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## CURRENT SCENARIO OF GENDER IMBALANCES IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** *Census of India is the only source providing useful demographic information at state, district and administrative levels below it. Gender composition is one of the basic demographic characteristics. It is defined as number of females per 1,000 males. Declining gender composition is emerging as a serious threat to the socio-economic, cultural and ethical structures and values of Indian society. As per 2011 census, the number of states and union territories below National average has remained constant over 2001 and 2011 census in spite of an improvement in overall sex ratio. There are eight districts in India, having sex ratio less than 800. The numbers of female is more in urban areas as compared to its rural counterparts. It requires stringent action from Government authorities and mass movement to change the mindset and the unequal order of the patriarchal society. This paper reveals the current scenario of gender imbalances prevailing in India, at state-wise, district-wise and by rural-urban residence.*

**Keywords:** *Demographic, Gender, Census, Composition, Patriarchal.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Gender composition is an important component of any census. Indian subcontinent is one of the few regions in the world where there are more males than females in the population (Bhat and Zavier, 2007). India's population has been marked by a low and declining sex ratio (SR) ever since the beginning of Census operations in the country. This has been a matter of much investigation and speculation among researchers and policy makers (Hussan, 2000). Changes in sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio-economic and cultural pattern of society in different ways. Sex ratio is an important indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time. The uneven distribution of any one of the sexes can disturb the basic equilibrium within the society. The Indian society is highly masculine and continues to remain like that with minor changes in the percent of females (Chauhan, 2003). Declining gender ratio is an indicator of female's low status and unequal roles prescribed to males and females (Gill and Madan, 2011). According to UNICEF, 12 million girls are born in India every year. Out of which 25 percent do not survive the 5<sup>th</sup> year (Bhardwaj, 2010). The child sex ratio captures a part of this discrimination against females. The net deficit of females was 9.9 million in 1951, which has now widened to 37 million in 2011. In India overall gender composition has been unfavorable to females. Table 1 shows gender composition in India from 1951 to 2011. The Table reveals that the gender composition slightly improved in 1981 but declined again in 1991 by seven points which came as a crude shock. The improvement in sex ratio in 2001 and 2011 gives some confidence towards better social status to women in the country (Premi, 2012). This has resulted to narrow down the gender disparity prevailing in India. The increase in urban sex ratio and decline in rural sex ratio after 1961 are compensatory to each other but decline in rural sex ratio is a painful scene of rural areas and is a matter of serious concern (Sangwan, 2009).



**Table 1**

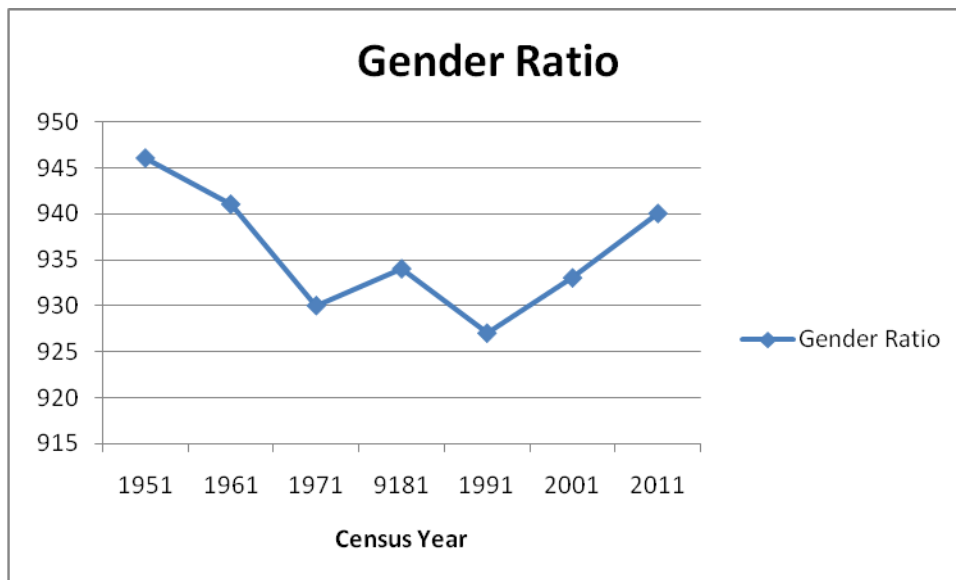
**Gender composition (females per 1,000 males) in India, 1951-2011**

