

CUET · GEOGRAPHY · CLASS XII · CODE 313

Population: Distribution, Density, Growth and Composition

CUET unit: India — Population: Distribution, Density, Growth,

Composition
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Snapshot

- India is the world's 2nd most populous country (1,210 million in 2011) after China — larger than North America, South America and Australia combined.
- Four pillars organise this unit — Distribution, Density, Growth, Composition — and CUET consistently tests them through factual, statement-based and map-based items.
- Numeric anchors matter: 2011 Census figures, density (382 persons/sq km), decadal growth (17.64%), rural share (68.8%), workers (39.8%), primary sector workers (54.6%).
- Several classification frameworks apply (4 phases of growth; 4 language families; 4 occupational categories; 3 worker types) — fertile ground for match-the-following MCQs.
- Policy add-ons (NYP-2014, Skill India 2015, Beti Bachao–Beti Padhao) often surface as one-liner factual MCQs.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

- India is the second most populous country after China with a total population of **1,210 million** as per Census 2011; this single figure exceeds the combined total of North America, South America and Australia. "Such a large population invariably puts pressure on its limited resources and is also responsible for many socio-economic problems in the country" (NCERT Introduction, p. 1).
- The first population Census in India was conducted in **1872** but the first **complete** Census was conducted only in **1881**; Census operations are held every 10 years (NCERT "Sources of Population Data", p. 1). NTA loves the 1872 vs 1881 trap — only the latter is described as the first **complete** Census.
- Distribution of population is highly uneven: **Uttar Pradesh has the highest population**, followed by Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal; UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, MP, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Gujarat together hold about **76 per cent** of India's population (NCERT §Distribution of Population, p. 3).

- Small population shares are found in **Jammu & Kashmir (1.04%)**, **Arunachal Pradesh (0.11%)** and **Uttarakhand (0.84%)** despite fairly large geographical area (NCERT §Distribution, p. 3).
- Pattern of distribution is shaped by **physical factors** (climate, terrain, water availability) plus **socio-economic and historical factors** — settled agriculture, pattern of human settlement, transport networks, industrialisation and urbanisation. NCERT explicitly lists examples — irrigation in Rajasthan, mineral and energy resources in Jharkhand, transport networks in Peninsular states — that turned previously thinly populated areas into moderate-to-high concentrations (NCERT §Distribution, p. 3). The urban regions of **Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Pune, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Jaipur** show high concentration due to industrial development and urbanisation drawing large numbers of rural-urban migrants.
- Density of population in India (2011) is **382 persons per sq km**, up from **117 in 1951** — a steady increase of more than 200 persons per sq km in 50 years (NCERT §Density of Population, p. 3).
- Spatial range of density: as low as **17/sq km in Arunachal Pradesh** to **11,297/sq km in NCT Delhi**; **Bihar (1,102)**, **West Bengal (1,029)** and **UP (828)** lead among northern states, while **Kerala (859)** and **Tamil Nadu (555)** have the higher densities among peninsular states (NCERT §Density of Population, p. 3). Assam, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Odisha have moderate densities; the hill states of the Himalayan region and the north-eastern states (excluding Assam) have relatively low densities; the Union Territories (excluding Andaman & Nicobar) have very high densities.
- Three measures of density: **crude** (persons/total area), **physiological density = total population / net cultivated area**, **agricultural density = total agricultural population / net cultivable area** (NCERT box, p. 5). Agricultural population is explicitly defined as "cultivators and agricultural labourers and their family members".
- Population growth has two components — **natural** (birth & death rate) and **induced** (migration); natural growth is the focus here. Annual growth rate (2011) is **1.64 per cent** (NCERT §Growth of Population, p. 5). **Population Doubling Time** is the time taken by any population to double itself at its current annual growth rate.
- **Decadal growth rate formula:** $g = ((P_2 - P_1) / P_1) \times 100$ — where P_1 is the base-year and P_2 the present-year population (NCERT Table 1.1 footnote, p. 5).
- **Four phases of growth** (NCERT pp. 7–8):
- **Phase I (1901–1921):** Stagnant/stationary phase; **negative growth of –0.31% recorded in 1911–1921**; poor health and medical services, illiteracy and inefficient distribution system of food and basic necessities kept both birth and death rates high.
- **Phase II (1921–1951):** Steady population growth; mortality fell due to overall improvement in health and sanitation; impressive growth despite the Great Economic

Depression of the 1920s and the Second World War; better transport and communication improved the food distribution system while crude birth rate stayed high.

