

Demographic Study of Gujjars of Delhi: I. Population Structure and Socio-cultural Profile

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ABSTRACT The importance and application of demographic studies is ever increasing. Keeping this in mind, a demographic study was conducted on Hindu Gujjars. No detailed demographic study has been conducted on Gujjars of Delhi so far. Population composition of Gujjars residing in Delhi was evaluated. The survey was conducted in five Gujjar predominated villages. Data was collected by interviewing ever-married women in the age group 15-49 years from a sample of 558 households. Sample Gujjars represents a young population which has recently experienced fertility decline. Sex ratio is high. All the females and nearly all males have ever been married by age of 29 years. There is no case of divorce or separation. Overall, among Gujjars though the literacy is high, the level of education attained is low. Younger Gujjars particularly the females show improvement in the level of education. Negligible proportions of females are employed. Many of them have combined their traditional occupation of pastoralism and marginal cultivation by working in private sectors, government offices and small businesses. Residence characteristics indicate semi-urbanized nature of settlement.

INTRODUCTION

Demography, the science of population, is defined as the scientific study of human population or more specifically, the study of the size, geographic distribution, age-sex structure and socio-economic composition of populations and the factors that affect changes in these dimensions, namely, fertility, mortality and migration (Siegel, 2002). The importance and application of demographic studies is ever growing. The ethnic diversity in India provides a unique opportunity to study demographic variations among the endogamous populations living in different geographical and ecological conditions. Therefore, in India demographic studies have been conducted on rural (Dandekar, 1959; Jain, 1985, Levine, et al, 1992; Dash and Misra, 2001), urban (Jolly, 1981; Saksena and Srivastava, 1984; Krishna and Pattnaik, 1997) as well as tribal (Malik and Hauspie, 1986; Prakash and Malik, 1990; Kar, 1993; Kshatriya et al., 1997; Chachra and Bhasin, 1998; Langstieh, 2001; Bhasin and Nag, 2002a; Bhasin, V. and Nag, 2002) populations by various anthropologists to view different aspects of demography.

An evaluation of population composition is an important aspect of demographic studies. It

helps to understand the basic structure, which is the outcome of various demographic processes and social factors. This covers the following basic personal, social and economic attributes of a population, viz. age, sex, ethnic group, religion, marital status, household composition, educational attainment, literacy, occupation and income. These attributes are important as these often influence socio-demographic behaviour of people, for example education is an important socio-economic characteristic as educational attainment often affects reproductive behaviour and health practices of the individuals. It is an essential pre-requisite of all-round development of individuals towards better quality of life. Furthermore, the better educated members of society are most likely to be the agents of change that will encourage the diffusion of an innovation such as fertility limitation (Mishra et al., 1999; Weeks, 2002). Marital status has a direct bearing on the computation of fertility measures and is thus of considerable importance.

The present paper is first in the series of research articles dealing with various aspects of Gujjars of Delhi namely population structure and socio-cultural profile, reproductive and mortality levels, fertility preferences, KAP of family planning, maternal and child health care practices, factors affecting fertility, mortality and use of birth control methods.

The present paper is an attempt to evaluate the population composition of Hindu Gujjars of Delhi. It aims at studying the age-sex

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composition of Gujjars besides socio-economic characteristics, namely; marital status, educational status, occupational status, economic status along with the variations in general characteristics of their residence.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The term Gujjar is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Gurjara'. Most of the Scholars refer to the word 'Gurjara' primarily to the 'Gurjaratra' or Gujarat. The origin of Gujjars is debatable. While Smith (1908) traces their origin to the white Huns who came as nomadic hordes to India around AD 465, Cunningham (1871) places them among the Scythian tribe who conquered Kabul around 100 BC and came to India and settled in Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat and established the Gujjar or Gurjara kingdom. Munshi (1944) considered Gujjars of Indian origin and according to him the people of Rajputana, Malwa, and modern Gujarat, the whole region called Gurjaradesa, were one homogeneous people, whose Gurjara empire started disintegrating following disintegration of Chalukya Empire by the end of the thirteenth century. Gujjars of north-western India have ethnic affinities with the Rajputs, Jats, Ahirs, and belong to one ethnic stock (Bingley, 1978; Ibbetson, 1983). Gujjars were once a nomadic pastoral community, but a majority of them, including Gujjars of Delhi, today are living sedentary lives. Their primary occupation is cattle rearing and marginal farming. Gujjars are widely distributed over Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. They were originally Hindus, however, Muslim Gujjars are found in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh (Verma, 1954; Singh, 1998).

