



Comparison between Rural and Urban Socio-Economic Indicators in India

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Abstract:

Rural-Urban disparities, particularly in post-colonial countries, have for long been one of the causes of concern for the policymakers. The disparities are seen in all spheres of human life-economic and non-economic. The extent of disparities, however, differs from country to country. India is the largest democracy with consistent economic growth rate since independence. India is also third largest scientific and technological workforce. In agriculture India produces sugar, groundnut, tea, fruits, rice, wheat, vegetables and milk in a large scale. With regard to demographic profile more than 720 billion i.e. one third of its population live in rural areas. Despite these developments, there is a wide gap between rural and urban India with respect to technology, living condition, economic empowerment etc. Many in rural India lack access to education, nutrition, health care, sanitation, land and other assets and they are trapped into poverty. In rural India there is high number of Infant Mortality with low Life Expectancy at Birth Rate. Rural India mostly depends on agricultural sector. The growth rate in agricultural sector (primary sector) is 2-3% when compared to secondary and tertiary sector which are growing at the rate of 8-12%. Due to this there is a large scale migration of labour forces from rural to urban in search of employment. 8-12% growth rate in the secondary and tertiary sector help Urban India as an emerging global information based economy still urbanization of poverty is a major concern. In this paper an attempt is made to study the rural-urban disparity with the help of selected socio-economic indicators.

Key words: Rural, Urban, Poverty, Literacy, Health, Work-Participation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human settlements are classified as rural or urban depending on the density of human-created structures and resident people in a particular area. Urban areas can include town and cities while rural areas include villages and hamlets. While rural areas may develop randomly on the basis of natural vegetation and fauna available in a region, urban settlements are proper, planned settlements built up according to a process called urbanization. Many times, rural areas are focused upon by governments and development agencies and turned into urban areas. Unlike rural areas, urban settlements are defined by their advanced civic amenities, opportunities for education, facilities for transport, business and social interaction and overall better standard of living. Socio-cultural statistics are usually based on an urban population. While rural settlements are based more on natural resources and events, the urban population receives the benefits of man's advancements in the areas of science and technology and is not nature-dependent for its day to day functions. Businesses stay open late into the evenings in urban areas while, sunset in rural areas means the day is virtually over. The flip side of this is that rural areas do not have pollution or traffic problems that beset regular urban areas. Many governments, though focusing on the development of rural areas, have also tried to 'protect' these areas as preservation of their country's basic culture and traditions. Urban areas are also classified according to land use and density of population. But this can vary from developed countries to developing countries. For

example, in Australia, urban cities must include at least a 1,000 residents with 200 or more people per square kilometer while in Canada, an urban area is defined with a density of 400 people per square kilometer. In China, the density requirement for an urban area is about 1,500 people per square kilometer. Statistically, two urban areas with less than two kilometers between them are considered one urban zone. India's three-tiered census definition of 'urban'—at least 5,000 inhabitants, density of 400 people per sq. km or more, and at least 75% of male working population engaged in non-farm activities—was first framed in 1961 by then census commissioner Asok Mitra. "The problem he was trying to solve was that the Gangetic plain is a particularly high-density belt," says Chinmay Tumbe, an economic historian at the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad. Using just a population or density parameter would have inflated the urban rate, skewing funding priorities away from rural schemes. However, more than five decades later, questions are being raised on whether that definition underestimates the urban population although there is no agreement among urban experts on what the new definition should be. Under the census definition, 31% of the Indian population lived in urban areas in 2011. But the share of urban population which lives in towns and cities, actually classified as urban, and governed by urban local bodies is even lower at 26%. Even if one were to discount the satellite data, just relaxing the census definition, and considering settlements with more than 5,000 inhabitants as urban will raise the share of the urban population to 47%.

