

A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMICS IN INDIA AND TAMIL NADU (1925–2025): A CENTURY OF POPULATION GROWTH, URBANIZATION, AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This comprehensive study examines a century of demographic transformations in India and Tamil Nadu from 1925 to 2025, highlighting population growth, migration, and socio-economic impacts. India's population surged from approximately 319 million in 1925 to over 1.44 billion in 2025, driven by declining fertility and mortality rates, increased life expectancy, and rapid urbanization. Tamil Nadu mirrored these trends, with significant urban growth and demographic shifts, yet faced unique challenges such as employment pressure, healthcare strains, and socio-economic disparities. The region's early fertility control policies and investments in education and health have contributed to improved human development indicators, though urban-rural gaps persist.

Politically, population pressures influence governance, representation, and policy initiatives, requiring adaptive strategies. Migration patterns have led to regional disparities within Tamil Nadu, emphasizing the need for balanced development. Sustainable growth is increasingly prioritized through investments in human capital, infrastructure, and inclusive urban planning. Overall, the demographic transition underscores opportunities for economic expansion alongside challenges in resource management, social equity, and governance. This analysis offers insights into the complex demographic and socio-economic landscape shaping India and Tamil Nadu's future trajectory. This research paper addresses pressing and crucial issues that hold great importance in today's rapidly evolving and interconnected world, highlighting its strong relevance to the current global scenario.

Keywords: Demographic Transition, Population Growth, Urbanization, Migration, Socio-Economic Development and Economic Expansion.

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The theme of the article

The demographic landscape of India and Tamil Nadu has undergone profound transformations over the past century, driven by population growth, declining fertility and mortality rates, and increasing urbanization. In 1925, India's population was approximately 319 million, and by 2025, it is projected to reach around 1.44 billion, making it the world's most populous country. Tamil Nadu, reflecting national trends, experienced steady growth, from about 23 million in 1951 to an estimated 77 million in 2025, coupled with rapid urbanization and socio-economic development. These demographic shifts are characterized by declining fertility rates, improved healthcare leading to increased life expectancy, and a significant rural-to-urban migration. The 1941 Census of British India highlighted the community composition, with Hindus constituting half of the population, followed by Muslims and other groups, illustrating the country's socio-cultural diversity.

Post-independence, India's population growth accelerated, creating both opportunities for economic expansion and challenges related to resource management, infrastructure, and social equity. Tamil Nadu's development trajectory showcases how demographic changes influence regional socio-economic patterns, affecting employment, education, healthcare, and urban infrastructure. Additionally, population pressures have political implications, shaping governance and policy responses at both national and state levels. Urbanization patterns reveal migration trends and inter-district disparities, emphasizing the need for balanced regional development and sustainable urban planning. Overall, understanding these demographic transformations is crucial for formulating policies that promote sustainable growth, equitable development, and improved quality of life across India and Tamil Nadu.

Statement of the problem

The demographic transformations in India and Tamil Nadu over the past century have profoundly impacted social, economic, and political landscapes. While population growth, declining fertility and mortality rates, and urbanization have contributed to economic opportunities and development, they have also posed significant challenges such as resource strain, socio-economic disparities, infrastructural deficits, and governance complexities. In India, rapid population

expansion has heightened pressures on health, education, housing, and employment sectors, risking sustainability and equitable growth. Tamil Nadu, as a highly urbanized and industrialized state, exemplifies these tensions through urban overcrowding, rural-urban migration, and widening income inequalities, despite notable progress in human development indicators.

Addressing these multifaceted issues necessitates a nuanced understanding of demographic dynamics and their socio-economic implications. The core problem lies in balancing population growth and urbanization with sustainable development, equitable resource distribution, and effective governance. Without integrated policies targeting rural development, urban infrastructure, healthcare, education, and social equity, the risks of increased poverty, inequality, and social unrest may intensify. Furthermore, political representation and resource allocation need to adapt to demographic changes to ensure fair governance. Therefore, the challenge is to formulate and implement comprehensive strategies that harness demographic dividends while mitigating adverse effects, ensuring inclusive growth, and securing long-term stability for India and Tamil Nadu amidst ongoing population transformations. This research paper holds significant relevance in today's rapidly changing and interconnected world, as it explores vital socio-economic and political issues that are both urgent and highly impactful in the present global landscape.

