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Declining Child Sex Ratio in Southern States and EAG States during the Two Decades (2001–2011)

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Abstract

"The children of today are the future of tomorrow" is especially significant in India, where children aged 0–14 years constitute nearly one-third of the total population. In the era of globalization, sustainable economic growth and competitiveness in global commerce depend largely on women's empowerment, skilled human capital, and gender-balanced workforce participation. However, Census data from 2001 and 2011 reveal a persistent decline in the child sex ratio across 21 Indian states, despite economic growth and social development. The child sex ratio (0–6 years) is a key demographic indicator reflecting gender equity and the future labor force structure. This paper examines the trends and patterns of declining child sex ratio in the Southern States and Empowered Action Group (EAG) States of India using comparative Census data. The analysis highlights inter-state variations, rural–urban differences, and regional disparities. The findings show that Southern States, though better integrated into global markets with higher literacy and health indicators, experienced a significant decline in child sex ratio, particularly in urban areas. This reflects the coexistence of technological progress and persistent son preference. EAG States continue to record lower child sex ratios due to socio-economic backwardness, low female education, and patriarchal norms. The study argues that a declining child sex ratio weakens women's participation in global commerce, reduces innovation potential, and affects long-term economic sustainability. Strengthening policy implementation, promoting female education, and changing social attitudes are essential for balanced demographic and inclusive economic development.

Keywords: Child Sex Ratio, Socio-demographic Consequences.

1.Introduction

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR), defined as the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group 0–6 years, is a critical demographic indicator reflecting the social status of women and children in a society. In India, despite sustained economic growth, constitutional safeguards, and multiple welfare interventions, the declining trend in the child sex ratio has emerged as a serious social and demographic concern. Census data over successive decades reveal that both socially advanced Southern States and historically

disadvantaged Empowered Action Group (EAG) States have experienced a decline in CSR, though the magnitude, determinants, and underlying dynamics vary across regions. Traditionally, Southern States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have been regarded as demographically progressive due to higher literacy rates, better health indicators, and relatively improved gender development outcomes. Conversely, EAG States—namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Odisha—have been characterized by higher fertility, lower female literacy, and weaker health infrastructure. However, the persistence and spread of declining child sex ratios in both these contrasting regions indicate that the problem transcends levels of development and is deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms, patriarchal values, and son preference.

In the Southern States, the decline in CSR is increasingly associated with the intersection of low fertility, technological access to prenatal sex determination, and continued preference for male children. In EAG States, the decline is further compounded by poverty, early marriage, limited awareness, and restricted access to quality maternal and child healthcare services. These regional variations suggest that economic progress alone is insufficient to ensure gender equity at birth and that social attitudes play a decisive role in shaping demographic outcomes. Against this backdrop, the present paper examines the patterns and trends of declining child sex ratio in Southern and EAG States, identifies key socio-economic and cultural determinants, and highlights the implications for future population structure and social development. Understanding these regional disparities is crucial for designing targeted policy interventions and strengthening existing legal and social mechanisms aimed at promoting gender equality and safeguarding the rights of the girl child.

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is a crucial indicator of gender equality and social development. The continued decline in CSR reflects deep-rooted gender discrimination and persistent son preference in society. This demographic imbalance poses a serious challenge to the attainment of sustainable development, particularly the goals related to gender equality and women empowerment. A declining child sex ratio directly weakens the foundation of women empowerment by reducing female participation in education, workforce, and leadership over time. It also obstructs the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG-5, which emphasizes gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Without ensuring the survival and well-being of the girl child, long-term social and economic development remains unsustainable. Therefore, addressing the declining child sex ratio is not only a demographic necessity but also a prerequisite for achieving inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development.

2.Objectives

1. The present study Analyses the trend and nature of lowest CSR in Southern and EAG States.
2. To find out declining pattern of child sex ratio and overall sex ratio two decadal rate like 2001 – 2011.
3. To examine the impact of decline child sex ratio over the society
4. To Analyses the causes for decline girl in the districts.

3.Hypothesis:

There is significant difference in Sex Ratio and CSR with in the Rural and Urban areas.

4.Data and Methodology:

The study is based on secondary data and examines changes in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) across the erstwhile districts of Tamil Nadu and Bihar between 2001 and 2011. The analysis utilises Census of India data to compare district-wise variations in the Child Sex Ratio, as well as decadal changes in rural and urban sex ratios.

5.Statement of the problem:

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR) appears to be more adversely affected when compared to the overall sex ratio. This disparity indicates the persistence of practices such as sex-selective abortions and female foeticide, which have been reported in several studies. However, available data on these practices remain limited and, in many cases, unreliable. A number of micro-level studies have nonetheless documented the prevalence of sex selection and female infanticide. For instance, Diaz (1988) reported that at a well-known abortion centre in Mumbai, nearly all of the 15,914 abortions performed during 1984–85 involved female foetuses. In the present study, ten districts with the lowest Child Sex Ratio were selected to examine the decadal trends and identify the underlying factors contributing to the continued decline. The focus on these districts is intended to highlight critical issues associated with the negative trends in CSR and to contribute to efforts aimed at preventing the loss of the girl child and safeguarding future demographic balance.