Much of India's population currently resides in the middle space, away from the big cities as well as the hamlets. Many large settlements that are deemed by the Census and state governments as rural may require urban services such as spatial planning, fire services, and building regulations. But the rigid rural-urban division means that they are denied such services. The level of urbanisation increased from 27.81% in the 2001 Census to 31.16% in the 2011 Census, while the proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% to 68.84%. "The slowing down of the overall growth rate of population is due to the sharp decline in the growth rate in rural areas, while the growth rate in urban areas remains almost the same," Chandramouli said. However, according to the report, the number of births in rural areas has increased by 9 crore in the last decade. The statistics reveal that while the maximum number of people living in rural areas in a particular state is 15.5 crore in Uttar Pradesh, Mumbai tops the list having the maximum number of people in urban areas at five crore. The data also reflects that 18.62% of the country's rural population lives in Uttar Pradesh and 13.48% urban population lives in Maharashtra.

Objective of the Study

1. To explain the nature of rural-urban disparity
2. To analyse rural-urban disparity on the basis of select socio-economic indicators

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data collection. The secondary data was collected by various published sources like

Census Report, NSS Report, Economic Survey, Demographic and Health Surveys, Human Development Report, Books, Journal, Magazine, etc. The findings were discussed in the light of published literature.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

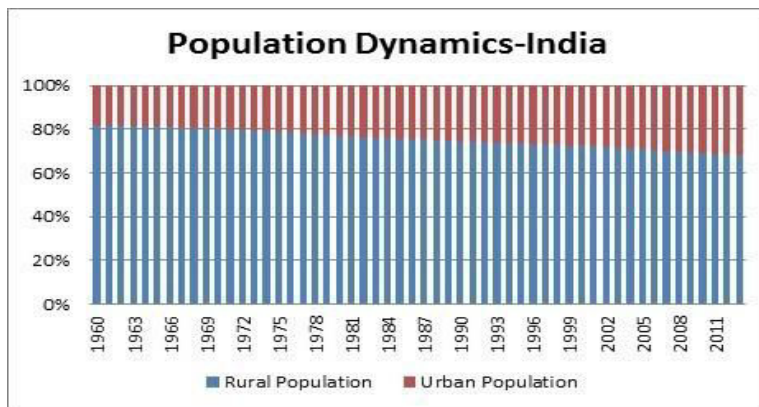
The total land area of India is 2,973,190 Sq.Km. Of which 70% of area comes under Rural area which consists of 6,40,867 villages. Out of this 5,98,000 are inhabited villages. There are only 7,935 towns and 4,041 urban areas as per 2011 Census of India.

Rural India is far behind Urban India in every Indicator of Progress

The India Vs Bharat debate is not new. The Urban–Rural divide has been debated for years together. There seems to be little progress made over the last seven decades in bridging this gap. The gap only seems to be widening by the day. Here is a look at some of the important socio-economic indicators in Urban & Rural India.

1. Population

“India lives in villages” were the golden words of Mahatma Gandhi many decades ago. Ironically after almost 50 years the data does not seem to disagree. Today a majority of the Indian population still live in the villages. Though there is substantial migration from rural to urban areas in India, still almost 68% of India continues to live in rural areas.



The socio-economic census data (2011) released very recently said that almost 73% of the households were in rural areas. On the contrary, India's vision today is highly urban centric. Cities are tipped to be the catalysts of growth in the future. One fears the decay of villages and therefore there is a need to visit the existing ground realities. This piece looks at various indicators of socio-economic progress in India from the rural-urban perspective.

2. Sex Ratio

The sex ratio is the proportion of females to males in a given population, usually expressed as the number of females per 1000 males. The urbanization process in India does not bring desired social changes and did not bring any positive attitudinal change towards women. Advanced technologies influenced the urban masses to terminate the girl child in the foetus itself. High mortality of women during pregnancy is also one of the reasons

for low sex ratio. We can substantiate this argument by looking at the overall maternal mortality rate in India. This coupled with gender bias at health care and less social attention to girl child results in missing women. The sex ratio in India is shown in Table 2.

Table: 2 Sex Ratio

India	940
Rural	947
Urban	926

Source: Census of India, 2011.