The present demographic study was conducted among Hindu Gujjars living in Delhi, the National Capital of India. They are mostly Hindus. However, there are few Muslim Gujjar families as well. Gujjars of Delhi do not come under Scheduled tribe category. Gujjars converse in 'Gujjari' (an Indo-Aryan language) at home; with others they speak Hindi and use the Devanagari Script in writing. Most of them are vegetarian. They consume a lot of milk and milk products. Wheat forms their staple cereal diet.

Gujjars follow monogamy, community endogamy and clan exogamy. They practice both child marriage followed by 'Gauna' as well as adult marriage. Junior and senior levirate and junior sororate marriages are recognized. Clan names are generally used as surnames. Gujjar women practice 'Pardah' system. Gujjar villages in Delhi are quite urbanized. Many of them still practice animal husbandry and agriculture, particularly, those who live in the villages situated on the outskirts. Though, most of them have combined it with working in other sectors such as government jobs or small business.

The data for the present study was collected by interviewing ever-married Gujjar women aged 15-49 years from a sample of 558 households, comprising of 3545 individuals. Pilot study was followed by the field work. Also, secondary data was collected from various sources. Five Gujjar predominated villages (selected by random sampling), were visited during different months of the year 2002. They were Fatehpur Beri, Dera, Molarband, Madanpur Khadar and Asola villages. An attempt was made to contact the maximum number of households living therein covering the entire village. Not more than one married woman in the age group 15-49 years was selected from each household. In case of more than one ever-married woman in the reproductive age per household, the eldest woman was selected. Keeping in view the specific objectives, a detailed interview schedule was framed on the basis of comprehensive study of the concerned literatures. It included both closed and open-ended questions. The Household Schedule consisted questions on household identification, residence characteristics, economic status, queries related to each household member i.e. age, sex, marital status, education, occupation and relationship to the head of the household. Cross-questions were also included so as to elicit the required information accurately. To supplement the information collected through interviews, indirect and informal discussions were also carried out with the respondent and other members of the family. The information obtained from the each respondent was also spot-checked to verify the accuracy so as to minimize the response errors. The data collected was statistically treated, using descriptive statistics.

In some cases, age could not be appropriately assessed due to misstatement of age especially by older women who tend to understate their real

age. Information about household income was recorded after taking the respondents into confidence, still in some cases there is a possibility of understatement due to misreporting on the part of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age-sex Distribution of Gujjars: Age and gender are the important factors for the study of population structure, on the basis of which, other type of demographic data, such as population count, educational level, etc., are cross-classified and analyzed. Age and sex distribution of Gujjars suggests that more than one third of the population is below 15 years of age and a marginal proportion is 60 years and above (Table 1, Figure 1). The age distribution of Gujjars is typical of a population that has recently experienced a

fertility decline. The age-sex pyramid also indicates higher old age mortality and lower life expectancy. Broad base population pyramid for Gujjars, reflects a 'Young' (defined as 35% or more of population being under 15 years) population (Weeks, 2002). Dependency ratio among Gujjars is approximately 59 dependents for every 100 working individuals. The sex ratio in Gujjars (884.64) is higher than the all Delhi population (821: Census of Delhi-provisional, 2001), but lower than all-India population (933: Census of India-provisional, 2001). The sex ratios by age do not exhibit any particular trend (Table 1).

