



Urbanization and Demographic Dynamics in Jammu and Kashmir: A District-Level Analysis

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Abstract: Urbanization is the transition of a predominantly rural agrarian society into one that is predominantly urban, industrial, and service-based. India has a relatively low level of urbanization (31.6% in 2011 and a projected 35.39% in 2021) compared to developed countries, but it constitutes 10.6% of the world's urban population. This study analyses urbanization variables using statistical methods. Standard deviation and coefficient of variation quantify determinant spread. Correlation and regression are used to determine the interrelationship and level of variation between urban populations and determinants. Results show that approximately two-thirds of the state's entire urban population is distributed throughout three major cities: Srinagar, Jammu, and Leh. There has been an increase in the number of towns formed there over the years, especially with Class I towns having a declining urban population and Class III, Class IV, and Class V towns having an increasing urban population.

Keywords: Urbanization • Population Growth • Demography • Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

Every nation goes through the same process of urbanization as it moves from an agricultural society to an industrial society. Based on historical data, the trend toward urbanization appears to be universal and inexorable (Wani and Mayer 2018). Urbanization is defined as the migration of people from rural to urban areas, the gradual increase in the number of people living in urban areas, and how each society responds to the change (Habib 2017a). Urbanization includes a natural increase in population, migration, and the conversion of rural into urban areas, resulting in the horizontal and vertical expansion of the urban regions (WHO 2010 and WUP 2019). In demographic terms, urbanization refers to a rise in the share of the total population that resides in urban areas over time (Rahman 2007; Sharma and Rana 2017). Currently, there is a rate of urbanization in India that is equal to 35.39 percent (world Bank 2024).

Between the years 2001 and 2011, the urban population increased by 377 million, representing a growth rate of 2.76 percent (Bhagat 2011). The urbanization level in India is similar to that in other developing countries at present. Jammu and Kashmir's urbanization rate has nearly tripled over the last century, from 8.46 percent in 1901 to 27.37 percent in 2011.

Urbanization, in its demographic context, refers to the progressive rise in the proportion of the urban population compared to the total population. The urbanization development of Jammu and Kashmir continues to be unbalanced and is oriented toward its major cities and towns. Numerous studies have been conducted on the development of the level and pattern of urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir. Still, very few studies have been



conducted on the geographic and demographic dimensions of urbanization in the state.

Study Area

The Jammu and Kashmir state is located in the north of India, it is located between 32° 17' North to 37° 05' North Latitude and 72° 31' East to 80° 20' East Longitude (Habib 2017; Khan 2018; Raina 1971). The state extends 640 kilometers from north to south and 480 kilometers from east to west. The area comprises the regions of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, and Gilgit, which are distributed among the three Asian sovereign nations of India, Pakistan, and China. The state has a

total size of 222,236 km², which accounts for 6.93 percent of the entire Indian territory. Includes 78,114 km² illegally occupied by Pakistan and 42,685 km² occupied by China (Andrabi 2020). Jammu and Kashmir is surrounded by Kargil (Ladakh) in the north, Tibet (China) in the east, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab in the south, and Pakistan in the west. The main objective of this study is the district-level analysis of urbanization from 1971-2011 in Jammu and Kashmir and Examine the demographic changes over the decades due to urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir.

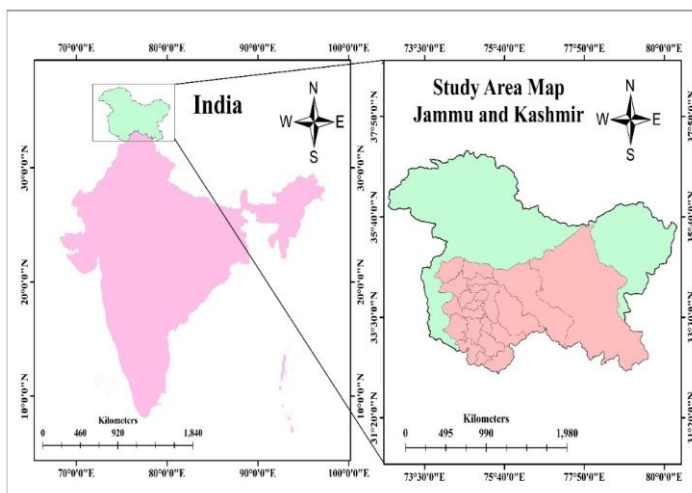


Figure 1: Study Area

Data Source and Methodology: The primary source of data for this study is the Census of India data, number of statistical and annual reports issued by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of India.

