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# GENDER DIFFERENTIALS IN AGING IN INDIA AND ANDHRA PRADESH: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO RURAL CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

*Increasing life span of people world over lead to significant demographic shifts in societies and has drawn scholarly attention to the study of population aging in terms of the influence of socio-economic, historical and environmental factors on the processes of individual aging. This increased interest has led to the development of a large body of research in social gerontology. This increase in the percentage of older people in the population has been accepted as a demographic reality in India. The curve of life expectancy of older people has also started looking more similar to that of Western countries. India has entered the third stage of demographic transition in the 1970s with a declining birth rate. Demographically, India is the second largest country in the world with the largest number of persons aged 60 years and above - 75 million in 2004. The process of ageing has consequences to social relationships and other variables. The impact may vary between states and regions. Also gender is found to be an important variable in determining the consequences of aging to the individual as well as to social relationships. In this paper an attempt is made to highlight the gender differentials in ageing phenomenon in terms of sex ratio, marital status, residence, education, living arrangements, and dependency ratio and so on. The Census data including Census 2001 are used to examine the gender differentials in terms of the above mentioned variables.*

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## **Introduction**

Increase over life span of people in world lead to significant demographic shifts in societies and has drawn scholarly attention to the impact of population aging on social and economic dimensions of the society. Also, gender is found to be an important variable in determining the consequences of aging to the individual as well as to social relationships.

## **Outline of the paper**

In this paper an attempt is made to highlight the gender differentials in ageing phenomenon in terms of rural urban differences, growth rate, sex ratio, dependency ratio, work participation, marital status, education and living arrangements. The Census data including Census 2001 are used to examine the gender differentials in terms of the above mentioned variables. The information relating to both India and Andhra Pradesh is presented.

## **Profile of the Aging Population in India and Andhra Pradesh**

### ***Rural urban differences and growth rate***

India a vast country is geographically diverse and culturally heterogeneous. At the global level, it accounts for 16.9 percent of the world population. Indian older population is predominantly rural and women slightly outnumber men in the total population. As per 2001 Census, 76.6 million people in the country aged over 60 years constitute 7.4 percent of the total population, and it is expected to go up to 12.3 percent by 2025. Of these, about 75 percent of the elderly reside in rural areas. Over the last two decades, the rural share of the older people has been steadily increasing (Rajan et al., 1999 and Rajan, 2003). About 5.7 million elderly who account for 7.7 percent of the total population are living in rural areas. The sex composition of rural elderly is 49.4 percent and 50.6 percent for men and women respectively.

**Table 1**

Population of the elderly (60+ years) and their proportion to total population by sex and residence: India and Andhra Pradesh for 1991 & 2001

	Percentage to total population					
	2001			1991		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>						
Total	7.6	7.2	8.0	6.8	6.6	6.9
Rural	8.1	7.7	8.6	7.3	7.3	7.4
<b>India</b>						
Total	7.4	7.1	7.8	6.8	6.7	6.8
Rural	7.7	7.4	8.1	7.1	7.2	7.0

Source: Census of India, 2001. (2004). Report and Tables on Age: Series 1, Delhi, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, pp.254-60.

Coming to Andhra Pradesh, the state with its total population of 76 million occupies fifth place in terms of population in the country. Of this total population, 57 lakh are elderly (60+ years) constituting 7.6 percent of the total population. The number of rural elderly comprise of 45 lakhs (8.1 percent), which is slightly higher as compared to 7.3 per cent in 1991. The percentage of men and women among the rural elderly is 47.8 and 52.2 respectively. It can be seen that both at the state and country levels the percentage of women elderly is slightly higher than that of men elderly and the proportion of the elderly has also shown an increase over 1991 population. The growth has also been more among women as compared to men (See Table 1).

Table 2 shows that there has been a steady increase in the growth of elderly population in India over the years from only 5 per cent in 1901 to almost 7.4 in 2001. The decadal growth rate of the number of older persons has also been consistently raising and the raise was sharper in 2001 at 40 per cent.

**Table 2**

Population of persons of 60 years and above and decadal increase in their growth, India, 1951-2001

Year	No. of persons 60+	Percentage to total population	Decadal increase in population of 60+	
			Number	Decade rate of Growth (%)
1951	20,190	5.66	---	---
1961	24,712	5.63	4,522	22.40
1971	32,700	5.97	7,988	32.32
1981	43,172	6.49	10,472	32.02
1991	54,685	6.54	11,153	26.67
2001	76,622	7.40	21,937	40.1

Source: Rajan, S.I, and Sharma, P.S., India's Elderly: Burden or Challenge, Sage Publications, 1999 (The Census 2001 data were added).