Marital Status: A look at the marital status of Gujjars suggests that by age of 29 years, all the females and nearly all males have ever been married (Table 2A and 2B). Overall, Gujjar women marry at younger ages than Gujjar men, which is a common practice in Indian society.

Table 1: Distribution of Gujjars, by age and sex

Age groups (in years)	Males		Females		Total		Age specific sex ratio
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
0- 4	230	12.23	195	11.72	425	11.99	847.83
5- 9	269	14.30	201	12.08	470	13.26	747.21
10-14	224	11.91	178	10.70	402	11.34	794.64
15-19	200	10.63	200	12.02	400	11.28	1000.00
20-24	219	11.64	229	13.76	448	12.64	1045.66
25-29	188	9.99	185	11.12	373	10.52	984.04
30-34	173	9.20	130	7.81	303	8.55	751.45
35-39	104	5.53	94	5.65	198	5.59	903.85
40-44	93	4.94	85	5.11	178	5.02	913.98
45-49	77	4.09	106	6.37	183	5.16	1376.62
50-54	71	3.77	44	2.64	115	3.24	619.72
55-59	25	1.33	8	0.48	33	0.93	320.00
60-64	4	0.21	4	0.24	8	0.23	1000.00
65+	4	0.21	5	0.30	9	0.25	1250.00
Total	1881	100.00	1664	100.00	3545	100.00	884.64

Table 2A: Percent distribution of males (aged 15 years and above), by marital status and age

Age groups (in years)	Never married	Currently married	Widowed	Total	
				Percent	Number
15-19	96.5	3.5	-	100.0	200
20-24	42.5	57.5	-	100.0	219
25-29	2.7	97.3	-	100.0	188
30-34	-	100	-	100.0	173
35-39	-	100	-	100.0	104
40-44	-	98.9	1.1	100.0	93
45-49	-	98.7	1.3	100.0	77
50-54	-	98.6	1.4	100.0	71
55-59	-	100	-	100.0	25
60+	-	87.5	12.5	100.0	8
Total	25.1	74.6	0.3	100.0	1158

Note: There is no case of divorce or separation

Table 2B: Percent distribution of females (aged 15 years and above), by marital status and age

Age groups (in years)	Never married	Currently married	Widowed	Total	
				Percent	Number
15-19	75.5	24.0	0.5	100.0	200
20-24	10.9	89.1	-	100.0	229
25-29	-	98.4	1.6	100.0	185
30-34	-	97.7	2.3	100.0	130
35-39	-	97.9	2.1	100.0	94
40-44	-	94.1	5.9	100.0	85
45-49	-	89.6	10.4	100.0	106
50-54	-	68.2	31.8	100.0	44
55-59	-	50.0	50.0	100.0	8
60+	-	44.4	55.6	100.0	9
Total	16.1	79.5	4.4	100.0	1090