The study area map and choropleth map were designed by using ArcGIS software, and all tables, diagrams, maps and urbanization-related measures were calculated by using MS

$$\text{Level of Urbanization} = \frac{\text{Urban Population}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Percent Rural Pop.} = \frac{\text{Rural Population}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Urban – Rural ratio} = \frac{\text{Urban Population}}{\text{Rural Population}} \times 100$$

The lower limit of the ratio of urban Pop. /Total Pop. is 0, and the upper limit is 1, i.e., $0 < \text{Urban Pop.} / \text{Total Pop.} < 1$. When the overall population and the rural population are equal,

Excel and SPSS Software. The percentage of the total population in any area at any given date who lives in an urban area is used to determine the level of urbanization. The rural population percentage and rural-urban population ratio are also calculated.

the index equals (0). This value is equal to (1) when the whole population resides in urban areas.



Decadal Growth Rate in %

$$DGR = \frac{P_n - P_o}{P_o}$$

P_n = Population now/ this decade

P_o = Population Originally / last decade

P_n and P_o are ten years apart.

Results And Discussion

Urbanization is a demographic phenomenon that pertains to the expansion of towns and cities, both absolutely and relatively, within a specific geographic area. Jammu and Kashmir do not have a high level of urbanization (Khan and Mondal 2018). The rural population continues to dominate the state. Urbanization has displayed significant diversity in its patterns and characteristics at both regional and district levels. This can be attributed to variations in economic conditions, physiographic features, climate conditions, and political upheavals.

Urban-Rural Disparity: There was a notable difference in the population distribution of urban and rural areas. The state primarily consisted of rural populations. Pulwama and Kupwara had a relatively balanced distribution of urban and rural populations, while in Leh and Kargil, urban populations were considerably smaller compared to rural ones.

In contrast to rural areas, urban populations in districts like Leh and Kargil were relatively smaller. Figure 2. provides a detailed analysis of the distribution of urban and rural populations in Jammu and Kashmir districts, revealing significant variations in population patterns. The data presented in the figure. 2 shows the proportions of urban and rural residents in each district, highlighting substantial differences. Notably, Srinagar stands out as a predominantly urban district, with 98.60% of its populace residing in urban areas. In contrast, districts like Kishtwar (93.56% rural) and Ramban (95.84% rural) have a predominantly rural population. The significant disparity between rural and urban development in Jammu and Kashmir, with a low of 0.01% in Srinagar and a high of 23.02% in Ramban, underscores the immediate need for customized development plans.

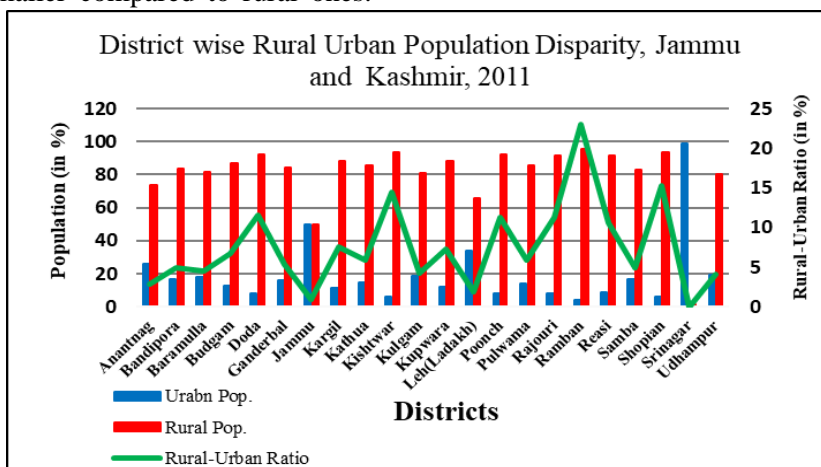


Fig. 2: District-wise Rural-Urban Population disparity in Jammu and Kashmir (2011)