Census Year	Gender Ratio
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	927
2001	933
2011	940

**Source:** Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional population totals.

**Figure 1**

**Gender composition in India, 1951-2011**



**Source:** Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional population totals.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The gender composition has been on a continuous decline since the beginning of this century with some nominal exceptions. The urban place has been more affected as compared to the rural areas of India by abnormality of the sexes due to some specific natural and socio- economic conditions. The basic objective of the present paper is to study the current scenario of gender imbalances in India at state-wise, district- wise and by rural-urban residence.



## **DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY**

The study is mainly based on the secondary sources of data. Census of India (2011) provides most of the data required for the study. Some relevant data meant for the purpose have also been obtained from earlier publications of the census of India. Various occasions of the paper published by Census of India, Office of the Registrar General, New Delhi, were also consulted.

Gender composition is measured in terms of number of females per thousand males. The rural-urban differential was calculated by subtracting urban sex ratio from the rural one.

## **INTER-STATE DISPARITIES**

The pattern in sex ratio among the states and union territories are distinct. In 1951 there were as many as eleven states and UTs, which had sex ratio of more than 1000. This number declined to nine in 1961, three in 1971, two in 1981, one in 1991. In 2001, the state of Kerala and UT of Puducherry reported above 1000 sex ratio. These states have also shown considerable increase in 2011 as well (Singh, 2012). In fact, the sex ratio in Kerala has remained above 1000 right from 1901 onwards. This is probably on account of two reasons. First, Kerala had matriarchal society which did not allow discrimination between a daughter and son. Second, in Kerala since women received education and proper healthcare, their survival chances were as good as those of males. In contrast, prosperous states of the North India, particularly Punjab and Haryana reflect adverse sex ratio (Misra and Puri, 2010).

As per 2011 Census, the top three states recording the highest value of overall sex ratio are neighbors located in the southern part of India namely Kerala(1084), Tamil Nadu(995), and Andhra Pradesh(992). Among the UTs, the top three are Puducherry (1038), Lakshadweep (946) and the Andaman & Nicobar islands (878).The lowest sex ratio among the states has been recorded in Haryana (877), Jammu & Kashmir (883) and Sikkim (889). Among the UTs the lowest sex ratio has been returned in Daman & Diu (618), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (775) and Chandigarh (818). Among the major states only Bihar, Gujarat and Jammu & Kashmir experienced a decline of 3, 9 and 2 points respectively. The other Union Territories registering decline in overall sex ratio include Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Lakshadweep.

It is noteworthy to note that although the number of states and union territories with sex ratio less than 916 declined twelve to ten in 2011 but percentage share of these states



population has remained almost constant (Table-2). In contrast, the number of states and union territories with high sex ratio of 986 and above rose sharply from four in 2001 to seven in 2011 with corresponding increase in the share of population. Movement of large states (Andhra Pradesh) in this category resulted in the increase in the population share. However, overall increasing trend in the sex ratio at the census 2011 has boosted the sex ratio of India.

**Table 2**

**Distribution of states/UTs by range of sex ratio of India: 2001 and 2011**

Sex ratio	2001	Percentage of population to total population, 2001	2011	Percentage of population to total population, 2011
880& below	8	5.8	6	3.65
881-915	4	17.44	4	19.87
916-950	11	47.18	10	45.08
951-985	8	18.12	8	13.01
986& above	4	11.28	7	18.4

**Source:** Based on Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional Population totals.

Table- 3 reveals that the number of states and UTs with sex ratio below national average has remained constant over 2001 and 2011. In fact, the proportion of population other smaller UT showing steep decline are Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Perceptible increase has been observed in the major states such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and all the states located in the north east. A point is to be noted is that the states having historically low sex ratio such as Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Chandigarh have shown appreciable increase in the ratio in census 2011.



