

IIPS Research Brief

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A Statistical and Geographical Analysis of Changes Over Time in the Religious Composition and Distribution of Population in India :
A Study At The District Level

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Religion is defined as "one of the oldest basic socio-cultural characteristics associated with the mankind and civilizations created by them over thousands of years of known history. Different communities and people perceive religion in their own way." Further it states, "Despite deviations in manifestations of their expressions of beliefs, people generally believe in one or the other divine power that created the universe and is taking care of all human beings" (Banthia, 2004). The components of population change namely, fertility, mortality and migration are greatly affected by a change in the religious distribution of population, their growth and composition of any country overtime.

India is seen to be the only country in the world where many religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism) have originated, and also, certain other religions of foreign origin (Islamism and Christianity) have flourished to a great extent. Also India is origin for various indigenous faiths/tribal religions that have survived and still surviving, under the influence of other major religions over the years.

Objectives

- To study the growth, distribution and concentration of major religious followers by state and districts of each state in India over time and
- To find the clustering of the districts of India based on the religious distribution of population.

Data source and Methodology

The study especially uses the religious distribution of population in India at the state and district level of the censuses of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001.

The study mainly uses various simple statistical and geographical measures and graphs such as Lorenz Concentration Curves and bar diagrams. We also tried to study the diversity in the distribution of various religions in India, its states and districts using a simple and Standardized Index of Diversity (SID) of religion developed by us using the formula suggested by Lieberman in 1969. This standardized index is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Standardized index of diversity (SID)} = [1 - ((PH)^2 + (PM)^2 + (PC)^2 + (PS)^2 + (PB)^2 + (PJ)^2)] / [1 - (1/6)]$$

where:

- PH = Proportion of Hindus in the total population
 - PM = Proportion of Muslims in the total population
 - PC = Proportion of Christians in the total population
 - PS = Proportion of Sikhs in the total population
 - PB = Proportion of Buddhists in the total population
 - PJ = Proportion of Jains in the total population
- $$PH + PM + PC + PS + PB + PJ = 1.0$$

Six religious categories are used to construct this SID index and it varies between 1 and 0. For instance, if every one in the population is Hindu (i.e. if PH =1.0 and PM = PC = PS = PB = PJ = 0).