Source: Compiled from various reports of the census of India, Jammu and Kashmir Series, 2011



The Trends of Urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir

The state's urbanization has consistently increased over the modern era, particularly in the 20th century, following a temporary decline from 1911–1921 to 1941. The degree of urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir is not particularly high (Wani et al. 2018). Still, the vast majority of the state's population is from rural areas; 27.38 percent of the total population resides in urban areas as shown in

(Table 1 and Fig 4), and ranked 15th in the nation in terms of urban population(Khan 2018).The levels of urbanization from 1901 to 2011 at the national and state level are depicted in the (figure. 4). Jammu and Kashmir, in particular, exhibit a lower level of urbanization at 27.37%, which is lesser than the national average of 31.2%.

Table 1: Level of Urbanization in India and Jammu and Kashmir (1901-2021)

Census Year	Jammu and Kashmir (Value in %)	India (Value in %)
1901	8.46	10.8
1911	10.60	10.3
1921	10.31	11.2
1931	11.76	12.0
1941	13.10	13.9
1951	14.05	17.3
1961	16.66	18.0
1971	18.59	18.2
1981	21.05	23.3
1991	23.83	25.7
2001	24.82	27.8
2011	27.37	31.2
2021*	30.01	35.39
% Of Change	200.6	219.7

Source: Compile various reports of Census of India, J & K series data of Census, 1901-2011

*Data is projected for 2021; census data is not available for 2021

The low level of urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir is linked to the prevalence of agricultural Practices and the absence of industrial advancement in the state(Wani and Mayer 2018) Urbanization is intricately connected to economic development, and its

pace can differ significantly across regions and Districts due to varying economic, geographic, Climatic and Political Conditions(M. A. Wani and Mayer 2018) Compared to the national average of 35.39 percent, Jammu and Kashmir, in particular, has a lower level of urbanization at 30.1 percent

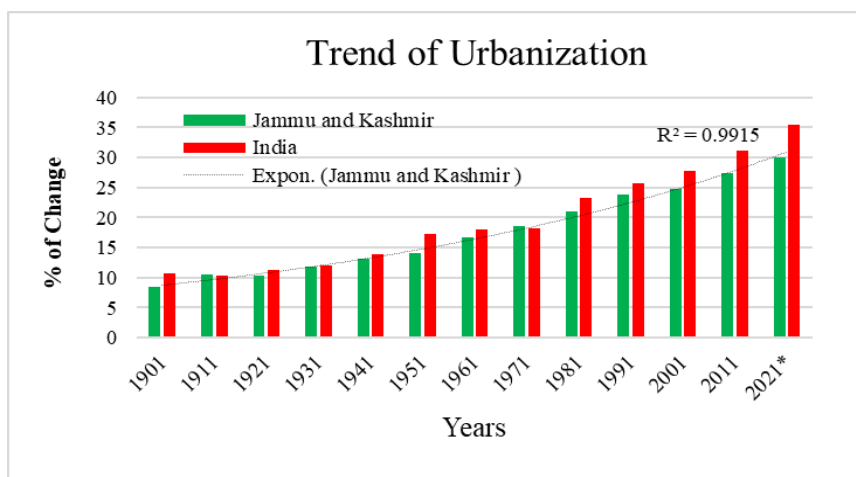




Fig. 4. Trend of Urbanization in Jammu Kashmir and India

Source: Compile various reports of Census of India, J & K series data of Census, 1901-201

The urbanization level of Jammu and Kashmir is 30.01 percent and stands in 20th rank among the states in the country. Jammu and Kashmir's low level of urbanization may be attributed to the state's agricultural dominance and industrial backwardness. The distribution of the urban populace across districts in Jammu and Kashmir is uneven, with a large proportion concentrated in three specific areas: Srinagar, Jammu, and Leh, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the total urban populace in Jammu and Kashmir. The Census

2011 report revealed that these districts had a higher percentage of urban populace compared to the average for the entire Union Territory, which was 27.38%. In the post-independence era, the urban landscape can be characterized by dualism, where developed Union Territories (UTs) attracted people to urban areas due to relatively higher employment choices and availability of essential amenities. Interestingly, there was rapid urban development in the backward areas.