6.Result and Discussion

Table:1

Child Sex Ratio (0-6) Decadal Changes 2001- 2011

SL.NO	Name of District	2001	2011	Decadal Changes
1	Thiruvallur	957	946	-11
2	Thrivannmalai	948	930	-18
3	Villupruam	961	941	-20
4	Perambalur	937	913	-24
5	Ariylur	949	897	-52
6	Cuddalore	957	896	-58
7	Nagapattinam	962	959	-3
8	Thirvarur	970	958	-12
9	Thanjavur	959	957	-2
10	Ramanathapuram	964	961	-3

The above table 1 shows that decadal changes lowest ten districts child sex ratio, according census data 2001 & 2011. Tiruvallur CSR in 2001 (957) & 2011 (946) it's declined 11 points, Tiruvannamalai CSR in 2001 (948) & 2011 (930) it's declined 18 points, Villupuram CSR in 2001 (961) & 2011 (941) it's declined 20 points, Preambular CSR in 2001 (949) & 2011 (897) it's declined 52 points, Ariyalur 2001 (949) &897 declined 52 points Cuddalore CSR in 2001 (957) & 2011 (896) it's declined 58 points, Nagaipattinam CSR in 2001 (962) & 2011 (959) it's declined 03 points, Thiruvarur CSR in 2001 (970)

& 2011 (958) it's declined 12 points, Thanjavur CSR in 2001 (959) & 2011 (957) it's declined 02 points, Ramanathapuram CSR in 2001 (964) & 2011 (961) it's declined 03 points.

Graph: 1

Child Sex Ratio (0-6) Decadal Changes 2001- 2011:

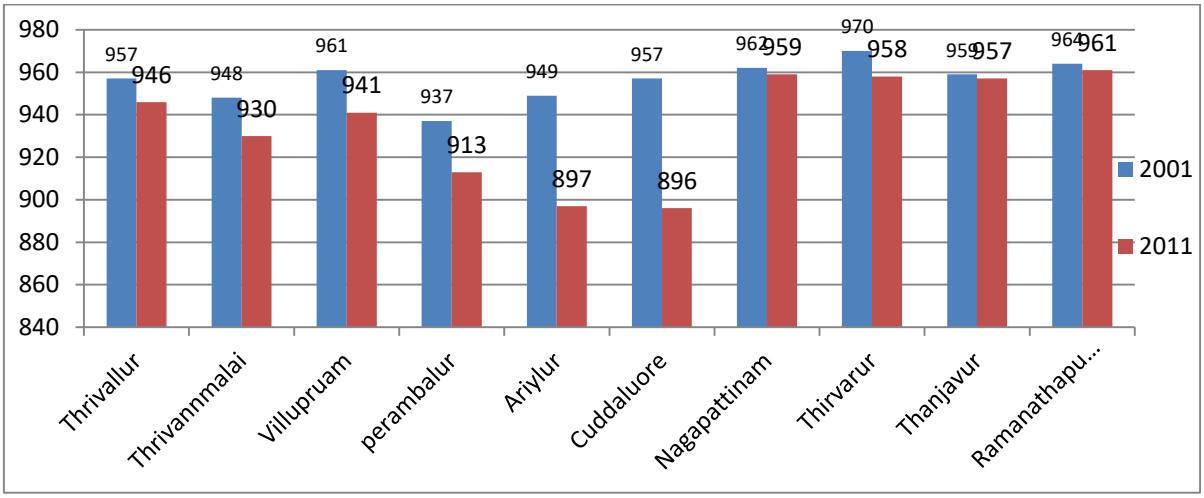


Table: 2

Decadal Changes Child Sex Ratio 2001 – 2011 (Rural)

SL.No	Name of Districts	2001	2011	Decadal Changes Sex Ratio
1	Thiruvallur	960	947	-13
2	Thiruvannamalai	944	927	-17
3	Villupram	960	939	-21
4	Perambalur	933	908	-25
5	Ariyaur	946	895	-51
6	Cuddalore	957	880	-77
7	Nagapattinam	965	958	-7
8	Thiruvarur	968	956	-12
9	Thanjarur	958	955	-3
10	Ramanathapuram	961	961	0

Source: www.tn.gov.in census 2001 to 2011

The above table 1 shows that Rural area decadal changes lowest ten districts child sex ratio, According census data 2001 & 2011. Tiruvallur CSR in 2001 (960) & 2011 (947) it's declined 13 points, Tiruvannamalai CSR in 2001 (944) & 2011 (927) it's declined 17 points, Villupuram CSR in 2001 (960) & 2011 (939) it's declined 21 points, Preambular CSR in 2001 (933) & 2011 (908) it's declined 25 points, Ariyalur 2001(946) &2011 (895) 51 points declined Cuddalore CSR in 2001 (957) & 2011 (880) it's declined 77 points, Nagaipattinam CSR in 2001 (965) & 2011 (958) it's declined 07 points, Thiruvarur CSR in 2001 (968) & 2011 (956) it's declined 12 points, Tanjavur CSR in 2001 (958) & 2011 (955) it's declined 03 points, Ramanathapuram CSR in 2001 (961) & 2011 (961) it's declined 0 points.