Objective of the article

The overall objective of the article is to analyze the demographic transformations in India and Tamil Nadu over the past century, focusing on population growth, migration, and urbanization. It aims to explore the socio-economic, political, and developmental implications of these demographic changes. Additionally, the article highlights strategies for sustainable development and balanced growth in Tamil Nadu amid evolving population dynamics with the help of secondary sources of information and statistical data pertaining to the theme of the article.

Research Methodology of the article

The research methodology of this article primarily employs a comprehensive secondary data analysis, drawing upon historical census records, government reports, and reputable statistical sources such as the Census of India, NSSO surveys, NFHS, and reports from agencies like NITI Aayog. Quantitative data on population figures, fertility, mortality, migration patterns, and socio-economic indicators are systematically collated and analyzed to illustrate demographic trends over a century (1925–2025). The study utilizes longitudinal comparisons to highlight changes in

population size, composition, urbanization, and socio-economic disparities in India and Tamil Nadu. Demographic transition theories underpin the analytical framework, facilitating understanding of shifts in fertility and mortality rates. The demographic profiles and socio-economic impacts are contextualized through descriptive statistical analysis and trend evaluation. The research also integrates policy review approaches by examining government initiatives and interventions aimed at population control, urban planning, and sustainable development. The methodology emphasizes a data-driven, historical-comparative approach to understand the complex interplay of demographic transformations and socio-political factors influencing regional and national development trajectories. The data is methodically structured and examined to align with the study's goals, resulting in valuable insights, substantiated conclusions, and practical policy suggestions.

Demographic Transformations in India and Tamil Nadu (1925–2025): A Century of Population Dynamics and Migration Trends

Over the past century, India and Tamil Nadu have experienced significant demographic shifts shaped by population growth, changing fertility and mortality rates, and rural-urban migration. In 1925, India's estimated population stood at approximately 319 million. By 1947, at the time of independence, it was around 330 million. The first official census in independent India (1951) recorded a population of 361 million. By 2025, India's population is projected to reach 1.44 billion, making it one of the most populous nations globally. Tamil Nadu mirrored this trend. Its population was around 23 million in 1951, rising to 72.1 million in the 2011 Census, and estimated to cross 77 million by 2025. Fertility rates have drastically declined, from about 5.2 children per woman in India in 1971 to 2.0 in 2022. Tamil Nadu achieved replacement-level fertility (2.1) much earlier, in the early 2000s, and now has one of the lowest fertility rates among Indian states at 1.6.

Mortality rates also improved due to advancements in healthcare. The crude death rate in India declined from 25 per 1,000 in 1951 to 6.0 in 2023. Similarly, life expectancy increased from 32 years in 1951 to over 70 years by 2020. Rural-urban migration has been a defining demographic trend. In 1951, nearly 82.7% of India's population lived in rural areas; by 2021, this declined to around 65%. In Tamil Nadu, urbanization accelerated more rapidly, with 48.4% urban population as per the 2011 Census, projected to exceed 55% by 2025. These changes highlight a demographic transition marked by lower fertility, higher life expectancy, and urbanization, influencing economic planning, labor markets, health systems, and infrastructure

development across India and Tamil Nadu. The details of the composition of Population in British India as per 1941 Census is given in table - 1.

Table - 1
Population in British India - 1941 Census

Communities	Population	Order of Importance (by population)	Percentage of Total Population
Total	295,808,722	-	-
Hindus	150,890,146	1	50.0%
Muslims	79,398,503	2	23.6%
Scheduled Castes	39,920,807	3	13.5%
Tribal	16,713,256	4	5.7%
Sikhs	4,165,097	5	1.3%
Indian Christians	3,245,706	6	1.0%
Europeans	122,788	7	-
Anglo-Indians	113,936	8	-
Parsis	101,968	9	-

Source: Census of India, 1941 – Government of India publication, compiled under the supervision of the Registrar General of India, during British rule.