Table 2: District-wise Decadal Growth of Urban Population in Jammu and Kashmir (1961-2011)

Districts	Decadal GR 1961-1971	Decadal GR 1971-1981	Decadal GR 1981-2001	Decadal GR 2001-2011	Decadal GR 1961-2011
Anantnag	0.51	0.37	1.13	0.89	7.32
Badgam	2.67	3.38	0.36	0.39	29.30
Bandipora	0.52	1.29	2.27	0.41	15.04
Baramulla	0.07	0.23	1.60	-0.07	2.18
Doda	0.26	0.29	-0.13	0.50	1.11
Ganderbal	NA	0.00	-0.46	2.43	0.84*
Jammu	0.45	0.36	1.51	0.20	4.99
Kargil	0.00	0.48	2.02	0.53	5.84
Kathua	0.61	0.67	0.87	0.14	4.77
Kishtwar	0.27	0.36	1.08	0.00	2.59
Kulgam	0.38	0.29	1.31	3.26	16.53
Kupwara	NA	0.93	1.63	3.11	19.84*
Leh	0.48	0.58	2.29	0.08	7.30
Pulwama	1.70	0.77	1.11	0.43	13.45
Punch/Poonch	-0.16	0.03	0.69	0.61	1.36
Rajouri	0.36	0.89	1.13	0.55	7.49
Ramban	0.14	0.40	0.67	0.08	1.90
Reasi	0.61	4.21	0.00	0.33	10.16
Samba	0.21	3.55	1.44	-0.18	10.03
Shupiyan	0.30	0.23	0.27	0.34	1.72
Srinagar	0.41	0.32	0.71	0.31	3.18
Udhampur	0.73	0.52	1.70	-0.07	5.59

Source: Compiled from different Census reports 1961-2011, Census of India, Jammu & Kashmir Series.

Table 2 Above shows the district-wise decadal growth of the urban population. The data shows that the urban population is continuously growing, but the percentage

increase is very slow except in a few districts, like Kupwara, Ganderbal and Kulgam. The urban population has changed during the last six decades. Data shows that the urban



population is continuously growing, but the pace of urbanization is very slow; only three districts have more than 25 percent urban Population. On the other hand, districts such as Rajouri, Kathua, Pulwama, Budgam, Kargil, Poonch, and Baramulla, Kupwara have experienced slower growth in urbanization levels over the same period. Figure 4 and Table 2 provide insights into the dynamic nature of urban population growth in Jammu and Kashmir during the period from 1961 to 2011. The districts of Badgam and Kupwara exhibit a notable increase in urban population,

with percentages of 29.30 and 19.84, respectively. The urban populations of Doda, Poonch, and Baramulla have shown the lowest percentage of change, with figures of 1.11, 1.36, and 2.18, respectively. By comparison, the population ratio of India has been recorded at 3.78. This clearly shows that the urban population of Jammu and Kashmir is growing much faster than that of India. The higher decadal growth rate in Jammu and Kashmir compared to the national average can be attributed to a combination of factors unique to the region.

