

Sex tests hit rural India

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NEW DELHI: Fears on the rampant use of pre-natal sex determination technology in rural areas have been confirmed with census data indicating that [child sex ratio](#) (CSR) fell far more sharply in villages than in urban areas in the last decade.

According to provision data on population, though the urban CSR is far worse than that in rural areas, the fall in CSR in rural areas is around four times than that in urban areas.

Rural [India](#) still has a better CSR (ratio of girls to boys under the age of six years) of 919 than urban India's 902. However, between 2001 and 2011, rural India's CSR fell by 15 points as opposed to urban India's four-point decline, and the gap between the two has narrowed. Haryana has both the worst urban and rural CSRs. Nagaland has the best urban CSR, while in rural areas, the Andaman and Nicobar has the best, indicating yet again that tribal communities have a more egalitarian attitude to girls than other communities. The data also highlights that growth rate of population in empowered action group states, including Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, is nearly three times more than rural areas in non-EAG states like Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu. The growth rate in EAG states in rural areas is 18.7% as compared to 5.7% in non-EAG states.

The new census data on rural and urban areas shows that India is still overwhelmingly rural, with close to 70% of people still living in villages. census data released on Friday shows that 377 million Indians, or 31.16% of the population, now live in cities. This is up from 27.81% in 2001.

The proportion of Indians living in urban areas registered the biggest ever jump since the Independence, but this does not automatically point to migration, warn experts. "The growth of the urban population is largely explained by the reclassification of some rural areas, especially those close to cities, where people get concentrated and need to be provided sewage and other amenities," explained Dr P Arokiasamy, a demographer and reader in the department of fertility studies at the Mumbai-based International Institute for Population Sciences.

"The rate of migration to big cities is going down with the centres of these cities having reached saturation point and becoming unaffordable for the working class and the middle class," said Dr Arokiasamy. Some amount of migration is taking place, but this is to the peripheries of big cities, as well as to Tier-II cities, he said.

Goa and Mizoram are the first states to be more urban than rural. Some states have thrown up surprises: Tamil Nadu, projected in 2001 to be 50% urban by 2007, is still more rural than urban. Kerala (48%) is now more urban than Maharashtra (45%). This has completely confounded the Census's earlier projections by which Kerala was expected to be only 25.5% urban by 2011.

Himachal Pradesh, 90% rural, is India's most rural state, followed by Bihar (89%) and Assam

(86%). UP has almost a fifth of the country's rural population. For the first time in independent India, the absolute growth in the urban population—91 million—is greater than that in rural India. While the urban population grew by 32%, the rural population rose by 12%. However, growth rates in both urban and rural India are tapering.