



Background paper prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006
Literacy for Life

**Mapping literacy in India:
who are the illiterates
and where do we find them?**

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Mapping Literacy in India¹

Who are the illiterates and where do we find them?

I. Growth in Literacy

India covers an area of 3,287,263 sq. km from the Himalayas to the tropical rain forests of the south. The country is divided into 28 states and 7 union territories (UTs) for the purpose of governance. States and the centre function under a federal relationship. Union territories are under the direct control of the Central Government. Education has been on the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India since 1976. As per the national census, 2001, total population of India is 1027.02 million, out of which 495.74 million are females. As the second most populous country, India is home to 16 per cent of world's population. In terms of Human Development Index (HDI), India occupies 127th position in the family of 177 nations (Human Development Report 2004). The paper makes a modest attempt at mapping out literacy in India, focusing on an analysis of the illiterates by making use of data from the Census of India, the National Family Health Survey-2, and various rounds of the National Sample Survey. The primary objective of the paper is to locate the illiterates at the sub-national and district levels, and to highlight the characteristics of the illiterates, given the limitations of the available information.

The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP), the first countrywide programme in 1978, viewed literacy as a means to bring about fundamental changes in socio-economic development. It aimed at covering 100 million illiterate persons in the age group 15-35 in the adult education centres across the country. Based on the findings of the evaluation of the NAEP, the National Policy on Education (1986) suggested creation of a National Literacy Mission (NLM) to design and manage large-scale literacy programmes. Adopting a well-defined campaign approach, the NLM launched the total literacy campaigns in 1990. The objective was to impart functional literacy (i.e. self-reliance in 3 Rs) to non-literates in the age group 15-35. The total literacy campaigns also created positive environment for implementing national and state level basic education programmes. The initial literacy campaign was followed up with post-literacy and continuing education programmes aimed at preventing relapse into illiteracy, to enroll dropouts and enable non-achievers to upgrade their literacy skills. Besides various adult literacy programmes, the literacy rate of population in 7-14 age group has been directly influenced by the implementation of a number of basic education development programmes in the 1990s, thereby directly contributing to the overall literacy status of population in 7+ age group.

In most of the developing countries, including India, literacy has been measured by the 'literacy rate', which is the percent (or, equivalently, fraction) of the population, usually adult population. In India, the decennial census data remain the most widely acceptable and frequently quoted estimates of literacy. Besides, the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) conducts sample surveys once in every five years, usually in between two census years, to collect data on literacy status and other socio-economic characteristics of the population. The estimates of literacy by the NSSO can be viewed as the mid-term assessment of literacy in the country. The NLM designs, implements and

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monitors literacy programmes, and formulates guidelines for literacy assessment. Several other non-governmental bodies/organizations also carry out independent studies on assessment of literacy². The National Family Health Surveys of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai provide database on a variety of demographic and socio-economic indicators, including literacy, on the basis of sample study of the households.

However, the definition and method of assessment of 'literacy' varies across various sources such as the Census of India, NLM, NSSO and NFHS. The definition of 'literacy' in the population census of India is fairly liberal³. In the census enumeration, 'a person, who can read and write with understanding in any language, is treated as literate. The person may or may not have received any formal education.'⁴ The data on literacy collected through census enumeration is based on self-declaration of the respondent, and thus, it classifies all individuals into only two categories, i.e. literate and illiterate. It does not make any distinction between the 'proximate'⁵ and 'isolated'⁶ illiterates.⁷ The census data thus suffer from obvious limitations, as these are not based on any objective measure to test the literacy status of the respondents.

The literacy figures of different census years are not strictly comparable. Since 1991 census, children in the age group 0-6 have been treated as illiterates by definition and the 7+ age group population has been considered for estimating the literacy rate. Prior to 1991 census, the literacy rate had been estimated taking the 5+ age group population as the denominator⁸. The NSSO survey covers the entire country and adopts the census definition of literacy but takes a sample as a basis for estimation. However, in 1991, the NSSO administered tests to a sub-sample of the 15+ age group population to verify the literacy status of those who declared themselves as literate. One of the important outcomes of this exercise was that nearly 34% of those who claimed 'literate' status had failed to qualify the test (NSSO 1995). This has significant implications for assessing estimates of literacy rate provided in different population censuses.

The NSSO surveys also provide useful information on the characteristics of various types of households defined in terms of monthly per capita consumer expenditure, main occupation, etc. by literacy status. The latest survey of the NSSO (55th Round⁹) was conducted in July 1999- June 2000. There was only 7-month difference between the latest NSS (55th Round) and the population census in 2001. The findings of the NSS (55th Round) on literacy¹⁰ are quite robust as these are not much different from that of the Census of India, 2001 (see Table A5 in Annexure I). The National Literacy Mission defines literacy as 'acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to

² For example, literacy assessment practices by the Indian Institute of Education in Maharashtra, and *Digantar* in Madhya Pradesh. However, these innovative literacy assessment practices have not been widely replicated in the country. For further details, see Rao, I. V. Subba (2002), "Literacy Assessment Practices (LAP) in Selected Developing Countries: India Case Study."

³ If literacy is measured in terms of years of schooling, the average is merely 2.4 years in India for persons aged 25 and above (Dreze and Sen 1995).

⁴ Census of India, 2001, *State of Literacy* (Chapter 7), Provisional Population Totals, Series 1, India, Paper 1 of 2001.

⁵ An illiterate member (s) having literate member (s) in the household, which generates intra-household externalities.

⁶ An illiterate member (s) having no literate member in the household, which does not generate intra-household externalities.

⁷ For further details, see Basu, Kaushik, et al, (2000), "Isolated and proximate illiteracy and why these concepts matter in measuring literacy and designing education programmes." Working Paper No. 00-W02, Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

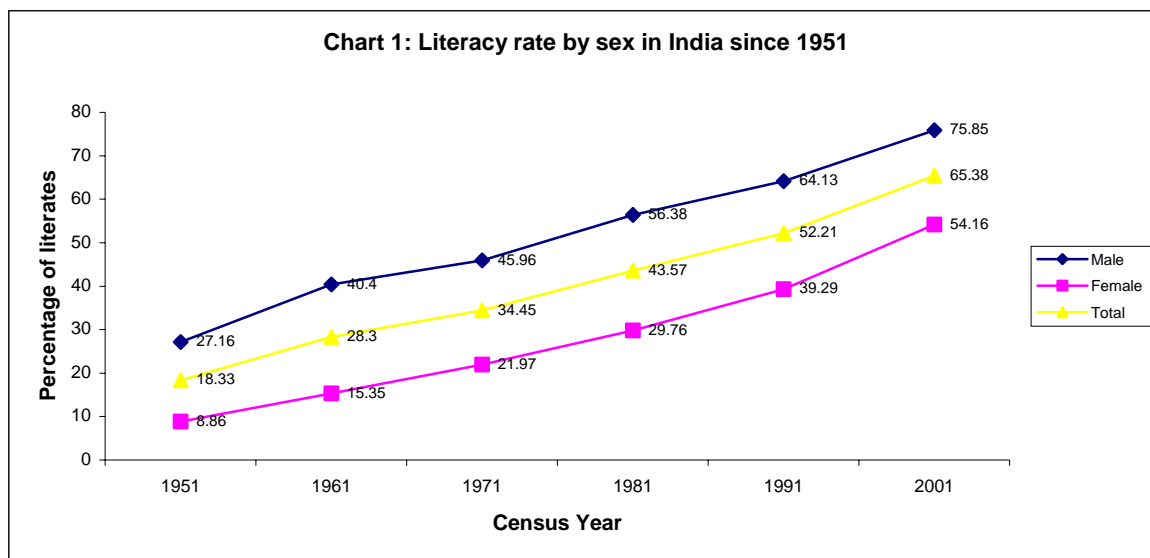
⁸ When total population is taken as the denominator, the estimated literacy rate is called the 'crude literacy rate.'

⁹ Sample size was 600,016. The survey followed a two stage stratified design with villages or urban blocks as first stage and households as second stage.

¹⁰ NSSO (2001), "Literacy and Levels of Education in India, 1999-2000." Report No. 437 (55/1.0/11), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.

apply them to one's day-to-day life.'¹¹ The definition of literacy by the NLM goes beyond the census definition and focuses on the functional literacy. The NFHS defines an 'illiterate person' as one who can not read and write, even if he/she may have been to school¹².

Over the last five decades, there has been an impressive growth in literacy in India. In 1901, a little over 5% of Indian population was literate, which increased to around 16% in 1950, a mere increase of 11 percentage points in the literacy rate during the first half of the century. In the post-independence period, the decadal growth in literacy has shown a substantial progress – i.e. from 18.35% (5+ age group population) in 1951 to 65.38% (7+ age group population) in 2001.



Source: Census of India, 2001.

- Notes: (i) Literacy rates for 1951,1961 and 1971 censuses relate to population aged five years and above. The rates for the 1981,1991 and 2001 census relate to population aged seven years and above.
- (ii) In the 1981 census, literacy rates exclude Assam where census could not be conducted and the 1991 literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir where Census could not be conducted due to disturbed conditions.
- (iii) In the 2001 census, literacy rates exclude entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district of Gujarat State and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of the Census of India, 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamities.

The female literacy rate was just 8.9% in 1951, which went up to 54.2% in 2001 (see Chart 1). The literacy rates for population in the 7+ age group are available for the last three censuses, and therefore, comparable for assessing the progress. In 1981, the literacy rate was 43.57% (56.58% for male and 29.76% for female), which increased to 52.21%¹³ (64.13% for males and 39.29% for females) in 1991. In 2001, almost two-thirds of India's population (65.38%), and around three-fourths of males (75.85%) and more than half of females (54.16%) were literate.

Between 1981 and 2001, while the literacy rate of population increased by 21.82 percentage points, the female literacy rate went up by 24.41 percentage points. During this period, the increase in the female literacy rate was more than the male literacy rate, which was 19.48 percentage points. The literacy rate registered an increase of 13.17 percentage points from 1991 to 2001; the highest increase in any one-decade. Much of this increase

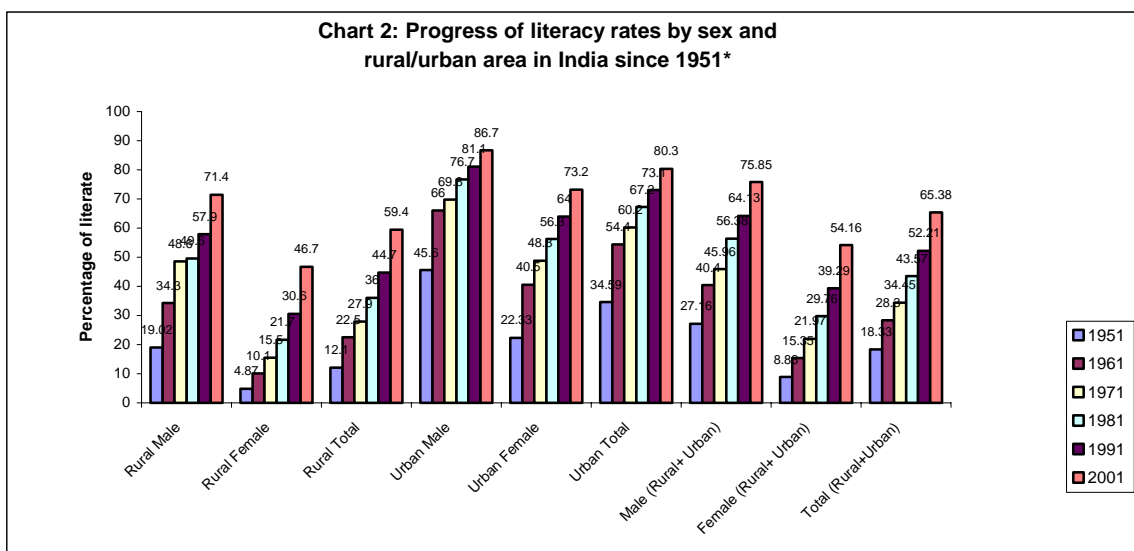
¹¹ NLM, 1994, and website of the NLM.

¹² IIPS (2000), *NFHS-2, India*. p. 28.

¹³ Excluding Jammu and Kashmir, where census could not be conducted.

may be due to the implementation of various national and state level externally funded primary education programmes and the national adult literacy programmes of the NLM. The increase in female literacy (14.87 percentage points) was also relatively higher than that of the male literacy rate (11.72 percentage points) in the 1990s.

In 1951, only 12.1% of rural population and 4.87% of females in India were literate. In 2001, rural literacy rate increased to 59.4% (71.4% for males and 46.7% for females). During 1991-2001, the increase in female literacy rate (16.1 percentage points) in rural area was relatively more compared to that of the male (13.5 percentage points). In urban India, only 34.59% of the population was literate in 1951, which increased to 80.3% in 2001. The female literacy rate was 22.33% in 1951, which increased to 73.2% in 2001 (see Chart 2). In urban area too the growth in female literacy rate (13.2 percentage points) was relatively faster than that of the male (5.6 percentage points) during 1991-2001. In 1951, the male-female differences in the literacy rate in rural and urban areas were 14.15 and 23.27 percentage points respectively. In 1991, the gaps in the male-female literacy rate in rural and urban areas were 27.3 and 17.1 percentage points respectively, which came down to 24.7 and 13.5 percentage points in 2001. In 1991, rural-urban gap in literacy rate was 28.4 percentage points, which decreased to 20.9 percentage points in 2001. In other words, while 4/5th of the urban population was literate, more than 2/5th of the rural population was illiterate in 2001.



Source: Census of India, 2001.

Notes: (*) For 1951, the population male, female and persons refer to effective literacy rates and the break up of rural, urban, male and female components are crude literacy rates.

(i), (ii), and (iii) Same as that of Chart 1.

Another notable aspect of the progress in literacy in India is that, for the first time, the number of illiterates has gone down in absolute term. During 1991-2001, the population of India in the 7+ age group increased by 172 million, while around 204 million additional persons became literate. As a result, the total number of illiterates came down from 328.88 million in 1991 to 300.14 million¹⁴ in 2001. During this period, the absolute number of illiterates decreased by around 28.74 million. In 1981, India had 235.73 million literate persons, which increased to 359.28 million in 1991 and 566.71 million in 2001. The average annual growth of literate persons was 4.30% during 1981-91,

¹⁴ As per the provisional figures, the estimated number of illiterates in India was 296 million in 2001, which excludes the number of illiterates in Jammu and Kashmir. This figure increases to 300.14 million when the estimate is based on the district level data of the Census of India 2001, and the number of illiterates in Jammu and Kashmir is included.

and it was 4.66% during 1991-2001. The number of illiterates grew at an average annual growth rate of 0.75% during 1981-91, while it declined at an average annual growth rate of -0.91% during 1991-2001.