Graph:2

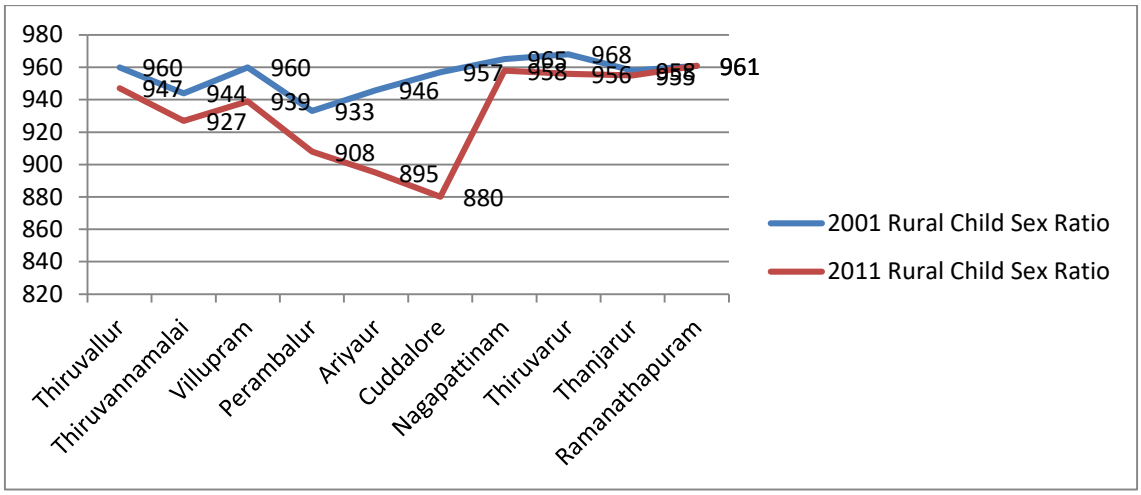


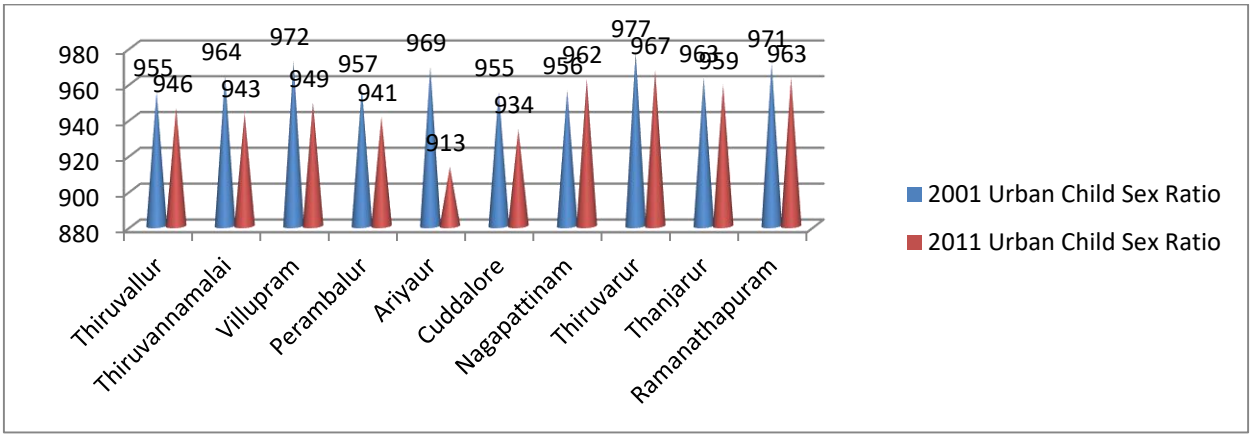
Table:3

Decadal Changes Child Sex Ratio 2001 – 2011 (Urban)

SL.No	Name of Districts	2001	2011	Decadal Changes Sex Ratio
1	Thiruvallur	955	946	-9
2	Thiruvannamalai	964	943	-21
3	Villupram	972	949	-23
4	Perambalur	957	941	-16
5	Ariyaur	969	913	-56
6	Cuddalore	955	934	-21
7	Nagapattinam	956	962	6
8	Thiruvarur	977	967	-10
9	Thanjarur	963	959	-4
10	Ramanathapuram	971	963	-8

Graph:3

Decadal Changes Child Sex Ratio 2001 – 2011 (Urban)

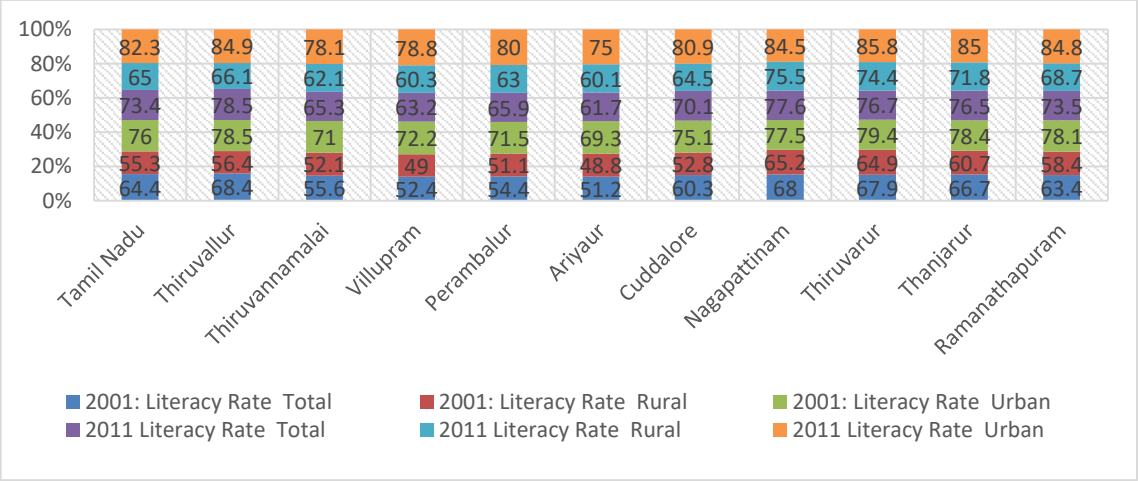


The above table 1 shows that Rural area decadal changes lowest ten districts child sex ratio, according census data 2001 & 2011. Tiruvallur CSR in 2001 (955) & 2011 (946) it's declined 9 points,Thiruvannamalai CSR in 2001 (964) & 2011 (943) it's declined 21 points, Villupuram CSR in 2001 (972) & 2011 (949) it's declined 23 points, Perambalur CSR in 2001 (957) & 2011 (941) it's declined 16 points, Ariyalur 2001 (969) &2011(913) 56 points Cuddalore CSR in 2001 (955) & 2011 (934) it's declined 21 points, Nagaipattinam CSR in 2001 (956) & 2011 (962) it's declined +6 points, Thiruvarur CSR in 2001 (977) & 2011 (967) it's declined 10 points, Tanjavur CSR in 2001 (963) & 2011 (959) it's declined 04 points, Ramanathapuram CSR in 2001 (971) & 2011 (963) it's declined 08 points.