**Table 3**

**Distribution of states/UTs by sex ratio below**

**National level and above National level: 2001 and 2011**

Sex ratio	Number of states/union territories 2001	Percentage of population to total population 2001	Number of states/union territories 2011	Percentage of population to total population 2011
Below national average	17	57.19	17	58.31
Above national average	18	42.81	18	41.69

**Source:** Census of India 2011, Series1, India, Provisional Population totals.

**OVERALL GENDER COMPOSITION BY RURAL- URBAN RESIDENCE AT STATE LEVEL**

Table 4 shows overall gender composition by rural- urban residence at state level in India as per 2011 Census. Table 4 reveals that the urban sex ratio is lower than rural sex ratio by 20 points or more in many states mainly because of differential in rural to urban migration by sex. There are, however, several states- Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tamil Nadu, where urban sex ratio is higher than rural sex ratio. Overall urban sex ratio in Manipur is higher by 72 points and in Meghalaya by 50 points which is somewhat surprising. In contrast, urban sex ratio is lower than rural sex ratio by 135 points in Himachal Pradesh, 117 points in Uttarakhand, 67 points in Gujarat, 59 points in Jammu & Kashmir and 52 points in Jharkhand. Kerala has the highest sex ratio in total (1084), rural (1077) and urban (1091). In rural, Chandigarh (691) and in urban, Daman & Diu (550) shows the lowest sex ratio in the country respectively. Eight states namely Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and one UT Lakshadweep show fall in the sex ratio in rural area and two UTs Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli in urban areas.



**Table 4**  
**Overall sex ratio by residence, India, states and union territories, 2011**

India/State/Union Territory	Total	Rural	Urban
<b>India</b>	940	947	926
<b>Big States</b>			
Andhra Pradesh	992	995	984
Assam	954	956	937
Bihar	916	919	891
Chhattisgarh	991	1002	956
Gujrat	918	947	880
Haryana	877	880	871
Himachal Pradesh	974	988	853
Jammu&Kashmir	883	899	840
Jharhkand	947	960	908
Karnataka	968	975	957
Kerala	1084	1077	1091
Madhya Pradesh	930	936	916
Maharashtra	925	948	899
Orrisa	978	988	934
Punjab	893	906	872
Rajasthan	926	932	911
Tamil Nadu	995	993	998
Utter Pradesh	908	914	888
Uttrarakhand	963	1000	883
West Bengal	947	950	939
<b>Small States</b>			
Arunachal Pradesh	920	929	889
Goa	968	997	951
Manipur	987	966	1038
Meghalaya	986	983	997
Mizoram	975	950	1000
Nagaland	932	942	905
Sikkim	889	883	908
Tripura	961	956	976
<b>Union Territories</b>			
A& n islands	878	871	891
Chandigarh	818	691	821
Dadra& Nagar Haveli	775	863	684
Daman& Diu	618	867	550
Delhi	866	847	867
Lakshadweep	946	954	944
Puducherry	1038	1029	1043

**Source:** Census of India 2011, Series1, India, and Provisional Population totals



## INTER- DISTRICT DISPARITIES

Table-5 presents distribution of 640 districts by overall sex ratio in 2001 and 2011 in order to indicate the nature of shift between the two time points. The number of districts with sex ratio above 1,000 has increased from 78 to 98 in 2011. In which Kerala and Tamil Nadu registered 15 such districts each in this category and is followed by Andhra Pradesh with 11 such districts. While Orissa has 10 such districts and is followed by Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh with 7 such districts each in this category. There is upward shift in the next category (951-1000) as well resulting in decline in the number of districts in certain categories especially below 850. We observe that 353 districts have shown sex ratio above the national average that accounts around 56 per cent of the total districts. Four districts Parbhani (Maharashtra), Simdega (Jharkhand), Bishnupur (Manipur), Sivaganga (Tamil Nadu) are having sex ratio exactly equal to national average and remaining 283 districts are recording sex ratio below national average.