Note: There is no case of divorce or separation

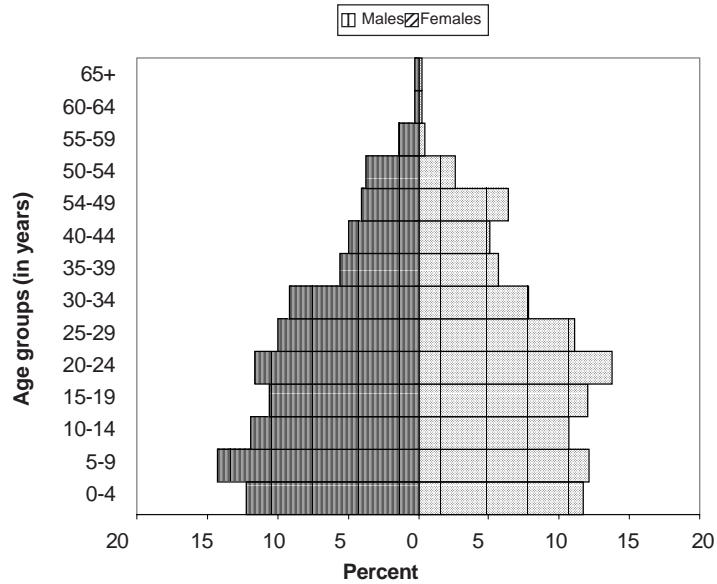


Fig. 1. Population pyramid of Gujjars of Delhi

About three-fourth of males and higher proportion of females are currently married. In the sample population there are no divorced or separated individuals indicating higher level of marital accord among Gujjars. The impact of widowhood is limited until older ages. Gujjars males have lower life expectancy than females as indicated by the proportions of widows who are 55+. Remarriage is nil among Gujjars. Every fourth male and every sixth female is never

married reflecting a lower marriage rates for males. Among persons aged 15-19 years, ever married females are substantially higher.

Educational Attainment: Education is an essential pre-requisite of all-round development of individuals towards better quality of life. Among Gujjars though the literacy rate is high, the level of education attained is low. The literacy rate (total) among Gujjars is 79.37 percent, while it is 86.83 percent for males and 71.19 percent

Table 3A: Percent distribution of males (aged 7 years and above), by level of education and age

Age groups (in years)	Illiterate	Literate							Total	
		<Primary	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Higher sec.	Graduation	Post graduation and above	Percent	Number
7- 9	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	153
10-14	0.4	53.1	45.5	0.9	-	-	-	-	100.0	224
15-19	-	-	27.6	45.2	26.6	0.5	-	-	100.0	199
20-24	0.5	0.5	6.8	23.7	46.6	18.7	2.7	0.5	100.0	219
25-29	2.7	1.1	8.5	30.3	34.0	16.5	6.4	0.5	100.0	188
30-34	8.7	0.6	17.9	27.7	21.4	15.0	8.1	0.6	100.0	173
35-39	12.5	1.9	12.5	12.5	28.8	16.3	13.5	1.9	100.0	104
40-44	41.9	-	9.7	9.7	17.2	10.8	9.7	1.1	100.0	93
45-49	58.4	2.6	9.1	9.1	10.4	2.6	5.2	2.6	100.0	77
50-54	77.5	1.4	11.3	5.6	2.8	1.4	-	-	100.0	71
55-59	88.0	-	4.0	8.0	-	-	-	-	100.0	25
60+	75.0	-	25.0	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	8
Total	12.8	18.6	17.1	18.6	20.3	8.4	3.8	0.6	100.0	1534

for females. Generally, a higher percentage of males than females have completed each level of education. This reflects that in India, in spite of positive policy initiatives gender gap in education still prevails. Major reasons for this are probably early marriage of women and domestic work load.

The percentage of higher educated individuals is less among Gujjars. The extent of literacy and educational level of the Gujjar population, aged 7 years and above, by age and sex, shows that the proportion of illiterate males is almost same while it is slightly higher for females (males, 12.8 percent and females, 28.8: Table 3A and Table 3B), as compared to 2001 provisional Census rates (males, 12.6 percent and females, 25.0 percent: Census, 2001). There has been a progress in the level of literacy over time (Figure 2), as indicated by marked improvement in the proportion of literates in younger age groups, particularly females.

Occupational Status: The occupational structure of a community is an index of its economic profile. It is one of the sensitive indicators of an individual's status. Livelihood among Gujjars, as in most of the human societies, is observed to be primarily a male's responsibility. Less than

one-third of the Gujjar males are engaged in farming (Table 4). Among non-agricultural activities, private jobs and business constitute the major categories. One-tenth are in government jobs while only a small proportion is self-employed. On the whole, two-fifth of the males are economically active while rests are non-workers. Female employment among Gujjars is uncommon (Table 4). Only negligible proportion of Gujjar females is working (0.2 percent).