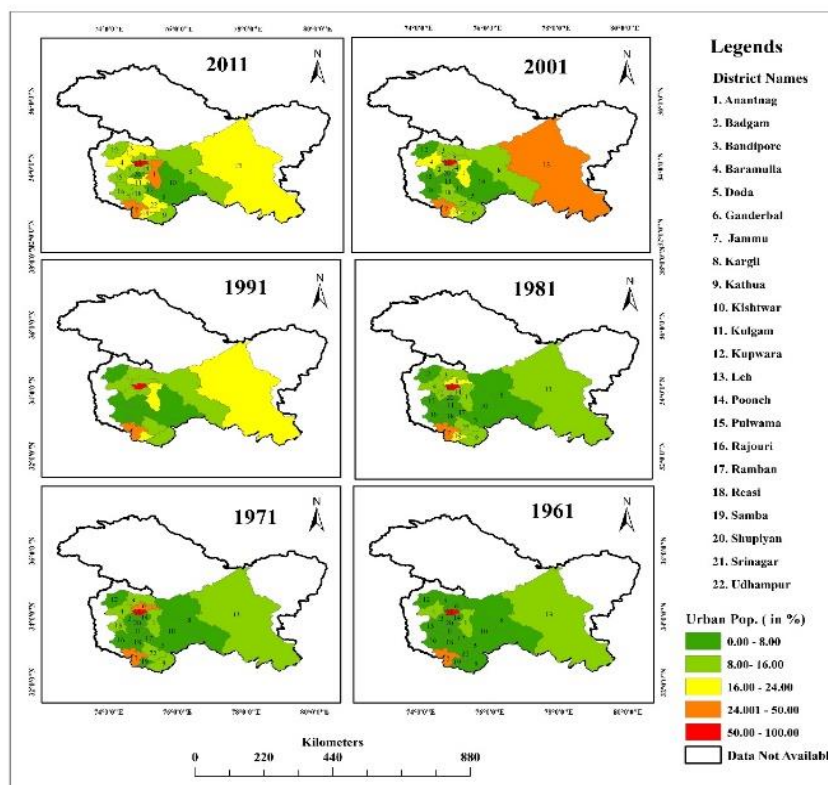


Fig.4: District-wise level of urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir (1961-2011)

Source: Compiled from Census of India 1961 to 2011

The state is primarily comprised of two main urban centers, namely Srinagar and Jammu, with the majority of the remaining settlements being classified as smaller towns, falling within the categories of class IV, V, and VI. However, a significant number of these minor settlements are deficient in essential social amenities and persist in exhibiting rustic attributes akin to those observed in other regions of India(Khan and Mondal 2018).

Additionally, with the establishment of eight new districts in the year 2007, the major urban centers, especially for class I and II, experienced a population decline, while the newly created districts primarily contributed to the progressive change observed in class IV (Table. 3), as their urban population mostly falls within this category(Wani and Bhat 2022). Figure 5 and 6 shows the number of towns in each town class during the same



period. The findings reveal a decrease in the urban populace share in Class I towns. At the same time, there is a significant increase in the

lower-sized towns of Class III, Class IV, and Class V.

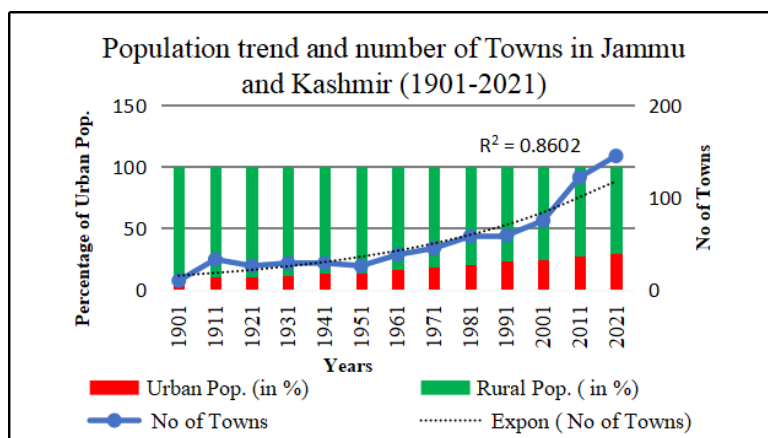


Fig. 5. Trend of Towns and Population Share in Jammu and Kashmir (1901-2021)

Trends are effectively represented in Figure 5, which illustrates the percentage distribution using a bar diagram. Additionally, the number of Class I towns remains relatively constant or slightly increasing. In contrast, the number of towns in Class III, Class IV, and Class V has increased significantly from 1961 (1, 4, and 6, respectively) to 2011 (15, 30, and 46, respectively). The total number of towns in 1961 was only 38, which increased to 145 in 2021; the percentage of change in towns from 1961 to 2021 is 281.57 percent (Figure.5 and 6). Migration of people from the mountains area to the plain areas, people start settling along the Roadside for better transport facilities, education and health, giving birth to the new towns in many hilly areas, like Thana Mandi, Surankote and Qazigund etc. The urban population in Jammu and Kashmir has experienced significant growth, with the expansion of urban concentrations from smaller population groups to Class I urban centers. However, despite the increase in the number of large cities, it is important to consider the faster rate of population growth and the migration of people from rural areas to urban peripheries when addressing urban development. These findings align with previous studies conducted at the national

level (Kundu 1983) that reported similar conditions. Figure 5 and 6 represents the level of urban development and the total number of towns in all 22 districts of Jammu and Kashmir in 2011, together with the spatial distribution of the population of the state among the 22 districts(Khan and Mondal 2018). Based on the 2011 census, Leh district has three towns, with 34.21 percent of its populace residing in urban areas. In contrast, Kupwara district has twelve towns, but only 12.03 percent of its population lives in urban areas. Jammu district has a 50 percent urban population and 20 towns, which are distributed in 20 towns, while Srinagar district has a 98.6 percent urban Population, which is distributed in only five towns.

