

Tamil Nadu
DATA HIGHLIGHTS : THE SCHEDULED TRIBES
Census of India 2001

The total population of Tamil Nadu, as per the 2001 Census is 62,405,679. Of this, 651,321 (1 per cent) are Scheduled Tribes (STs). Thirty six (36) STs have been notified in Tamil Nadu by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 1976. Of the STs, six have been notified with area restriction. These are Malayali, Kurumbas, Kanikaran, Kammara, Kota and Toda. Malayali have been notified in Dharmapuri, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Pudukkottai, Salem, Namakkal, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli, Karur and Perambalur districts, Kurumbas in Nilgiri district, Kanikaran in Kanniyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district. Kammara, Kota and Toda have been notified through out the state except Kanniyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district.

2. The growth rate of ST population in the decade 1991-2001 at 13.4 per cent is higher than the overall growth rate of 11.7 per cent of the state. As per the 2001 Census, among the numerically large STs, Kurumans have reported the highest growth rate of 43 per cent, followed by Malayali (24.2 per cent), Irular (12.1 per cent) and Kattunayakan (5.8 per cent).

Population- Size and Distribution

3. Of the STs, Malayali, Irular, Kattunayakan, Kurumans and Kondareddis together constitute 85.3 per cent of the ST population of the state. Malayali are the largest ST with a population of 310,042, constituting 47.6 per cent of the state ST population. They are followed by Irular, numbering 155,606 (23.9 per cent), Kattunayakan 45,227 (6.9 per cent), Kurumans 24,963 (3.8 per cent) and Kondareddis 19,653 (3 per cent). Fourteen (14) STs have returned population below one thousand in 2001 Census.

4. Expectedly STs are primarily residing in the rural areas and only 15.4 per cent are in the urban areas of the state. Among major STs, Malayali have the highest (98.3 per cent) rural population, followed by Irular (87 per cent), Kurumans (78.9 per cent) and Kondareddis (71.7 per cent). On the other hand, Kattunayakan, the third largest ST population have reported as much as 61.6 per cent urban population. Salem, Tiruvannamalai, Viluppuram, Vellore, Dharmapuri and Namakkal are major ST populated districts of the state as these six districts account for 64 per cent of the ST population of the state.

Sex ratio

5. The overall sex ratio of the ST population in Tamil Nadu is 980 females per 1000 males, which has recorded improvement from 960 in 1991 Census. Among the district, Thanavur has recorded the highest sex ratio of the ST population (1054) and Perambalur the lowest (936).

The Statement below shows sex ratio and child sex ratio (0-6) of the ST population at the national, state and numerically the largest five STs in 2001 Census:

Statement - 1 : Sex Ratio							
Age Groups	All STs (India)	All STs (Tamil Nadu)	Malayali	Irular	Kattunayakan	Kurumans	Kondareddis
All Ages	978	980	966	996	1012	953	984
0-6	973	945	932	984	923	872	859

6 As may be seen from the Statement, the overall sex ratio of ST population in Tamil Nadu is almost equal to the sex ratio of ST population of the country. But in case of child sex ratio (0-6), it is less by 28 points than that of ST population aggregated at the national level. At the individual tribe level, all major STs, except Irular, have lower sex ratio in 0-6 age-group populations, as compared to the state ST population. Among these Kondareddis and Kurumans child sex ratio is alarmingly low.

Literacy and educational level

7. Literacy and level of education are two basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a group/society as literacy results in more awareness besides contributing to the overall improvement of health, hygiene and other social conditions. According to 2001 Census, percentage of ST literate (those who can read and write with understanding) persons aged 7 years and above is 41.5 per cent in the state, which is lower than 73.5 per cent reported for the state as a whole. The literacy rate (41.5 per cent) has however increased from 27.9 per cent recorded in 1991 Census.

8. Among the major STs, Kondareddis are reported to have the highest 78.2 per cent literacy rate, followed by Kurumans (61.4 per cent), Kattunayakan (54.7 per cent), Malayali (37.4 per cent) and Irular (34.3 per cent). The female literacy rate of 32.8 per cent among ST population is lower than 64.4 per cent registered among total female population of the state. As in literacy rate, the highest and lowest female literacy rate of 68.9 per cent and 27.1 per cent are also recorded among Kondareddis and Irular.