**Table 5**

**Distribution of districts by overall gender ratio, 2001 and 2011**

Range	2001	2011
Above1000	78	98
951-1000	175	198
901-950	210	199
851-900	122	125
801-850	45	12
Up to 800	10	8
Total	640	640

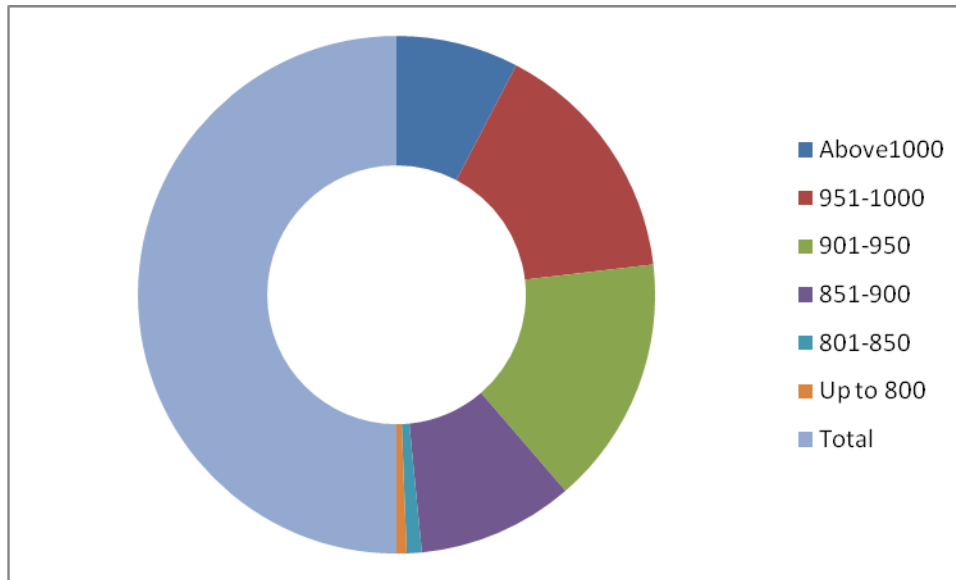
**Source:** Premi (2012; 40)





Figure 2

Distribution of districts by overall gender ratio (2011)



Source: Premi (2012; 40)

Table 6

Top five & bottom five districts by overall gender ratio in India (2011) Top five districts with highest gender ratio	Overall gender ratio	Bottom five districts with lowest gender ratio	Overall gender ratio
Mahe (Puducherry)	1176	Daman (Daman & Diu)	533
Almora (Uttarakhand)	1142	Leh (Jammu & Kashmir)	583
Kannur (Kerala)	1133	Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)	701
Pathananthitta (Kerala)	1129	West Kameng (Arunachal Pradesh)	755
Ratnagiri (Maharashtra)	1123	North District (Sikkim)	769

Source: Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional population totals