II. Gender and Regional Variations in Literacy

As has been mentioned earlier in Section I, there has been relatively greater progress in the literacy rate of females during the last two decades. The gender gap has been reduced in 2001 compared to what it was in 1981 and 1991. Male-female differential in literacy rate was 26.62 percentage points in 1981 and 24.84 percentage points in 1991, which decreased to 21.70 percentage points in 2001. The progress in the female literacy rate hides the fact that, the decrease in absolute number of non-literate females between 1991 and 2001 is relatively small compared to that of the males. In 1991, the number of male illiterates in the country was 128.099 million, which came down to 106.654 million in 2001. The decrease in the number of male illiterates was 16.74% during 1991-2001. In 1991, the number of female illiterates was 200.068 million, which decreased to 189.554 million in 2001. The decrease was just 5.25% during the same period.

The slower progress made in the reduction of the number of non-literate females during the last decade can be attributed to relatively lower participation rate and higher dropout rate of girls at the primary level of education. According to the National Family Health Survey¹⁵ (NFHS-2), while 85.2% of boys in the age group 6-10 were attending school, only 78.3% of girls were doing so in 1998-99. In 2000-01, the percentage share of girls in total enrolment at primary level was 43.7. The boys-girls differential in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the primary level was around 19 percentage points.¹⁶

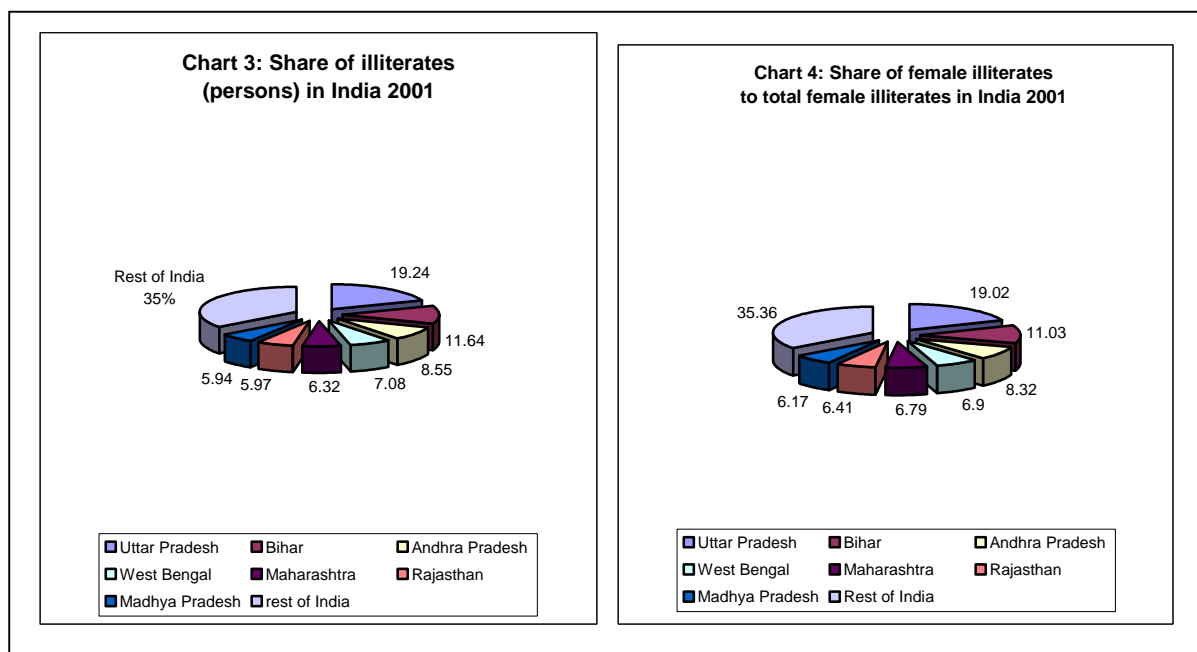
Besides, there exist huge variations in literacy rates across states (provinces) in India. According to 2001 census, Kerala remains on the top with a literacy rate of 90.9%, while Bihar is at the bottom with a literacy rate of 47.5%. In 2001, 23 states/UTs had literacy rate equal to or above the national average (Chhatisgarh having literacy rate of 65.18% included). States/UTs having literacy below the national average are Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand and Bihar. In the same year, 24 states and UTs had male and female literacy rates equal to or more than the national average. States having female literacy rate below the national average are Chhatisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand and Bihar.

Between 1991 and 2001, Kerala has registered the lowest increase in the literacy rate (1.11 percentage points), primarily because of the high literacy rate in the base year. Among the educationally backward states mostly located in the north, Bihar has shown the lowest increase in the literacy rate during the last decade (i.e. 10.04 percentage points), and Rajasthan and Chhatisgarh have registered the highest increase (i.e. 22.48 and 22.27 percentage points respectively). The literacy rate during the last decade has also increased substantially in Uttar Pradesh (16.65 percentage points), Arunachal Pradesh (17.03 percentage points), Andhra Pradesh (17.02 percentage points) and Madhya Pradesh (19.44 percentage points), and Orissa (14.52 percentage points). During the last decade, the educationally backward states located in the Hindi speaking belt of the country have

¹⁵ The survey also finds that while the median number of years of schooling was 5.5 for males (6+ age group), it was only 1.6 for females (6+ age group). The share of girls' enrolment in total enrolment at primary level (grades I-V) 43.6% in 1999-2000, and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 104.1% for boys and 85.2% for girls (Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, 1999-2000). Around 39% of boys entering grade I dropped out before grade V, and 42% of girls did so (Selected educational Statistics, MHRD, 1999-2000).

¹⁶ Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, GOI, various years.

contributed significantly to the reduction of illiteracy in the country. It may be noted that during the 1990s, several state specific basic education programmes like Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme, Bihar Education Programme, Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Programme, Lok Jumbish, and Education Guarantee Scheme were implemented in the educationally backward states. Besides, the District Primary Education Programme focused on the backward districts, mostly located in these states. The NLM also focused on these states while implementing adult literacy programmes. These interventions have perhaps contributed to the relative faster growth of literacy in educationally backward states. How much of this contribution can be attributed to basic education programmes and adult literacy programmes? One can have some idea about this only when census data on literacy by age group are available.



Even after the impressive progress in literacy during the last decade, still India is home to 300.14 million¹⁷ non-literates, which includes 191.93 million females (63.95%). Nearly 46.51% of illiterates are found in 4 states – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Around 65% of illiterates are found in 7 states -- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh (Chart 3). In absolute terms, nearly 194.52 million illiterates are found in these 7 states, and around 64% of them are females. The share of females in total illiterates of the state is very high in Uttaranchal (70.8%), Himachal Pradesh (69.2%), Kerala (69.2%), Rajasthan (68.6%) and Maharashtra (68.6%) (see Chart 5). However, in terms of female literacy rate in 2001, Kerala tops the list; Himachal Pradesh takes 10th rank, Maharashtra 11th rank, and Uttaranchal 18th rank. It implies that, even in educationally advanced states, most of the illiterates are females.

However, in 2001, the percentage change in the number of illiterate persons was negative in eight states/UTs namely, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi and Chandigarh (see Table A5 and Chart A2 in Annexure I). Except Bihar, all other such states are located in the north-eastern part of the country, and the total population of these states is relatively small. The negative change in the number of illiterate persons in most of the above-mentioned union territories

¹⁷ Census of India, 2001 (Series 1, Provisional Population Totals (Paper 1 of 2001)).

is primarily because of rural-urban migration, especially casual labourers. More than 20% decrease in the number of illiterate persons during 1991-2001 was in two states -- Chhatisgarh (25.62%) and Himachal Pradesh (22.42%). Besides, during the same period, more than 15% decrease in the number of illiterate persons was in 8 other states – Rajasthan (16.95%), Tripura (18.58%), Madhya Pradesh (16.97%), Maharashtra (17.35%), Andhra Pradesh (17.28%), Goa (15.97%), Uttaranchal (19.13%) and Tamil Nadu (18.18%). More than 10% decrease in the number of illiterates was in 3 states – West Bengal (11.04%), Mizoram (13.35%), and Orissa (14.36%). At the all-India level, the percentage decrease in the number of illiterates was 9.74 during 1991-2001.

Towards reduction of the number of illiterates in the country, 7 states/UTs have contributed negatively. These are Delhi, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Chandigarh, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Highest contribution has come from Andhra Pradesh (16.79%) and the least from Bihar (-9.33%). Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have made more than 10% contribution in the reduction the number of illiterates at the national level. Three of the five such states are located in the Hindi-speaking belt of north, northwest and central India. Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu contributed around 3/4th of the percentage decrease in the total number of illiterates in the country, whereas half of the country's population lived in these states in 2001.

Uttar Pradesh contributed the maximum (19.46%) in the decadal (1991-2001) decrease of male illiterates in the country. Five other states also contributed significantly to the decadal decrease in the number of male illiterates – Andhra Pradesh (13.59%), Maharashtra (9.21%), Madhya Pradesh (11.37), West Bengal (7.03%), and Rajasthan (12.42%). Eight states, including Kerala (-0.01%), contributed negatively to the decadal decrease in the number of male illiterates. During the last decade, the maximum number of female illiterates decreased in Andhra Pradesh (2.45 million; 13.31%), followed by Maharashtra (2.01 million; 13.37%), Tamil Nadu (1.89 million; 16.19%), Madhya Pradesh (1.21 million; 9.29%) and West Bengal (1.13 million; 7.88%). The contribution of these 5 states taken together explains 82.69% of the total decline in female illiterates in the country. Bihar has made a huge negative contribution (-21.99%) in the decadal decline in female illiterates in the country. Other states/UTs, which have made significant negative contribution to decadal decline in female illiterates in the country, are Jharkhand (-2.85%), Gujarat (-1.31%), Delhi (-1.67%) and Nagaland (-0.93%).

In 1991, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of literacy rate was 0.59 or less) in 12 state and UTs, namely Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Madhya, Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Orissa, Uttaranchal, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, and Arunachal Pradesh. In 18 states and UTs, the GPI of literacy rate was equal to or more 0.69. In 2001, the GPI of literacy rate was equal to or less than 0.69 in 10 states and UTs – i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, J&K, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

Table 1: Relative position of major states in terms of gender disparity in literacy rates, 1991 and 2001

S. No.	State	Rank ¹⁸ (GPI ¹⁹ , 1991)	Rank (GPI, 2001)
1.	Rajasthan	1	3

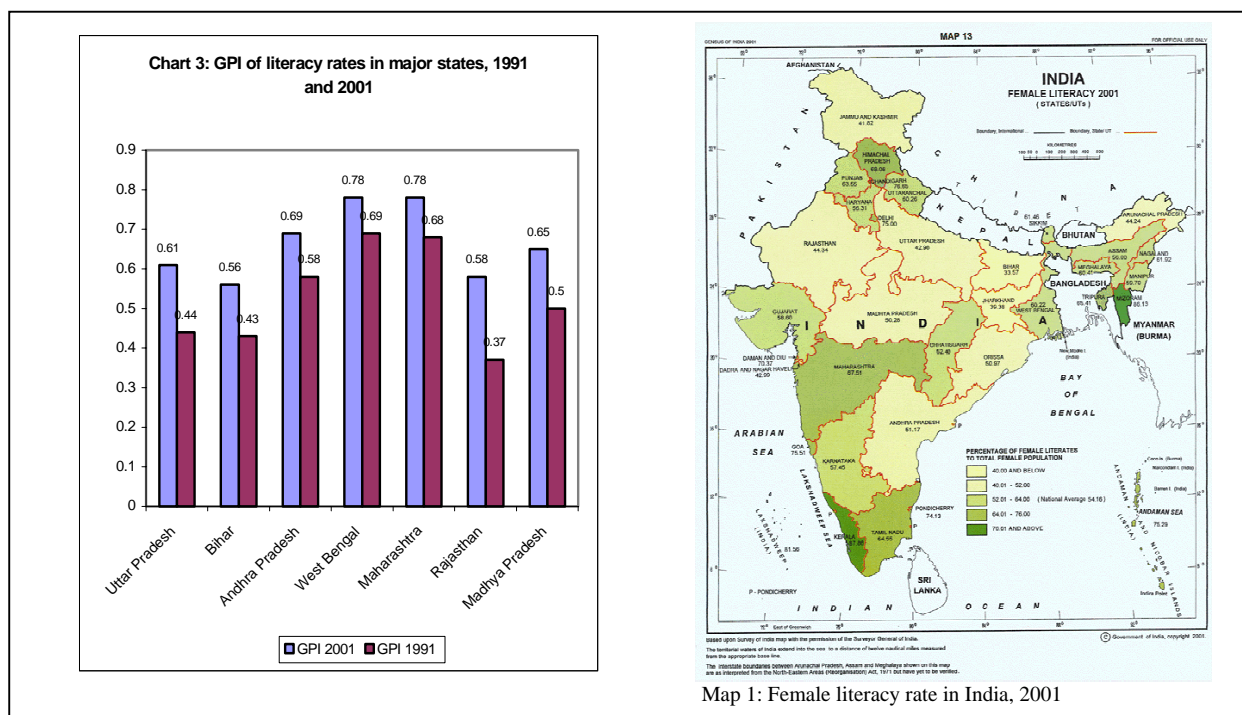
¹⁸ Higher the rank, wider is the gender disparity in the literacy rates in the state, i.e. smaller the size of the GPI in literacy. A state getting 'Rank 1' has the highest gender disparity and a state having 'Rank 20' has the lowest gender disparity in literacy. The ranking is not based on all states and UTs. The basic purpose is to show the progress of major states in bridging gender gap during 1991-2001.

¹⁹ GPI of Literacy = Female Literacy Rate/ Male Literacy Rate.