Table:4 :Literacy rate by residence Females: -

SL. No	Name of Districts	2001: Literacy Rate			2011 Literacy Rate		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
	Tamil Nadu	**64.4**	**55.3**	**76**	**73.4**	**65**	**82.3**
1	Thiruvallur	68.4	56.4	78.5	78.5	66.1	84.9
2	Thiruvannamalai	55.6	52.1	71	65.3	62.1	78.1
3	Villupram	52.4	49	72.2	63.2	60.3	78.8
4	Perambalur	54.4	51.1	71.5	65.9	63	80
5	Ariyaur	51.2	48.8	69.3	61.7	60.1	75
6	Cuddalore	60.3	52.8	75.1	70.1	64.5	80.9
7	Nagapattinam	68	65.2	77.5	77.6	75.5	84.5
8	Thiruvarur	67.9	64.9	79.4	76.7	74.4	85.8
9	Thanjarur	66.7	60.7	78.4	76.5	71.8	85
10	Ramanathapuram	63.4	58.4	78.1	73.5	68.7	84.8

Graph:4
Literacy rate by residence Females



The table shows district-wise literacy rates in selected districts of Tamil Nadu for 2001 and 2011 by total, rural, and urban population. Literacy levels improved consistently across all districts during the

decade. Tiruvallur recorded the highest total literacy rate in 2011 (78.5%), while Ariyalur remained comparatively lower despite notable progress. Rural literacy registered substantial gains, particularly in districts such as Nagaipattinam and Thiruvarur, where rates exceeded 74 percent, indicating a narrowing rural–urban gap. Although urban literacy remained higher in both years, faster improvements in rural areas suggest gradual convergence. Overall, the trends reflect positive educational development, while persistent inter-district and rural–urban disparities call for targeted policy interventions.

Table: 5

SL. No	Name of Districts	2001: WPR			2011: WPR		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
	Tamil Nadu	**31.5**	**41.4**	**18.9**	**31.8**	**41.2**	**21.8**
1	Thiruvallur	19.8	28.6	12.3	23.5	33.6	18
2	Thiruvannamalai	39.6	44.8	16.7	40.6	45.8	20.3
3	Villupram	40	44.1	15.9	39.9	43.8	18.2
4	Perambalur	49.7	54.1	27.1	48.4	52.6	28.3
5	Ariyaur	41.5	44.6	17.2	38.7	41.1	20.2
6	Cuddalore	29.6	38.2	12.3	32.5	40.6	16.8
7	Nagapattinam	23.6	26.8	12.1	25.8	29	14.6
8	Thiruvarur	27.1	30.8	12.4	26.7	30	14.2
9	Thanjarur	24.9	30.6	13.7	24	29.1	14.8
10	Ramanathapuram	33.1	40.4	11.4	31.3	38.8	14.2

The table 5: presents district-wise Work Participation Rates (WPR) for Tamil Nadu and selected districts for the census years 2001 and 2011, classified by total, rural, and urban population. The analysis reveals both spatial and sectoral variations in workforce participation across districts over the decade. At the state level, Tamil Nadu recorded a marginal increase in total WPR from 31.5 percent in 2001 to 31.8 percent in 2011. While rural WPR remained almost stagnant, urban WPR showed a noticeable increase, indicating a gradual shift towards urban-based employment opportunities.

District-level analysis indicates considerable variation in total WPR. Perambalur consistently recorded the highest work participation rates in both census years, reflecting its agrarian and labour-intensive occupational structure. In contrast, districts such as Tiruvallur and Nagaipattinam exhibited relatively lower total WPRs, particularly in urban areas. Rural WPRs were substantially higher than urban WPRs across all districts, underscoring the dominance of agricultural and allied activities in rural economies. However, a slight decline in rural WPR was observed in several districts between 2001 and 2011, including Ariyalur and Ramanathapuram, possibly due to mechanisation, migration, and diversification of livelihoods. Urban WPRs, though lower than rural rates, increased across most districts during the decade. Districts such as Tiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, and Perambalur recorded notable growth in urban WPR, suggesting expansion in non-agricultural and informal sector employment. Overall, the data highlight persistent rural–urban disparities in work participation across districts. The modest improvement in urban WPR coupled with stagnation or decline in rural WPR points towards structural changes in the labour market. These trends underline the need for employment-focused policies that

promote inclusive growth, skill development, and sustainable livelihood opportunities, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions.

