

## GROWTH BEHAVIOUR OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN RAJASTHAN BY SIZE CLASS

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### Abstract

Settlements are an expression of the interaction between humans and the environment. While the dictionary definition of *urban* means polished, refined or cultured; *urbanization* in the demographic sense means an increase in the proportion of the urban population to the total population of any area with time. No consensus has been reached till date regarding the definition of urban and different scholars have defined urban in their own different ways. The Indian Census as the largest repository of the demographic data for the country defines urban according to its own pre-defined criteria and classifies urban centres into different size classes on the basis of population.

The tempo of urbanization has been quite rapid in developing countries like India and thus, Rajasthan can be no exception to this. Though in terms of its percentage share to the total urban population of India Rajasthan has been a medium performer, but its unique diversity in physical landscape which is also reflected in its urban settlements, provides an interesting area of study. Common to the nature of urbanization in any developing country, most of the urban population in Rajasthan is concentrated in the limited number of cities; but Rajasthan is essentially a state of medium towns which if developed properly with necessary infrastructures may serve as counter magnets to the excessive migration and overcrowding in the cities.

**Key Words:** Urban settlements, urbanization, census, size classes, medium towns.

### Introduction

Settlements are an expression of the interaction between humans and the environment. Like humans, settlements are also varied in space exhibiting great variations in terms of population, economy, social structure etc. Coming to the term '*urban*,' the dictionary generally defines it as polished, cultured or refined and '*urbanisation*' (in demographic sense) necessarily means an increase in the proportion of the urban population to the total population of any area over time.

Different scholars have defined 'urban' in different ways. **Aurousseau** defined urban as dense clusters of persons who have an immediate interest in the production of the material for their food, clothing or general comfort, but are engaged in transport, manufacturing, buying and selling goods or in educating the people or in managing the affairs of the state or is merely 'living in towns.' **Murphy** defines urban as busy streets lined with houses, stores, factories and the like. Sociologist **Wirth** has defined urban areas as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of heterogeneous individuals.

Population size of a place has often been used as a criterion for defining an urban settlement. In **India**, the *Census* has its own definition of urban involving multiple criteria. It defines an urban settlement as: all statutory towns i.e. all places with municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified area committee etc., and, all other places with a minimum population of 5000, atleast 75% of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and a population density of atleast 400/sq.km. A town with a population of 100000 and above is referred to as a 'city.' The 'outgrowth' of towns and cities may also be treated as urban. A town or city with its outgrowth may be treated as an 'urban agglomeration,' a term introduced in the 1971 Census.

### **The Study Area**

The tempo of urbanization has been quite rapid in developing countries like India and Rajasthan is no exception to this. Though in terms of its share to the total urban population of the country, Rajasthan is a medium performer; temporally, Rajasthan's urban population has also increased tremendously. The state provides an interesting area of study because of its unique diversity of physical landscapes. It is a land of both the Aravallis and the shifting sand dunes of the Great Thar Desert, of scorching heat and freezing cold, thus presenting a great variation in the distribution of its population. The same is applicable in case of urban settlements as well which are limited to certain favourable pockets like the piedmont and the intermontane regions of the Aravallis; along major rivers and their tributaries; rocky tops and higher slopes (mainly from security point of view in ancient times); fresh water and salt lakes; and, caravan route crossings.

## Growth of Urban Settlements in Rajasthan

With potentialities of mineral occurrences, availability of power resources, irrigation development and development of transport and communication, providing scope for the expansion of secondary and tertiary sectors, Rajasthan has registered quite a rapid growth of urban settlements.

**Table 1: Trends in Growth of Urban Settlements in Rajasthan**

Census Year	Total Number of Urban Settlements	Total Population of Rajasthan	Total Urban Population of Rajasthan	Percentage of Urban Population	Decennial Growth
1901	135	10294090	1550656	15.06	--
1911	138	10983509	1475829	13.44	-4.83
1921	147	10292648	1475335	14.33	-0.03
1931	150	11747974	1729205	14.72	+17.21
1941	157	13863859	2117101	15.27	+22.43
1951	227	15970774	2955275	18.50	+39.59
1961	145	20155602	3281478	16.28	+11.04
1971	157	25765806	4543761	17.63	+38.47
1981	201	34261862	7210508	21.05	+58.69
1991	215	44005990	10067113	22.88	+39.62
2001	222	56507188	13214375	23.39	+31.26
2011	297	68548437	17080776	24.91	+29.26