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2.	Bihar		2	1
3.	Uttar Pradesh		3	4
4.	Jharkhand		4	2
5.	Chhatisgarh		5	8
6.	Jammu and Kashmir		NA ²⁰	5
7.	Madhya Pradesh		6	6
8.	Orissa		7	7
9.	Uttaranchal		8	11
10.	Andhra Pradesh		9	9
11.	Haryana		10	10
12.	Arunachal Pradesh		11	12
13.	Karnataka		12	14
14.	Manipur		13	15
15.	Gujarat		14	13
16.	Maharashtra		15	18
17.	West Bengal		16	16
18.	Himachal Pradesh		17	20
19.	Assam		18	17
20.	Tamil Nadu		19	19

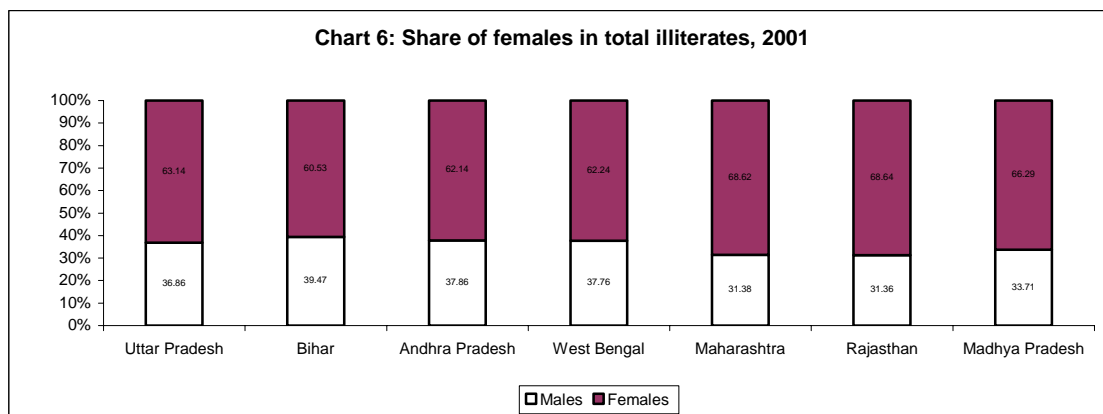
Source: Estimated using data from the Census of India, 2001.



Source: GPI for major states estimated by authors on the basis of Census of India 2001 data.

The gender gap in literacy rate was highest in Bihar followed by Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Chhatisgarh and Andhra Pradesh (see Table 1; Chart 5; and Map 1). In 1991, gender gap in literacy was the highest in Rajasthan, which improved its position to the third place in 2001. Bihar, which had second position in 1991 in terms of gender disparity in literacy, moved to the first position in 2001, further widening the gender disparity. Relative performance of states like Jharkhand, Gujarat and Assam was not very encouraging in reducing the gender gap in literacy (see Table 2). The share of females in total illiterates continues to be high in major states (see Chart 6).

²⁰ Census not held in the state.



Regional variations in literacy rate become more pronounced when analysis is done at the district level. According to 2001 census, around one-fifth of 591 districts²¹ (i.e. 81 districts) have literacy rate equal to or less than 50%; 21.3% of the districts have literacy rate in the range of 50-60%; 29.3% of districts have literacy rate ranging between 60% and 70%; a little more than a quarter of the districts have literacy rate ranging between 70% and 80%; and only 10% of the districts have literacy rate more than 90%. Around 21% of the districts have female literacy rate equal to or less than 40%; 21.5% of districts have 40-50% female literacy rate; 23.4% of districts have female literacy rate ranging between 50-60%; one-fifth of the districts have 60-70% female literacy rate; and around 14% of districts have more than 80% of female literacy rate.

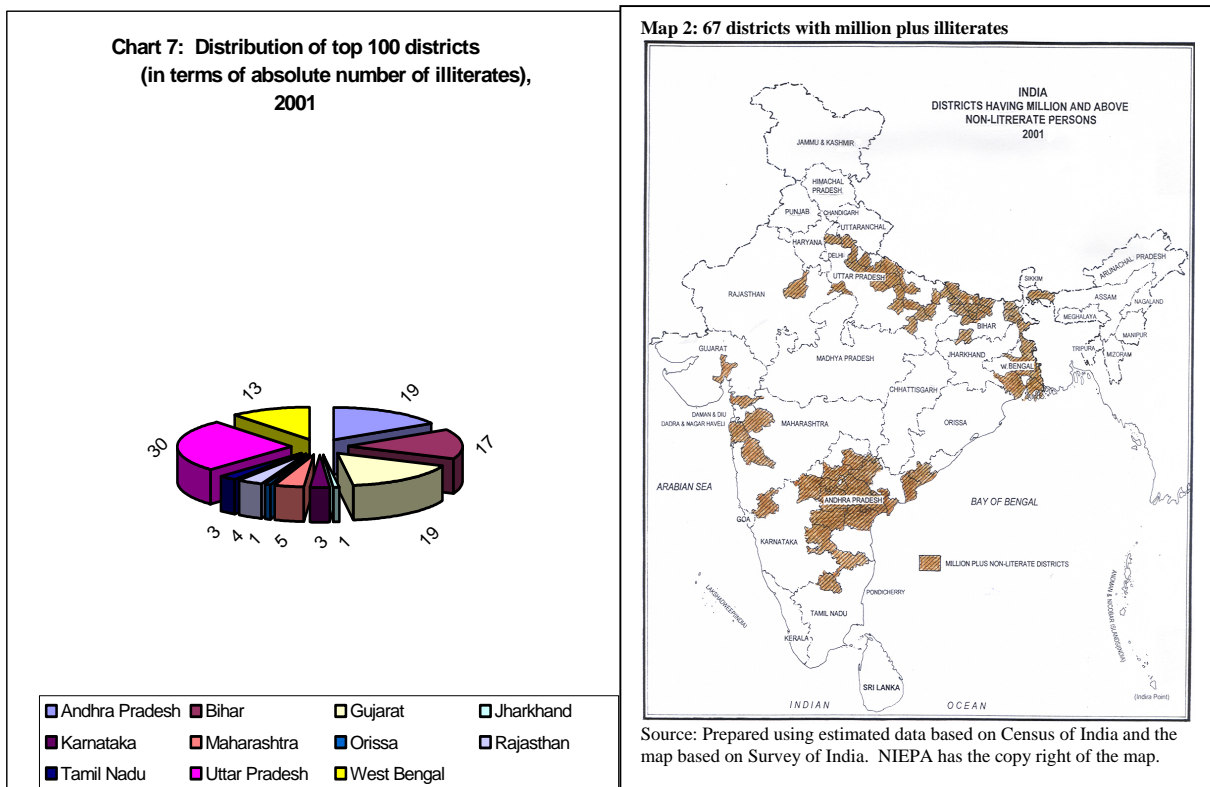
Most of the low literacy districts (26 districts having literacy rate less than 40%) are located in the educationally backward states such as Bihar (11 districts; 42.3%), Jharkhand (3 districts; 11.5%), Orissa (4 districts; 15.4%), and Uttar Pradesh (5 districts; 19.2%). Most of the high literacy districts (46 districts having literacy rate = 80-90%) are found in Kerala (6 districts; 13.0%), Maharashtra (9 districts; 19.6%), and Delhi (6 districts; 13.0%). Districts having more than 90% literacy rate are found in Kerala (8 districts; 61.5%), Mizoram (4 districts; 30.8%) and Pondichery (1 district; 7.7%).

In terms of absolute number of illiterates in 2001, the top 100 districts are found in 11 states -- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (see Chart 7). These districts are home to 120.03 million illiterates (around 40% of illiterates of the country). Among these 100 districts, female literacy rate is more than 70% (maximum 77.86%) in 12 districts in Bihar (7 districts) and Uttar Pradesh (5 districts) – Araria (Bihar), Bahraich (UP), Purnia (Bihar), Katihar (Bihar), Purba Champaran (Bihar), Budaun (UP), Paschim Champaran (Bihar), Sitamari (Bihar), Madhubani (Bihar), Gonda (UP), Rampur (UP), and Siddharthnagar (UP).

Sixty-seven districts in the country spread over 9 states are having million plus illiterates. These districts are home to 88.51 million illiterates, which is 29.5% of total illiterates in the country (see Map 2). These districts are located in Andhra Pradesh (14), Bihar (15), Gujarat (2), Karnataka (2), Maharashtra (3), Rajasthan (1), Tamil Nadu (1), Uttar Pradesh (20), and West Bengal (9). The top 10 districts in terms of absolute number of illiterates are found in 4 states – Bihar (3 districts), West Bengal (5 districts), Uttar Pradesh (1 district), and Andhra Pradesh (1 district). These are Murshidabad (WB), Medinapur (WB), Purba Champaran (Bihar), South 24 Parganas (WB), North 24 Parganas (WB), Bardhaman (WB), Madhubani (Bihar), Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh), Mahbubnagar

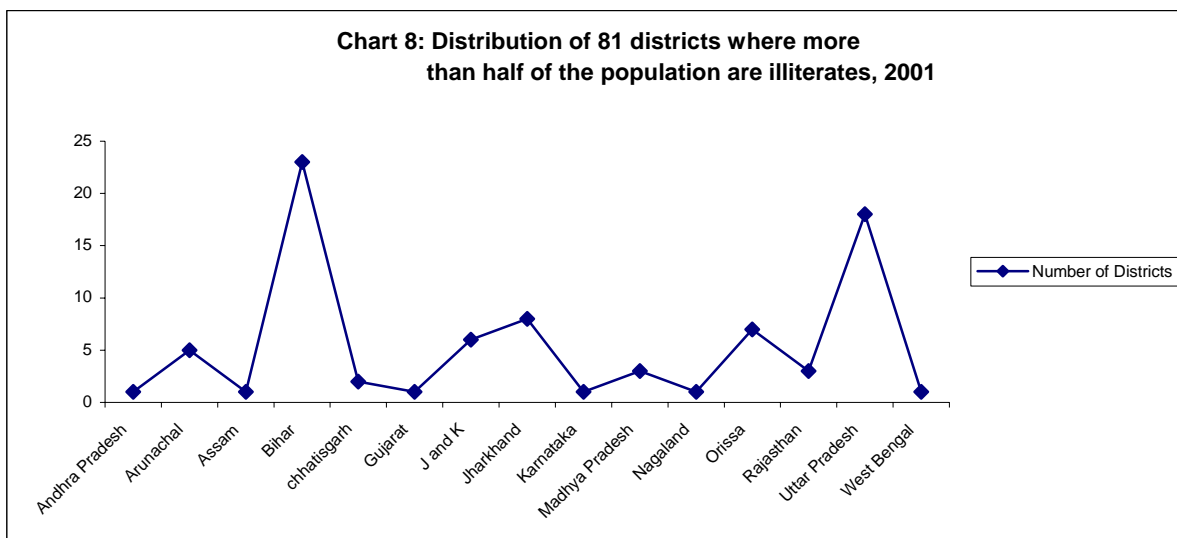
²¹ Census of India, 2001 has been conducted in 591 districts out of the total 593 districts.

(Andhra Pradesh), and Muzaffarpur (Bihar). These 10 districts have 17.85 million illiterates accounting for around 6% of illiterates in the country.



More than half of the population is illiterate in 81 districts located in 15 states (see Chart 8). Most of these districts are located in Bihar (around 28%) and Uttar Pradesh (around 22%). Around one-fifth of the illiterates (61 million; 20.32%) live in these 81 districts. Female illiteracy rate is more than 50% (maximum of 81.51%) in 253 districts mostly located in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, J and K, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (see Chart 14). These districts have 104.62 million female illiterates, which accounts for 54.51% of female illiterates in the country.

In 17 districts, more than 3/4th of the females are illiterates. These districts are located in Bihar (7), Chhatisgarh (1), Jharkhand (2), Orissa (4), and Uttar Pradesh (3). These districts are Kishanganj (Bihar), Shravasti (UP), Pakaur (Jharkhand), Dantewada (Chhatisgarh), Nabarangapur (Orissa), Supaul (Bihar), Malkangiri (Orissa), Balrampur (UP), Araria (Bihar), Madhepura (Bihar), Garhwa (Jharkhand), Bahraich (UP), Purnia (Bihar), Katihar (Bihar), Rayagada (Orissa), Purba Champaran (Bihar), and Koraput (Orissa).



III. Literacy Rates by Age, Social Group and Household Type

Presently, data on literacy rates by age group are not available for the census year 2001. Literacy rates for population (age 15+) have been obtained by simple extrapolation. In 1991 census, the difference between the literacy rates of age groups 7+ and 15+ was 4 percentage points, which increased to 5 percentage points in 1997 (NSS 53rd Round)). As several basic education programmes have been implemented in the 1990s, particularly in the educationally backward states, it is expected that literacy level of children in 7-14 age group would have increased at a relatively faster rate. Therefore, it has been assumed that the difference between the literacy rates of age groups 7+ and 15+ is 6 percentage points in 2001 census. To get the literacy rate of 15+ age group population, 6 percentage points have been deducted from the literacy rate of 7+ age group population.

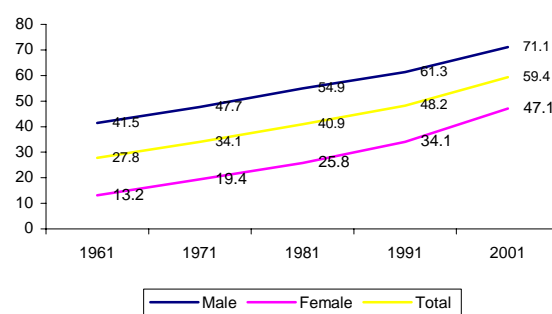
Over the years, the literacy rate of population in the age group 15+ has shown a linear increase. In 1961, the literacy rate of the population (age 15+) was just 27.8% (41.5% for males and 13.2% for females), which increased to an estimated 59.4%²² (71.1% for males and 47.1% for females) in 2001. According to the NFHS-2, 1998-99, the literacy rate of population (age 15+) is 58.6%. If we apply the estimates of the NSS 53rd Round, 1997 (i.e. 5 percentage point difference between the literacy rates of population in the age group 7+ and 15+) to the literacy rates as given in the census 2001 data, the literacy rate of population in 15+ age group comes to 60.4%.

Table 2: Literacy rate of population (age 15+), India

Year	Males	Females	Total	Gender Gap
1961	41.5	13.2	27.8	28.3
1971	47.7	19.4	34.1	28.3
1981	54.9	25.8	40.9	29.1
1991	61.3	34.1	48.2	27.2
2001*	-	-	60.4	-
2001**	71.1	47.1	59.4	24.0

Sources: (i) Census of India, 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991.
 (ii) Applying the 5 percentage point difference in the literacy rate between 7+ and 15+ age group population to 2001 census data on the basis of estimates of NSS 53rd Round 1997.
 (iii) **Srivastava, ABL, 2002

Chart 9: Literacy rate of the population in the age group 15+, 1961-2001



²² Srivastava, ABL, 2002.