- **Phase III (1951–1981):** Period of **population explosion; average annual growth as high as 2.2%**; planned development after Independence improved living conditions, mortality fell rapidly while fertility remained high; international migration of **Tibetans, Bangladeshis, Nepalese and even people from Pakistan** added to the growth.
- **Phase IV (post-1981 to present):** Growth still high but slowing gradually; downward trend of crude birth rate driven by higher mean age at marriage, improved quality of life and female education.
- Projected population (World Development Report) is **1,350 million by 2025** (NCERT Phase IV discussion, p. 8).
- During 1991-2001, southern states (**Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Puducherry, Goa**) grew under 20%; **Kerala recorded the lowest at 9.4%**; a continuous belt of states from west to east in the north-west, north and north-central parts (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, UP, Uttarakhand, MP, Sikkim, Assam, WB, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand) recorded 20–25% (NCERT §Regional Variation, p. 7).
- In 2001-2011 growth rates of almost all states/UTs fell below those of 1991-2001 — the largest decline was in **Maharashtra (6.7 percentage points)**, the smallest in **Andhra Pradesh (3.5 pp)**; **Tamil Nadu (+3.9 pp)** and **Puducherry (+7.1 pp)** were exceptions that registered some increase.
- Adolescents (10–19 years) form **20.9% (2011)** — male 52.7%, female 47.3%; **National Youth Policy 2014** defines youth as **15–29 years** and aims "to empower the youth of the country to achieve their full potential"; **National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015** provides an umbrella framework to align skilling with demand centres (NCERT p. 8). Challenges flagged for the adolescent group include lower age at marriage, female illiteracy, school dropouts, low intake of nutrients, high rates of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS infection, drug/alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency and commitment of crimes.
- **Rural-Urban Composition: 68.8%** of India lives in villages (2011); out of **640,867 villages, 597,608 (93.2%)** are inhabited; village size varies from less than 200 persons in hill states/Western Rajasthan/Rann of Kachchh to as high as 17,000 in parts of Kerala/Maharashtra; urban population is **31.16%** but growing faster owing to enhanced economic development and improved health/hygiene (NCERT pp. 8–9). Conspicuous rural-urban migration belts include the Kolkata–Mumbai axis, the industrial corridors of Bengaluru–Mysuru, Madurai–Coimbatore, Ahmedabad–Surat, Delhi–Kanpur and Ludhiana–Jalandhar.
- **Linguistic Composition:** India is "a land of linguistic diversity"; **22 scheduled languages; Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903–1928)** counted **179**

languages and 544 dialects; Hindi speakers have the highest share; **Sanskrit, Bodo and Manipuri** are the smallest scheduled languages (2011) (NCERT §Linguistic Composition, p. 9).

