

DENSITY OF RURAL POPULATION : A PANCHAYAT LEVEL STUDY IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT: The paper describes and explains the rural population density and its variation as seen from the data on a Panchayat level aggregation.

INTRODUCTION

Though seven Five Year Plans were completed, villages in India have not reached a stage of self supporting in all the activities. It is because of the fact that the fruits of planning have not reached the grass root level villages. If villages have to come up, the planning process has to start at village level. Having this in mind, the Planning Commission in India in its 8th Five Year Plan proposal gave importance to the rural development by adopting decentralised planning strategy. Decentralisation of planning process to the lowest level of Government carries with it the double advantage of ensuring surer specific information to serve as the basis of planning and the relatively more direct participation of the people in plan formulation and implementation (Gulati, 1988). Since 95 per cent of the total area in Kerala represents rural and 81 per cent of the total population lives in rural areas, an effort has been made in this paper to study the spatial distribution of density of rural population at Panchayat level.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim and objectives of this paper are:

i. to study the spatial distribution of density

of rural population at Panchayat level in Kerala and

ii. to give an idea of frequency of Panchayats falling under different density of rural population categories in each district in Kerala.

This would be useful for the decentralised planning at district and state level to identify priority areas for the development. This would also be useful for the implementation of rural employment programmes.

STUDY AREA

The study area, Kerala is one of the states in India, which has got 14 districts and 998 panchayats (Fig.1). It has a total panchayat area of 37,694.34 sq.km with a total panchayat population of 22,035,264 (Census,1981). Maximum number of panchayats are found in Trichur district, followed by Malappuram, Palghat, Ernakulam and other districts. Minimum number of panchayats are found in Wayanad district, followed by Kasaragod, Idukki, Pathanamthitta and other districts. Table.1 shows the district-wise distribution of panchayats, panchayat area and panchayat population in the state.