According to 2001 census, total population (age 15+) in India is 666,999,816, which is 65.5% of the total population. In 2001, the country had 402.87 million²³ literates (age 15+). If we consider a 6 percentage point difference in the literacy rate of population 7+ and 15+, the estimated number of literates (age 15+) comes to 396.198 million. This seems to be more likely because of progress in primary education during the last decade, increasing the size of the literates in the age group 7-14.

The gender gap in the literacy rate of population (age 15+) still continues to be as high as 24.0 percentage points²⁴, whereas it was 21.7 percentage points for population (age 7+) in 2001. Since 1961, the gender gap in the literacy rate of population (age 15+) has been reduced by only 4 percentage points. In fact, the gender gap in the literacy rate of population (age 15+) did not decrease up to the census year 1991 (see Table 2 and Chart 9). However, if we consider the information from the NSS 53rd Round, the difference between the literacy rates of population in the age group 7+ and 15+ was 5 percentage points (3 percentage points for males and 7 percentage points for males) in 1997.

Table 3: Percentage distribution of population (age 6 and above) by literacy and primary level of education, India, 1998-99

Age group (In years)	Males			Females			Total		
	Illiterate	Literate <primary school complete	Primary school graduate ²⁵	Illiterate	Literate <primary school complete	Primary school graduate	Illiterate	Literate <primary school complete	Primary school graduate
6-9	26.9	72.3	0.8	32.6	66.8	0.5	29.6	69.6	0.7
10-14	13.0	37.0	40.3	23.9	31.7	35.1	18.2	34.4	37.8
15-19	14.7	8.0	21.4	31.8	7.4	18.2	23.1	7.7	19.8
20-29	19.2	6.9	15.6	45.8	6.2	14.0	33.0	6.5	14.8
30-39	28.6	9.1	16.2	58.0	6.8	13.4	43.1	8.0	14.8
40-49	30.8	10.5	17.0	63.2	7.9	12.2	46.0	9.3	14.7
50+	44.1	15.0	15.9	78.9	7.2	7.3	61.1	11.2	11.7
Total ²⁶	25.5	21.1	18.4	48.6	17.1	14.5	36.9	19.2	16.5

Source: International Institute for Population Sciences (2000), *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2), 1998-99, India*. Mumbai., p. 28, Table 2.7.

Table 4: Estimated number of illiterates by age group and sex, India, 2001 (based on NFHS-2 estimates of illiteracy rate in 1998-99)

Age group	% of illiterates 1998-99 (NFHS-2)			Population, Census 2001 (In million)			Estimated number of illiterates, 2001 (In millions)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
10-14	13.0	23.9	18.2	65.633	59.214	124.847	8.53	14.15	22.68
15-19	14.7	31.8	23.1	53.941	46.276	100.217	7.93	14.72	22.65
20-29	19.2	45.8	33.0	87.879	85.308	173.187	16.87	39.07	55.94
30-39	28.6	58.0	43.1	73.401	71.447	144.848	20.99	41.44	62.43
40-49	30.8	63.2	46.0	54.747	48.401	103.148	16.86	30.59	47.45

Source: Estimated by authors using NFHS-2 and Census 2001 data.

Note: The illiteracy rates by age group from NFHS-2 have been applied to estimate the number of illiterates in 2001. The estimated figures may be slightly higher because of two years difference between the NFHS-2 and Census, 2001. In the Table 4, the number of illiterates have been estimated for only five age groups, whereas the NFHS-2, illiteracy rate is given for 3 other age groups, i.e. 6-9; 50+; and Total having no information on age, p.28, Table 2.7.

According to the NFHS-2 data, the literacy rates of the population in 15-19 and 20-29 age groups were 76.9% and 67% respectively in 1998-99. In 1991, the literacy rates of

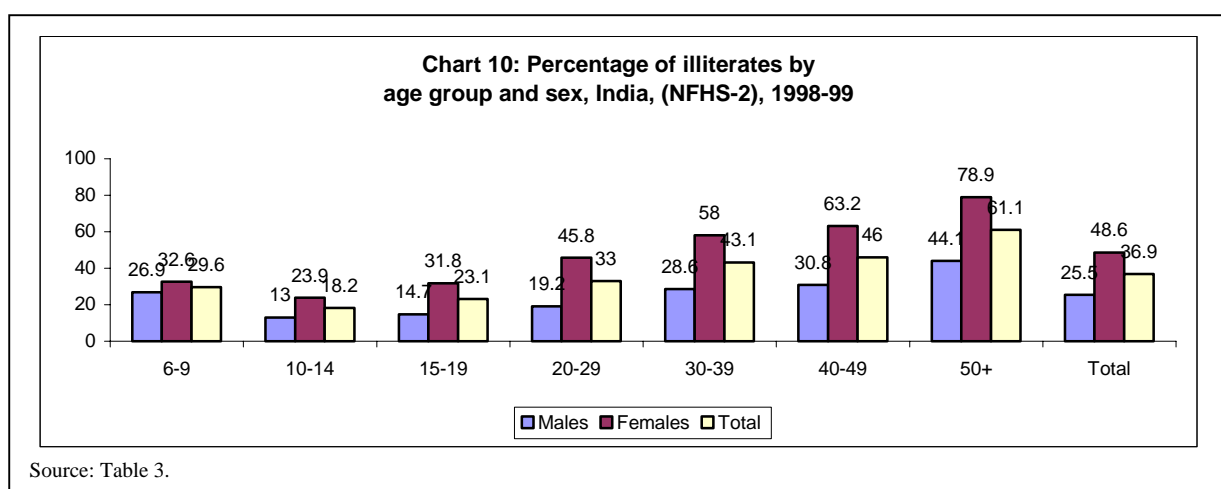
²³ When a 5 percentage point difference in the literacy rates of population 7+ and 15+ is considered.

²⁴ On the basis of the estimated literacy rates as given in Table 2.

²⁵ 'Primary school complete' means 5 to 7 completed years of schooling.

²⁶ Includes persons with missing information on age, who are not shown separately.

children in the age groups 10-14 and 15-19 were 68.6% and 65.8% respectively. The increase in the literacy rates of these age groups may not be very substantial between 1998-2001. It implies that the illiteracy rate of young adults still continues to be high in the country. An estimated 22.65 million²⁷ children (14.72 million girls) in the age group 15-19 were illiterate in 2001. As per the estimate, the number of illiterates in the age group 15-29 was 78.59 million (53.79 million females) (see Table 4). In 2001, the estimated number of illiterates in the age group 30-39 was 62.43 million (also see Chart 10). An estimated 22.68 million children in the age group 10-14 were illiterates in 2001. The estimated number of female illiterates in the age groups 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 was almost double the number of male illiterates in 2001. It also implies that the number of illiterates in the older cohorts of the population still continues to be very high, which calls for designing and implementing large scale adult literacy programmes in the country. Besides, huge number of illiterate children in 2001 has serious implications for achieving the goal of EFA in the country by 2010²⁸.



The variation in the literacy rate across social groups and household type is high in India. In terms of social status, the population of India can be grouped into four categories – i.e. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Class (OBC), and others. The SC and ST population are generally disadvantaged in most of the states in India. According to the 2001 Census, India has 16.2% and 8.2% of SC and ST population respectively. The greatest concentration of population of SCs is in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa (also see Chart A5 in Annexure I). Besides the northeastern states, STs are found in greater numbers in Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. It may be noted that the educational status of ST households is relatively better in majority of the northeastern states.

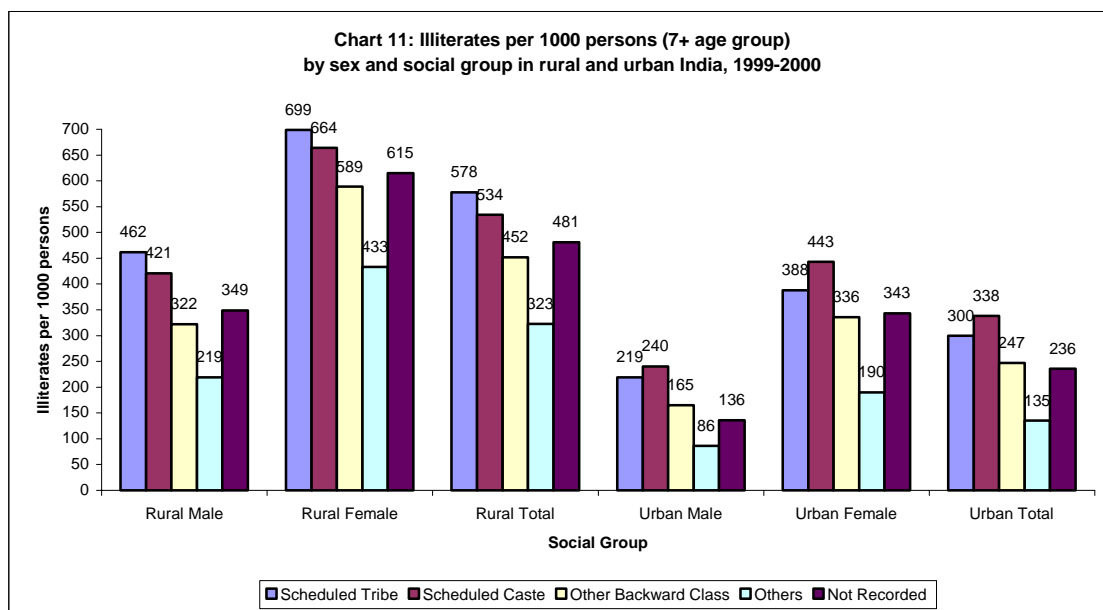
As per 1991 Census, the literacy rate of SCs and STs was 37.41% and 29.6% respectively, much lower than the literacy rate of the general population. The literacy rates of SC males and females were 49.91% and 23.79%, a gender gap of 26.15 percentage points. The ST male and female literacy rates were 40.65% and 18.19%, also a wide gender gap of 22.46 percentage points. The literacy rate was lowest for SCs in Bihar

²⁷ The number of illiterates in different age groups have been estimated by the authors by applying the illiteracy rates of the respective age group population as estimated in the NFHS-2, 1998-99.

²⁸ Under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for All Programme), India aims at achieving universal elementary education of 8 years of formal schooling or its alternatives for children in the age group 6-14 by 2010.

(19.49%), and highest in Kerala (79.66%), and for STs, it was the lowest for Andhra Pradesh (17.16%) and highest in Mizoram (82.0%). Literacy rate of STs was more than SCs in Bihar, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh. In general, SCs were ahead of STs in the literacy rate, but in urban areas, the STs were ahead of STs. The literacy rate of SC females compared to general population was much lower in Bihar (7.07%), Rajasthan (8.31%) and Uttar Pradesh (10.69%). The literacy rate of ST females was extremely low in Rajasthan (4.4%). As the Census 2001 has not yet brought out the data on the literacy rate of SCs and STs, it is not possible to assess the progress during the last decade. However, literacy data by social group are available from the 55th Round of NSS (1999-2000), which was conducted just 7 months before the Census, 2001.

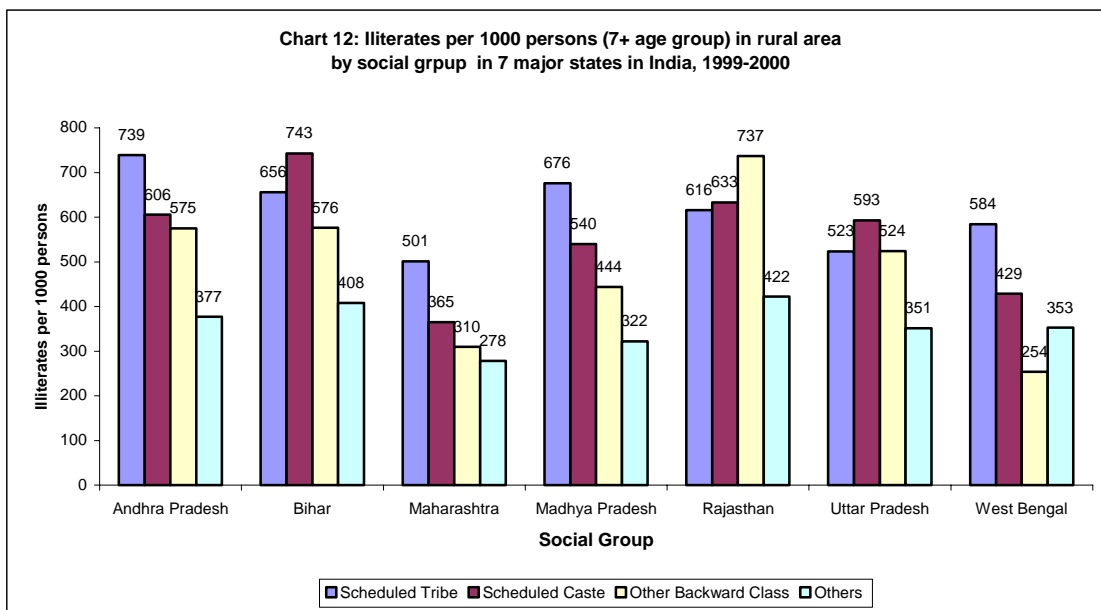
As per NSS, 55th round, the literacy rate of SCs in rural India was 46.6% (58.8% for males and 33.6% for females). In urban India, the literacy rate was 66.2% (76.0% for males and 55.7% for females). The literacy rate of ST population was 42.2% in rural areas (53.8% for males and 30.1% for females), and in urban areas, it was 70% (78.1% for males and 61.2% for females). The literacy rate of Other Backward Class (OBC) was 54.8% (67.8% for males and 54.8% for females) in rural India. In urban India, the literacy rate of OBC was 75.3% (83.5% for males and 66.4% for females). Though the literacy rates of SC and ST population have increased between 1991 census and the NSS, 55th round, the increase is much slower than that of the general population. Between 1991 census and NSS, 55th round, the progress in the literacy rate of ST population is relatively faster than that of the SC population (see Chart 11).



Source: NSS, 55th Round (2001), Report No. 473 (55/1.0/11).