Almost all the females are housewives (engaged in household activities that include expanded domestic work, such as preparation of cow dung cakes, etc). This may be due to a number of socio-psychological factors prevailing in the community like, early marriage, work load, lower women's status, etc. The non-worker categories among the Gujjar population include housewives, students, dependents, retired and unemployed in varying frequencies.

Economic Status: Distribution of households, by income, is one of the bases of socio-economic status. On the basis of annual income, annual per capita income of the households was calculated. In case of agriculturalist, an estimate of yearly income from farming was provided by them (because harvesting season is twice or

Table 3B: Percent distribution of females (7 years and above), by level of education and age

Age groups (in years)	Illiterate	Literate							Total	
		<Primary	Primary school	Middle school	High school	Higher sec.	Graduation	Post graduation and above	Percent	Number
7- 9	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	130
10-14	0.6	54.5	42.7	2.2	-	-	-	-	100.0	178
15-19	1.5	1.5	19	50	25.5	2.5	-	-	100.0	200
20-24	7.9	2.2	21.0	28.8	25.8	12.2	1.7	0.4	100.0	229
25-29	26.9	4.3	28.0	21.0	11.3	5.4	2.7	0.5	100.0	186
30-34	38.5	4.6	30.0	16.9	3.1	5.4	1.5	-	100.0	130
35-39	59.6	1.1	16.0	12.8	5.3	2.1	2.1	1.1	100.0	94
40-44	75.3	4.7	10.6	3.5	2.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	100.0	85
45-49	94.3	2.8	1.9	-	0.9	-	-	-	100.0	106
50-54	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	44
55-59	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	8
60+	100.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100.0	9
Total	28.8	18.4	19.9	17.6	10.2	3.8	1.0	0.3	100.0	1399

Table 4: Percent distribution of economically active males and females aged 15-59 years, by occupational categories

Gender	Sample size	Occupational categories/ activities					Total	
		Farming	Govt. jobs	Private jobs	Business	Self employed	Percent	Number
Males	1881	30.5	10.5	29.0	26.7	3.2	100.0	741
Females	1664	-	75.0	25.0	-	-	100.0	4

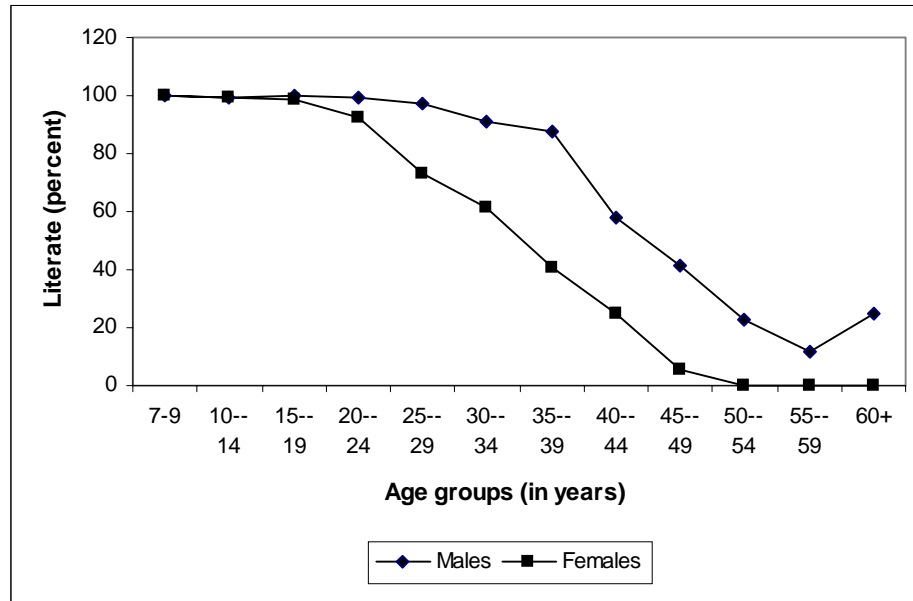


Fig. 2. Percentage literate, by age and gender

Table 5: Percent distribution of households, by annual per capita income

Annual per capita income (in Rs.)	Households	
	Number	Percent
Up to 10,000	230	41.2
10,001-15,000	198	35.5
15,001-20,000	65	11.6
20,001-25,000	42	7.5
Above 25,000	23	4.1
Total	558	100.0