The 1941 Census of British India recorded a total population of 295.8 million. Hindus formed the majority, accounting for 50% (150.89 million), followed by Muslims at 23.6% (79.4 million), making them the largest religious minority. Scheduled Castes represented 13.5% (39.9 million), reflecting the significant size of marginalized communities within the Hindu fold. Tribal populations made up 5.7% (16.7 million), indicating the socio-cultural diversity and geographic isolation of indigenous groups. Sikhs, though a relatively small group, numbered over 4.1 million (1.3%), mainly concentrated in Punjab. Indian Christians constituted 1% (3.2 million), a notable presence given their concentration in southern and northeastern regions. Although the European (122,788), Anglo-Indian (113,936), and Parsi (101,968) communities were small in number, they wielded significant administrative and economic power as a result of colonial policies. Their combined population was less than 0.2%, highlighting the demographic contrast between rulers and the ruled. The data underscores the religious and social heterogeneity of British India. It also reveals the early demographic foundations of post-partition India and Pakistan. The census reflected both the hierarchical social structure and communal diversity that influenced colonial governance and eventually played a role in the subcontinent's partition. An outline of India's population growth from 1947 to July 2025 is provided in table-2.

Table -2

An overview of India's population changes from independence in 1947 to July 2025

S.No.	Year	An overview of India's population changes from independence to the year 2025
1.	1947	Approximately 330 million (post-Partition)
2.	1951	382.4 million (1st census)
3.	1955	409.9 million
4.	1961	459.6 million (census)
5.	1965	499.1 million
6.	1971	567.9 million (census)
7.	1975	623.1 million
8.	1981	715.4 million (census)
9.	1985	784.4 million
10.	1991	891.3 million (census)
11.	1995	963.9 million
12.	2001	1,028,737,436 (i.e., approximately 1.03 billion people)
13.	2005	1.148 billion
14.	2011	1.210 billion (census)
15.	2015	1.323 billion
16.	2021	1.408 billion
17.	2025	Approximately 1.463 billion (approximately equal to 146.3 crore)

Source: 1. Edudwar – Year-wise Population of India (1947–2025)

<https://www.edudwar.com/population-of-india>

2. Census of India- Official decadal population data for census years (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011). Conducted by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

Data shown in table - 2, reveals that the India's population has seen a dramatic increase since independence in 1947, when it was estimated at approximately 330 million following Partition. The first official census in 1951 recorded 382.4 million, marking a growth of 52.4 million in just four years. By 1961, the population had risen to 459.6 million, indicating a steady upward trend. This growth continued through the decades: 567.9 million in 1971, 715.4 million in 1981, and 891.3 million in 1991. Notably, between 1951 and 1991, the population more than doubled in just 40 years. India reached the 1 billion mark in 2001, with a census count of 1.03 billion (1,028,737,436). Rapid urbanization, declining death rates, and improved healthcare contributed to this sharp rise.

The population further grew to 1.21 billion in 2011, showing an addition of about 180 million in just a decade. Recent estimates place India's population at 1.408 billion in 2021, and by July 2025, it is expected to reach approximately 1.463 billion (146.3 crore). This implies a growth of over 1.1 billion people since independence — a nearly four-and-a-half-fold increase. This steep population rise brings both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, it provides a vast labor force and consumer base, supporting economic growth. On the other, it strains resources like food, water, housing, education, and healthcare. India's

demographic journey highlights the need for effective population control measures, sustainable development policies, and investments in human capital to balance growth with quality of life. The focus must shift from merely managing numbers to enhancing the well-being and productivity of this vast population.

Socio-Economic Implications of Population Growth on Tamil Nadu's Development: A Study of Employment, Education, Healthcare, Poverty, Housing, and Income Inequality

Tamil Nadu, one of India's most industrialized and urbanized states, has experienced steady population growth over the past century. As per Census 1951, the population of Tamil Nadu was around 30 million, which increased to 72.1 million by Census 2011 and is estimated to reach nearly 78 million by 2025. While population growth can enhance market size and labor availability, it has also triggered socio-economic challenges that impact the state's development. Population growth has put significant pressure on employment opportunities, especially in rural areas. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022-23, the unemployment rate among youth (15–29 years) in Tamil Nadu stood at 12.3%, higher than the all-India average of 10.1%. Despite industrial growth in sectors like textiles, automobiles, and IT, job creation hasn't kept pace with the rising labor force.