### ***Sex ratio***

Sex ratio (number of women per 1000 men) reflects the balance of males and females in the population. In Indian context, in the older age brackets (60+ years), the women are more in number as compared to men. However, the sex ratio for the elderly (60+ years) population in the country was found to be unfavorable for women during the last three decades i.e. from 1971 (938) to 1991 (904), though it showed an increase (1029) during the census period 2001. At the state level, the sex ratio, which was favorable at 1020 during

the census 1961, came down to 990 for 1971 and 1981 censuses and showed an increase from 1991 onwards (Table 3). A closer look at the information in Table 4 by specific age groups reveals that women in general outnumbered men in the advanced age categories of 70+ years especially at the state level over the census periods.

**Table 3**

Sex ratio of elderly population (60+ years) and general population, India, Andhra Pradesh, 1961-2001

Year	All ages (General Population)	Aged 60+	Aged 60+ (in years)		
			60-64	65-69	70 & above
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>					
1961	—	1020	1000	950	1090
1971	977	990	980	990	1010
1981	975	990	930	1010	1040
1991	973	1050	1000	1010	1060
2001	970	1099	1083	1206	1051
<b>India</b>					
1961	941	1000	969	962	1064
1971	930	938	921	922	970
1981	934	956	931	978	970
1991	927	904	904	953	930
2001	933	1029	1025	1091	992

**Source:** Sharma and Xenos, "Aging India: Demographic Background and Analysis based on Census Materials". Occasional paper No.2 of 1992, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi, 1992 (1991 & 2001 Census data added).

### ***Dependency ratios and Index of Aging***

The dependency ratio tells us about the magnitude of burden on the economically productive group. It consists of two components i.e. young and old dependency ratios. Thus, the number of persons in the age group (15–59 years), who are considered economically active, in relation to the rest of the two age groups that is, 0–14 years and 60+ years will provide us with an idea about the extent of dependency on the economically productive age group.

The ageing process is influenced by the fertility and mortality rates and in India there has been a substantial reduction in mortality as compared to fertility since 1961. For instance, the crude birth rate declined from 41.7 in 1961 to 23.7 in 2001. However, during the same period the crude death rate fell from 22.8 to 8.4 (Table 4).

**Table 4**

The Crude Birth Rate (CBR), Crude Death Rate (CDR) and expectation of life at age 60.

Census year	CBR	CDR	Expectation of life at 60	
			Male	Female
1961	41.7	22.8	11.8	13.0
1971	41.2	19.0	13.6	13.8
1981	33.9	12.5	13.8	14.7
1991	29.7	10.7	14.5	15.5
2001	23.7	8.4	15.2	16.4

**Source:** Channa H.B. and P.P.Talwar "Aging in India: Its Socio-Economic and Health implications", Asia-pacific population Journal, Vol.2, No.3, September 1987, p.24.

Thus there was a faster decline in fertility as compared to mortality rate as it has already reached a low level. This transition intensifies

the ageing process broadening the age pyramid at the top (60+ years) and narrowing the age structure at the base i.e 14 years and below (Rajan, 2003). These changes have significant influence on the social relationships within a community in terms of intensifying the dependency levels of the aged.

In India, the elderly dependency ratio has increased from 9.8 in 1951 to 13.4 in 2001 with the combined total dependency ratio of 72.9. On the other hand, the dependency ratio for young has showed a decreasing trend over the period, which is due to decline in the fertility. The same trend is observed in the case of Andhra Pradesh (Table 5).

**Table 5**

Dependency Ratios and Indices of Aging, India 1951-2001 & Andhra Pradesh 1991-2001

Year	Dependency ratio		Total	Index of Aging
	Young	Old		
<b>India</b>				
1991	67.0	11.8	78.7	18.1
2001	59.5	13.4	72.9	20.8
<b>AP</b>				
1991	61.8	11.2	73.1	18.1
2001	50.5	12.9	63.4	23.7

**Source:** Sharma S.P. and Xenos "Aging in India: Demographic Background and Analyses based on Census Nationals", occasional paper No.2 of 1992, Office the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi, 1992 and, Census 2001 (2004).