3. Literacy Levels

A look at the literacy levels in India over last 3 decades from the same rural urban lens gives us more or less similar numbers. Rural literacy rate is much lower than the urban literacy rate. The point to be noted is the gender disparity in this area, where

the urban female literacy rate is almost higher by 17% than the rural female.

Table.3. Literacy Rates in Post Independent India

Year	Urban			Rural			Combined		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.02	12.1	22.33	45.6	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.1	34.3	22.5	40.5	66	54.4	15.35	40.4	28.31
1971	15.5	48.6	27.9	48.8	69.8	60.2	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.7	49.6	36	56.3	76.7	67.2	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36	64.05	81.09	67.2	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	46.7	71.4	59.4	73.2	86.7	80.3	53.67	75.26	64.83
2011	58.75	78.57	67.8	79.92	89.67	84.1	65.46	82.14	74.04
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	26%	10%	14%	9%	3%	5%	22%	9%	14%

Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India

For 1951, the population male, female and persons refers to effective literacy rates and the breakup of Rural, Urban and male- female components are crude literacy rates.

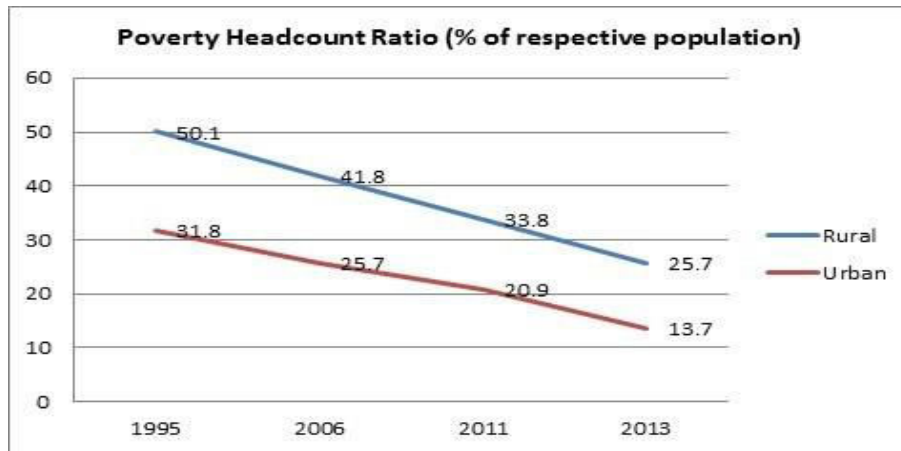
Notes:

1. Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 relate to population aged 5 years and above whereas literacy rates for 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 relate to the population aged 7 years and above.
2. The 1981 literacy rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted.
3. The 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where the 1991 Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions.

4. The 2001 and 2011 literacy rates exclude Mao Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-divisions of Senapat district of Manipur.

4. Poverty Estimates

The chart below summarizes the poverty situation in India. Though poverty has been reducing over time, the rate of poverty reduction in urban areas has been higher than rural areas. Also today, nearly 26% of rural India is poor, compared to a meager 13.7% in urban areas. The Rangarajan Committee estimates are also indicative of the fact that rural poverty is higher than urban and stands at approximately 31% in 2011-12.