Tamil Nadu has made commendable progress in education, with a literacy rate of 80.1% (Census 2011). However, rapid population growth has strained public schooling infrastructure, leading to overcrowded classrooms and a demand-supply mismatch in rural areas. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education in Tamil Nadu was 51.4% (AISHE 2020-21), the highest in India, yet quality and equity in access remain concerns for marginalized groups. Population pressure burdens the state's healthcare system. Tamil Nadu's doctor-population ratio stands at 1:836 (2022), better than WHO's norm of 1:1000, but rural and remote areas continue to face shortages. Public health facilities are stretched, particularly during health crises like COVID-19. The state's infant mortality rate (IMR) is 15 per 1,000 live births (NFHS-5), an improvement, but further progress is challenged by growing demand.

While Tamil Nadu has significantly reduced poverty—from 21.2% in 2004-05 to 11.3% in 2011-12 (Tendulkar Method)—population growth has slowed poverty eradication, especially in rural belts where underemployment and land fragmentation persist. Urban population growth has led to housing shortages and slum expansion. The 2011 Census reported 2.7 million households in slums across Tamil Nadu. Despite housing schemes like PMAY, the urban poor struggle with inadequate sanitation, water, and electricity. Economic disparities have widened with population

growth. According to the NSSO, the Gini coefficient for consumption expenditure in Tamil Nadu increased from 0.36 (1993-94) to 0.40 (2011-12), indicating rising income inequality between urban and rural populations. In short, while Tamil Nadu has made strides in human development, population growth continues to pose critical challenges across sectors. Addressing these requires integrated policies that focus on equitable growth, investment in rural infrastructure, job creation, and sustainable urban planning.

Political Implications of Population Pressure: Governance, Representation, and Policy Responses in India and Tamil Nadu

India, with a population exceeding 1.44 billion in 2025, faces serious political implications due to population pressure. Tamil Nadu, one of the most urbanized states, has also witnessed rapid growth, from 30.1 million in 1951 to around 78 million in 2025. This surge affects governance, representation, and public policy in multiple ways. Population growth increases pressure on public services like health, education, sanitation, and housing. For example, urban areas like Chennai face overcrowding, traffic congestion, and slum expansion. Government bodies struggle to ensure efficient delivery of basic amenities. According to NITI Aayog (2020), over 60% of Indian districts reported resource strain due to high population density. Although population has grown unevenly across states, the number of Lok Sabha seats has remained fixed at 543 since 1976, causing disparities in representation. Tamil Nadu, with its success in population control, now has a lower MP-to-population ratio compared to states like Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. This raises questions about federal equity and democratic representation.

Governments have adopted various measures to address these challenges. The National Population Policy (2000) aimed to achieve population stabilization through family planning, awareness, and health services. Tamil Nadu's early adoption of two-child norms, mass literacy campaigns, and female education helped reduce fertility rates (Total Fertility Rate of 1.6 in 2023, below replacement level). Moreover, policies are shifting focus towards urban governance reforms, decentralization, and technology-based public service delivery (e.g., Smart Cities Mission, Direct Benefit Transfers). These aim to manage urbanization while ensuring equitable development. In short, population pressure significantly influences India and Tamil Nadu's political landscape. It demands adaptive governance, fair representation, and proactive policymaking to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

Urbanization and Population Dynamics in Tamil Nadu: Migration Patterns and Inter-District Socio-Economic Disparities