Another indicator of the aging process is the *index of ageing*. It is defined as the ratio of the 60+ years age group to children in ages 0–14. On the basis of this index, it can be seen from Table 5 that the aging process registered a sharp increase between 1991 and

2001. In Andhra Pradesh, it was 18.1 in 1991, which rose to 23.7 in 2001.

Further, a look at the rural urban differences in the dependency ratios for young and old indicate that for both India and Andhra Pradesh they are high in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The differences as compared to the total are also found to be large. Similarly, at the state level the dependency ratio in the case of older persons from the rural has increased from 13.1 in 1991 to 13.8 in 2001. On the whole, the old age dependency ratios increased from 1991 to 2001 Census, and for young they have decreased (Table 6). These trends also indicate that the elderly dependency ratio is more in rural areas and that it is increasing. However, there will be considerable regional variations in these patterns as different regions are at different paces of demographic transition.

	1991	2001
India	18.1	23.7
Andhra Pradesh	18.1	23.7
Rural	13.1	13.8
Urban	13.1	13.8
Total	13.1	13.8

**Table 6**

Young, Old and Total dependency ratios by residence, India and Andhra Pradesh, 1991-2001

India/state	Dependency Ratio*					
	2001			1991		
	Young	Old	Total	Young	Old	Total
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>						
Total	53.2	12.6	65.8	63.0	11.9	74.9
Rural	55.6	13.8	69.4	64.6	13.1	77.7
Urban	47.2	9.7	56.9	58.8	8.9	67.7
<b>India</b>						
Total	62.1	13.1	75.2	67.2	12.2	79.4
Rural	67.8	14.1	81.9	71.0	13.2	84.1
Urban	49.1	10.7	59.9	57.3	9.7	67.0

\*Dependency ratios are calculated as:

Young : Number of persons in ages 0-14 per 100 persons in age 15-59.

Old : Number of persons in ages 60 and above per 100 persons in age 15-59.

Total : Dependency ratio of young + dependency ratio of old.

Source: Census of India, 2001 (2004). Report and Tables on Age: Series 1, Delhi, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, pp.50-52.

### **Education**

As compared to the general population, the elderly are much less literate and educated. According to the Census 2001, 65.2 per cent of the population is literate in the country. The overall literacy rates for men and women in the country works out to be 75 per cent and 54 per cent respectively, with a gap of 21 percentage points between the sexes. Now, for the elderly population, the total lit-

eracy rate is 36.3 per cent of which 53 per cent are men and 20 per cent are women. Coming to the rural elderly, the total literacy rate is only 29 per cent with 45.5 per cent literacy rate for men and 13 per cent for women, with a difference of 32 percentage points between the sexes.

For Andhra Pradesh, the literacy levels for 2001 Census both for all ages, and the elderly are much lower compared to that of literacy rates at the national level. The total literacy rates for men and women at the Andhra Pradesh state level are 71 and 51 per cent respectively, which are lower than the national rates. Of the total elderly population in the state, 29 per cent are literate and for the rural elderly the literacy rate is much lower i.e., 23 per cent. Among the rural elderly, only 11 per cent of the women are literate as against the 36 per cent of men elderly. Thus, the literacy rates of the rural elderly are quite lower as compared to state and national levels and women are much less literate (Table 7).

	Male	Female	Total
State	71	51	61
National	65	54	59.5
AP Total	29	13	21
AP Rural	45.5	11	28.25

**Table 7**  
Percentage distribution of the elderly (60+ years) by their educational level and residence, India and Andhra Pradesh (2001)

	Illiterate			Literate		
	Persons	M	W	Persons	M	W
<b>India</b>						
All ages	34.8	24.3	46.0	65.2	75.7	54.0
Percent to total elderly	63.7	47.2	79.7	36.3	52.8	20.3
Percent to rural elderly	71.0	54.5	87.0	29.0	45.5	13.0
<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>						
All ages	38.8	29.2	48.8	61.1	70.8	51.2
Percent to total elderly	71.0	56.8	83.9	29.0	43.2	16.1
Percent to rural elderly	76.7	63.6	88.8	23.3	36.4	11.2

**Source:** Census of India 2001, Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, New Delhi, 2004.

**Note:** Age not stated data excluded.

### *Work participation*

With old age, there is diminished participation in productive and economically gainful work. In India with its predominantly agrarian economy, a majority of the elderly is dependent on agricultural or farm work to make a living. Therefore, a total or partial withdrawal of the elderly from occupation not only results in loss of income for them but also the flow of money suddenly reverts from children to parents when parents grow old. One reason is that a majority of the elderly in rural context doesn't have

assets and therefore become dependent on their adult children for their living. The situation of the elderly in the unorganized sector (agrarian workers, daily wage workers etc.) is even worse as they have practically nothing to fall back upon. Since more women are assetless as compared to men, and as more women are found in advanced age groups (70+), the economic dependency is found to be more among women as compared to men. As per NSSO 52<sup>nd</sup> round (Chakraborti, 2004) as many as 70 per cent of the aged depend on others for their day-to-day maintenance. The situation is far worse for elderly women: about 85 to 87 per cent of the elderly women are dependent on others! Now, a look at Table 8 reveals the changing trends in the sex-wise participation rates among the elderly in India and Andhra Pradesh.