Rural areas are found more in Idukki district,

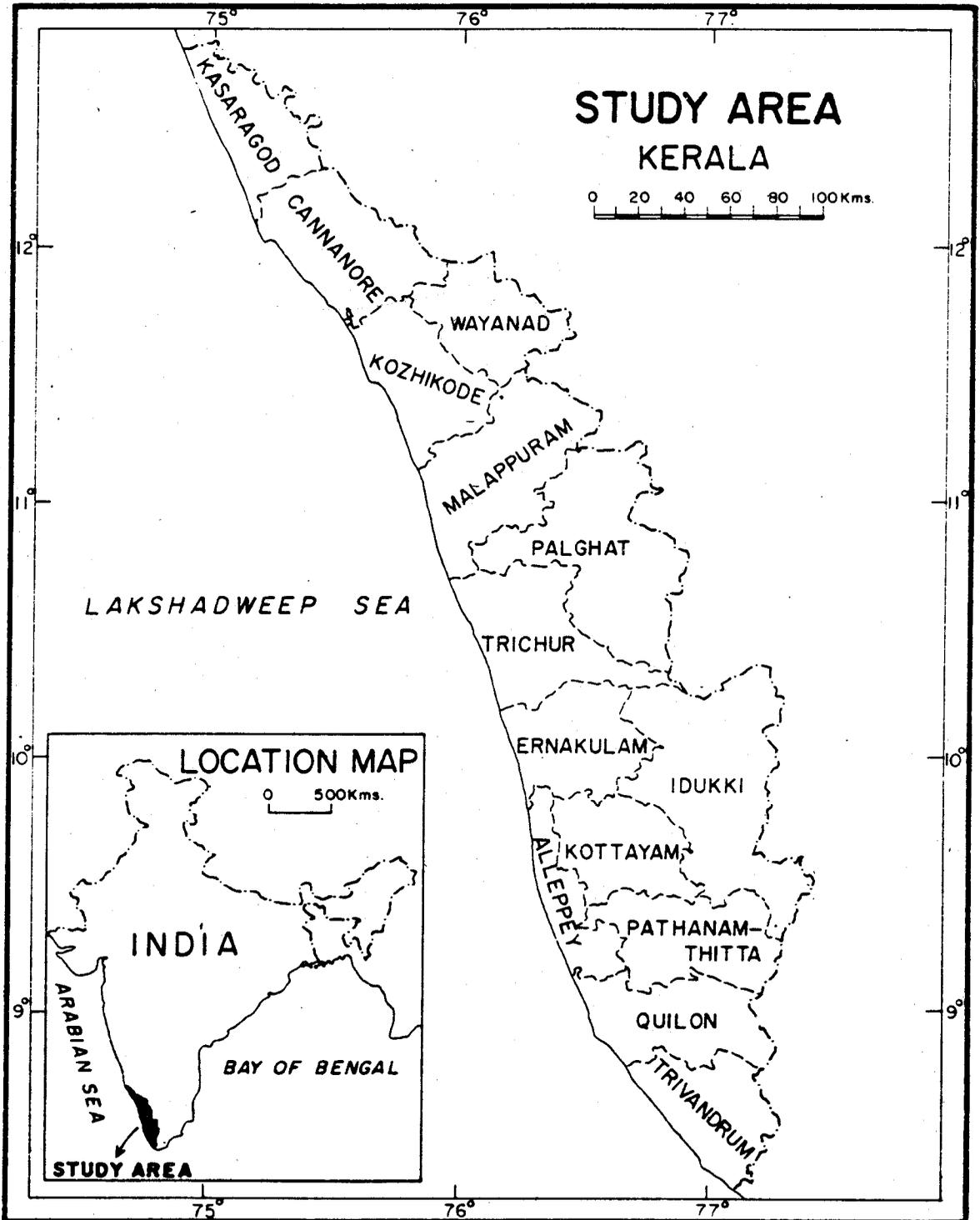


Fig. 1

followed by Palghat, Malappuram, Cannanore, Trichur and others. Alleppey district holds the lowest rank in the order of distribution of rural areas in the state. As far as rural population is concerned, Malappuram stands first in rank, followed by Trichur, Quilon, Trivandrum, Palghat, Ernakulam and other districts. Wayanad district holds the lowest rank in rural population.

> 4000 persons per sq.km
 3001 - 4000 " " "
 2001 - 3000 " " "
 1001 - 2000 " " "
 501 - 1000 " " "
 100 - 500 " " "
 < 100 " " "

TABLE 1
DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PANCHAYATS IN KERALA

Sr. No.	Districts	No. of Panchayats	Total Panchayat Area	Total Panchayat Population
1	Kasaragod	38	1944.5	829,604
2	Cannanore	85	2939.8	1,789,772
3	Wayanad	25	2125.7	554,026
4	Kozhikode	77	2229.3	1,786,644
5	Malappuram	95	3435.6	2,224,927
6	Palghat	91	4399.2	1,867,627
7	Trichur	98	2901.5	2,193,654
8	Ernakulam	85	2132.1	1,779,397
9	Idukki	51	5059.2	926,319
10	Kottayam	72	2141.7	1,529,335
11	Alleppey	70	1261.6	1,535,306
12	Pathanamthitta	53	2601.0	990,026
13	Quilon	74	2483.8	2,051,237
14	Trivandrum	84	2039.3	1,977,390
Total		998	37,694.34	22,035,264

Source: compiled from the Census, 1981.

METHODOLOGY

Area and total population data for 998 panchayats have been taken from Final Population Totals, Census, 1981. Density of population was calculated and seven class intervals were made as follows :

Based on the above classification, a choropleth map has been made to show the spatial distribution of panchayat level density of rural population in Kerala.

DENSITY OF RURAL POPULATION

Average density of rural population at pan-

chayat level in Kerala is 585 persons per sq.km. Of the total panchayats in Kerala, 72 per cent are above the state average density of rural population. Alleppey is the district where 97 per cent of the panchayats have above the state average density of rural population. Wayanad is the only district where all the panchayats are below the state average density of rural population. Table. 2 shows the district-wise number of panchayats which are above and below the state average density of rural population.