- **Four language families (Table 1.2, p. 10)**: Austric (Nishada) 1.38%; Dravidian (Dravida) 20%; Sino-Tibetan (Kirata) 0.85%; **Indo-European (Aryan) 73%** — the largest. Austric sub-families are Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer in Meghalaya/Nicobar; Munda in WB/Bihar/Odisha/Assam/MP/Maharashtra) and Austro-Nesian (outside India). Sino-Tibetan splits into Tibeto-Myanmari (J&K, HP, Sikkim; Arunachal) and Siamese-Chinese (Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya). Indo-European includes the Iranian, Dardic (J&K) and Indo-Aryan branches.
- **Religious Composition (Table 1.3, p. 10)**: Hindus **79.8%** (966.3 mn); Muslims **14.2%** (172.2 mn); Christians **2.3%** (27.8 mn); Sikhs **1.7%** (20.8 mn); Buddhists **0.7%** (8.4 mn); Jains **0.4%** (4.5 mn); Other Religions and Persuasions (ORP) **0.7%** (7.9 mn); Religion Not Stated **0.2%** (2.9 mn).
- Muslims concentrated in **J&K, parts of West Bengal, Kerala, UP, Delhi and Lakshadweep** — they form a majority in the Kashmir valley and Lakshadweep; Christians along the **Western coast (Goa, Kerala)** and the hill states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Chotanagpur, Hills of Manipur; Sikhs in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi; Jains in urban Rajasthan/Gujarat/Maharashtra; Buddhists in Maharashtra, with majority in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh (J&K), Tripura and Lahul & Spiti (HP) (NCERT pp. 10–11). Other religions including Zoroastrians and tribal/indigenous faiths are scattered in small pockets.
- **Working population categories**: Main worker (works ≥ 183 days or six months/year), Marginal worker (works <183 days/year), Non-worker (NCERT box, p. 11).
- Workers (main + marginal) form only **39.8% (2011)**; non-workers ~60%, indicating a high proportion of dependent population (NCERT p. 11).
- Work participation rate varies from **29.1% in Lakshadweep to 51.9% in Himachal Pradesh**; higher rates are in HP, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, AP, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, and among UTs in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu; the rate "tends to be higher in the areas of lower levels of economic development since number of manual workers are needed to perform the subsistence or near subsistence economic activities" (NCERT p. 11).
- **Sectoral composition of workers (Table 1.4, p. 12)**: Primary **54.6%** (males 16,54,47,075; females 9,75,75,398); Secondary **3.8%**; Tertiary **41.6%**. Share of primary fell from **58.2% (2001) to 54.6% (2011)** — a clear sectoral shift from farm to non-farm livelihoods.
- 2011 Census divides workers into **4 categories: Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industrial Workers, Other Workers** (NCERT box, p. 12). Spatially, HP and Nagaland have very large shares of cultivators; Bihar, AP, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, WB and MP have high proportions of agricultural

labourers; highly urbanised Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry are dominated by "Other Workers".

- Female workers dominate the primary sector but male workers out-number females in all three sectors; UNDP HDR 1995 famously argued "If development is not engendered, it is endangered"; Government launched **Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao** to address gender discrimination (NCERT pp. 12–13).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

| Term | Definition | Page |
|----------------------------|--|------|
| Census | Population data collected through a nationwide enumeration held every 10 years | 1 |
| First Census (India) | 1872 — but first complete Census in 1881 | 1 |
| Density of Population | Number of persons per unit area | 3 |
| Physiological Density | Total population / Net cultivated area | 5 |
| Agricultural Density | Total agricultural population / Net cultivable area | 5 |
| Agricultural Population | Cultivators + agricultural labourers + their family members | 5 |
| Growth of Population | Change in number of people living in a particular area between two points of time (in %) | 5 |
| Natural Growth | Growth analysed via crude birth and death rates | 5 |
| Induced Growth | Growth explained by inward/outward migration | 5 |
| Population Doubling Time | Time taken by a population to double itself at its current annual growth rate | 5 |
| Decadal Growth Rate | $g = ((P_2 - P_1) / P_1) \times 100$ | 5 |
| Phase I (1901-1921) | Stagnant/stationary phase with negative growth in 1911-21 | 7 |
| Phase II (1921-1951) | Steady population growth phase | 7 |
| Phase III (1951-1981) | Period of population explosion; ~2.2% avg annual growth | 7 |
| Phase IV (post-1981) | Growth high but slowing; falling CBR | 7 |
| Main Worker | A person who works for at least 183 days (six months) in a year | 11 |
| Marginal Worker | A person who works for less than 183 days (six months) in a year | 11 |
| Non-worker | A person who does not work either as main or marginal worker | 11 |
| Work Participation Rate | Proportion of working population to total population | 11 |
| National Youth Policy 2014 | Defines youth as the 15-29 age group | 8 |

| Term | Definition | Page |
|----------------------------|--|------|
| Scheduled Languages (2011) | 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule | 9 |
| Grierson's LSI | 1903–1928 survey that counted 179 languages and 544 dialects | 9 |