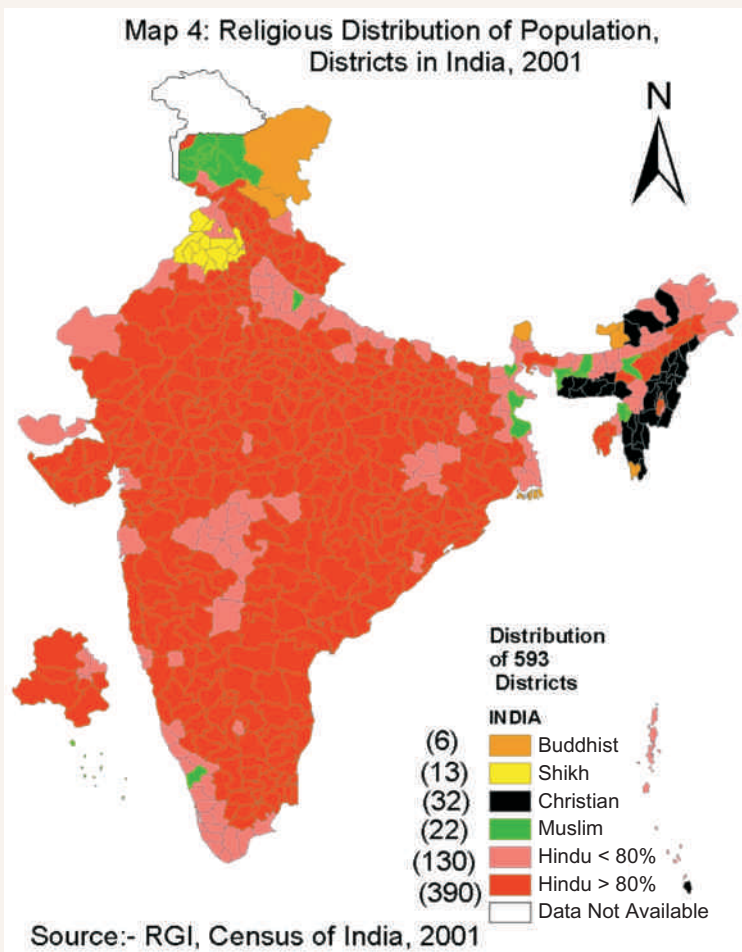
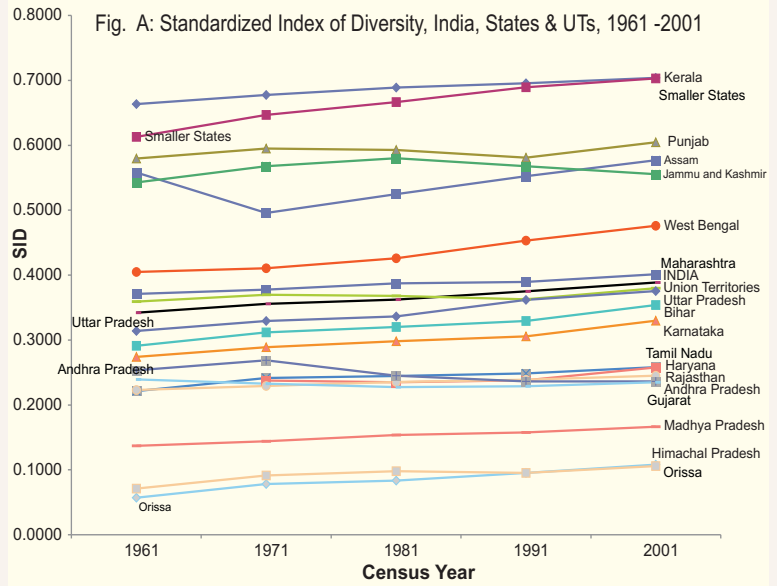
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the index will be equal to '0'. The index will be equal to '1' if the total population is evenly distributed between Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains (i.e. $P_H = P_M = P_C = P_S = P_B = P_J = .167$).

Results, Summary and Conclusion

Hindus are predominantly high in India as compared to other religious groups. Historical evidence clearly shows that after Hindus, Muslims occupy the second position in the distribution of various religions in India as a whole. Muslims followed by some other minority religions are at an increase, however the proportion of Hindus is declining at the national level. When we consider the size of Muslim population, among the states, Uttar Pradesh seems to be the state with the highest number of Muslims in its population both in 1971 and 2001 when compared to other major states in India. West Bengal and Bihar occupies second and third positions respectively.



An analysis of the 1961 to 2001 census data on religious distribution of population at state level by using the diversity index indicates that almost all the states (exceptions being Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) have experienced a rise in their index value from 1961 to 2001, which further indicates that all the states have experienced diversity (by means of an increase in the proportion of minority group population over the last 40 years or so) in their religious distribution of population (Fig. A). An analysis of the 2001 census data by religion at the district level by means of this SID indicates that all the 593 districts in India can be neatly divided into few clusters or groups based on the concentration of the religious distribution of population. The analysis highlights that in the year 2001 at the national level, out of the 593 districts, there were 390 districts where Hindus are predominant (by 80 percent or more) and there were 130 districts where Hindus are predominant but their proportion is found to be less than 80 percent. The other districts where the religious group predominant are Muslims in 22 districts; Christians in 32 districts; Sikhs in 13 districts; and Buddhists in 6 of the districts (Map A). There is no single district where Jains are in majority. Christians followed by Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains were found to be concentrated in some pockets of India and there seems to be no much change in their distribution over the census years starting from 1961 to 2001.

Reference

Banthia, J.K. (2004). *The First Report on Religion Data*. New Delhi: Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India.

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