Tamil Nadu, one of India's most urbanized states, has witnessed rapid urban expansion and shifting population dynamics over the decades. As per the 2011 Census, about 48.4% of the state's population lived in urban areas, significantly higher than the national average of 31.2%. This figure is projected to rise beyond 53% by 2025, driven largely by rural-to-urban migration, industrial growth, and improved infrastructure. Migration patterns in Tamil Nadu have been shaped by push factors such as agrarian distress and limited rural employment, and pull factors like job opportunities, better education, and healthcare in urban centres. Districts like Chennai, Coimbatore, Tiruppur, and Madurai attract a large influx of migrants due to their strong industrial and service sectors. In contrast, rural districts like Villupuram, Perambalur, and Ariyalur face high out-migration rates. These shifts have led to inter-district socio-economic disparities. For instance, Chennai's literacy rate (90.2%) and per capita income (₹2.69 lakh in 2021–22) far exceed that of districts like Dharmapuri or Ariyalur, where per capita incomes are below ₹1 lakh and literacy remains under 75%. Urban areas benefit from better access to healthcare, sanitation, and digital infrastructure, while many rural regions lag behind, creating a divide in living standards.

Moreover, over-urbanization in cities like Chennai has resulted in slum proliferation, traffic congestion, and strain on public services. At the same time, underdevelopment in rural areas leads to youth migration, resulting in labor shortages in agriculture and aging rural populations. To bridge this gap, Tamil Nadu's policy focus must include balanced regional development, investment in rural infrastructure, and sustainable urban planning to ensure inclusive growth across districts.

Sustainable Development and Population Dynamics in Tamil Nadu: Strategies for Balancing Growth and Human Capital Investment

Since Independence, Tamil Nadu has witnessed significant demographic and economic changes. In 1951, the state had a population of around 30 million with a literacy rate of just 20%. By 2011, the population rose to 72.1 million, with literacy improving to 80.3%. As per recent projections, the population is expected to reach nearly 78 million by 2025. Notably, Tamil Nadu's fertility rate dropped to 1.6 by 2017, below the replacement level, reflecting a demographic transition supported by effective family planning and women's education. Sustainable development in Tamil Nadu has focused heavily on human capital investment. The state's Human

Development Index (HDI) improved from 0.541 in 1990 to 0.751 in 2023, with Chennai topping the list at 0.841. Life expectancy increased from 62.5 years in the 1980s to over 72 years in 2020. School enrolment has remained consistently high, with Gross Enrolment Ratios of 98.4% at the primary level and 82.9% at the higher secondary level. Poverty levels drastically declined from 36.5% in 2005–06 to just 1.4% in 2022–23.

Economically, the state transitioned from an agrarian economy to a diversified one. By 2023–24, Tamil Nadu's per capita income reached ₹1.96 lakh. The services sector now contributes around 54% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), followed by manufacturing at 33%, and agriculture at 13%. Employment in non-agricultural sectors has grown, with over 70% of workers now engaged outside farming. To maintain balanced growth, Tamil Nadu has focused on inclusive industrialisation, rural infrastructure, skill development, and expanding social safety nets. The state's investments in education, healthcare, renewable energy, and piped water supply have strengthened its path toward sustainable development, positioning it as a model for balancing population dynamics with human capital growth.

Conclusion

Over the past century, India and Tamil Nadu have experienced profound demographic changes that have shaped their social and economic landscapes. India's population has grown rapidly from about 319 million in 1925 to over 1.44 billion in 2025, driven by declining birth rates and advancements in healthcare. Tamil Nadu, reflecting national trends, has also seen steady population growth, urbanization, and socio-economic development. These demographic shifts have created both opportunities and challenges: they have provided a large labor force and market, fueling economic growth, but have also increased pressure on resources, infrastructure, and social services. Tamil Nadu, with its early success in controlling fertility rates and investing in education and health, has achieved notable progress in human development indicators. Yet, rapid urbanization and population growth continue to pose issues such as employment pressure, healthcare strain, and urban-rural disparities.

Politically, the rising population influences governance, resource allocation, and representation, requiring adaptive policies to ensure inclusive development. To address these challenges, the focus must be on sustainable growth through balanced regional development, investment in rural infrastructure, urban planning, and social safety nets. Tamil Nadu's experience demonstrates that strategic investments in human capital, sustainable urbanization, and inclusive policies can help harness

demographic dividends while mitigating adverse effects. In essence, understanding these demographic and socio-economic transformations is vital for crafting effective policies that promote equitable growth, social stability, and long-term development. As India and Tamil Nadu move forward, their ability to manage population dynamics thoughtfully will determine their future prosperity and social harmony.

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