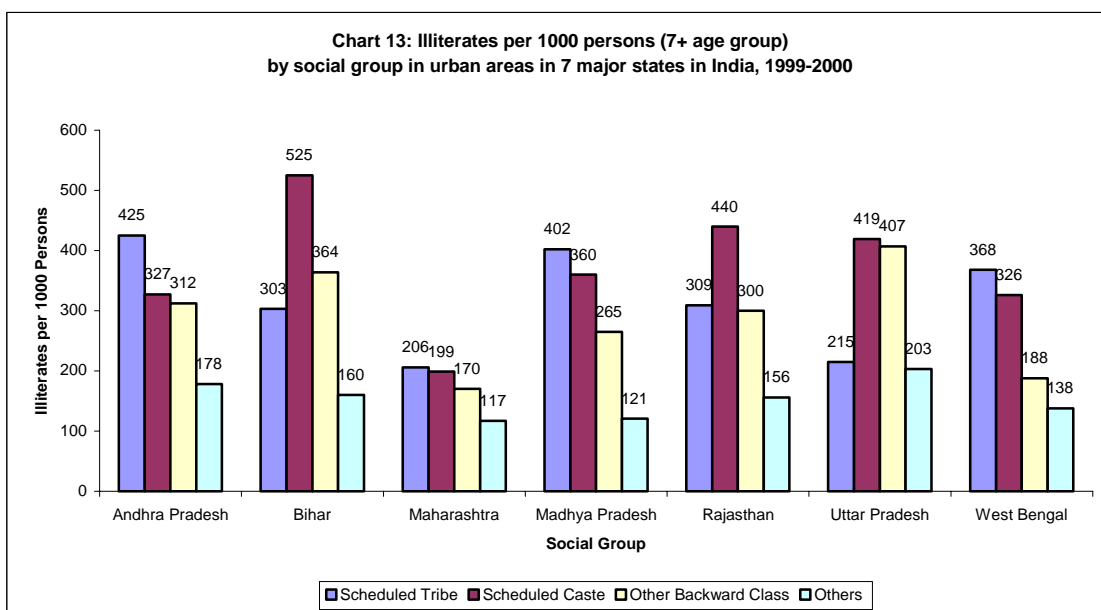
As per NSS, 55th round, in rural India, the illiteracy rates of SC, ST and OBC females were very high, and it was highest for the ST females (69.9%). In urban India, the illiteracy rate of SC females was higher than that of the ST females. The illiteracy rate of others was much lower compared that of SCs, STs and OBCs in both rural and urban areas (see Chart 11). In the 7 major states, where around 65% of illiterates are found in 2001, the literacy status of SCs, STs and OBCs is relatively very low. As per NSS, 55th round, in rural areas, the illiteracy rate of ST population was higher than that of the SC population in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. The illiteracy rate of SC population was higher than that of the ST population in Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar

Pradesh. The illiteracy rate of OBC was also very high in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (see Chart 12).



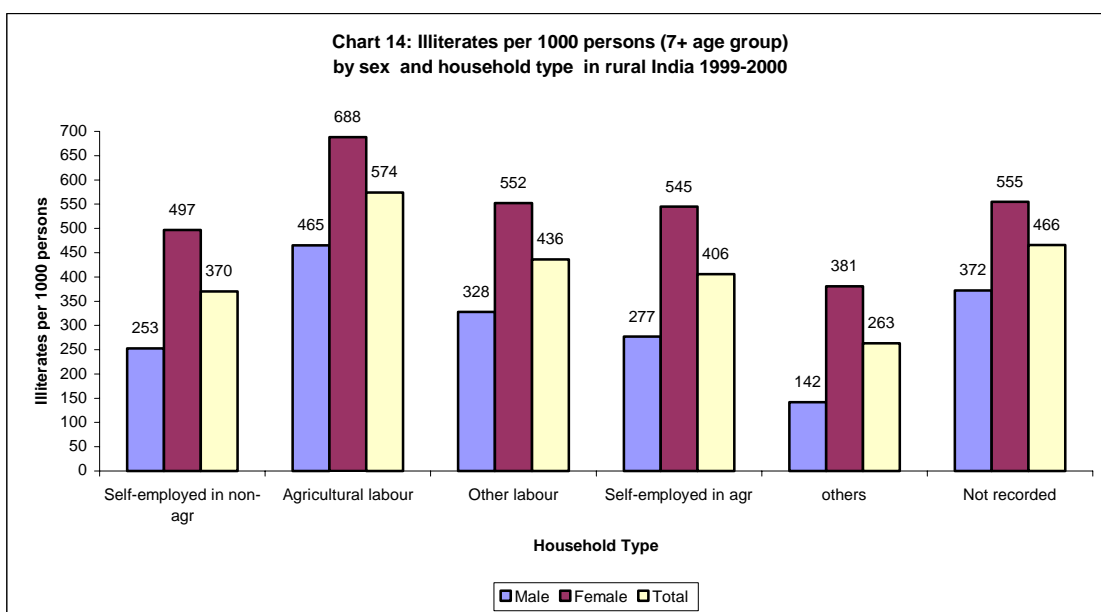
Source: Ibid.

In urban areas in these 7 states, the illiteracy rate of SC population was more than 50% in Bihar, and more than 40% in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The illiteracy rate of ST population was more than 40% in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Even the urban OBC are not better off in literacy in these states, particularly in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (see Chart 13). In general, the illiteracy rates of SC, ST and OBC population were much lower in urban areas compared to that of the rural areas. It may be noted that these states are not very urbanized, and therefore, most of the illiterates live in villages. As per 2001 Census, while 27.78% of population lives in urban area in India, the share of urban population is much lower in Rajasthan (23.38%), Uttar Pradesh (20.78%), Bihar (10.47%) and Madhya Pradesh (26.67%). Among the 7 states, Maharashtra has the largest share of urban population (42.4%), where around one-fifth of the urban SCs and STs are illiterate.

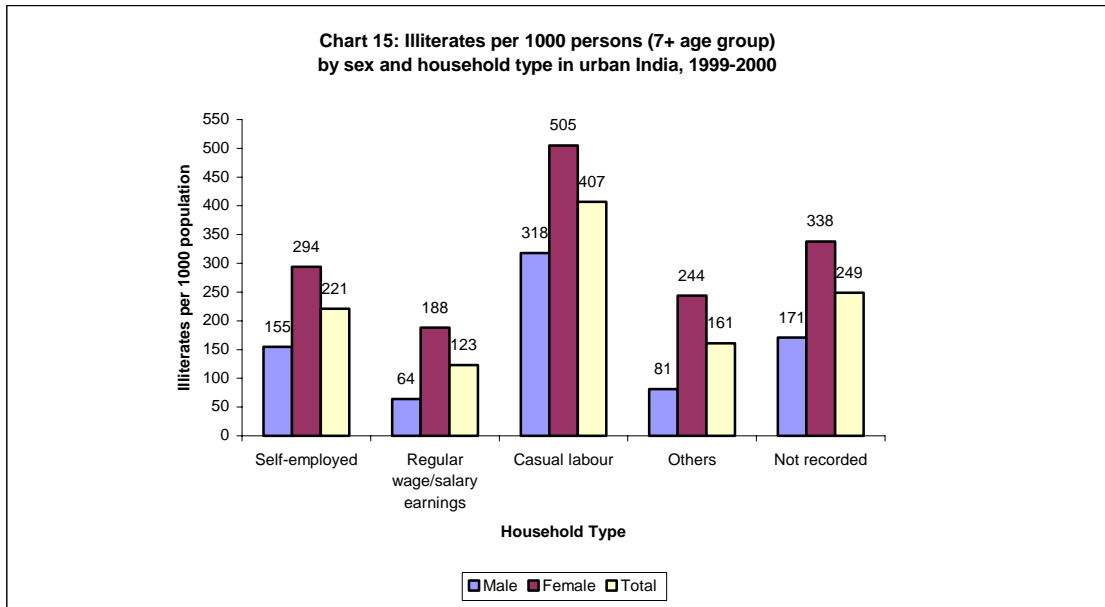


Source: Ibid.

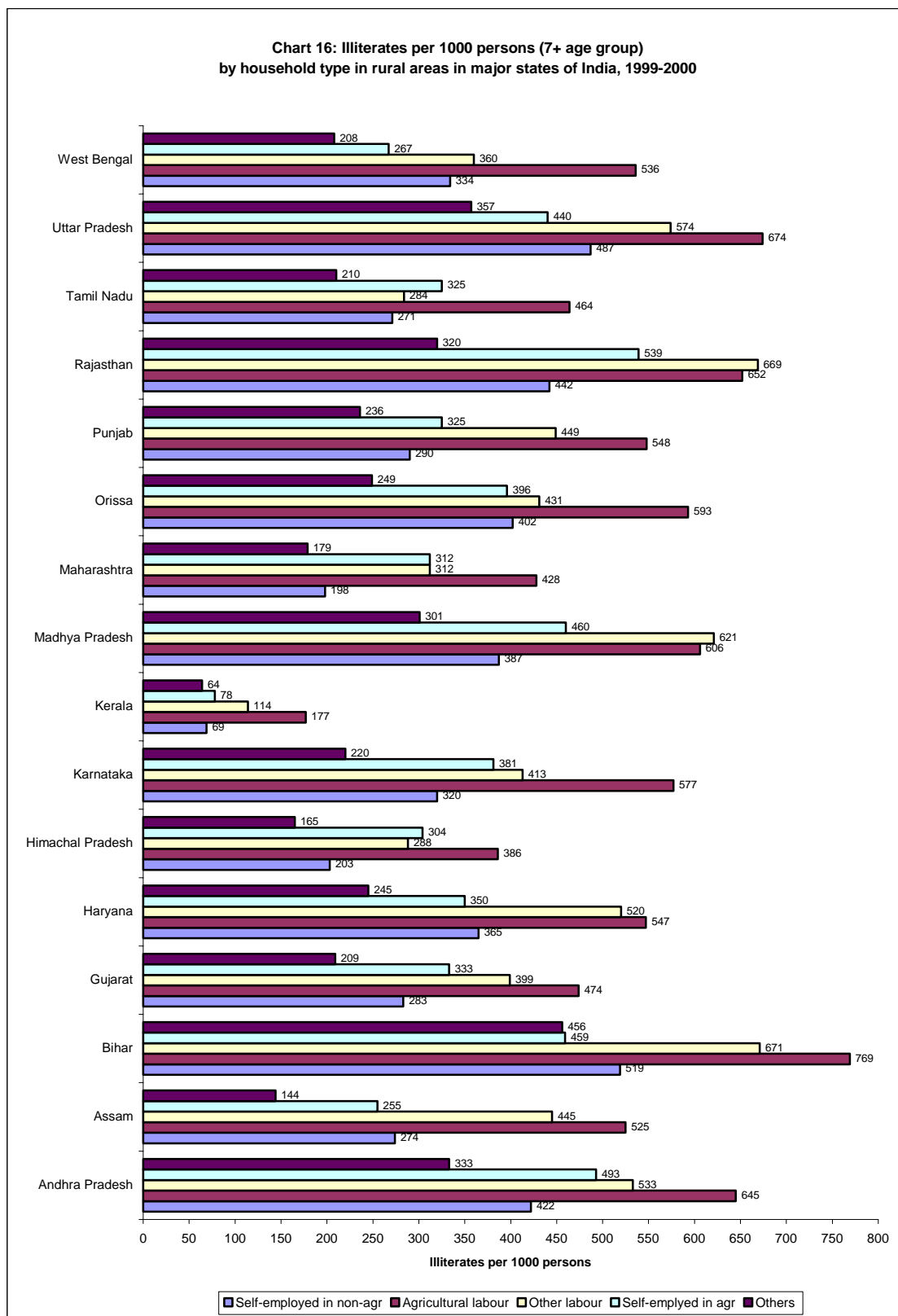
Analysis of NSS, 55th round data by household type reveals that the literacy rate of agricultural labourers is the lowest in rural areas. In urban areas, the literacy rate of the casual laborers is distinctly very low. In rural India, the illiteracy rate of agricultural labourers was 57.4% (46.5% for males and 68.8% for females) in 2000 (see Chart 14). In urban India, the illiteracy rate of casual laborers was 40.7% (31.8% for males and 50.5% for females) in the same year (see Chart 15). The female illiteracy rate was the highest agricultural labour households in rural areas, and casual labour households in urban areas. This implies that the economic status of the households is directly related to the literacy level in the country. Moreover, states where most of the illiterates are found have high illiteracy rates among agricultural labourers and casual labourers. As per NSS, 55th round, compared to other states, the illiteracy rate of agricultural labourers in rural areas was very high in Bihar (76.9), Andhra Pradesh (64.5%), Madhya Pradesh (60.6%), Orissa (59.3%), Rajasthan (65.2%), West Bengal (53.6%), and Uttar Pradesh (67.4%) in 2000 (see Chart 16).



Source: Ibid.



Source: Ibid.



IV. Who are the Illiterates?

Who are the illiterates? Illiterates are found across all regions and demographic groups in India. They are found in both rural and urban areas; relatively more in rural areas because of obvious reasons. They are mostly females and belong to socio-economically backward communities, particularly SCs and STs. Poverty happens to be the

single most important factor contributing to the high illiteracy rate in the country. Even without any empirical evidence, one can draw a conjecture between the high concentrations of agricultural labourers in districts having high illiteracy rate. Discussions in the preceding section also reveals that the 7 states having around 65% of illiterates have high concentration of SCs and STs, and the illiteracy rates of agricultural and casual labour households are relatively very high. Besides, in most of the states, where female illiteracy rate is high, the percentage share of females in total agricultural labourers is also high (see Chart A3 in Annexure I). However, there are few states, high female illiteracy rate is accompanied by low share of female agricultural labourers, primarily because women are engaged in other household based paid activities or other commercial activities, particularly in Rajasthan and northeastern states.

District level analysis also shows that the correlation coefficients among the number of illiterates, SC and ST population and the number of agricultural labourers are extremely high, positive and significant (see Table 5). A correlation coefficient of 0.750 (significant at 0.01 level) supports the fact that irrespective of the social characteristics, low economic status of the households (agricultural labourers as a proxy variable) contributes to high illiteracy rate. This finding is further supported by the findings of the NSS, 55th round that the level of illiteracy and the Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE²⁹) of households are inversely related to each other.