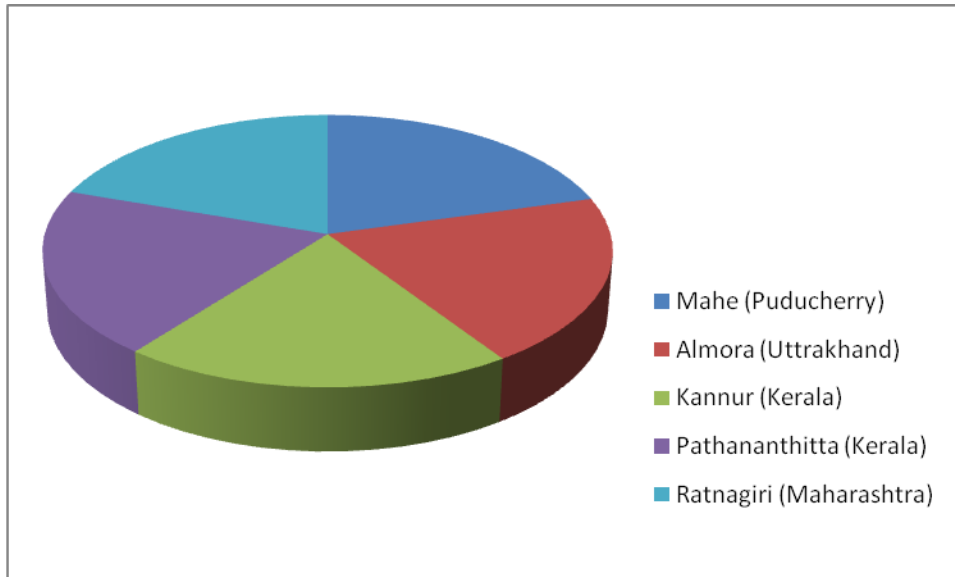
Table 6 reveals the top five & bottom five districts by overall gender ratio in India in 2011. Concentration of high sex ratio is noticed in most of Uttarakhand, Kerala, Orissa and in parts of Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Uttar Pradesh with largest number of districts i.e. 36 have recorded ratio less than 900, only 16 districts registered sex ratio above national average. Areas with low sex ratio are mainly in



Punjab, Haryana, Utter Pradesh and Delhi. It is interesting to note that among bottom five districts none of the district of Haryana and Punjab registered in this category (Table-6). In 2001, there were 17 districts in India, having less than 800 sex ratio and 10 of them were in Haryana and Punjab.

**Figure 3**

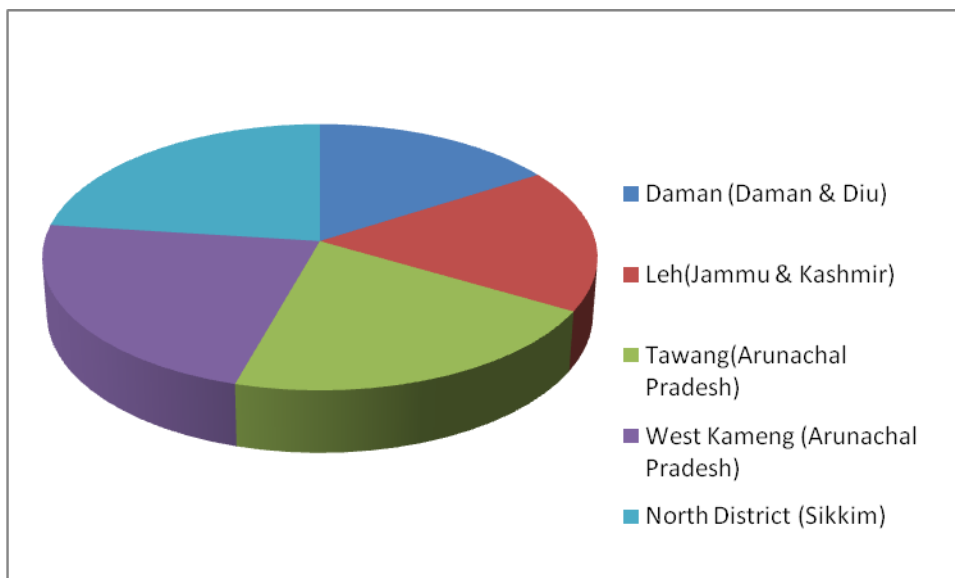
**Top five Districts by Overall Gender Ratio in India (2011)**



**Source:** Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional population totals

**Figure 4**

**Bottom five Districts by Overall Gender Ratio in India (2011)**



**Source:** Census of India 2011, series1, India, Provisional population totals



## OVERALL GENDER COMPOSITION BY RURAL- URBAN RESIDENCE AT DISTRICT LEVEL

At district level the areal differences in sex ratio reflect the variations in social attitudes of the populations. It is clear from Table 7 as per 2011 Census data that the maximum and minimum sex ratio in rural areas was 1180 in Almora (Uttarakhand) and 673 in Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) with a difference of 507 females per 1,000 males. Similarly, the maximum urban sex ratio in 2011 was 1,176 in Mahe (Puducherry) while the minimum was 308 Leh (Ladakh) in J&K, making a difference of 868 females per 1,000 males.

