

DENSITY OF POPULATION

Density of population is the ratio of total population to the total area of the country. With an average density of 382 persons per sq km in 2011, India is considered as one of the most thickly populated countries of the world. Decadal growth rate (2001- 2011) was 17.64 per cent. However, population density varies from region to region – from a minimum of 17 persons per sq km in Arunachal Pradesh to 1,102 persons per sq km in Bihar, 1,029 persons per sq km in West Bengal and 11, 297 persons per sq km in NCT of Delhi. The eastern region of the country, comprising of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands sustain a density of 625 persons per sq km. Kerala is having a density of 859 persons per sq km. The northeastern region comprising of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam is having the lowest density of 176 persons per sq km. Central region comprising of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh is having the second highest density of 417 persons per sq km, followed by southern region comprising of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Lakshadweep. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry (397), western region comprising of Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Maharashtra (344) and northern & northwestern region comprising of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, NCT of Delhi and Rajasthan (267) respectively. The spatial distribution classes (state and UT level) are as follows:

Areas of extremely low density: Areas having 100 persons per sq km or less are seen in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Sikkim. These are generally remote areas often lacking basic amenities of living. :

Areas of low density: Areas having population density of 101 to 270 persons per sq km are Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. These are mostly hilly, forested plateaus often lacking fertile level land to support high density. In case of Rajasthan scanty rainfall is the main cause of low density.

Areas of medium density: This class includes areas having 271 to 600 persons per sq km. National average figure for 2011 Census (382) comes under this class. Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Assam, Goa, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Punjab belong to this group. These areas have flourished in agriculture/plantation, or rich in mineral / industrial resources.

Areas of high density: These are areas having population density of 601 to 1,000 persons per sq km. Four states – Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and union territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli are included in this category. Here, highly fertile agricultural plains support high density of population. Kerala produces a variety of plantation crops.

Areas of very high density: Areas with more than 1000 persons per sq km are termed as very high-density regions. West Bengal, Bihar, NCT of Delhi, Chandigarh, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu come under this class.

District level patterns: States are often too large to give a realistic picture of density distribution. Some states with low density of population have a few high-density districts and vice versa. The range in district level density varies widely. The highest density of around 31,000 persons per sq km in Northeast Delhi district and the lowest is about 06 persons per sq km in Lahul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh. The ten most densely populated districts of the country are Northeast Delhi, Central Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, East Delhi, Mumbai, Mumbai Suburbs, Hyderabad, West Delhi and North Delhi.

In contrast, there are a few districts in which the population density is around 20 persons per sq km. Kargil, Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir), Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang, Dibang (Arunachal Pradesh) and Lahul & Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), North Sikkim, West Kameng, Lower Subansiri Kinnaur, Jaisalmer, West Siang and Lohit have very low population density. The mountainous and desert areas are having a very low population density. Three types of density classes can be recognized:

High-density districts: The largest compact belt of high-density population spreads over Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, eastern and southern Haryana, Punjab and Delhi. The high density is due to urban-industrial as well as agricultural development. The second cluster of districts is found in coastal tracts of Kerala and in Tamil Nadu plain. Agricultural prosperity as well as rapid urbanization is the factors behind. Also the east coastal districts and the riverine plains and deltas of major rivers sustain high density of population. Industrialization is also the factor behind the very high density in Gujarat and Maharashtra plains.

Moderate-density districts: In northern and eastern India these districts are found adjacent to the high-density districts. In peninsular India, moderate density districts are found in Maharashtra, Gujarat, parts of Rayalseema and Telangana and coastal Andhra, also in parts of Tamil Nadu. These areas are having less fertile soil and limited supply of fresh water compared to the high-density districts. However, urbanization and industrialization have promoted population growth. Medium density districts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are benefitted from Green Revolution and canal irrigation.

Low-density districts: Low-density districts are having physical constraints, like mountainous/ hilly topography, scarcity of water, adverse climate or dense forest. Most parts of Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and western Odisha belong to this class.

The population of India as on 1st March 2011, is 1,210,193,422 persons compared to a total of 1,028,737,436 persons in 2001. The population in India has increased by more than 181 million during the decade 2001-2011. The estimated global population in 2010 was 6908.7 million. At present, a little more than one out of every six persons in the world is from India. The gap between India, the country with the second largest population in the world and China, the country with the largest population in the world has narrowed from 238 million in 2001 to nearly 131 million in 2011. On the other hand, the gap between India and the United States of America, that has the third largest population, has now widened to about 902 million from 741 million in 2001.

The population of India is almost equal to the combined population of U.S.A., Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan put together – the population of these six countries totals 1214.3 million. A point that is striking is that while India accounts for a meager 2.4 per cent of the world's surface area of 135.79 million sq km, it supports 17.5 per cent of the world population. In contrast, the USA accounts for 7.2 per cent of the surface area with only 4.5 per cent of the world population. Among the ten most populous countries of the world (China, India, USA, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Russian Federation, and Japan), only Bangladesh has a higher population density compared to India.

The United Nations has estimated that the world population grew at an annual rate of 1.23 per cent during 2000-2010. China registered a much lower annual growth rate of population (0.53 per cent) during 2000-2010, as compared to India (1.64 per cent during 2001-2011). In fact the growth rate in China is substantially lower than the USA (0.7 per cent). It is now estimated that by 2030, India will most likely overtake China to become the most populous country on the earth with 17.9 per cent population living here (if the current growth rate is not controlled). The population of India at the turn of the twentieth century was only around 238.4 million. This has increased by more than four times in a period of one hundred and ten years to reach 1210 million in 2011. Interestingly, the population of India grew by one and half times in the first half of the twentieth century, while in the later half it recorded a phenomenal threefold increase.