The highest rural density is found at Karumkulam panchayat in Trivandrum district with 9223 persons per sq.km. followed by Vadakkevila panchayat in Quilon district with 5109 persons per sq.km. Beypore pan-

chayat in Kozhikode district with 3933 persons per sq. km. and others.

Lowest rural density is found at Nelliampathy panchayat in Palghat district with 16 persons per sq.km. followed by Vettilappara panchayat union in Trichur district with 19 persons per sq.km. Seethathode panchayat union in Pathanamthitta district with 26 persons per sq.km. and others. Table.3 shows the district-wise highest and lowest rural density of population at panchayat level

High density of rural population is concentrated along the coastal and midland region of Kerala (fig.2.). Along the Western Ghats in the east, the density is low, showing a decreasing trend from west to east. The density of population is less in the east because of the

TABLE 2

DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF PANCHAYATS WHICH ARE ABOVE AND BELOW THE STATE AVERAGE DENSITY OF RURAL POPULATION

Sl. No.	Districts	Number of panchayats	
		above state average	below state average
1	Kasaragod	8	30
2	Cannanore	53	32
3	Wayanad	0	25
4	Kozhikode	67	10
5	Malappuram	71	24
6	Palghat	62	29
7	Trichur	84	14
8	Ernakulam	65	20
9	Idukki	4	47
10	Kottayam	46	26
11	Alleppey	68	2
12	Pathanamthitta	44	9
13	Quilon	68	6
14	Trivandrum	77	7
Total		717	281

hilly and mountainous nature of the terrain and also the panchayats in the east are covered by forests and plantations. The size of the panchayat is also bigger in the eastern side, compared to the western side.

Density of rural population is very high in panchayats which are close to the urban centres. e.g., panchayats around Quilon, Trivandrum, Alleppey, Kottayam, Cochin, Calicut and Cannanore towns. This is mainly due to the urban influence. Most densely populated panchayats are found around Quilon town in the state. It is mainly because of the narrow land-strip between Ashtamudi kayal in the east and the Lakshadweep sea in the west. Fishing is the main occupation and economy of this region. Also Quilon is one of the trade and commerce centre right from the historical past.

Frequency of panchayats are found more between 51 and 2000 persons per sq. km. class interval. Table 4 shows the district-wise distribution of frequency of panchayat unions under different class interval of density of rural population. Trivandrum and Quilon are the only districts which are showing density of rural population more than 4000 persons per sq. km. Wayanad is the district which shows frequency of panchayats only upto 501-1000 persons per sq.km. Alleppey is the district which shows no frequency of panchayats below 500 persons per sq. km. class interval.

CONCLUSION

From the study it is found out that the maximum number of panchayats are found in Trichur district and minimum number found in Wayanad district in the state. Rural areas are found more in Idukki district and less in Alleppey district. Rural population is found more in Malappuram district and less in Wayanad district. Average density of rural population at panchayat level in Kerala is 585