Table 7 reveals that among top ten rural districts, Uttarakhand registered four such districts and is followed by Kerala three such districts. Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka have one such district each in this category. In bottom ten rural districts Arunachal Pradesh registered three such districts and Chandigarh, NCT of Delhi, Sikkim, J&K, Daman & Diu, Andaman & Nicobar, Madhya Pradesh have one district each in this category. On the other hand Kerala at state level is at the top moreover, among top ten urban districts Kerala alone registered eight such districts whereas Mahe (Puducherry) ranked highest in urban sex ratio and Tamil Nadu has also one such district in this category. The Leh (Ladakh) figures the lowest urban sex ratio as 308. It is heartening to observe that J&K registered four districts among bottom ten districts (Table-7).

**Table 7**

**Top ten and Bottom Ten Districts by sex Ratio in Rural and Urban Area**

<b>Top ten districts (Rural area)</b>	<b>Overall sex ratio</b>	<b>Bottom ten districts (Rural area)</b>	<b>Overall sex ratio</b>
Almora (Uttarakhand)	1,180	Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)	673
Ratnagiri (Maharashtra)	1,146	Chandigarh (Chandigarh)	691
Garhwal (Uttarakhand)	1,145	South (NCT of Delhi)	725
Rudraprayag (Uttarakhand)	1,143	North (Sikkim)	755
Pathanamthitta (Kerala)	1,129	Dibang Valley, West Kameng (Arunachal Pradesh)	760



Kollam (Kerala)	1,126	Kargil (J&K)	762
Tehri Garhwal (Uttarakhand)	1,117	Daman (Daman&Diu)	763
Udupi (Karnataka)	1,112	Nicobar (Andaman&Nicobar)	778
Hamirpur (Himachal Pradesh)	1,110	Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh)	818
Alappuzha (Kerala)	1,108	Bhind (Madhya Pradesh)	829
<b>Top ten districts (Urban area)</b>	Overall sex ratio	<b>Bottom ten districts (Urban area)</b>	Overall sex ratio
Mahe (Puducherry)	1,176	Leh (Ladakh) (J&K)	308
Kannur (Kerala)	1,168	Daman (Daman& Diu)	494
Pathanamthitta (Kerala)	1,125	Anjaw (Arunachal Pradesh)	578
Trissur (Kerala)	1,113	Rajori (J&K)	617
Kasaragod (Kerala)	1,111	Udhampur (J&K)	674
Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)	1,100	Dadra&Nagar Haveli	684
Kozhikode (Kerala)	1,101	Rudraprayag (Uttarakhand)	697
Malappuram (Kerala)	1,099	Solan (Himachal Pradesh)	731
Kollam (Kerala)	1,097	Ramban (J&K)	738
Alappuzha (Kerala)	1,094	West Kameng (Arunachal Pradesh)	739

Source: Based on Census of India 2011, Series1, India, Provisional Population totals

## CONCLUSION

Right from the beginning of the census operations, the gender ratio in India has been adverse to women not only in rural areas but also in urban counterparts. Declining sex ratio is a very sensitive issue. Government is realizing the importance of sex ratio. Several efforts have been done to decrease the gap of male and female ratio (FMR). It is interesting to observe that majority of states, Union Territories and districts have improved overall sex ratio during 2011 but the number of states and UTs below national average (940) has remained constant in 2011 Census. Majority of the states identified as gender critical for



special attention and intervention as part of the census 2011 have shown increasing trend in the sex ratio as per the provisional results of 2011 Census. More efforts have to be done to narrow down the gap of sex imbalances.

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