Graph:5

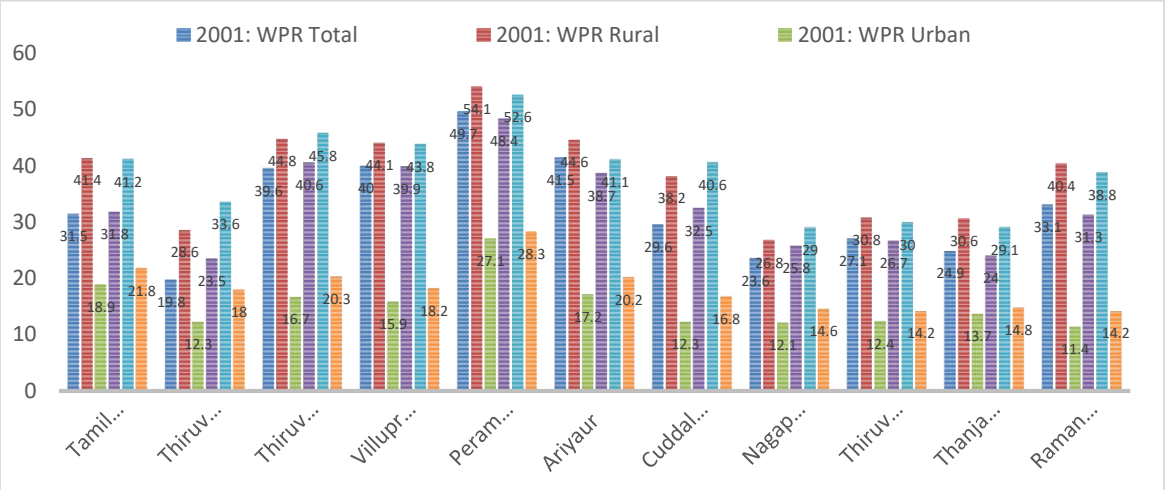


Table :6

District	CSR 2001 Total	CSR 2001 Rural	CSR 2001 Urban	CSR 2011 Total	CSR 2011 Rural	CSR 2011 Urban
Bihar State	942	944	924	904	938	912
PashchimChamparan	953	954	943	909	955	924
PurbaChamparan	937	938	917	915	934	918
Madhubani	939	940	924	920	936	925
Araria	963	964	943	922	957	953
Kishanganj	947	947	947	923	972	967
Purnia	967	969	940	926	954	955
Katihar	966	969	952	926	962	939
Gopalganj	964	965	938	931	955	943
Bhagalpur	966	971	942	938	943	915
Banka	965	965	941	940	944	899

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in Bihar shows a notable decline between 2001 and 2011, reflecting persistent gender imbalance concerns across the state. At the state level, CSR declined from 942 in 2001 to 904 in 2011, indicating a substantial deterioration over the decade. While rural areas continued to record relatively higher CSR than urban areas, both segments experienced a decline, with the reduction being more pronounced at the aggregate level. Across districts, Pashchim Champaran, Araria, Purnia, Katihar, and Bhagalpur exhibited relatively higher CSR levels in 2001; however, most of these districts registered a sharp fall by 2011, suggesting widening demographic stress. Districts such as Kishanganj and Purnia showed comparatively better rural CSR performance in 2011, yet urban CSR remained lower

in several districts, highlighting persistent urban gender disparities. Overall, the data indicate that despite regional variations, no district was immune to the declining trend in CSR, underscoring the influence of socio-cultural preferences, access to sex-selective technologies, and uneven development. The findings emphasize the need for district-specific policy interventions, strengthened enforcement of legal provisions, and sustained social awareness programs to address gender imbalance in Bihar.

Graph:6:

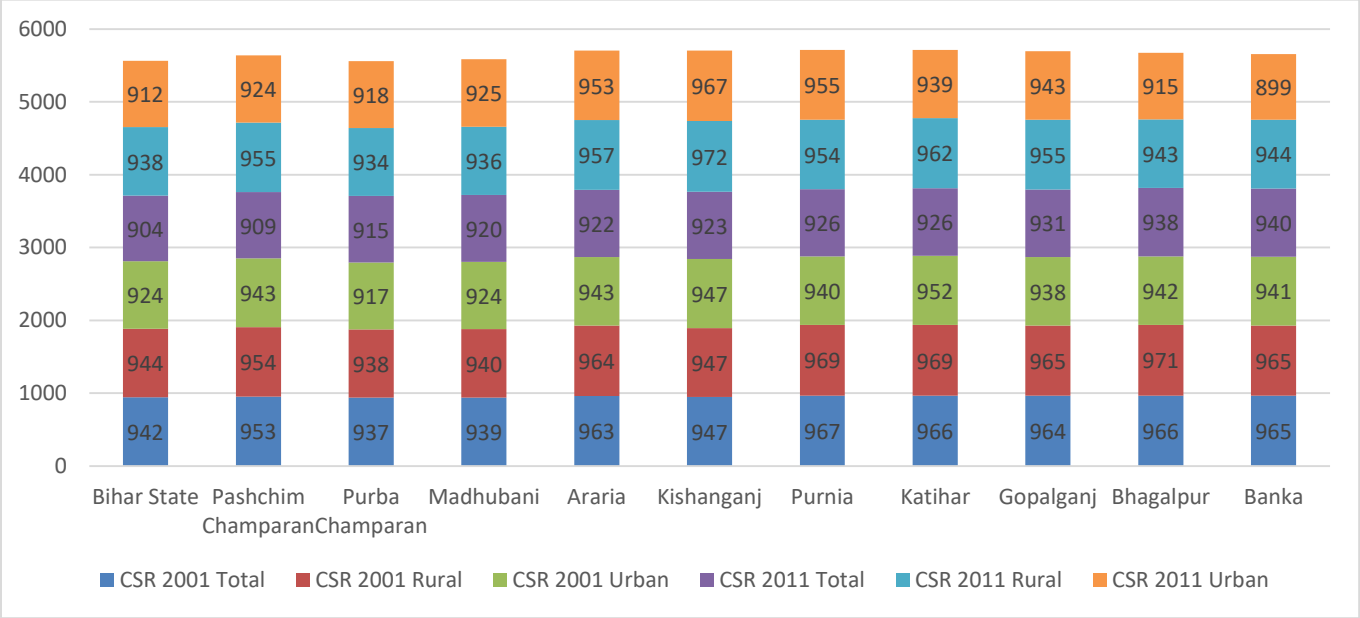


Table :7

Name of Districts	2001: Literacy Rate			2011: Literacy Rate		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bihar State	33.1	29.6	62.6	51.5	49	70.5
Pashchim Champaran	25.2	21.9	53.3	44.7	42.5	64
PurbaChamparan	24.3	22	57.2	45.1	43.4	64.6
Madhubani	26.2	25.4	50.9	46.2	45.5	62.4
Araria	22.4	20.4	51.5	43.9	42.5	65.6
Kishanganj	18.6	15.4	48.2	46.8	44.7	65.3
Purnia	23.4	19.6	62.1	42.3	39.3	67.1
Katihar	23.8	19.7	63	44.4	41.6	71.4
Gopalganj	32.2	31	50	54.8	54	67
Bhagalpur	38.1	32.1	62.9	54.9	50.9	70.3
Banka	28.7	27.9	50.6	47.7	47	66.1

The literacy profile of Bihar exhibits substantial improvement between 2001 and 2011, though marked inter-district and rural–urban disparities persist. At the state level, total literacy increased from 33.1% in 2001 to 51.5% in 2011, reflecting significant progress in educational attainment. Both rural and urban

areas recorded gains; however, urban literacy consistently remained much higher than rural literacy. District-wise analysis reveals that Bhagalpur and Gopalganj emerged as relatively better performers in 2011, with total literacy exceeding 54%, while Kishanganj, Araria, and Purnia continued to lag behind despite noticeable improvement. Rural literacy improved substantially across all districts, particularly in Gopalganj and Bhagalpur, indicating the positive impact of educational expansion in non-urban areas. Urban literacy levels remained significantly higher across districts, with Katihar (71.4%) and Bihar State (70.5%) recording the highest urban literacy in 2011. Nevertheless, the persistent rural–urban gap highlights unequal access to educational infrastructure and socio-economic opportunities.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Bihar made considerable strides in literacy during 2001–2011, the pace of progress was uneven across districts. The study underscores the need for targeted district-specific interventions, especially in educationally backward districts, to bridge regional and rural–urban disparities and ensure inclusive human capital development

Graph:7:

