

Religion Data of Census 2011: IX

Literacy and Fertility: Hindus and Sikhs

The Census of India has this week released the community wise data on Literacy, Population of Children of 0-6 years, and Work Participation Rates. In the previous post, while discussing the considerable decline in the share and number of Sikhs, we found it difficult to suggest any particular reason for the phenomenon. In this note, we give the data of literacy rates and other parameters for Sikhs and Hindus; it is generally believed that literacy, especially female literacy, leads to a decline in the fertility of a population. Sikhs indeed have a considerably higher female literacy than the Hindus, at the all India average level as well as in almost all the major States. But, in Punjab, where more than 75 percent of the Sikhs live, female literacy among them is considerably below that of Hindus. The gap in female literacy thus does not seem to be the reason for the declining share and numbers of Sikhs. But the comparative data of Sikhs and Hindus on literacy rates, children per cent of population and work participation rates of men and women reveals several interesting features which we present in this short note.

Female literacy among Sikhs is higher than Hindus, Male literacy is lower

Sikhs have higher female literacy

As seen in the Table here, at the all India average literacy rate of Sikhs at 75.4 percent is slightly higher than that of Hindus at 73.3 percent.

Interestingly, literacy rate of

Sikh males is lower than that of Hindu males; it is the considerable gap of 6 percentage points between the female literacy of Sikhs and Hindus that raises the overall literacy rate of Sikhs above that of the Hindus. The gap between the female literacy rates of Sikhs and Hindus was even higher in 2001; the ratio was 53.2 percent for Hindus and 63.1 percent for Sikhs. During the decade, female literacy among Hindus has grown faster than the Sikhs; yet, female literacy among Sikhs has remained much higher.

Sikhs have lower number of Children per hundred of the population

The ratio of children in 0-6 year age group in the Sikh population at 10.5 per cent is considerably lower than in the Hindu population at 13.2 per cent. There are thus nearly 3 more children per hundred of the population of Hindus as compared to the Sikhs. The gap between the two was almost similar in 2001, when there were 15.6 children per cent of the population among the Hindus and 12.8 among Sikhs. This gap between the Child ratios of the two populations is perhaps the main cause of the relative decline of the Sikh population.

Literary, Child Ratio, WPR of Hindus and Sikhs: INDIA 2011

Religion	Lit	Lit-M	Lit-F	0-6%	WPR	WPR-M	WPR-F
Hindu	73.3	81.7	64.3	13.2	41.0	53.9	27.4
Sikh	75.4	80.0	70.3	10.5	36.3	55.4	15.2

INDIA 2001							
Hindu	65.1	76.2	53.2	15.6	40.4	52.4	27.5
Sikh	69.4	75.2	63.1	12.8	37.7	53.3	20.2

Lit: Literary Ratio; Lit-M: Male Literacy Ratio; Lit-F: Female Literacy Ratio; 0-6%: Percentage of population in 0-6 year age group; WPR: Work Participation Rate; WPR-M: Male WPR; WPR-F: Female WPR

And Sikh women have much lower work participation rates

The data on relative Work Participation Rates (WPR) of Sikhs and Hindus is even more interesting. As seen in the Table above, WPR of Sikhs is considerably lower than Hindus; but WPR of males is somewhat higher for Sikhs. The WPR of females among Sikhs is extremely low at just 15.2 percent, as compared 27.4 percent for Hindus. The situation is thus the reverse of literacy: Literacy among Sikh men is lower than Hindus and their work participation is higher; on the other hand, literacy among Sikh women is higher than Hindus and their work participation rate is much lower. Incidentally, as compared to the situation in 2001, the WPR of females among Hindus has remained nearly unchanged among Hindus, but among Sikhs it has declined by 5 percentage points. WPR of females in 2001 was 27.5 percent for Hindus and 20.2 percent for Sikhs; the gap of about 7 has now widened to 12 percentage points.

It is tempting to conclude that more literate (or educated) the women are the less is their participation in the workforce and they produce lesser number of children. But, the figures for Punjab below directly contradict this conclusion.

Both male and female literacy among Sikhs in Punjab is lower than the Hindus

Sikh literacy in Punjab is lower

In Punjab, Sikhs have a literacy rate of 73.7 percent compared to 80.0 percent of Hindus.

Literary, Child Ratio, WPR of Hindus and Sikhs: PUNJAB								
Religion	Lit	Lit-M	Lit-F	0-6%	WPR	WPR-M	WPR-F	
Hindu	80.0	84.7	74.8	11.8	35.6	55.2	13.4	
Sikh	73.7	78.2	68.7	10.5	35.8	55.2	14.3	

Sikh literacy rate in Punjab is lower for both men and women, and the gap between Sikhs and Hindus is about the same 6 percentage points in both cases.