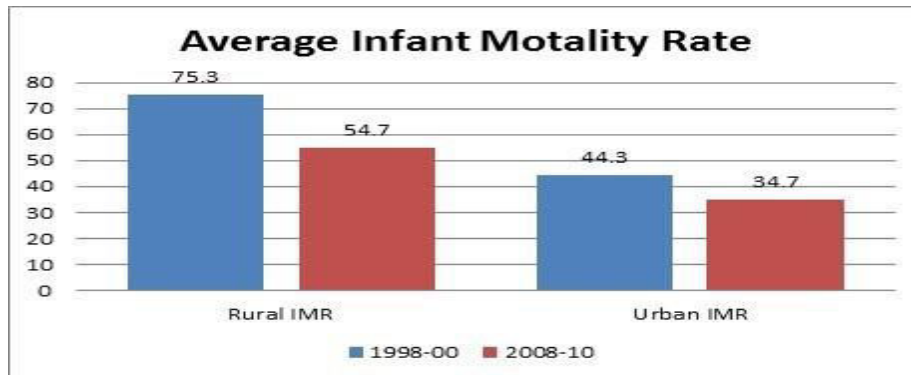


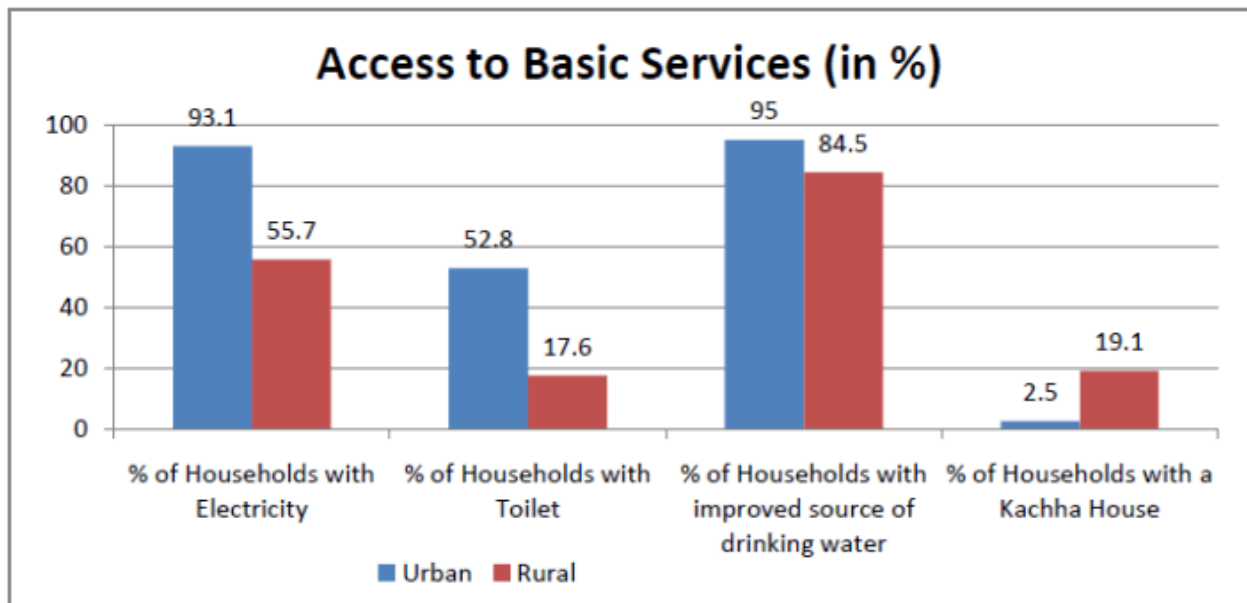
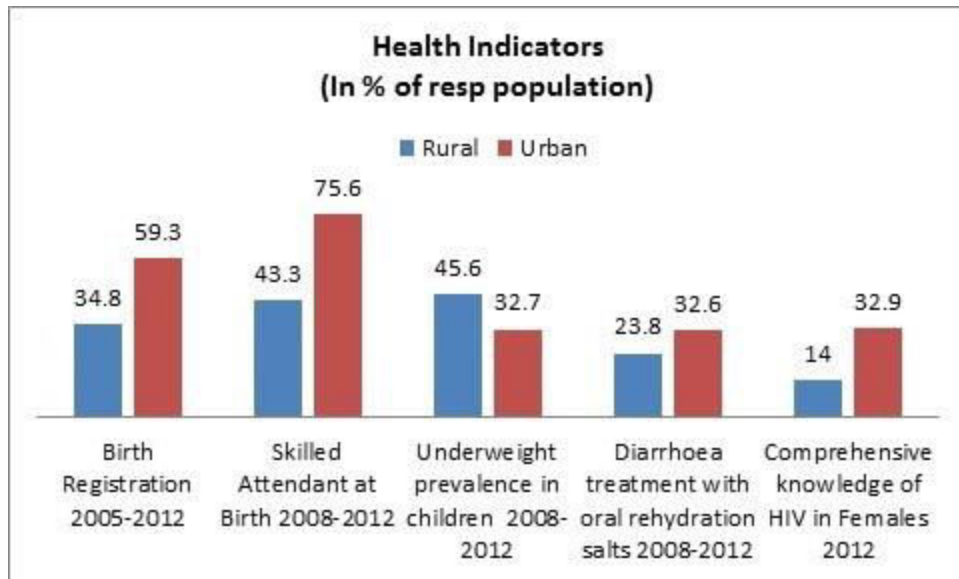
5. Health Indicators – The same story continues