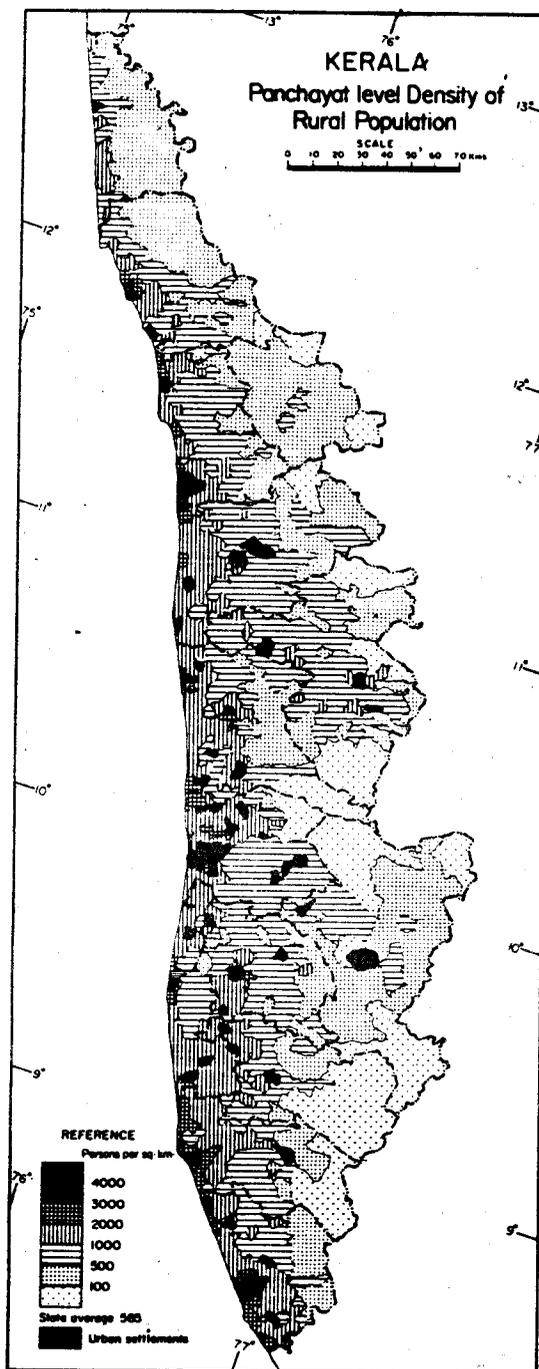


TABLE 3

DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM DENSITY OF RURAL POPULATION

Sl.No.	District	Density of rural population per sq.km.	
		Maximum	Minimum
1	Kasaragod	1233	118
2	Cannanore	3961	93
3	Wayanad	522	82
4	Kozhikode	3933	122
5	Malappuram	2206	46
6	Palghat	1513	16
7	Trichur	2708	19
8	Ernakulam	3766	72
9	Idukki	825	35
10	Kottayam	2524	248
11	Alleppey	3565	526
12	Pathanamthitta	1683	26
13	Quilon	5109	66
14	Trivandrum	9223	103

TABLE 4

DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF PANCHAYATS UNDER DIFFERENT CLASS INTERVAL OF DENSITY OF RURAL POPULATION

Sl. No.	Districts	Density of rural population							Total
		>4000	4000 to	3000 to	2000 to	1000 to	500 to	<100	
1	Trivandrum	2	1	17	37	22	5	0	84
2	Quilon	4	1	12	28	24	3	2	74
3	Pathanamthitta	0	0	0	17	28	5	3	53
4	Alleppey	0	1	3	49	17	0	0	70
5	Kottayam	0	0	1	15	40	16	0	72
6	Ernakulam	0	1	8	30	40	5	1	85
7	Idukki	0	0	0	0	14	29	8	51
8	Trichur	0	0	7	48	33	9	1	98
9	Palghat	0	0	0	8	65	15	3	91
10	Malappuram	0	0	1	38	39	16	1	95
11	Kozhikode	0	2	7	24	36	8	0	77
12	Wayanad	0	0	0	0	2	21	2	25
13	Cannanore	0	3	7	25	25	24	1	85
14	Kasaragod	0	0	0	7	10	21	0	38
Total		6	9	63	326	395	177	22	998

persons per sq.km. Seventy two per cent of the total panchayats in the state show above the state average rural density of population. Highest rural density is found at Karumkulam panchayat in Trivandrum district and the lowest rural density is found at Nellyampathy panchayat in Palghat district. Density of rural population is concentrated in the coastal and midland regions in the western side of the state. It is found low in the east along the Western Ghats. Panchayats which are close to the urban centres shows high density of

rural population due to the urban influence. Frequency of panchayats is found more between 501 and 2000 persons per sq.km. class interval.

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