Table 5: Correlations among illiterates, SC and ST population, and agricultural labour in India, 2001 (based on district level records, N=591)

	Number of illiterates (persons) 2001	SC population (persons) 2001	ST population (persons) 2001	Estimated number of agricultural labourers 01
Number of illiterates (persons) 2001	1.000	0.711**	0.142**	0.750**
SC population (persons) 2001		1.000	-0.097*	0.524**
ST population (persons) 2001			1.000	0.212**
Estimated number of agricultural labourers 01				1.000

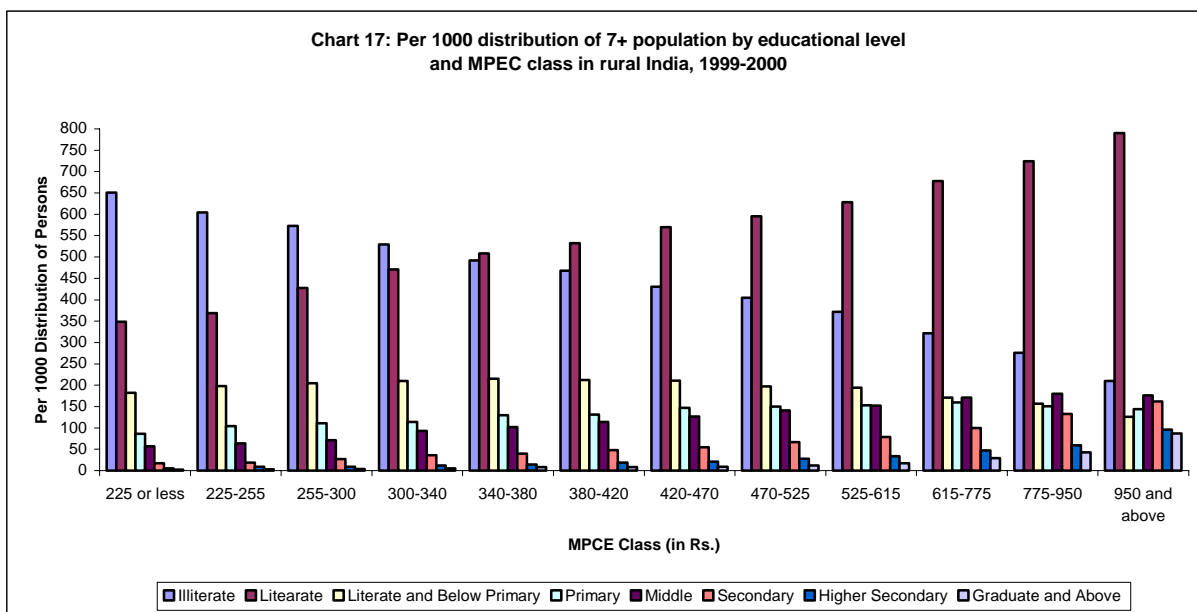
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

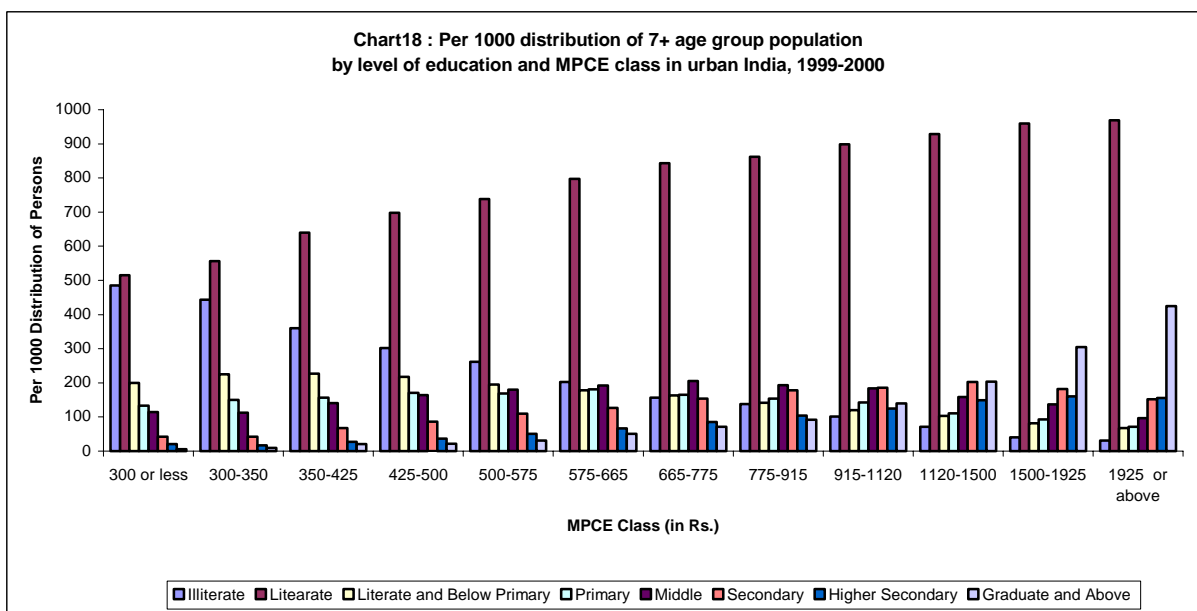
As per NSS, 55th round, the educational attainment and economic status of households are directly related to each other. Illiteracy rate is relatively high among members of households having low MPCE, both in rural and urban areas (see Charts 17 and 18). Compared to urban areas, the literacy rate increases relatively at slower rate with the increase in the MPCE of rural households. On the other hand, the illiteracy rate declines very sharply with the increase in the MPCE of the urban households. Compared to rural areas, the percentage share of secondary school graduates and above increases at a faster rate with the increased MPCE of the urban households. In other words, MPCE as a variable directly explains the economic characteristics of the household, and now, it is

²⁹ MPCE is defined in NSS, 55th round as the per capital consumer expenditure in the last 30 days of the survey. MPCE = (Household's last 30 days total consumer expenditure / Household size). In the NSS, 55th round, the MPCE classes have been assigned to households based on the data with reference period of "365 days" for items of education, medical expenses (institutional, clothing, footwear, and durable goods and of "last 30 days" for the rest of the items. NSSO, Report No. 473, p. 11, 2001.

evident that poverty is the most important factor explaining the low literacy level of rural households. Besides, cultural factors also contribute to the low literacy status of households, particularly in the Hindi heartland on India. It is also argued that, in this region of the country mainly covering Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, much weaker process of emergence of sub-nationalism and a virtual failure to give rise to a middle class, which in most other parts of the country have spearheaded the social reforms, have created a value system perhaps that does not give adequate recognition to education as a critical individual endowment.³⁰



Source: Table A1 in Annexure I.



Source: Table A2 in Annexure I.

V. Concluding Remarks

The last two decades have shown enormous improvement in the literacy scene in the country as reflected by the average literacy figures. Yet, the country has more than 300

³⁰ For a detailed discussion, see Gupta, Shaibal, 2000.

million illiterates (7+ age group). Where are they and who are they? Though illiteracy still remains to be wiped out in every state, the burden in terms of numbers seems to be carried by a few states, namely, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Not surprisingly, analysis shows that the gender disparity is also higher in these states. A positive feature is that some of these states like Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have recorded very substantial increase in female literacy between 1991 and 2001 indicating the possibility of reducing gender disparity fairly quickly, if the trend continues. Though most of the so-called educationally backward states have contributed positively towards the decline in the number of illiterates in the country, Bihar remains a classic case of underdevelopment, where slow progress in literacy and high growth of population have made a huge addition to the pool of illiterates in the country.

It is important to note that educational development is not uniformly poor in all these states. For instance, Maharashtra is among the leading states in overall status of primary education as well as literacy. This points to the existence of intra-state disparities that are as important as inter-state disparities. In this context it is significant to note that in 20% districts, the average literacy rate is below 50%. When female literacy is considered, more than 40% districts are found to show less than 50% literacy rate. Around 65% of illiterates are found concentrated in 7 states, and 67 districts across 9 major states have million plus illiterates which together account for around 30% of the illiterates in 2001. In other words, it is these states and districts, which need special efforts for reducing illiteracy, whether through direct adult literacy programmes or through intensified programmes of primary education.

Examining the changing age profile of literates reveals that the literacy rate has increased steadily since 1961, in all age groups. In fact, the trajectory of change clearly indicates that the increase has come essentially due to increased primary school participation. Further, what is alarming is that an estimated 22.65 million children in the age group 15-19 were illiterates. Youth illiteracy (age group 15-29) appeared to be quite high with an estimated number of around 79 million illiterates. Analysis of the NSS, 55th round data shows that the literacy rates of socio-economically disadvantaged groups such as the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to be very low, particularly in the educationally backward states in the Hindi heartland and Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. More revealing is the fact that the illiteracy rates of casual and agricultural labourers are relatively very high in these states.

Who are illiterates is a difficult proposition to examine, as many factors including their location in different states matter significantly. Illiterates are found across all demographic, socio-economic and age groups, showing that inefficiency in primary education continue to be a major factor for continuation of illiteracy. Illiterates are relatively more in rural areas because of obvious reasons and females are substantially higher with a differential of 24% found in 2001. An overarching observation is that irrespective of location, gender and religion, poverty continues to be the most important determining factor. Taking concentration of agricultural labourers as a proxy for poverty levels, it was found that presence of illiterates and agricultural labourers particularity among female population goes hand in hand in most of the states. As per NSS, 55th round, the illiteracy level and the Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and the illiteracy rate are inversely related to each other, both in rural and urban areas, thereby further supporting our argument that poverty is one of the critical factors determining literacy level of households in India.

The implication is clear. While progress in primary education accounts for overall progress in literacy rates, its reach and coverage continues to be inadequate with respect to socially and economically disadvantaged population. This may not be a new observation. But it is significant for identifying the districts and groups that should become the focus of intensified intervention in order to make faster progress in reducing illiteracy levels in the country.

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Annexure I

Table A1: Per 1000 distribution of persons aged 7 and above by level of education and PMCE class in rural India in 1999-2000

MPCE Class (In Rs.)	Illiterate	Literate	Literate and Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduate and Above	All
225 or less	651	349	182	86	57	17	5	2	1000
225-255	604	369	198	104	64	19	9	3	1000
255-300	573	427	205	111	71	27	9	4	1000
300-340	529	471	210	114	93	36	12	5	1000
340-380	492	508	215	130	102	40	14	8	1000
380-420	468	532	212	131	114	48	19	8	1000
420-470	430	570	211	147	127	55	21	9	1000
470-525	405	595	197	150	141	67	28	12	1000
525-615	372	628	194	153	152	79	34	17	1000
615-775	322	678	171	160	171	100	47	29	1000
775-950	276	724	157	151	180	133	59	43	1000
950 and above	210	790	126	144	176	162	96	87	1000

Source: NSS, 55th Round, "Literacy and Levels of Education in India, 1999-2000." Report No. 473 (55/1.0/11), 2001.

Table A2: Per 1000 distribution of persons aged 7 and above by level of education and PMCE class in urban India in 1999-2000

MPCE Class (In Rs.)	Illiterate	Literate	Literate and Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduate and Above	All
300 or less	485	515	200	133	114	42	21	6	1000
300-350	444	556	225	150	113	42	17	9	1000
350-425	360	640	227	157	141	68	27	21	1000
425-500	302	698	218	171	164	86	37	22	1000
500-575	262	738	195	169	180	110	51	31	1000
575-665	203	797	178	181	192	127	67	51	1000
665-775	157	843	163	165	205	154	85	71	1000
775-915	138	862	142	154	193	178	104	92	1000
915-1120	101	899	120	143	184	186	125	140	1000
1120-1500	71	929	103	111	159	203	149	204	1000
1500-1925	40	960	82	93	137	182	160	305	1000
1925 or above	31	969	68	71	97	152	156	425	1000

Source: *Ibid.*

Table A3: Per 1000 distribution of persons aged 7 and above by household type and level of education in rural and urban India, 1999-2000

Household Type	Illiterate		Literate		Lit & Below primary		Primary		Middle		Secondary		Hr. Secondary		Graduate & above	
	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U
SC	578	300	422	700	181	189	106	133	83	153	32	90	14	66	7	70
ST	534	338	466	662	192	195	119	157	92	152	39	81	16	46	8	31
OBC	452	247	548	753	194	175	134	162	123	174	58	123	25	65	14	55
Others	232	135	677	865	198	142	155	136	155	165	97	159	43	107	30	156
Not Recorded	481	236	519	764	179	187	134	87	139	148	45	172	6	91	16	79

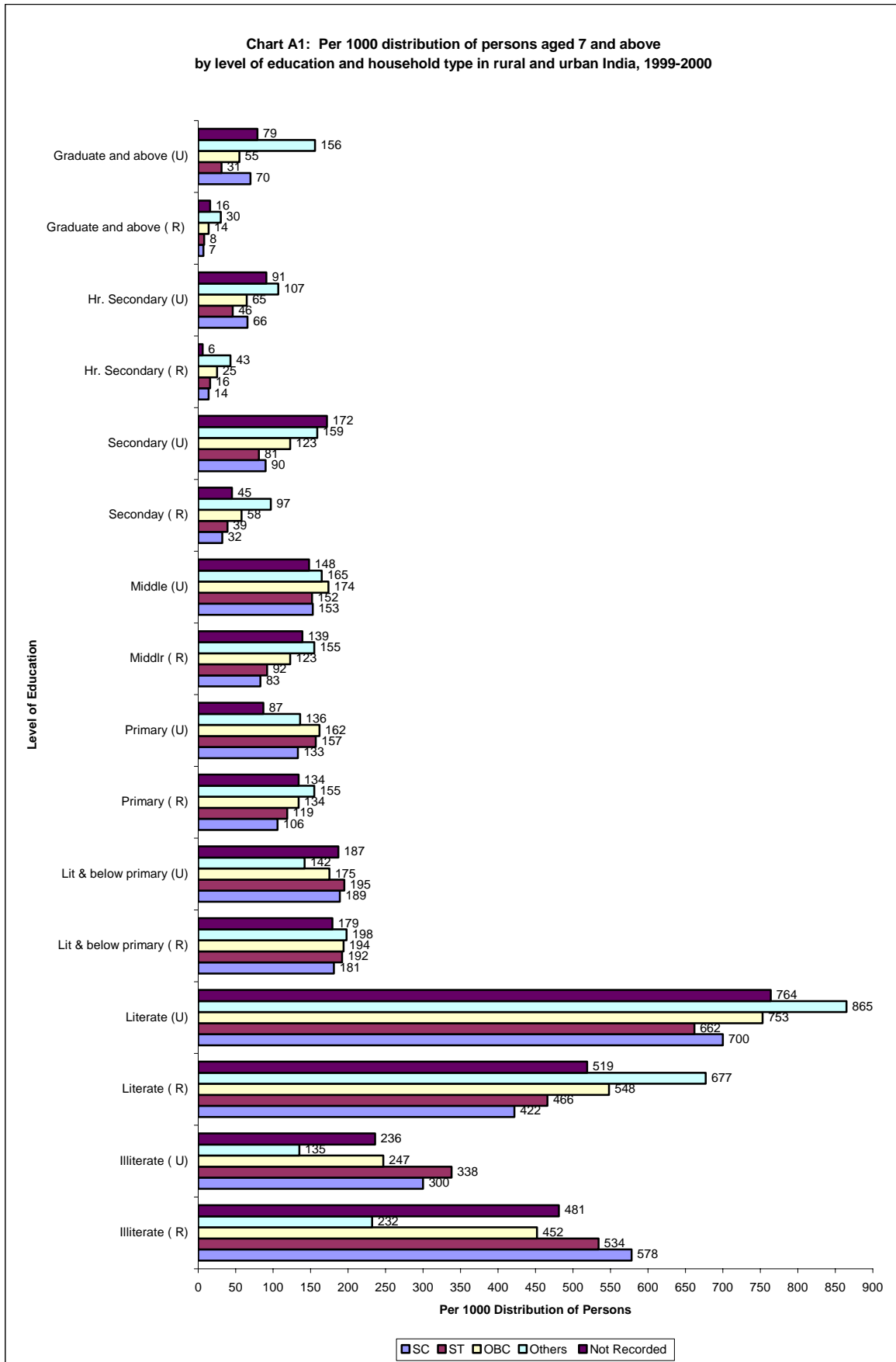
Note: R = Rural; U = Urban; SC = Scheduled caste; ST = Scheduled Tribe; OBC = Other Backward Class.