thrice a year depending upon the crop sown). However, in case of other sectors, they provided an account of their monthly income. An estimate was computed to the closest annual figure. The various annual per capita income groups, on which the Gujjar households are divided suggests that, two-fifth of the households have annual per capita income up to Rs. 10000 (Table 5). Only, small proportions of the households have annual per capita income higher than Rs. 25000.

Over two-third of the households do not own any agricultural land (Table 6A). About two-third own livestock. Despite being resident of Delhi, they have not left their traditional occupation of pastoralism and marginal

cultivation. However, they have combined them with working in private sectors, government offices and small businesses. The possession of consumer durable goods is in varying proportions (Table 6B). All these indicate that most of them avail the facilities available and that these Gujjar villages in Delhi are semi-urbanized.

Residence Characteristics: The residence characteristics of the population reflect its settlement nature. The Gujjar villages are quite urbanized and this is reflected by their settlement patterns. Almost cent percent of the households have electricity (Table 7). Large majority of the households (three-fourth) have piped drinking water in their residence, another one-fifth get it from hand pump while remaining from public tap. Regarding sanitation facilities, half of the households have a flush toilet, another one-third use pit latrine while the remaining have no

Table 6A: Percent distribution of households owing agricultural land and cattle

Asset	Percent
Own agricultural land	31.5
Owing cattle	64.5

Table 6B: Percent distribution of households owing selected consumer durable goods

Asset	Percent
<i>Consumer Durable Goods</i>	
Radio	61.8
T.V.	74.4
Refrigerator	43.2
Bicycle	52.3
Two-wheeler	34.6
Car	1.8
Telephone	21.0
Water pump	7.5
Tractor	1.3
Number of households:	558

facility. More than half of the households use liquid petroleum gas for cooking (Table 7).

Two-fifth still use dried dung cakes as main fuel. Majority of the household live in 'pucca' houses while all the remaining live in 'semi-pucca' houses. Over one-fourth of the households have five members while another one-fifth have six members (Table 8). The mean household size is 6.36 persons. All the above characteristics reflect semi-urbanized nature of these households.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that the sampled Gujjar population is a young population. Males outnumber females

Table 7: Percent distribution of households, by residence characteristics

Residence characteristics	Percent
<i>Electricity</i>	
Yes	99.64
No	0.35
<i>Source of Drinking Water</i>	
Piped water in residence	74.2
Hand pump	19.7
Public tap	6.1
<i>Sanitation Facility</i>	
Flush	49.8
Pit latrine	33.7
No facility	16.5
<i>Main Fuel used for Cooking</i>	
LPG	54.8
Dung cakes	40.5
Kerosene	4.7
<i>Type of House</i>	
Pucca	70.1
Semi-pucca	29.9
Total	Percent Number
	100.0 558

Table 8: Percent distribution of households, by size

Household size	Households	
	Number	Percent
3	5	0.9
4	49	8.8
5	153	27.4
6	121	21.7
7	97	17.4
8	75	13.4
9	28	5.0
10	20	3.6
11+	10	1.8
Total	558	100.0

in most of the age groups and the sex ratio of Gujjars is higher as compared to all Delhi population. The age distribution is typical of populations that have recently experienced a fertility decline. Younger Gujjars, particularly the females, show improvement in the level of education. Generally, Gujjar women marry young and are not employed. Gujjar residences are semi-urbanized in nature. However, in spite of adoption of modern technologies and availing modern facilities, they still have conservative thoughts, lower female status and social actions such as 'Pardah' system. Thus, an effective evaluation of present demographic profile is a step in developing an educated population with appropriate demographic behaviour.

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