Health is said to be the wealth of a society. Good health and adequate nutrition are the best indicators of the overall well-being of population and human resources development.

They also form an important component of human capability. The following charts depict the rural urban health divide.

Rural India lags behind Urban India in all the indicators: Infant Mortality Rate, Percentage of Anemic Population, Various Health Indicators and Access to Basic Services.





6. Work-Participation Rate

The labour force participation rate is an overall indicator of the level of market activity and its breakdown by sex and age group gives a profile of the distribution of the economically active population within a country. Work force participation rate in

rural areas is higher with 41.9% where as it is 32.2% in urban areas. Among the workforce participation in rural area male constitute 52.4 % and female contributes 30.9%. Female contribution in urban area is only 11.6%.

Table .4. Work Participation Rate

India 2011	Total Population			Total Workers			Work Participation Rate		
	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
Total	1025251059	530422415	494828644	402512190	275463736	127048454	39.3	51.9	25.7
Rural	740255371	380438194	359817177	310655339	199199602	111455737	41.9	52.4	30.9
Urban	284995688	149984221	135011467	91856851	76264134	15592717	32.2	50.9	11.6

Source: Census of India, 2011

IV. RURAL INDIA ALWAYS TAKES A BACKSEAT

Today, after almost 7 decades of independence, the existing policy dynamics has taken a toll on rural India. The villages take a backseat in almost every aspect of socio-economic analysis.

We have created an economy of rich cities and poor villages, surging urban areas and decaying rural areas. The current government at the centre came to power with a thumping majority with its primary objective being “Sab Ka Saath Sab Ka Vikaas”, which translates to “Taking everybody along and

development for all". One can only hope that this becomes a reality and for that to happen a balance between urban and rural development is a definite prerequisite.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Apart from taking steps to increase human development facilities in the villages, such as health and education, and develop appropriate infrastructure such as roads and marketing facilities, there is the need for generating employment, which can better the living conditions of villagers. We need to adopt a long-term policy, keeping in mind the requirements of the rural and urban areas. A close look at the development plan exercises tends to demonstrate that adhocism permeates the policy processes. In the rural areas there are many resources lying unutilised. It is time to identify these and make proper use of them. The application of Information Technology can be of great help in identifying what is lying unutilised or underutilised. In West Bengal, it is being done in some rural and municipal areas. Jalpaiguri has done a remarkable job in this regard. It is the only district in the State to go in for participatory decentralised planning. Under this programme, the people themselves prepared village registers, electoral constituency-wise (gram sansad). These registers are mines of information, and they record the people's perceptions of development. The database is important for the development planning exercise. Kerala has shown the way through the people's campaign for decentralised planning. Rural-urban disparity is the least in Kerala. There is a rural-urban continuum, rather than a divide. The people's campaign has definitely helped to make further improvement in the situation. The fact, however, remains that these steps at the State level, no matter how significant they are, cannot fully take care of the problem unless there is a shift of policy at the national level. This calls for sustained pressure from the bottom, that is, rural India. Secondly, urban development in a country like India has to dovetail with rural development. Otherwise, rural out migration will upset the applecart.

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