**Source:** Census of Rajasthan, 1901-2011.

Table 1 makes clear the scenario of the growth of urban settlements in Rajasthan. Right from 1901 to 1951 for a period of 50 years, there was a consistent growth of urban settlements in Rajasthan. Accordingly, urban population increased both in absolute terms as well as in the percentage share to the total population. However, in the decade 1951-1961 urban settlements suddenly plummeted to a great extent. Again, from 1961 onwards, there has been a consistent rise in the number of urban settlements as well as urban population. Interestingly, though there has been a significant increase in the number of urban settlements between 2001 and 2011, yet the decadal growth rate of urban population has reduced during the same decade in the state.

But the real nature of urbanization of any area may be best understood only by analyzing the growth of urban settlements by size class since urban settlements are not uniform in size. Here by size is meant the population of any settlement. The Indian Census provides for six size classes of urban settlements based on their population

Size Class	Population
I	100000 and above (city)
II	50000—99999 (large towns)
III	20000—49999 (medium towns)
IV	10000—19999 (small towns)
V	5000—9999 (small towns)
VI	Less than 5000 (mini towns)

Let us now evaluate the growth of urban settlements in Rajasthan by size class.

**Table 2: Number of Urban Settlements in Rajasthan by Size Class (1971-2011)**

Census Year	Size Classes						Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	
1971	7	7	29	65	41	4	157
1981	11	10	55	101	23	1	201
1991	14	20	74	87	25	2	215
2001	20	26	76	63	22	5	222
2011	29	26	105	80	47	10	297

**Source:** Census of Rajasthan, 1971-2011.

It may be inferred from Table 2 that in absolute terms, there has been increase in the number of cities in Rajasthan over time. But Rajasthan is essentially a state of medium and small towns. All the five different census figures from 1971 to 2011 depicted in Table 2 clearly reveals this fact that the maximum number of urban settlements in Rajasthan either belonged to the Class III or Class IV type. Interestingly, while until 1991, the Class IV type urban settlements outnumbered the Class III type, from 2001, it was reversed with the Class III type outnumbering the Class IV type. This suggests the increase in the population size of the Class IV type urban settlements. There has been no change in the Class II type meaning that these urban centres have failed to develop as cities. The least number of urban centres belonged to the Class VI type with population of less than 5000. It is because, this category of towns is mostly of the definitional type fulfilling the criteria proposed by the Census but not yet been recognized by the government as urban.

Let us now see as the percentage share of urban population of each of these size classes of urban settlements post-2000, i.e. for the 2001 and 2011 censuses.

**Table 3: Urban Population in Rajasthan by Size/Class**

	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V	Class VI	Total
<b>Total Urban Population in 2001</b>	7556650	1842458	2747602	915442	132911	19312	13214375
<b>% Urban Population</b>	57.18	13.95	20.79	6.93	1.00	0.15	100.00
<b>Total Urban Population in 2011</b>	10480755	1787872	3291478	1125177	353718	41776	17080776
<b>% Urban Population</b>	61.36	10.47	19.27	6.59	2.07	0.24	100.00

**Source:** Census of Rajasthan, 2001, 2011.

It is evident from Table 3 that the Class I cities are the home for more than half of the urban population in Rajasthan. This is typical of the nature of urbanization in developing countries and may be attributed to the excessive influx of migrants to these cities from surrounding rural areas or small urban centres, triggered mainly by economic reasons and sometimes due to education or health facilities. Hence, cities tend to be overcrowded posing a serious challenge to the existing infrastructures. The Class III towns are the next to follow in terms of the percentage share of urban population.

### Conclusion

Urban settlements have long been centres of economic growth. While human settlements in general, reflect the human-Nature interaction of the area, urban settlements are a reflection of socio-economic change in the area. The state of Rajasthan is a moderately urbanized state. It is highly diversified in its physical landscape which is also portrayed in its urban settlements. Urban centres in the state are limited to certain favourable pockets but the nature of urbanization is typical of any developing economy with overcrowded limited cities. Rajasthan is essentially a state of medium towns. These urban centres have lower urban rents than the cities and therefore, if developed properly with necessary infrastructures, may serve as countermagnets to excessive migration to the cities.

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