Source: *Ibid.*

Table A4: State-wise percentage of literate persons (7+ age group) based on NSS 55th Round (1999-2000) and Census of India 2001, (rural+ urban)

State/UT	Male		Female		Person	
	NSS 55 th Round	Census 2001	NSS 55 th Round	Census 2001	NSS 55 th Round	Census 2001
Andhra Pradesh	64	71	45	51	54	61
Arunachal Pradesh	60	64	48	44	55	55
Assam	78	72	63	56	71	64
Bihar	59	60	31	34	46	48
Goa	91	89	77	76	84	82
Gujarat	80	81	57	59	69	70
Haryana	76	79	54	56	65	69
Himachal Pradesh	84	86	67	68	75	77
Jammu and Kashmir	79	66	53	42	66	54
Karnataka	73	76	53	57	63	67
Kerala	94	94	87	88	91	91
Madhya Pradesh	69	77	42	50	56	64
Maharashtra	84	86	64	68	74	77
Manipur	79	78	67	60	73	69
Meghalaya	82	66	75	60	78	63
Mizoram	95	91	93	86	94	88
Nagaland	92	72	79	62	86	67
Orissa	69	76	46	51	57	64
Punjab	74	76	61	64	68	70
Rajasthan	70	76	35	44	53	61
Sikkim	82	77	67	61	75	70
Tamil Nadu	80	82	62	65	71	73
Tripura	85	81	71	65	78	74
Uttar Pradesh	68	70	41	43	55	57
West Bengal	75	78	57	60	66	69
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	88	86	78	75	83	81
Chandigarh	87	86	77	77	82	82
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	73	73	47	43	62	60
Daman and Diu	91	88	74	70	84	81
Delhi	93	87	77	75	86	82
Lakshadweep	93	93	83	82	88	88
Pondichery	89	89	75	74	81	81
All India	73	76	51	54	62	65

Source: *Ibid.*



Source: Table A3.

Table A5: State-wise number of illiterates in India, decadal decreases in illiterates and percentage contribution in decrease, 1991-2001

S. No.	State/UT	Number of illiterates		Decadal decrease in the number of illiterates	Percentage change	Contribution in the decrease
		1991	2001			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Himachal Pradesh***	1540150	1194777	345373	22.42	1.08
2.	Punjab	7043608	6379994	663614	9.42	2.08
3.	Chandigarh	121185	144413	-23228	-19.17	-0.07
4.	Uttaranchal	2454593	1984993	469600	19.13	1.47
5.	Haryana	5889463	5598873	290590	4.93	0.91
6.	Delhi	1930951	2155932	-224981	-11.65	-0.70
7.	Rajasthan	21597410	17935918	3661492	16.95	11.46
8.	Uttar Pradesh	62313875	57810542	4503333	7.23	14.09
9.	Bihar	31986516	34968650	-2982134	-9.32	-9.33
10.	Sikkim	142870	140495	2375	1.66	0.01
11.	Arunachal Pradesh	398323	403266	-4943	-1.24	-0.02
12.	Nagaland	384323	561941	-177618	-46.22	-0.56
13.	Manipur	613840	646287	-32447	-5.29	-0.10
14.	Mizoram	99553	86259	13294	13.35	0.04
15.	Tripura	894103	727997	166106	18.58	0.52
16.	Meghalaya	702944	678184	24760	3.52	0.08
17.	Assam	8476418	7960619	515799	6.09	1.61
18.	West Bengal	23906271	21266590	2639681	11.04	8.26
19.	Jharkhand	10220865	10143063	77802	0.76	0.24
20.	Orissa	13396318	11472584	1923734	14.36	6.02
21.	Chhatisgarh	8111922	6033286	2078636	25.62	6.50
22.	Madhya Pradesh	21512377	17860686	3651691	16.97	11.43
23.	Gujarat****	12661634	12469293	192341	1.52	0.60
24.	Daman and Diu	24712	26108	-1396	-5.65	0.00
25.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	65306	72448	-7142	-10.94	-0.02
26.	Maharashtra	22985512	18998379	3987133	17.35	12.48
27.	Andhra Pradesh	31056061	25689502	5366559	17.28	16.79
28.	Karnataka	16486397	15132802	1353595	8.21	4.24
29.	Goa	252881	212484	40397	15.97	0.13
30.	Lakshadweep	7695	6454	1241	16.13	0.00
31.	Kerala	2575157	2559343	15814	0.61	0.05
32.	Tamil Nadu	18074652	14668772	3405880	18.84	10.66
33.	Pondichery	176177	159372	16805	9.54	0.05
34.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	63226	58646	4580	7.24	0.01
	All India* '***'	328167288	296208952	31958336	9.74	100.00

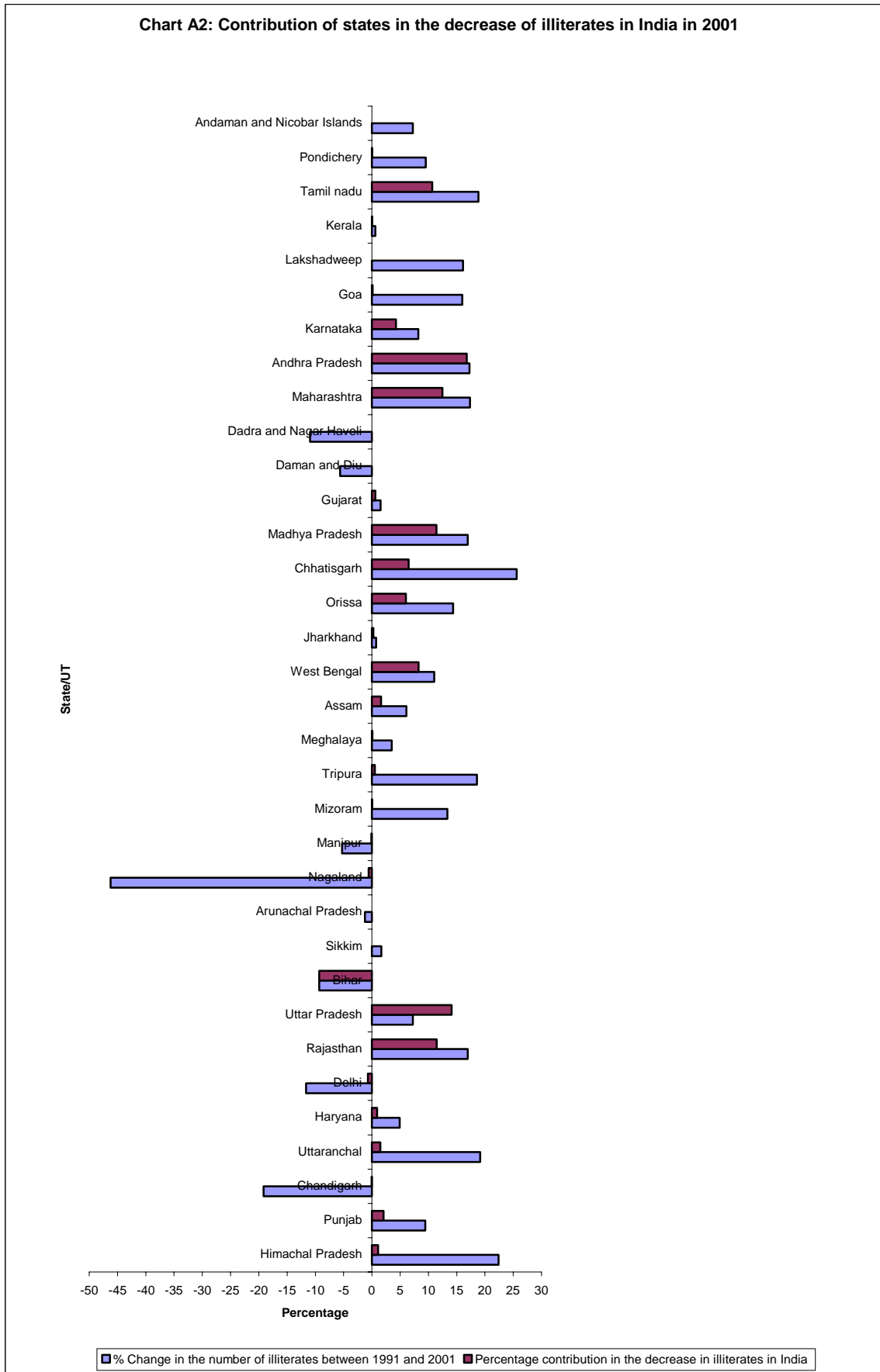
Notes: * For making the data comparable, the number of illiterates given in Column 4 against India excludes the figure for Jammu and Kashmir for 2001, as this data is not available for the state for 1991 Census, since Census could not be conducted due to disturbed condition.

*** To make the data comparable, the number of illiterates shown in Column 3 against India for 1991 excludes the number of illiterates of entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya- Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district of Gujarat state and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.

*** To make the data comparable, the number of illiterates shown against Himachal Pradesh in Column 3 for 1991 census excludes the figure of illiterates of entire Kinnaur district where census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.

**** To make the data comparable, the number of illiterates shown against Gujarat in Column 3 for 1991 census excludes the figures of illiterates of entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya- Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamnagar district where census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.

Source: Census of India, 2001, *State of Literacy* (Chapter 7), Provisional Population Totals, Series 1, India, Paper 1 of 2001.



Source: Table A5.

Table A6: State-wise literacy rate by sex in India, 1991 and 2001.

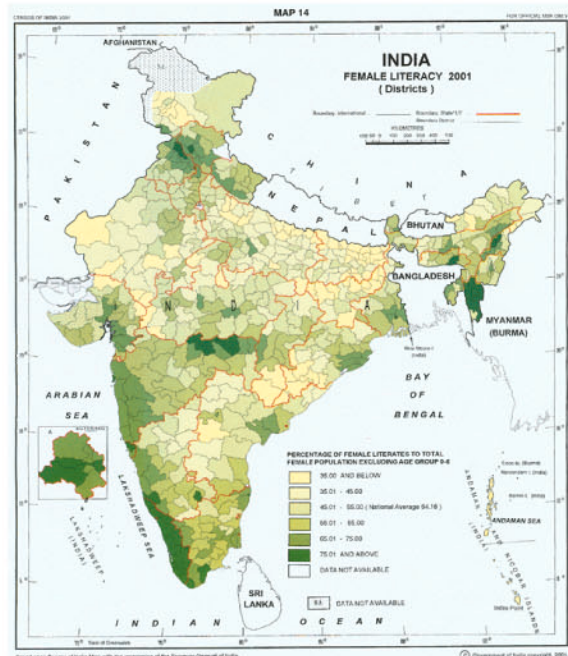
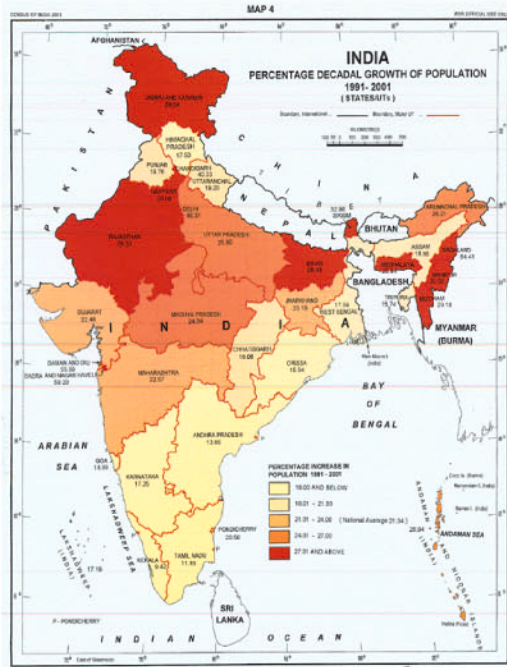
S.No.	State/UT	Literacy Rate, 2001 Census (%)			Literacy rate 1991 Census (%)	Change in Literacy Rate (1991-2001)
		Person	Male	Female		
1	Andaman & Nicobar Is.*	81.18	86.07	75.29	73.02	8.17
2	Andhra Pradesh	61.11	70.85	51.17	44.09	17.02
3	Arunachal Pradesh	54.74	64.07	44.24	41.59	13.15
4	Assam	64.28	71.93	56.03	52.89	11.52
5	Bihar	47.53	60.32	33.57	37.49	10.04
6	Chandigarh*	81.76	85.65	76.65	77.81	3.94
7	Chhatisgarh	65.18	77.86	52.40	42.91	22.27
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli*	60.03	73.32	42.99	40.71	19.33
9	Daman & Diu*	81.09	88.40	70.37	71.20	9.89
10	Delhi*	81.82	87.37	75.00	75.29	6.53
11	Goa	82.32	88.88	75.51	75.51	6.81
12	Gujarat	69.97	80.50	58.60	61.29	8.68
13	Haryana	68.59	79.25	56.31	55.85	12.74
14	Himachal Pradesh	77.13	86.02	68.08	63.86	13.27
15	Jammu & Kashmir	54.46	65.75	41.82	NA	NA
16	Jharkhand	54.13	67.94	39.38	41.39	12.74
17	Karnataka	67.04	76.29	57.45	56.04	11.00
18	Kerala	90.92	94.20	87.86	89.81	1.11
19	Lakshadweep *	87.52	93.15	81.56	81.78	5.74
20	Madhya Pradesh	64.11	76.80	50.28	44.67	19.41
21	Maharashtra	77.27	86.27	67.51	64.87	12.39
22	Manipur	68.87	77.87	59.70	59.89	8.97
23	Meghalaya	63.31	66.14	60.41	49.10	14.21
24	Mizoram	88.49	90.69	86.13	82.27	6.22
25	Nagaland	67.11	71.77	61.92	61.65	5.45
26	Orissa	63.61	75.95	50.97	49.09	14.52
27	Pondicherry*	81.49	88.89	74.13	74.74	6.74
28	Punjab	69.95	75.63	63.55	58.51	11.45
29	Rajasthan	61.03	76.46	44.34	38.55	22.48
30	Sikkim	69.68	76.73	61.46	56.94	12.61
31	Tamil Nadu	73.47	82.33	64.55	62.66	10.81
32	Tripura	73.66	81.47	65.41	60.44	13.22
33	Uttar Pradesh	57.36	70.23	42.98	40.71	16.65
34	Uttaranchal	72.28	84.01	60.26	57.75	14.53
35	West Bengal	69.22	77.58	60.22	57.70	11.52
	India 1	65.38	75.96	54.28	51.63	13.75