Statement - 2 : Educational levels attained by major STs							
Name of ST	Literate without educational level	Below primary	Primary	Middle	Matric/Secondary /Higher Secondary Intermediate etc.	Technical & Non-technical diploma	Graduate & above
All STs	10.3	26.3	33.3	14.7	12.8	0.6	1.8
Malayali	10.6	27.6	35.2	14.2	10.8	0.5	0.9
Irular	12.5	31.4	33.5	13.6	8.1	0.3	0.5

Kattunayakan	10.6	23.9	31.0	16.5	14.7	0.6	2.6
Kurumans	6.1	19.3	31.7	17.7	20.1	1.5	3.6
Kondareddis	3.9	13.0	28.1	16.4	28.2	2.1	8.3

9. Out of the total literates, 36.6 per cent are either literates without any educational level or have attained below Primary level. The literates, who have attained education up to Primary and Middle levels, constitute 33.3 per cent and 14.7 per cent respectively. 12.8 per cent are having educational level up to Matric/Higher Secondary levels, implying that every 8th ST literate is a Matriculate. Literates with educational level of Graduation and above are 1.8 per cent. Individually, Kondareddis (8.3 per cent) have the highest percentage of Graduation and above educational level.

10. From the educational level table, it also emerges that the drop out starts after the Primarily level and it increases with each subsequent level of education.

11. Population in the age group 5-14 years are the potential students. 61.7 per cent of the ST population in this age group is attending various educational institutions

Economic activity

Work Participation Rate (WPR)

12. The work participation rate (WPR) is the percentage of workers to the total population. The WPR among the ST population at 2001 Census is 54.9 per cent, which is higher than that for state population as a whole (44.7 per cent) as well as the state SC population (48.1 per cent). The WPR of ST population has increased if compared to 52.1 per cent recorded at 1991 Census. The WPR at 60.1 per cent for ST males is higher than 49.5 per cent reported among ST females at 2001 Census.

13. At individual tribe level, the WPR varies from 59.5 per cent among Malayali to 40.5 per cent among Kattunayakan. The trend is same in case of female WPR. Malayali have the highest 57.7 per cent female WPR.

Category of Workers

14. There has been a decline in the ST main workers from 94.2 per cent at 1991 Census to 81.3 per cent at 2001 Census. This, in turn, has resulted in corresponding increase in the marginal workers from 5.8 per cent in 1991 to 18.7 percent in 2001. Out of total workers, 'agricultural labourers' constitute 37.8 per cent, which is similar to the national average of 36.9 per cent for ST population. 'Cultivators' account for 36.3 per cent and only 23.6 per cent has been returned as 'other workers'. Remaining 2.4 per cent have been workers in 'household industry'. Thus, there is a change in agriculture related economic activities; the workers engaged in agricultural activities (cultivators and agricultural labourers) constitute 74.1 per cent of the total workers against 81.8 per cent recorded at 1991 Census.

15. At the individual tribe level, the highest percentage of 'agricultural labourers' (58.2 per cent) is recorded among Irular; 'cultivators' (58.8 per cent) among Malayali, 'other workers' (68.1 per cent) among Kattunayakan and 'household industry' (7.4 per cent) among Kondareddis.

Marital status

16. Marital status is one of the important determinants of fertility and growth of a population. The 2001 Census data on marital status show that 44.6 per cent persons among the STs of Tamil Nadu are 'never married'. The 'currently married' constitute 50.1 per cent while 4.8 per cent are 'widowed'. Only 0.5 per cent are 'divorced and separated'.

17. Majority of girls and boys among STs in Tamil Nadu are getting married after attaining the legal age of marriage. Marriages of ST girls below 18 years (2.7 per cent) are higher than that recorded among ST population at national level (2.1 per cent). On the other hand, the incidence of marriage of boys below 21 years at 2.6 per cent is almost equal to 2.8 per cent aggregated at national level for ST population.

18. The mean number of children ever born per ever married ST women of all ages as well as 45-49 years age group are 2.2 and 2.8 respectively, which are lower than that of 3.2 and 4.1 for ST population at national level.

Religion

19. Majority of the ST population of the state are Hindus (99.2 per cent). There are only 3,497 (0.5 per cent) Christians and 453 (0.1 per cent) Muslims ST populations in the state.