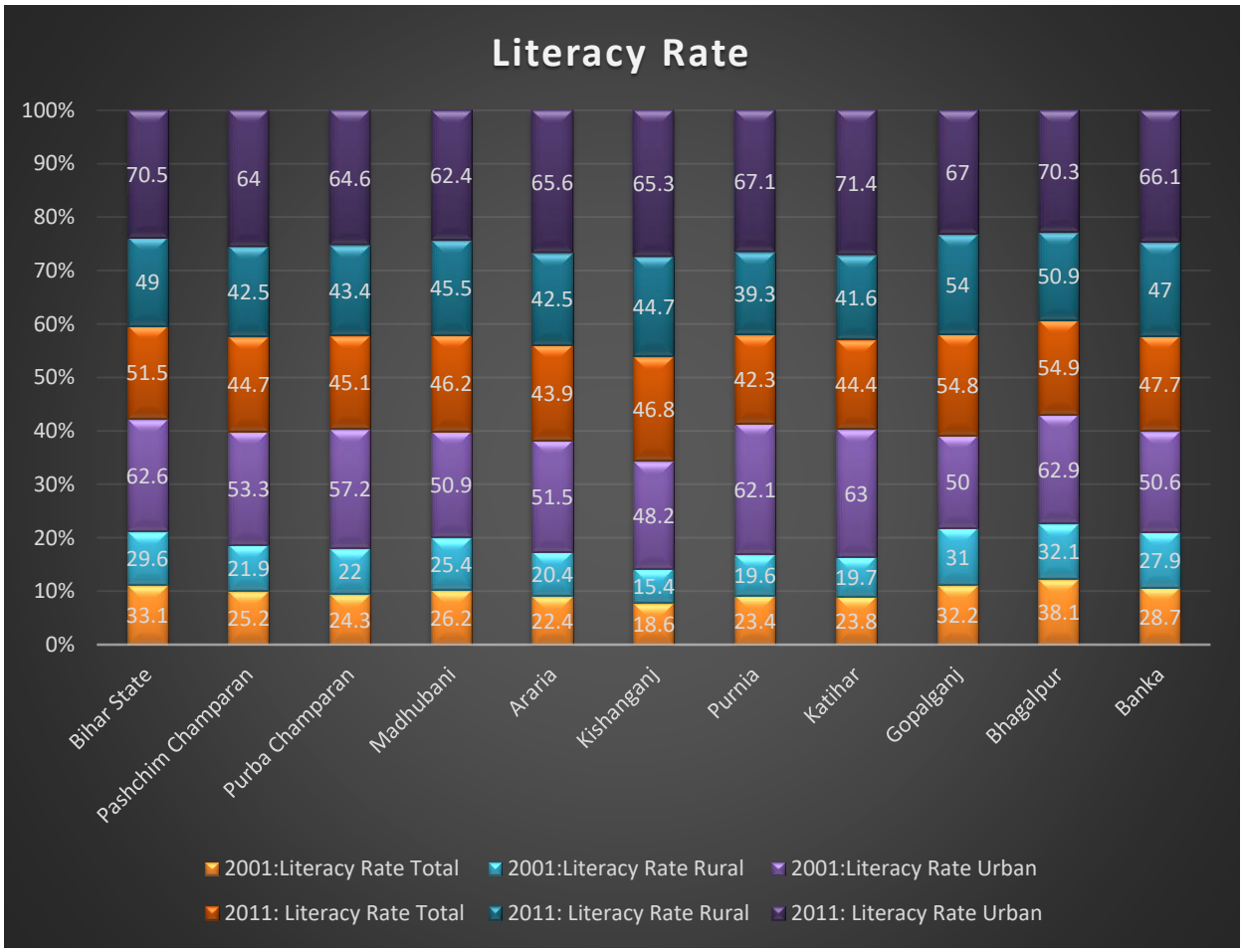


Table :8

Name of Districts	2001: WPR			2011: WPR		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bihar State	18.8	20.2	7	19.1	20.2	10.4
PashchimChamparan	23.6	25.2	9.5	25.6	27.4	9.4
PurbaChamparan	14.7	15.3	6.1	19.7	20.6	9.4
Madhubani	20.1	20.5	8.1	24.6	25	14.1
Araria	25.8	27.1	6.4	26.8	27.7	12.9
Kishanganj	10.2	10.7	5.6	13.1	13.1	12.8
Purnia	23.3	24.8	7.2	21.7	22.9	11.3
Katihar	23.1	24.8	5	17.2	18	8.7
Gopalganj	15.1	15.5	8.3	14.6	14.9	9.1
Bhagalpur	21.4	24.5	8.1	17.1	18.6	11.1
Banka	28.2	28.8	11.5	26.2	26.8	7.6

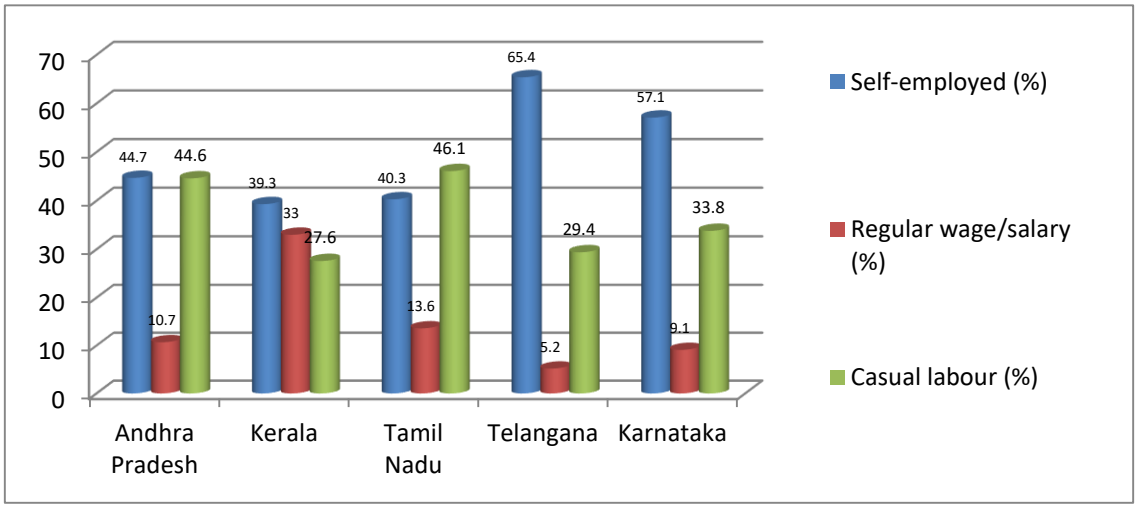
The Work Participation Rate (WPR) in Bihar shows moderate improvement at the state level between 2001 and 2011, alongside significant rural–urban and inter-district variations. Overall WPR increased marginally from 18.8% in 2001 to 19.1% in 2011, indicating slow employment expansion relative to population growth. Rural areas consistently recorded higher WPR than urban areas, reflecting the dominance of agriculture and informal sector activities. While rural WPR remained largely stable at 20.2%, urban WPR increased notably from 7.0% to 10.4%, suggesting gradual diversification of urban employment opportunities. At the district level, Banka, Araria, and PashchimChamparan recorded relatively high WPRs in both census years, whereas Kishanganj and PurbaChamparan remained at the lower end. Several districts, including Katihar, Bhagalpur, and Purnia, experienced a decline in total WPR, pointing towards employment stress and structural shifts away from traditional occupations. In summary, the analysis highlights that despite slight overall gains**,** employment growth in Bihar during 2001–2011 was uneven and sectoral constrained. The findings underline the necessity for district-specific employment strategies, with emphasis on rural non-farm employment, skill development, and urban job creation to achieve inclusive labour market outcomes.