The rough terrain and harsh climate in districts like Leh (34.21% urban, three towns) and Kargil (11.6% urban, one town) hinder urban growth. However, districts like Jammu (50% urban, 20 towns) and Srinagar (98.6% urban, five towns) have higher urban populations and more towns due to favourable circumstances and historical growth, whereas Doda (7.97% urban, two towns) and Kishtwar (6.44% urban, one town) remain rural owing to poor infrastructure.



As per 2001 census data, the districts of Jammu and Srinagar were the sole regions in Jammu and Kashmir that exhibited urbanization rates exceeding 30%. Nevertheless, as of 2011, the count of districts belonging to this particular classification had risen to three, comprising Leh, Jammu, and

Srinagar. This implies that Leh experienced significant growth in urban areas, exceeding the threshold of 30% urbanization. The expansion of Leh is attributed to a multitude of factors, including an upsurge in tourism, the advancement of infrastructure, and the existence of economic prospects.

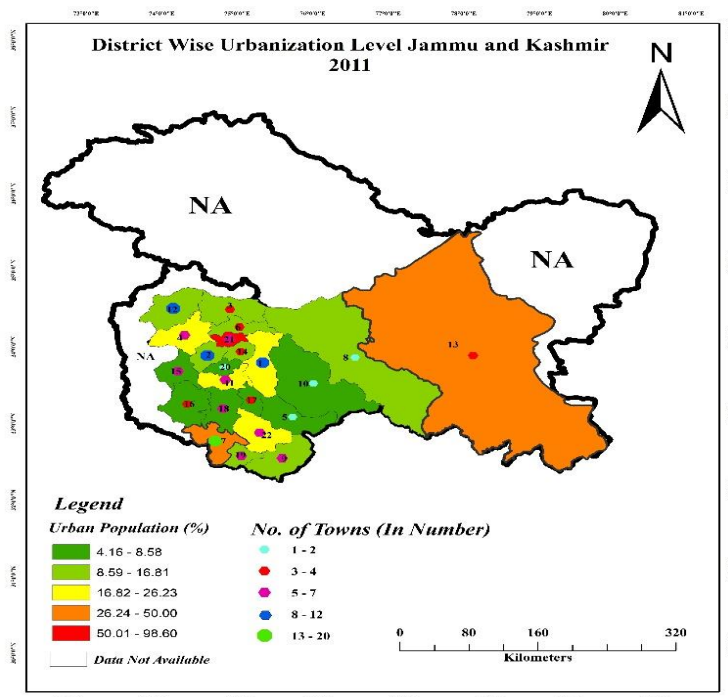


Figure 6. District-wise distribution of urban Population in Jammu and Kashmir (2011)
Demographic Characteristics.

It is important to note that demographic changes are not just a result of urbanization. Still, they also play a significant role in shaping urbanization processes, particularly in terms of the population's concentration in cities. Experts have long cited this as one of the main causes of the fertility decline. Urban fertility is generally acknowledged to be lower than rural fertility, with the exception of improvised urban slum areas. The demographic shifts in urban areas can be well explained by the Demographic Transition Theory (Kirk 1996; Notestein 1945; Thompson 1929), which provided an important analysis that confirmed the significance of urbanization in relation to economic factors that contribute to the decrease in fertility (Notestein 1945).

Over the past five decades, there has been a significant increase in population within the state (Khan 2018). The subsequent paragraphs provide a detailed elaboration of the key demographic features of Jammu and Kashmir State. The uneven distribution of the populace is primarily determined by factors such as topography, climate, and soil characteristics (Andrabi 2020).