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Fig. 1.1 - India: Distribution of Population (2011), p. 2** — dot map, one dot = 200,000 persons; dense dotting over the Indo-Gangetic plains, sparse over the Himalayas, the NE (except Assam) and the Rajasthan deserts; islands of dense dotting around metro cities.
- **Fig. 1.2 - India: Density of Population (2011), p. 4** — choropleth with 5 classes: Less than 100, 101–400, 401–800, 801–1200, **Above 1201** persons/sq km. Highest-class belt covers Bihar and Delhi NCR.
- **Table 1.1 - Decadal Growth Rates 1901–2011, p. 5** — key data points: 1901 (238.39 mn), 1911 (252.09 mn, +5.75%), 1921 (251.32 mn, **-0.31%**), 1931 (278.97 mn, +11.60%), 1941 (318.66 mn, +14.22%), 1951 (361.08 mn, +13.31%), 1961 (439.23 mn, +21.51%), 1971 (548.16 mn, **+24.80% — peak**), 1981 (683.32 mn, +24.66%), 1991 (846.30 mn, +23.85%), 2001 (1,028.61 mn, +21.54%), 2011 (1,210.19 mn, **+17.64%**).
- **Fig. 1.3 - India: Growth of Population (2001–2011), p. 6** — choropleth in 5 classes (<10, 10–15, 15–20, 20–25, Above 25%); high growth (>25%) in pockets of north-east and Bihar belt; below 10% in Kerala and Goa.
- **Table 1.2 - Linguistic Classification, p. 10** — 4 families with sub-families, branches and speech areas, sourced from Ahmed, A. (1999) *Social Geography*, Rawat.
- **Table 1.3 - Religious Communities of India, 2011, p. 10** — eight groups with population in millions and percentage; source Census of India 2011.
- **Fig. 1.4 - Occupational Structure 2011, p. 12** — 100% stacked bar showing share of Cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industrial Workers and Other Workers across all states and UTs.
- **Table 1.4 - Sectoral Composition of workforce 2011, p. 12** — Primary 54.6%, Secondary 3.8%, Tertiary 41.6%, with male/female absolute counts.

2.5 Key data table (chapter facts at a glance)

| # | Fact / figure | NCERT source |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | India's population, 2011 | 1,210 million, p. 1 |
| 2 | First Census / First complete Census | 1872 / 1881, p. 1 |
| 3 | | ~76%, p. 3 |

| # | Fact / figure | NCERT source |
|----|---|---|
| | Combined share of top 10 populous states | |
| 4 | Lowest state shares | J&K 1.04%, Uttarakhand 0.84%, Arunachal 0.11%, p. 3 |
| 5 | All-India density, 2011 | 382 persons/sq km (vs 117 in 1951), p. 3 |
| 6 | Highest UT density | NCT Delhi 11,297/sq km, p. 3 |
| 7 | Highest state density | Bihar 1,102/sq km, p. 3 |
| 8 | Lowest state density | Arunachal Pradesh 17/sq km, p. 3 |
| 9 | Annual growth rate, 2011 | 1.64%, p. 5 |
| 10 | Peak decadal growth | 24.80% (1961-71), Table 1.1 p. 5 |
| 11 | Negative growth decade | 1911-1921 at -0.31%, p. 5 |
| 12 | Projected population, 2025 | 1,350 million (World Development Report), p. 8 |
| 13 | Adolescent (10-19) share, 2011 | 20.9% (male 52.7%, female 47.3%), p. 8 |
| 14 | Rural population share, 2011 | 68.8%, p. 8 |
| 15 | Inhabited villages out of 640,867 | 597,608 (93.2%), p. 9 |
| 16 | Largest language family (% speakers) | Indo-European/Aryan, 73%, Table 1.2 p. 10 |
| 17 | Hindu / Muslim / Christian shares, 2011 | 79.8% / 14.2% / 2.3%, Table 1.3 p. 10 |
| 18 | Total workers share (main + marginal), 2011 | 39.8%, p. 11 |
| 19 | Work participation rate — range | 29.1% (Lakshadweep) to 51.9% (HP), p. 11 |
| 20 | Sectoral share of workers (P/S/T), 2011 | 54.6% / 3.8% / 41.6%, Table 1.4 p. 12 |
| 21 | Primary share decline (2001 → 2011) | 58.2% → 54.6%, p. 13 |

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Physiological vs. agricultural density** — both use cultivated land in the denominator; physiological uses total population, agricultural uses agricultural population. NTA loves swapping these.
- **Highest density vs. highest population** — **UP** has the highest population; **Bihar (1,102/sq km)** has the highest density among states; **NCT Delhi (11,297/sq km)** leads among UTs. Don't confuse "highest state density" with "highest density in country".
- **Phase II vs. Phase III** — Phase II (1921–1951) is "steady growth"; Phase III (1951–1981) is "population explosion" with 2.2% average annual growth. The 1911–1921 negative growth belongs to **Phase I**, not Phase II.