**Table 8**

Sex-wise work participation rates among the elderly (60+) in India and Andhra Pradesh, 1971 –2001

	1971		1981		1991		2001	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
India	73.78	10.5	65.08	14.04	60.53	16.14	60.25	20.92
Andhra Pradesh (Total)	73.24	18.91	68.45	24.71	62.90	24.23	58.98	23.99
Andhra Pradesh (Rural)	75.90	20.40	71.81	28.05	67.47	28.35	62.57	27.88

**Source:** Rajan, S.I.; Mishra, U.S. and Sarma, P.S., "India's Elderly: Burden or challenge", New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999, p.107 (2001 Census results were added)

While the work participation rates of older men at the national level have steadily decreased over the census periods i.e. from 73.7 per

cent in 1971 to 60.2 percent in 2001, for older women it increased from 10.5 per cent in 1971 to 21 percent in 2001. However, on the whole the participation rates of men appear to be much higher than that of women. However, a majority of the women confine themselves to the domestic chores and caretaker roles, which may not figure in the work participation rates hence the lower rates. Even at the state level, the trend is almost the same, though the total female work participation rate in 2001 is slightly lower as compared to the earlier Census periods 1981 and 1991. More importantly, the work participation rates of rural elderly are higher as compared to the rates of the urban elderly at the state level. This means that more elderly in rural areas are working even during old age (See Table 8).

### ***Marital Status***

The marital status of the elderly is another important demographic characteristic, which influences the social relationships and social status of the elderly men and women. Table 9 shows the differences between elderly men and women in terms of marital status. As can be seen from the Table, there are more men in the married as well as in the never married categories. For example, married men are 69 percent in 1961, which increased to 82 per cent in 2001. On the other hand, women are more in the widowed category and there has been a declining trend over the census periods from 75.4 per cent in 1961 to 50.7 percent in 2001. The differentials between the married and widowed categories of men and women elderly is mainly because of the conventional practice of men marrying women younger to them and the longevity of women over men. Therefore, with the projected life expectancy of females reaching 69 as against 67 for males by 2016, the female elderly population will grow at a faster pace particularly in the 70+ age groups (Reddy & Usha Rani, 2000). As a result, the widowed female age cohort is expected to expand at a faster rate in both rural

and urban areas. Moreover, the higher percentage of women in the

**Table 9**  
Percentage distribution of population aged 60 years and above by marital status and sex, India 1961-1991

Marital Status	1961		1971		1981		1991		2001	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Never Married	2.86	0.41	2.43	0.37	1.95	0.36	1.7	1.3	2.55	1.50
Married	69.06	23.72	74.67	30.04	78.19	34.89	77.1	35.9	82.14	47.34
Widowed	27.47	75.36	22.37	69.17	19.40	64.33	20.1	61.2	14.98	50.66
Divorced & Seperated	0.57	0.45	0.46	0.37	0.39	0.40	0.3	0.4	0.33	0.49
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

**Source:** Sharma and Xenos, "Aging in India: Demographic Background and analysis based on Census materials", Occasional paper No.2 of 1992, office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi, 1992. Updated with data from Census 2001

widowed category has significant implications to women elderly both socially and economically (Table 9).

Next, Table 10 gives details about the marital status of the rural elderly in Andhra Pradesh for 2001. While 86 per cent older men are in the married category, 57 per cent of the rural women (60+) are in the widowed category as against 12 per cent of the older men in the same category. This shows that there is more number of elderly widows in the rural context.

**Table 10**

Percentage distribution of the rural elderly (60+ years) by marital status and sex, A.P. 2001

Marital Status	Men	Women	Total
Never married	1.01	.81	.9
Married	86.04	41.6	62.8
Widowed	12.53	57.06	35.8
Divorced & Separated	0.42	0.53	.5

**Source:** Census of India, 2001, Registrar General and Census Commissioner India, New Delhi, 2004.

### ***Living arrangements***

Living arrangements determine the quality of life of elderly in many ways. Families in India are mostly patrilineal and a number of elderly live either in extended or joint households. Several factors such as sex, socio-economic status, marital status and social traditions influence living arrangements of older people. There is also a close link between living arrangements and family support. Traditionally in Indian context, older people stayed with the family and preferably with the married sons. However, these traditional family arrangements are gradually eroding even in rural areas. With increasing migration of the youth in the family as a result of urbaniza-

tion, families are becoming nuclear and smaller. Yet many of the older people are still cared for in the families.