Population Density

Since independence, the population density in Jammu and Kashmir State has witnessed a significant and rapid increase except in Leh and Kargil districts. This represents a more than four times increase in population density over the past 50 years alone. Notably, Bandipora, Ganderbal and Kulgam districts



have recorded particularly high population densities, with 1135, 1148 and 1035 individuals per square kilometer, respectively. Rugged and mountainous terrain in the Kargil and Leh districts poses significant obstacles to infrastructure development and access. This challenging terrain, along with limited resources, hinders population growth and

contributes to lower population densities. Moreover, the districts' geographical isolation from major urban centers and economic hubs further adds to their lower population densities. The distribution and density of the population in the state reflect a predominant influence of the geographical and physical characteristics across its various regions.

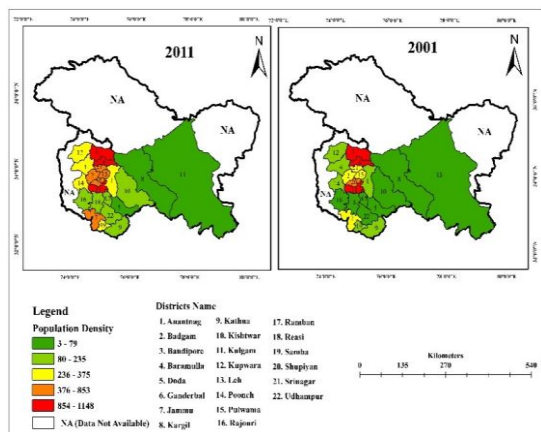


Fig.7: District Wise Population Density of Jammu and Kashmir (2001-2011)

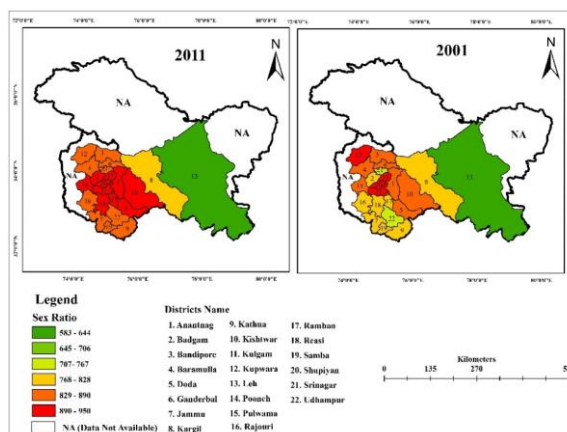


Fig 8: District Wise Variation in Sex Ratio in Jammu and Kashmir (2001-2011)

Sex Composition

The sex composition of a population plays a vital role in analysing demographic processes such as mortality, fertility, and migration. By examining the spatial distribution of sex ratios, significant variations can be observed at the district level, highlighting distinct patterns and characteristics (Khan 2018). Kulgam and Shopian districts recorded the highest sex ratios in both the 2011 and 2001 censuses, surpassing Samba and Udhampur. On the other hand, Kargil had the lowest sex ratio of 775 females per thousand males. The district-wise sex ratio is shown below.

An ongoing issue in the demographic transition of Jammu and Kashmir is the concerning sex ratio imbalance. The consistently low sex ratio in the state is caused by the unfortunate high mortality rate of females due to the neglect of girl children. Data presented in figure 8. above reveals fluctuations in the sex ratio across different districts of Jammu and Kashmir over the

years. Districts like Kulgam and Shopian consistently exhibit higher sex ratios. In Jammu district, it has been observed that the sex ratio is decreasing from 2001 to 2011

Literacy Rate: Srinagar with a literacy rate of over 25 percent. On the other hand, Kargil, Doda and Badgam had a literacy rate of less than 20 percent. District Jammu has consistently maintained its dominance, with a high literacy rate of 83.98 percent in 2011 figure 9. The analysis of district-wise literacy rates reveals higher rates in Jammu, Samba, and Leh districts, while Ramban, Bandipora, and Badgam districts exhibit lower rates. Notably, female literacy rates are consistently low across all districts. These findings indicate a lack of social awareness regarding female education, possibly influenced by prevailing socio-cultural practices.

Urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir is relatively low due to several factors, including limited economic diversification,



underdeveloped trade connections, an agriculture-centric economy, and insufficient

use of advanced technology for optimizing resources.