Table :9

SL. No	Name of the State	Self-employed	Regular wage/salary	Casual labour
1	Andhra Pradesh	44.7	10.7	44.6
2	Kerala	39.3	33	27.6
3	Tamil Nadu	40.3	13.6	46.1
4	Telangana	65.4	5.2	29.4
5	Karnataka	57.1	9.1	33.8
6	Bihar	71.4	5.3	23.3
7	Chhattisgarh	74.8	5.8	19.5
8	Jharkhand	90.3	2.4	7.3

9	Madhya Pradesh	73.6	3.4	23
10	Odisha	78.4	5.8	15.8
11	Rajasthan	86.6	2.8	10.6
12	Uttarakhand	87.4	10.1	2.5
13	Uttar Pradesh	88.8	5	6.2
14	Assam	75.1	18.8	6.1

Graph:8



Sources: Annual Report- PLFS 2022-23:

In the Southern region, women's participation in rural entrepreneurship is predominantly self-employment driven, though notable inter-state variations exist. Telangana (65.4%) and Karnataka (57.1%) record relatively higher shares of self-employed women, indicating stronger engagement in own-account enterprises. Andhra Pradesh (44.7%) and Tamil Nadu (40.3%) exhibit a more balanced distribution between self-employment and casual labour, with Tamil Nadu showing the highest dependence on casual labour (46.1%). Kerala stands out with a comparatively higher proportion of women in regular wage/salary employment (33.0%)**,** reflecting better formal employment opportunities for rural women. The EAG States demonstrate a strong dominance of self-employment among rural women entrepreneurs. States such as Jharkhand (90.3%), Uttar Pradesh (88.8%), Uttarakhand (87.4%), and Rajasthan (86.6%) report very high levels of self-employment, underscoring the limited availability of formal wage employment in these regions. Regular wage/salary employment remains minimal across most EAG States, except Assam (18.8%) and Uttarakhand (10.1%). Casual labour participation is relatively lower in states like Jharkhand (7.3%) and Uttarakhand (2.5%), while Madhya Pradesh (23.0%) and Bihar (23.3%) show comparatively higher reliance on casual labour.

Overall, the analysis highlights a regional disparity in the nature of women's rural entrepreneurship**.** Southern States show a relatively diversified employment structure with greater access to regular wage employment, whereas EAG States are overwhelmingly characterized by self-employment, largely driven

by necessity rather than opportunity. This pattern reflects underlying differences in economic development, labour market conditions, and access to institutional support for women entrepreneurs.

Table: 10

Southern States								
Sl. No	State Name	Total	Micro	Small	Medium	Employment	Investment (Rs.In Crore)	Turnover (Rs In Crore)
1	Karnataka	2,88,510	2,83,507	4,756	247	21,74,825	9053.61	113609
2	Kerala	1,42,144	1,40,303	1,759	82	5,37,209	3289.73	41139.99
3	Puducherry	10,199	10,009	173	17	66,493	402.28	4770.79
4	Tamil Nadu	6,23,492	6,15,385	7,705	402	42,79,608	17206.32	191942.79
5	Telangana	2,31,685	2,28,450	3,056	179	21,30,624	8786.43	73600.24
Empowered Action States (EAGs)								
1	Chhattisgarh	53,914	52,811	1,059	44	2,88,175	1470.62	24502.95
2	Jharkhand	82,439	81,759	657	23	6,79,533	1509.84	17832.42
3	Madhya Pradesh	1,58,805	1,55,991	2,712	102	9,09,832	4172.37	58636.11
4	Odisha	1,06,656	1,05,041	1,556	59	8,52,236	3274.41	37897.04
5	Rajasthan	2,20,993	2,16,179	4,608	206	11,66,292	5788.93	111004.19
6	Uttarakhand	41,904	41,191	691	22	2,04,777	1176.21	15212.89
7	Uttar Pradesh	3,50,542	3,43,917	6,320	305	21,70,076	8853.72	153964.46
8	Bihar	1,61,754	1,59,833	1,852	69	10,82,265	3671.12	47862.88
9	Assam	1,08,744	1,07,827	883	34	5,80,707	1986.66	21899.28

Sources: Ministry of MSMEs: Women Entrepreneurs in MSMEs, Published by PIB Delhi on 05 FEB- 2024:

Women-owned MSMEs registered under the Udyam portal play a significant role in employment generation, investment, and turnover across Indian states, with clear regional disparities. Southern States, particularly Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Telangana, demonstrate a strong and diversified women-led MSME ecosystem, characterized by higher enterprise numbers, greater employment creation, and substantially larger investment and turnover volumes. These states also show relatively better progression beyond micro enterprises, indicating more supportive institutional and market environments.

In contrast, Empowered Action Group (EAG) States are dominated by micro enterprises, reflecting necessity-driven entrepreneurship among rural and semi-urban women. While states such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan report sizable numbers of women-owned MSMEs and notable employment generation, overall investment and turnover remain comparatively low, pointing to constraints in scale, finance, and market access. The findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions to support enterprise upscaling, credit access, skill development, and market linkages—especially in EAG States—to promote inclusive, regionally balanced, and women-led economic growth.

7. Conclusion

Despite persistent challenges such as the declining child sex ratio**,** low female literacy in several regions, and **s**ubdued female work participation rates**,** the steady increase in women's entrepreneurship in India represents a critical structural shift in the country's development trajectory. This trend indicates that women are increasingly engaging in economic activities through self-employment and enterprise creation, particularly in micro and small sectors, even when formal wage employment opportunities remain limited. The rise of women-led enterprises contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs**)** notably SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth**)** by enhancing women's economic autonomy, household decision-making power, and income security. Simultaneously, it supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by enabling participation from women in rural and economically lagging regions, including EAG States. In the context of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, women entrepreneurship emerges as a transformative pathway for inclusive and green growth. However, entrepreneurship alone cannot offset demographic and social deficits. Sustainable success will depend on simultaneous improvements in child sex ratio, girls' education, skill development, and women's labour force participation**.** If supported through targeted policies, institutional credit, digital inclusion, and market access, women-led entrepreneurship can convert demographic challenges into economic opportunities, thereby strengthening India's prospects of achieving both SDG targets and the vision of a developed India by 2047**.**

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