- **First Census = 1872, first complete Census = 1881.** CUET stems often hide the word "complete".
- **Largest language family vs. largest spoken language** — Indo-European/Aryan family is largest (73%); among scheduled languages, Hindi speakers are highest. Do not equate Hindi alone with Indo-Aryan share in the stem.
- **Workers vs. main workers** — Workers (main + marginal) = 39.8%; "main worker" is a person working ≥ 183 days. A question asking "proportion of workers" expects 39.8%, not just main workers.
- **Lowest growth state** — Kerala had the lowest decadal growth (9.4%) during **1991-2001**, not during 2001-2011.
- **Sino-Tibetan and Sino-Chinese are NOT the same** — the family is Sino-Tibetan (Kirata) 0.85%; one of its branches is Siamese-Chinese.
- **Austro-Asiatic vs. Austro-Nesian** — both are sub-families under Austric; Mon-Khmer and Munda fall under Austro-Asiatic, not Austro-Nesian.
- **Highest urban proportion (Exercise 1iii)** — among Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala and Goa, **Goa** has the highest urban proportion per 2011 Census.
- **Population Doubling Time** is defined as the time to double at the current growth rate — not at a historical average.
- **Marginal worker** is defined by the **<183 days** threshold, not by income or land-holding.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a high-yield CUET source — distribution/density facts (Bihar density, Arunachal lows, UP top population), the four-phase growth model, the 73% Indo-Aryan share, the 79.8/14.2 religious split, and the 54.6/3.8/41.6 sectoral workforce ratio recur every year. CUET 2023-25 patterns lean on direct factual recall and statement-based items; expect ~8 MCQs/year across distribution, density definitions, growth phases, linguistic/religious tables, and worker classification. For year-wise CUET stems and tag-wise PYQ filters see [/pyq/geography](#).

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.20 (CUET 2025) Which one of the following is the least urbanised state of India?

- A) Himachal Pradesh B) Goa C) Rajasthan D) Maharashtra
- Tests: Levels of urbanisation across Indian states
Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.21 (CUET 2025) Which age group belongs to the adolescents population?

- A) 5–10 years B) 10–19 years C) 20–30 years D) 30–45 years Tests: Age composition — definition of adolescents Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.23 (CUET 2025) Match List-I with List-II: Linguistic Family — Branch/Group: Indo-European (Aryan) — Iranian; Sino-Tibetan (Kirata) — North Assam; Austric (Nishada) — Munda; Dravidian (Dravida) — North Dravidian.

- A) A-i, B-ii, C-iii, D-iv B) A-ii, B-i, C-iv, D-iii C) A-i, B-iii, C-ii, D-iv D) A-iv, B-iii, C-ii, D-i Tests: Linguistic classification (Grierson) — families and branches Answer: Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.19 (CUET 2024) Arrange states by population density (descending, Census 2011). (A) West Bengal (B) Uttar Pradesh (C) Kerala (D) Tamil Nadu

- A) D, A, C, B B) A, C, B, D C) B, A, D, C D) C, B, D, A Tests: Population density of Indian states (Census 2011) Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.43 (CUET 2024) Which of the following is not a push factor for the migration of rural population in India?

- A) High population pressure on land B) Availability of regular work C) Lack of basic infrastructural facilities D) Local conflicts Tests: Push factors of rural–urban migration in India Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.45 (CUET 2024) Among the following, which has the least populated state in 2011?

- A) Hayuliang B) Tawang C) Jharkhand D) Sikkim Tests: Population ranking of states / smallest by population Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.46 (CUET 2024) Which of the following states registered the highest population growth during 2001–2011?

- A) Karnataka B) Tamil Nadu C) Rajasthan D) Maharashtra Tests: State-wise decadal population growth 2001–2011 Answer: Not in extracted key

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.17 (CUET 2023) Arrange the states in descending order of population density (2011 Census): A. Odisha; B. Uttar Pradesh; C. Bihar; D. Mizoram.

- A) B, C, D, A B) C, B, A, D C) C, D, B, A D) B, A, D, C Tests: Population density ranking (Census 2011) Answer: Not in extracted key