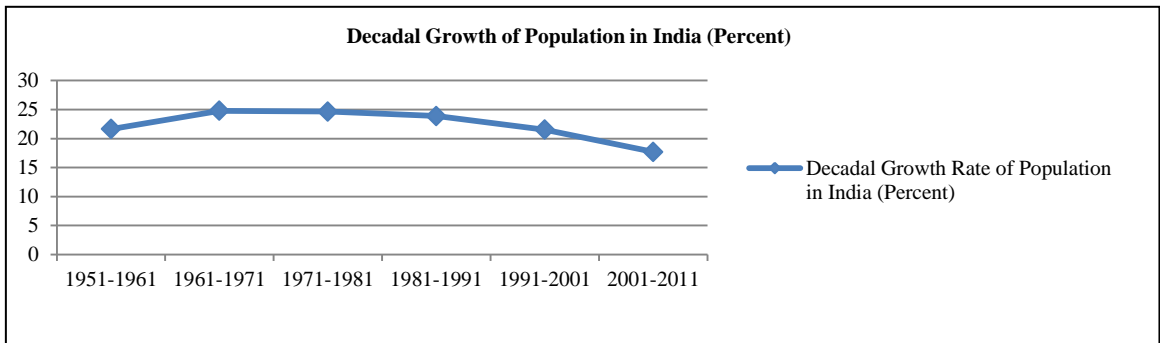
Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the 'Decadal Change' part of the above table.

Figure 1: Trend of Growth of Population in India (1951–2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India

Figure 2: Trend of Decadal Growth of Population in India in percent (1951-1961 to 2001-2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self-calculation by the author for the ‘percentage’ part.

As per the data in Table 1, it could be seen that during 1951-1961 population increased rapidly. Population increased by 78147 thousand during that period. The period 1961-1971 recorded an increase of 108925 thousand while during 1971-1981 population increased by 135169 thousand. 1981-1991 was the period in which the sign of slowing down started but still the rate of growth was quite high. During the period 1991-2001 population increased by 182316 thousand and during 2001-2011 population increased by 182118.

State-wise Total Population in India in 1951 and 2011

Table 2: State-wise Total Population in India in 1951 and 2011

State/Union Territory	1951 (Population in thousands)	2011 (Population in thousands)	Change	
			Absolute (thousands)	Increase (in times)
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	31	381	350	11.29
Andhra Pradesh	31115	84581	53466	2.72
Arunachal Pradesh	-	1384	-	-
Assam	8029	31206	23177	3.89
Bihar	29085	104099	74014	3.58
Chandigarh	24	1055	1031	43.96
Chhattisgarh	7457	25545	18088	3.43
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	42	344	302	8.19
Daman and Diu	49	243	194	4.96
Delhi	1744	16788	15044	9.63
Goa	547	1459	912	2.67
Gujarat	16283	60440	44157	3.71
Haryana	5674	25351	19677	4.47
Himachal Pradesh	2386	6865	4479	2.88
Jammu and Kashmir	3254	12541	9287	3.85
Jharkhand	9697	32988	23291	3.40
Karnataka	19402	61095	41693	3.15
Kerala	13549	33406	19857	2.47
Lakshadweep	21	64	43	3.05
Madhya Pradesh	18615	72627	54012	3.90
Maharashtra	32003	112374	80371	3.51
Manipur	578	2856	2278	4.94
Meghalaya	606	2967	2361	4.9
Mizoram	196	1097	901	5.6
Nagaland	213	1979	1766	9.29
Odisha	14646	41974	27328	2.87
Puducherry	317	1248	931	3.94
Punjab	9161	27743	18582	3.03
Rajasthan	15971	68548	52577	4.29
Sikkim	138	611	473	4.43
Tamil Nadu	30119	72147	42028	2.4
Tripura	639	3674	3035	5.75
Uttar Pradesh	60274	199812	138539	3.32
Uttarakhand	2946	10086	7140	3.42
West Bengal	26300	91276	64976	3.47

Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the ‘Change’ part of the above table.

