

Literacy as seen in the 2001 census

10.32 The progress of literacy rates in India since 1951 is listed at Figure 10.1. While the rates for the years 1951, 1961 and 1971 Censuses relate to the population in the five years plus category, those for 1981, 1991 and 2001 relate to the population which is seven years and above. The literacy rates for the country as a whole increased from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 65.38 per cent in 2001 (Table.10.13), with literacy rate for males at 75.85 per cent and that for females at 54.16 per cent. The literacy rate recorded an increase of 13.17 percentage points to from 1991 to 2001, the highest increase in any one decade. An encouraging feature is that the growth rate of literacy has been higher in case of females at 14.87 per cent than for males at 11.72 per cent during this decade. The gap in male-female literacy rates has decreased from 24.84 percentage points in 1991 to 21.70 percentage points in 2001. The rate of growth of literacy in the decade ending 2001 has been higher in the rural areas, at 14.75 per cent as compared to the 7.2 per cent increase in urban areas. Despite these improvements literacy in urban areas was 80.3 per cent and that in rural areas 59.4 per cent.

10.33 Kerala, which has the highest literacy rate of 90.92 per cent, occupies the top slot in both male and female literacy, at 94.20 and 87.86 per cent respectively. Bihar has the lowest literacy rate of 47.53 per cent, along with the lowest literacy rate for males at 60.32 per cent and for females, at 33.57 per cent. The number of literates has more than doubled in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Rajasthan during the decade 1991-2001. As per the 2001 Census, all States and Union Territories have now achieved a male literacy rate of over 60 per cent. States/UTs having less than 50 per cent female literacy rates are Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Bihar.

10.34 During 1991-2001 the population in the seven plus age group increased by 172 million while 204 million additional persons became literates. Despite the overall increase in population, the total number of illiterates has

come down from 328 million in 1991 to 296 million in 2001. This is significant since for the first time since independence, there has been a decline in the absolute number of illiterates during a decade. States which contributed to the decrease in absolute number of illiterates are Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. States/UTs registering an increase in the number of illiterates during the decade are Bihar, Delhi, Nagaland, Manipur, Chandigar, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

10.35 The National Literacy Mission (NLM) set up in 1988, seeks to achieve full literacy i.e. a sustainable threshold level of 75 per cent literacy by the end of the year 2005, by imparting functional literacy to the non-literates in the 15-35 age group. The NLM aims at ensuring that the Total Literacy Campaigns and their sequel, the Post Literacy Campaigns successfully move on to “Continuing Education”. Under this scheme, greater emphasis is placed on development and acquisition of new learning. To prevent the non-literates from relapsing into illiteracy and also acquire skills, the NLM has been restructured to provide for an integrated approach combining the Total and Post Literacy Programme under one “Literacy Project” to achieve continuity, efficiency and convergence.

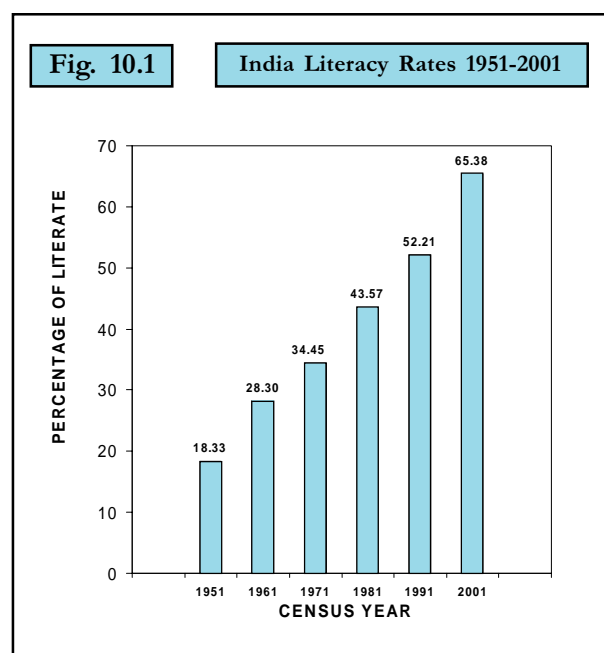


TABLE 10.13
Rural-Urban Literacy Rates 1951-2001

Year	Male	Female	Persons
1951			
Rural	19.02 *	4.87 *	12.10 *
Urban	45.60*	22.33 *	34.59 *
Total	27.16	8.86	18.33
1961			
Rural	34.30	10.10	22.50
Urban	66.00	40.50	54.40
Total	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971			
Rural	48.60	15.50	27.90
Urban	69.80	48.80	60.20
Total	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981			
Rural	49.60	21.70	36.00
Urban	76.70	56.30	67.20
Total	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991			
Rural	57.90	30.60	44.70
Urban	81.10	64.00	73.10
Total	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001			
Rural	71.40	46.70	59.40
Urban	86.70	73.20	80.30
Total	75.85	54.16	65.38

Note :-

- (*) For 1951, the population male , female and persons refers to effective literacy rates and the break up of Rural, Urban and male- female components are crude literacy rates.
- (1) Literacy rates for 1951,1961 and 1971 Censuses relates to population aged five years and above. The rates for the 1981,1991 and 2001 Census relate to population aged seven years and above.
- (2) The 1981 Literacy rates exclude Assam where census could not be conducted and the 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions.
- (3) The 2001 Census, literacy rates exclude entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district , Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district of Gujarat State and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of India,2001, could not be conducted due to natural calamities.

Source :- Census of India 2001