The higher literacy of Sikh females at the Indian average level is thus because of their much higher literacy outside Punjab. Outside Punjab, female literacy for Sikhs is higher than Hindus in all major States of India; it is so even in Haryana and Uttarakhand, where the total literacy rate of Sikhs is somewhat lower than the Hindus. The gap between the female literacy of Sikhs and Hindus is very high in most States; thus in Delhi female literacy rate of Sikhs is 92 percent compared to 82 percent of Hindus; the ratios are 61 and 52 percent in Rajasthan, 73 and 59 percent in Uttar Pradesh, 88 and 71 percent in Assam, 90 and 56 percent in Jharkhand, 82 and 58 percent in Madhya Pradesh, 73 and 58 percent in Andhra Pradesh, and so on.

Female literacy across States is not directly related to Urban-Rural ratio

Once again it is tempting to relate the relatively higher female literacy of Sikhs in India and different States to their higher urban ratio. In Punjab, Sikhs are indeed considerably less urban than Hindus; the urban ratio for the two is 22.8 and 58.8 percent, respectively. This probably explains the lower total and female literacy of Sikhs in Punjab. But, Sikhs are also less urban than Hindus at the all India average level, and also in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, where their female literacy is higher than Hindus. In most other States, Sikhs are much more urban than Hindus; in the farther States, Sikhs are mostly in the urban areas. The higher female literacy of

Sikhs outside Punjab certainly has something to do with this higher urbanisation of Sikhs. But, as we have seen, there is no one-to-one relationship between urbanisation and female literacy in different States; demographic phenomena are often complex and have multiple causes.

Sikhs in Punjab have lower child ratio but the gap with Hindus is small

Returning to Punjab, we find that notwithstanding the lower total and female literacy of Sikhs in Punjab, the number of children per hundred of Sikh population there is lower than Hindus. The gap between the two is, however, not as high as at the all-India average level. Sikhs in Punjab have 10.5 children per hundred of the population compared to 11.8 for Hindus; the corresponding numbers at the all-India average level are 10.5 and 13.2, as we have seen.

WPR of Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab is also similar

Unlike at the all-India average level, the work participation rates of Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab are almost equal. Work participation rate for the total population is 35.6 for Hindus and 35.8 for Sikhs. Work participation rate of males in both communities is almost exactly equal at 55.2 percent. Work participation rate of females is in fact somewhat higher among Sikhs than Hindus, the difference between the two is, however, small; the rate is 14.3 percent for Sikhs and 13.4 percent for Hindus.

The lower child ratio and female work participation of Sikhs is a regional phenomenon

From the figures of Punjab, it is clear that the lower work participation rate of women among Sikhs and the lower number of children per hundred of their population at the all-India average level are mainly because both these rates are low in Punjab, where most of the Sikhs live. However, in Punjab, these rates are almost equally low for Hindus also. The phenomenon is thus more regional than communal.

It seems that most of the significant demographic parameters, including gender ratio, fertility and mortality, depend strongly upon the region rather than the religious community. This assertion, however, does not seem to fully apply for the Muslims, as we shall discuss in some detail in a later post.

Children per cent of the population among Sikhs is low in all States

Though, the low all-India average of the child ratio among Sikhs can be largely explained by the lower ratio of Punjab for both Hindus and Sikhs, yet it is also true that the child ratio of Sikhs is lower than Hindus in all States of India, excepting only Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry; the total number of Sikhs in these exceptional States is hardly significant.

In many of the other States, the difference between the child ratio of Sikhs and Hindus is very high. Thus the ratio for the Hindus and Sikhs is 11.7 and 8.8, respectively, in Delhi; 11.7 and 7.6 in Chandigarh; 12.8 and 10.5 in Haryana; 15.4 and 11.8 percent in Rajasthan; 15.0 and 10.9 in Uttar Pradesh; 15.8 and 9.1 in Jharkhand.

Summing up

The number of children per hundred of Sikh population is clearly low compared to Hindus almost all across the country; it was also low relative to the Hindus in 2001. That is perhaps the main reason for the declining share of Sikhs in Punjab and many

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other States during the last two decades. Before 1991, as we have noticed in the previous post, the share of Sikhs was rising in Punjab and in most States outside Punjab. The lower fertility of Sikhs also seems to be responsible for the remarkable and widespread contraction in the number of Sikhs in several States and many districts spread across the country that has taken place during 2001-11.

But in Chandigarh, Haryana and Delhi, the share of Sikhs has been declining continuously for several decades. The causes of this long-term decline of Sikhs in the immediate neighbourhood of Punjab have to be searched beyond the declining fertility of Sikhs during the last two decades.

And as the literacy data compiled in this note indicates, the lower fertility of Sikhs cannot be simply related to the higher average literacy among Sikh women; in Punjab, they are less literate compared to Hindus and yet have fewer children per hundred of the population.

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