As per the data in Table 2, it could be seen that over a period of 60 years from 1951 to 2011, Chandigarh witnessed a 43.96 times increase in its population while Andaman and Nicobar Islands witnessed 11.29 times increase in its population followed by Delhi and Nagaland with 9.63 and 9.29 times increases respectively. As compared to other states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Odisha experienced a lesser increase in their population with 2.4, 2.47 and 2.87 times increases respectively.

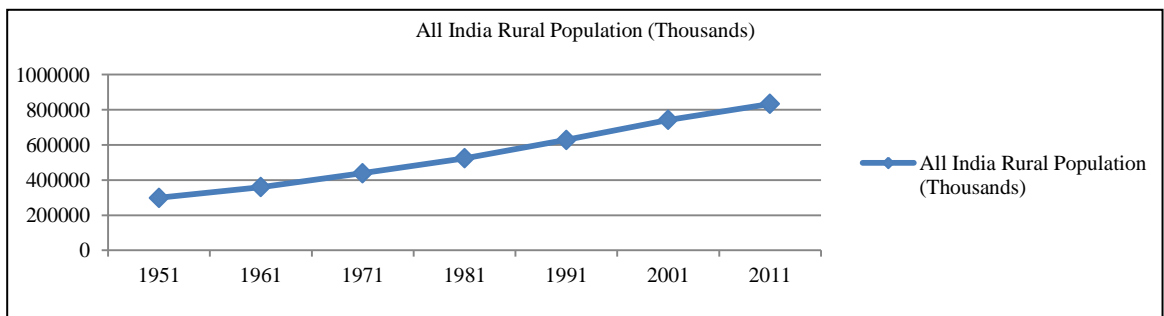
Growth of Rural Population in India (1951-2011): Composition of population in terms of their individual places of habitation is an important indicator of economic and social distinctiveness. This becomes very important for a country like India where majority of its total population lives in villages.

Table 3: Total Number of Rural Population in India (1951-2011)

Year	Population (thousands)	Decadal Change	
		Absolute (thousands)	Percentage
1951	298644	-	-
1961	360298	(+)61654	(+)20.64
1971	439046	(+)78748	(+)21.86
1981	523867	(+)84821	(+)19.32
1991	628856	(+)104989	(+)20.04
2001	742618	(+)113762	(+)18.09
2011	833749	(+)91131	(+)12.27

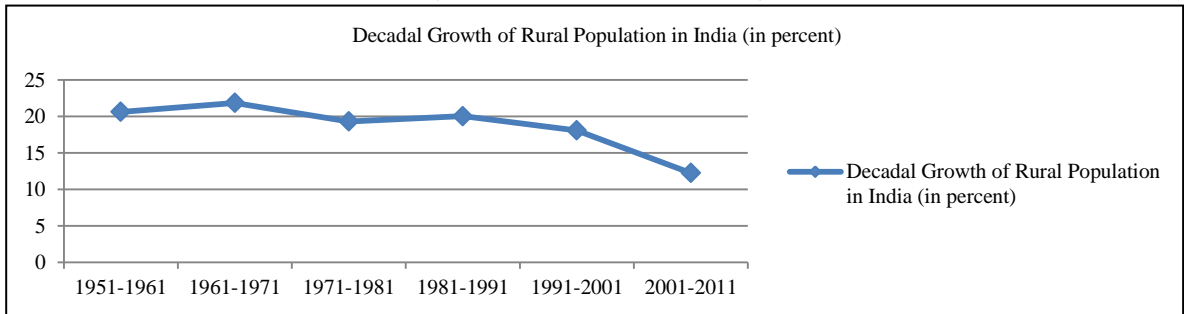
Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the ‘Decadal Change’ part of the above table.

Figure 3: Trends in Growth of Rural Population in India (1951-2011):



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India.

Figure 4: Decadal Growth of Rural Population in India in percent (1951-1961 to 2001-2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the ‘Percentage’ part.

