

## **Leading to Census of India 2011**

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Census is the official enumeration of the country's inhabitants. Every ten years enumeration of population is ordered by the Government. This is an extremely vital exercise, which, besides counting the population also provides information on many other characteristics of the population. Mr. Devender Kumar Sikri, Ex-Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India pointed out 'Census data demonstrates where the nation is positioned at a particular point of time in respect of various social and economic characteristics'. The government and those outside use the Census data in meaningful analysis and devising plans for development.

In 1928, the then rulers of India presented a Population report on India to British Parliament, mainly basing on the report of Dr. M. Visveswaraya led Economic Enquiry Committee and Census of 1921. This census and an earlier one had revealed reduction in population growth in India, not by use of birth control measures but due to diseases, epidemic and natural calamities. Sir Visveswaraya Committee made an effort to frame an estimate of economic condition of various classes of people". The Committee had observed: "the most elementary materials necessary for a satisfactory and adequate description of the economic condition of the Indian people are lacking. There were no statistics, which might help in estimating average income, crop production, wages, the cost of living and other cognate subjects. Census 1921 put the population of the country at 318,942,000 of which 9.5 per cent lived in the towns. The report on Indian population presented in British Parliament observed "India is a predominantly agricultural country with an increasing population and growing industries..... 72 per cent of her population dependent on agriculture. 11.2 per cent on industries, 5-6 per cent on trade and 1.6 per cent on transport, while the rest of the people depend on various professions, liberal arts, domestic services and public administration". "Between 1892 and 1925 the number of factories in this country rose from 650 to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 7000 and the average number of operatives employed in them increased from "less than one third of a million" to about a million and a half during the same period", the report to British Parliament pointed out.

Indian Census operation continuing in the collection of data is continuing since 1872. It has touched three centuries – Nineteenth, Twentieth and now the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the first census of the current millennium ended with the sunrise of 2001. Census 2001 provided benchmark data on the characteristics of population besides the head count. These included information on various demographic, socio-cultural, economic, migration and fertility characteristics. Indian population on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2001 stood at 1028 million, 532.2 million males, and 496.5 million females. A comparison

of certain statistics of 1951 census (first after Independence) and 2001 could be important:

Item	1951 Census	2001 Census
Sex ratio (Females per 1000 males)	946	933
Literacy (%) - Male	27.16	75.26
Literacy (%) - Female	8.86	53.67

2001 Census figures excluded the villages of areas under unlawful occupation of Pakistan and China where Census could not be taken. Census could not be held in 1981 in Assam and in Jammu & Kashmir in 1991 due to disturbed condition prevailing in the two States at the time of Census. In 2001, however, it was possible to conduct a complete census of the entire country.

As per 2001 Census, population density in India was 325 persons per square kilometer with West Bengal on the top with 903 persons per square kilometer (excluding Delhi, Chandigarh, Pondicherry and Lakshadweep). Wealth of data emanated from 2001 Census required sensitization of users to make use of. Census operations do not recommend high sounded ideas. It just put the tabulated data to speak for themselves, but everything official. As an example, census enumerators do not go out to search for people below poverty line. It is for the administrators and planners to fix the criterion to identify BPL in the society.

2001 Census through Houselisting of census houses collected data on people's way of life, like, use of house, material of roof, wall and floor, number of dwelling rooms, sources of drinking water, lighting, fuel used for cooking and even on types of latrines through canvassing of questionnaire.

Census 2011 is in progress with the data collection of the first phase of the work of Houselisting and Housing Census along with the National Population Register already complete. Capturing of data is in progress. In the second phase, Population Enumeration will be undertaken where information on individual characteristics of each member of the household will be collected. On completion the Census Commissioner, India is likely to declare the provisional population of the country within three weeks, an unbelievable feat.

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