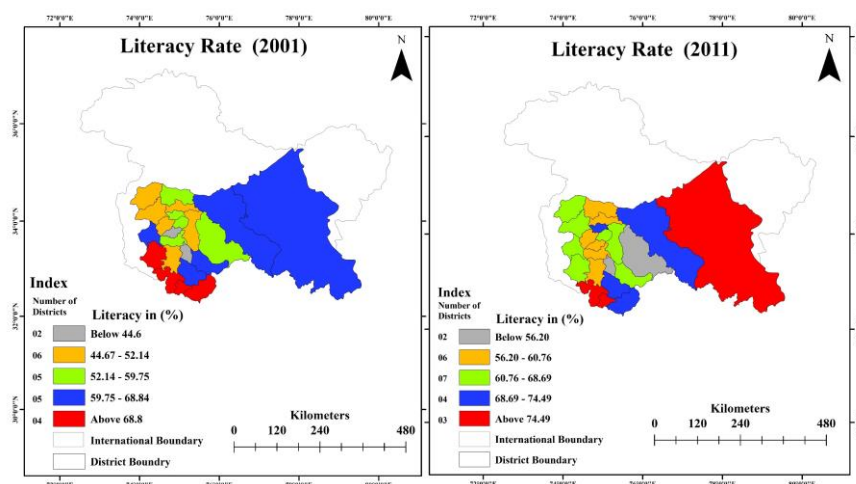


Fig 9: District-wise variation in Literacy in J&K (2001-2011)

Discussion

Despite these challenges, there has been significant urban growth: the urban population increased from 8.46% in 1901 to 27.37% in 2011, nearly tripling in a century. The number of municipalities increased significantly, from 10 in 1901 to 122 in 2011, although urban expansion varies regionally due to geographic and economic conditions.

Two main urban centers, Jammu and Srinagar, account for 58.9% of the urban population, while the remaining 42% is distributed across 20 other districts. The dominance of these cities underscores economic imbalance, as other districts lack substantial development.

The disparity in urbanization also highlights socio-cultural factors that influence population demographics. Issues such as gender-based neglect and maternal mortality have resulted in a skewed sex ratio, accounting for 8.64% of the variation in urban population. In contrast, literacy rates contribute 13.49% to this variation. Urbanization shows a positive correlation with town density and literacy rates, while the sex ratio has a negative effect on urban growth.

Urban development has increasingly benefited smaller towns (Class III, IV, and V), resulting in a notable 321% rise in the number of towns from 1961 to 2011. This trend toward smaller urban centers reflects the influence of government policies and urban development initiatives designed to promote growth in medium and small towns, tailored to Jammu and Kashmir's distinct geographical and socio-economic context.

In conclusion, while urbanization in Jammu and Kashmir has seen substantial growth over the last century, it is still constrained by geographical, economic, and socio-cultural factors. The concentration of urbanization in Jammu and Srinagar highlights the need for more balanced economic development across the region to support broader urban growth and improve living standards.

Conclusion

Urban amenities in rural of state are vital for balanced development, especially in light of the region's history of poverty, illiteracy, and high mortality. Urbanization has increased significantly, resulting in the urban population increasing from 8.46% in 1901 to 27.37% in



2011, driven by population growth, establishment of new urban centres and improvements in healthcare and education. However, urbanization remains uneven, with most urban population concentrated in Jammu and Srinagar due to geographic and climatic challenges, particularly in mountainous areas like Ladakh.

Analysis of data from 2001 to 2011 shows that there is a weak and statistical insignificant relationship between urbanization and population growth, indicating that other factors influencing demographic trends. Despite an overall positive trend in birth rates, death rates, and life expectancy, urbanization remains below the national average, with only 27.37% of the population living in urban areas. The number of smaller towns has grown significantly, increasing by 321.05% from 1961 to 2011, partly due to government policies. However, urban growth is still concentrated in larger cities like Jammu and Srinagar, leaving regional disparities. Addressing these challenges is essential for balanced and sustainable development. Overall, although progress has been made, regional disparities and difficult terrain continue to impede further urban development, indicating the need for targeted strategies to ensure more balanced development in Jammu and Kashmir.

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