As per the available data in Table 3, it could be seen that during 1951-1961 there was an increase of 20.64% of rural population and during 1961-1971 there was 21.86% increase of rural population. The period 1971-1981 witnessed a decline in the rate of growth of rural population. But during 1981-1991 there was again a rise in the rate of growth of rural population. During the period 1991-2001 there was a sign of fall in growth rate of rural population to 18.09%. The period 2001-2011 witnessed a great fall with a rate of growth of only 12.27%.

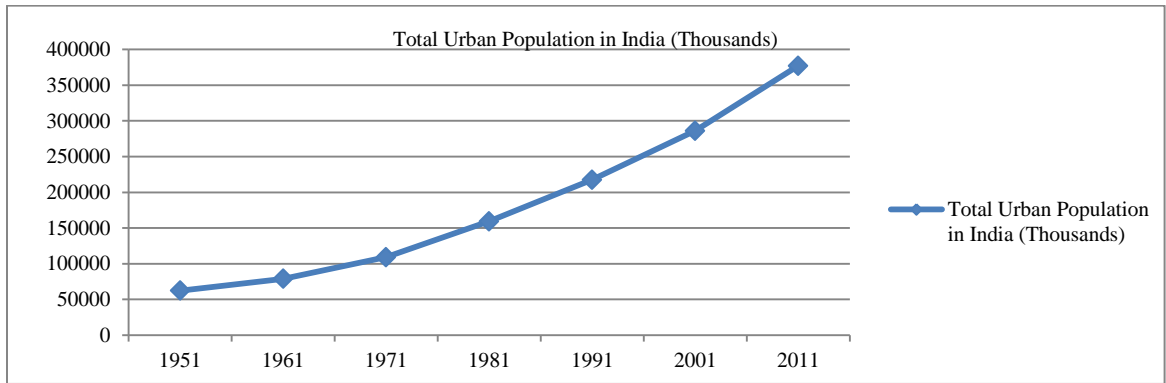
Growth of Urban Population in India (1951-2011): The proportion of urban population in India is quite low as compared to rural population. But it is showing a faster rate of growth for the past few years.

Table 4: Total Number of Urban Population in India (1951–2011)

Year	Population (thousands)	Decadal Change	
		Absolute(thousands)	Percentage
1951	62444	-	-
1961	78937	(+)16493	(+)26.41
1971	109114	(+)30177	(+)38.23
1981	159463	(+)50349	(+)46.14
1991	217566	(+)58103	(+)36.44
2001	286120	(+)68554	(+)31.51
2011	377106	(+)90986	(+)31.80

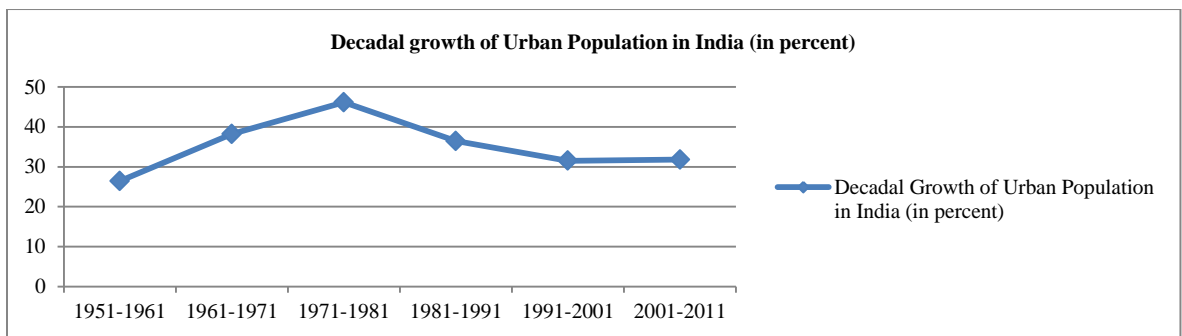
Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the ‘Decadal Change’ part of the above table.

Figure 5: Trends of Growth of Urban Population in India (1951–2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India.

Figure 6: Decadal Growth of Urban Population in India in percent (1951-1961 to 2001-2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India and self calculation by the author for the ‘Percentage’ part.