Table 11 presents details about the different kinds of living arrangements of the rural elderly in India for 1991.

**Table 11**

Living Arrangements of Older Persons: Percentage distribution of older persons by sex, age and living arrangements (Rural) - All India, 1991\*

Age	Living Arrangement (Code)						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Male</b>							
60-64	0.49	10.87	49.76	34.45	1.63	2.53	0.28
65-69	0.87	11.67	45.74	35.81	2.12	3.52	0.26
70+	0.67	13.14	37.87	41.06	2.83	3.96	0.48
80 & above	0.65	11.78	45.06	36.82	2.13	3.24	0.33
<b>Female</b>							
60-64	1.25	0.78	33.61	59.49	1.34	3.33	0.22
65-69	0.53	0.66	25.11	66.44	2.18	5.01	0.09
70+	0.22	0.59	13.31	74.43	5.17	6.13	0.15
80 & above	0.74	0.69	25.06	65.97	2.74	4.65	0.16
<b>All elderly</b>							
60-64	0.79	6.82	43.27	44.50	1.51	2.85	0.25
65-69	0.74	7.24	37.44	48.13	2.14	4.12	0.19
70+	0.49	8.05	27.91	54.59	3.78	4.84	0.35
80 & above	0.68	7.31	37.00	48.57	2.37	3.81	0.25

**Note:** Living Arrangement (Code): Living alone as an inmate of home for aged persons – 0, living alone but not as an inmate of home for aged persons – 1, living with spouse – 2, living with own children – 3, living with grand children – 4, living with other relations – 5, living with non relations – 6.

\* The data pertaining to living arrangements of elderly in 2001 census was not available.

**Source:** Sarvekshana, Vol.XV, No.2, Issue No.49, Oct.-Dec. 1991, p.158.

It can be seen that living with spouse, and living with own children have been found to be the most predominant forms of living arrangements for the elderly followed by living with other relations. The percentage of institutionalized elderly is very negligible. Of the elderly living with their children, a higher percentage of them belonging to 70+ years reported living with their children as compared to the other categories of older persons. Similarly, in the 80 yrs and above age groups, more women (65.9 per cent) were found to be residing with their own children as compared to men (37 per cent). Further, more women reported living with children compared to men who reported living with spouse. Even in the 80 yrs and above category, around 45 per cent of the male elderly reported living with spouse as compared to only 25 per cent of women. This indicates that less percentage of women are staying with their spouses at an advanced age due to widowhood. In terms of living alone, with the increasing age more elderly reported living alone. For example, around 12 per cent elderly men of 80 years and above were living alone in rural areas as compared to 0.7 per cent of women. Living alone is generally because of widowhood, childlessness or migration of children. This means that availability of carers in case of illness, disability, emergencies will also be less during the advanced years (Prakash, 1999).

### Summary

It is evident that Indian older population is predominantly rural and that women slightly outnumber men in the total population. Most of the elderly women are widows and they are found in advanced age groups (70+). In India, the elderly population still depends heavily on the family for economic and emotional support. Joint living with

sons followed by living with spouse seems to be the predominant form of living arrangement of the elderly. Some women's economic status depends largely on their marital status and women who are widowed and living alone are found to be the worst hit among the poor and vulnerable. In Andhra Pradesh, there are more widows especially in advanced age categories. Also, there are more women than men in age categories of 79 years and above.

These demographic trends have several implications. One major implication is its impact on the family. With the increase in the number and proportion of the elderly persons, adult children today are faced with an increasing number of elderly dependants for whom they are expected to provide long-term care. Some older people may live up to advanced age needing intensive care. Since caregiving in the family is women's work, this would mean more stress on the emotional and physical resources of women, especially in the context of their increased entry into paid and full time employment.

Another implication is that the increasing number of widowed women may more likely to be neglected and abandoned by families, as there is more number of them in the advanced age cohorts. These women need assistance, shelter, and medical and mental health services.

Moreover, in the light of the prediction that India would reach the threshold level of Net Reproductive Rate (NRR) of one child per family within a decade or so (Seal and Talwar, 1994) we are entering a model family situation where fewer children would be available for sharing the responsibility of care for the elderly parents, the likelihood of neglect and abuse of the elderly also increases.

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