Notes:

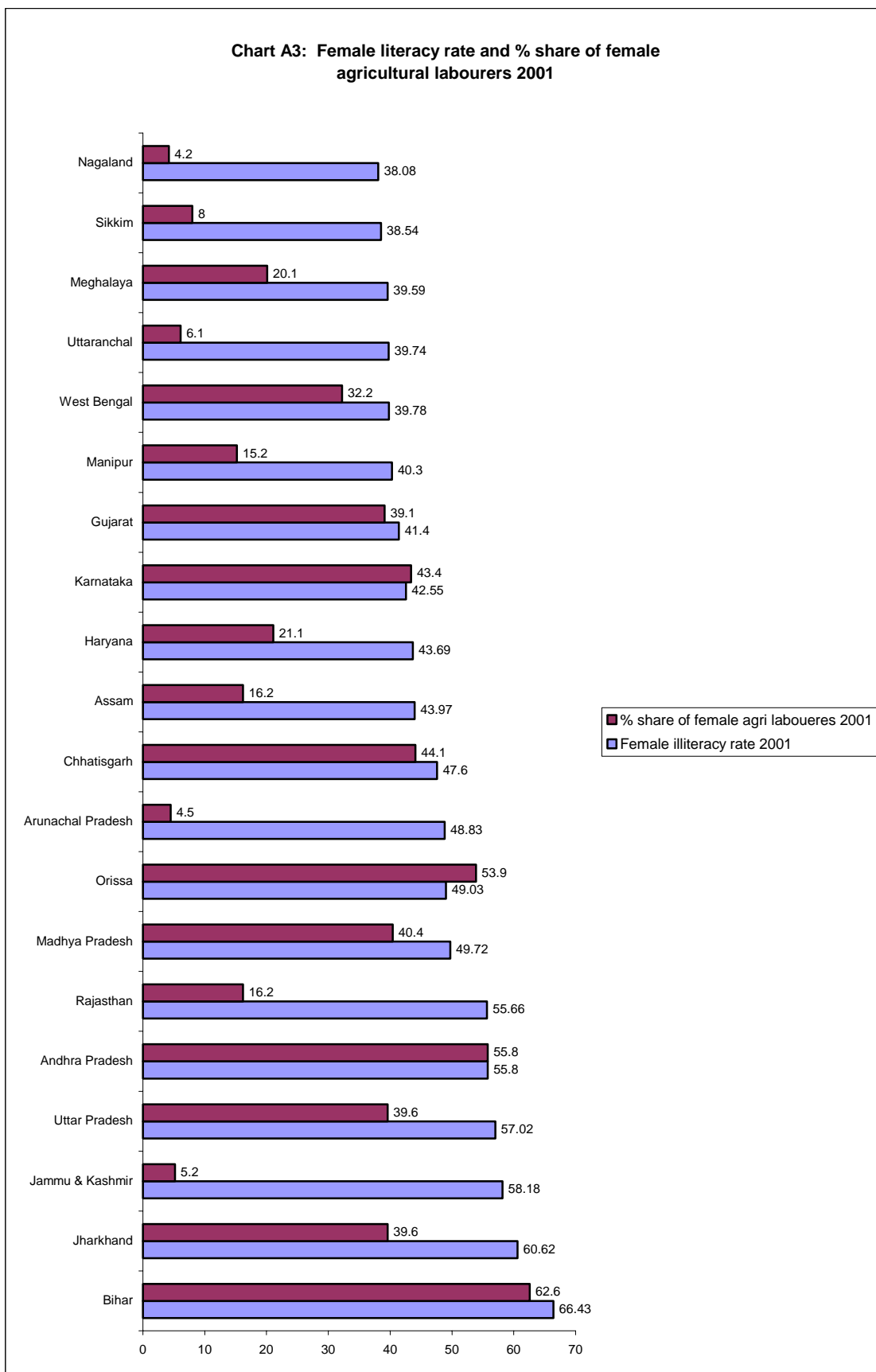
1. The population of India includes the estimated population of entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamanagar district of Gujarat State and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.
2. Figures shown against Population in the age-group 0-6 and Literates do not include the figures of entire Kachchh district, Morvi, Maliya-Miyana and Wankaner talukas of Rajkot district, Jodiya taluka of Jamanagar district and entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where population enumeration of Census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.
3. Figures shown against Himachal Pradesh have been arrived at after including the estimated figures of entire Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh where the population enumeration of Census of India 2001 could not be conducted due to natural calamity.

Source: *Provisional Population Totals: India* . Census of India 2001, Paper 1 of 2001.

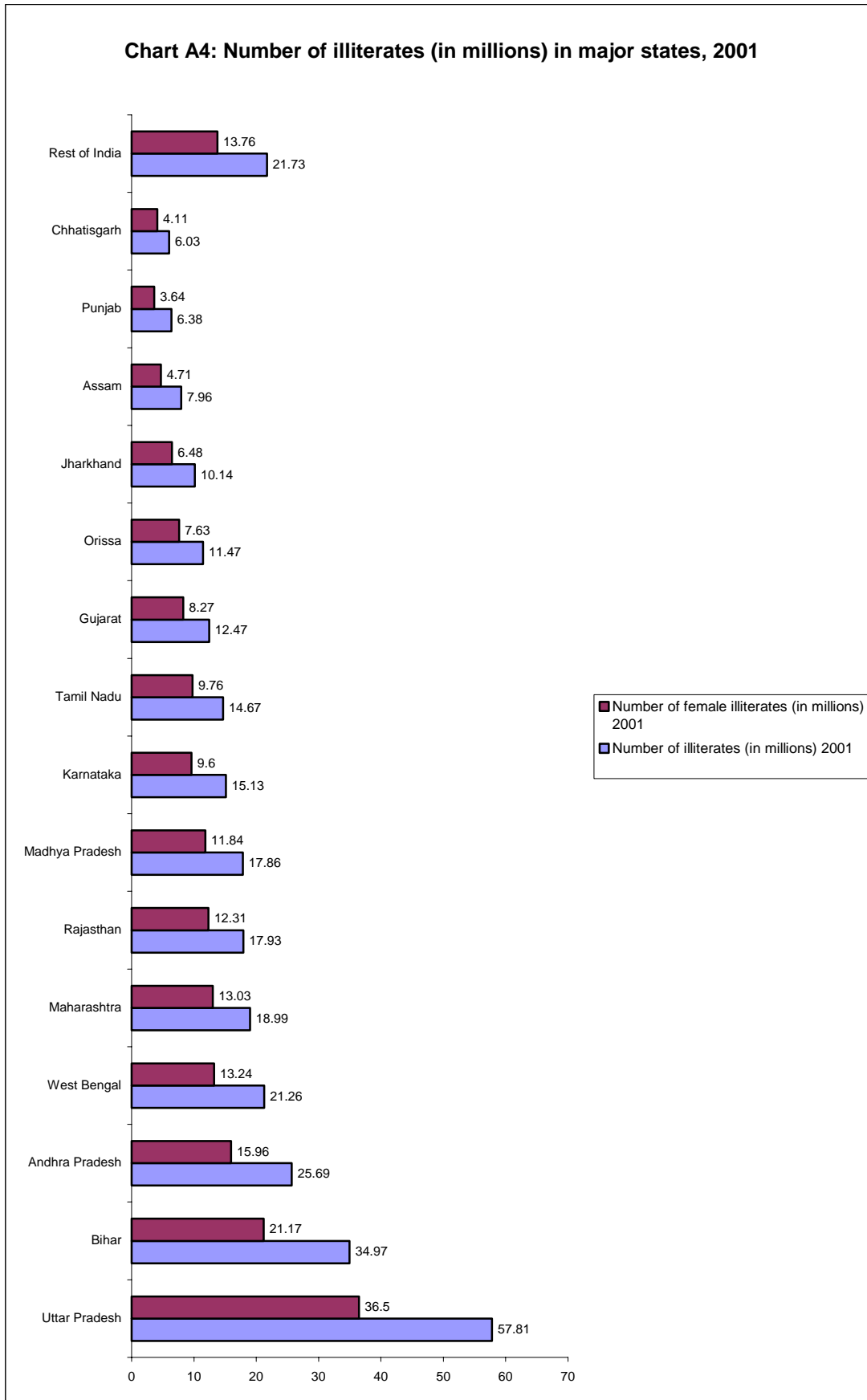
Mapping Literacy in India



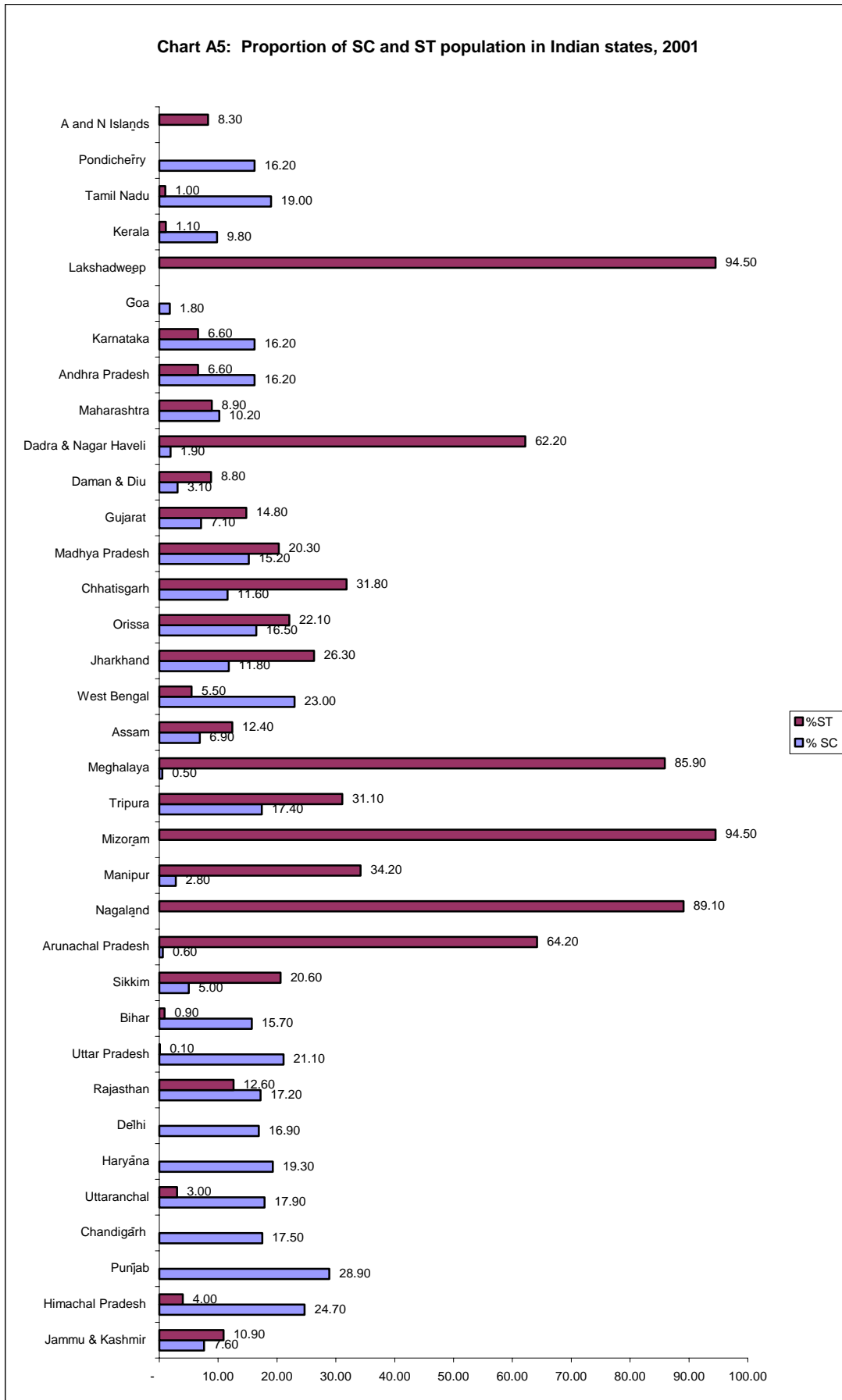
Source: Census of India 2001.



Source: Ibid.



Source: Estimated by authors using Census of India, 2001 data.



Source: Census of India, 2001.