As per the available data in Table 4, it could be seen that during 1951-1961 there was 26.41% increase in urban population. The period 1961-1971 witnessed an increase of 38.23%. During 1971-1981 there was a very high growth rate with 46.14% increase in the rate of growth of urban population. The period 1981-1991 witnessed a fall in the growth rate with 36.44% increase in the rate of growth of urban population. During 1991-2001 the sign of fall continued with a growth rate of 31.51% and during 2001-2011 the fall continued with a rate of growth of 31.80%.

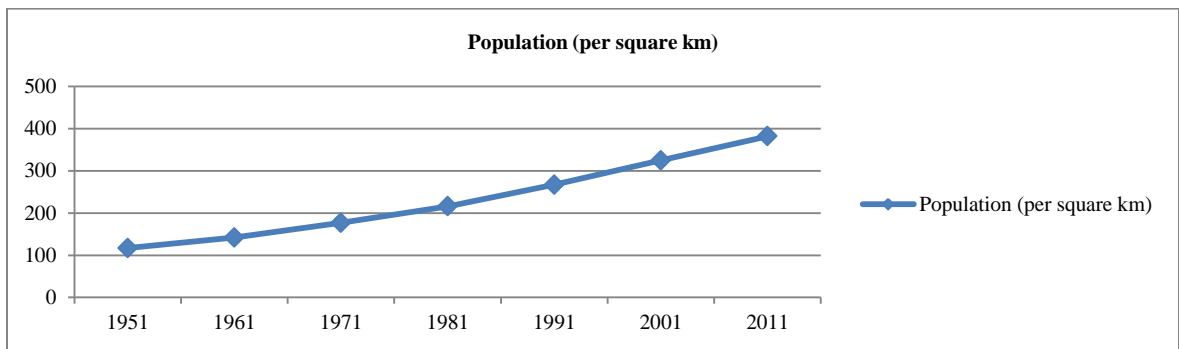
Density of Population in India (1951-2011): Density of population is defined as the number of persons living per unit area. Density of population helps in understanding the distribution of population in relation to land. The higher the number of people living per unit area, the higher becomes the pressure on land.

Table 5: Density of Population in India (1951-2011)

Year	Population (per square km)
1951	117
1961	142
1971	177
1981	216
1991	267
2001	325
2011	382

Source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India

Figure 7: Density of Population in India (1951-2011)



Data source: Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2022-23, Reserve Bank of India.

As per the data in Table 5, it could be seen that the density of population in India increased from 117 persons per square kilometer in 1951 to 382 persons per square kilometer in 2011. The high density of population has far reaching consequences. Some of the consequences are: fall in the land to human ratio, increase in the demand for food, increased demand for land for residential use, decline in the availability of agricultural land leading to food crisis, environmental degradation, forest clearing leading to food and habitat crisis for other species, etc.

Findings: It has been found that during the period 1951-1961 the population of India increased rapidly. 1981-1991 was the period in which the sign of slowing down of population growth started though the rate of growth was quite high.

A decline in the rate of growth of rural population was seen in the period 1971-1981. But again it took an upward turn in the period 1981-1991. But afterwards a gradual fall in the rate of growth of rural population was seen which came down to 12.27% during 2001-2011. But India continues to stay mainly rural in its nature because nearly 69% of its population lives in villages.

As far as the urban population in India is concerned, though the proportion of urban population in India is quite low as compared to its rural population, but the urban population

is showing a faster rate of growth for the last few years. It was highest during the period 1971-1981 with a growth rate of 46.14%. Afterwards the growth rate slowed down a little.

The density of population in India increased from 117 persons per square kilometer in 1951 to 382 persons per square kilometer in 2011 which is more than threefold increase in pressure on land.

Conclusion: The study reveals that the growth rate of population in India has started declining since 1981. India has completed demographic transition and is projected to go towards below replacement fertility and negative growth after sometime (Kulkarni, 2021). Though the growth rate of population is gradually declining, still measures like family planning, improving the status of women, spreading education, etc. must be continued in order to create a better world for the present as well the future generations. The population of India can be its greatest assets if they are provided with healthy and economically gainful lives and for achieving that population stabilization is necessary.

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