



punjab geographer

A JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
PUNJAB GEOGRAPHERS, INDIA

VOLUME 7

OCTOBER 2011



SEX RATIO IN PUNJAB-HARYANA REGION, 2011

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Introduction

The cat is out of the bag. Provisional data for 2011 census stand released. Hopes on the most sensitive issue of declining sex ratio have not been belied even in the most vulnerable region-Northwestern India. However, Punjab(893), Haryana (877) still continue to be the part of acute female paucity belt even while the country as a whole improved its sex ratio from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011 despite visible signs of improvement in their child (0-6) sex ratio. The child sex ratio of Haryana improved from 818 to 830 while that of Punjab improved from 798 to 846 during 2001-11. Thus, it is interesting to note that while the child sex ratio of Haryana improved by only 11 points that of Punjab improved by 48 points during the latest inter-censal period, putting a big question mark on the status of women empowerment in Haryana.

Table1 reveals that Punjab- Haryana region had an average sex ratio of 887 which was significantly low in comparison to the national average. It indicates that the explanations for female deficiency are to be sought not only in the societal set up but also in genetics. The continued female paucity in the region for over a century could be explained only by genetical factors controlling sex ratio at birth especially of Jat community that largely occupies this belt. In addition, poor score on women empowerment coupled with male selective in-migration especially in Haryana sub-region too had their contribution. The

factor of female foeticide seems to have been arrested to some extent, more so in Punjab, while Haryana sub-region continues to display low status of women in general. This is evident from the difference in the magnitude of improvement in child sex ratio of the two sub-regions during 2001-11.

With regard to the where and what of the sex ratio in Punjab-Haryana region, Maps 1 & 2 prepared for the purpose reveal that (i) Punjab sub-region has comparatively higher sex ratio(both general and child) than Haryana sub-region;(ii) Bist -Doab belt along with Rupnagar and SBS Nagar in Punjab and Mewat and Fatehabad districts in Haryana displayed high sex ratio of more than 900; (iii) industrial belt along G.T. road in Haryana and the industrial capital of Punjab (Ludhiana) along with the emerging industrial district of Bhatinda displayed a low sex ratio of less than 870; (iv) rest of the region had a sex ratio close to the regional average; (v)the pattern of child sex ratio corresponds fairly well with the pattern of general sex ratio except that the values of child sex ratio are comparatively low in general without exception; and (vi) child sex ratio in Haryana sub-region was lower than that in Punjab sub-region.

With regard to the why and how of sex ratio pattern in the region under study, it may be said that (i) the most literate Bist-Doab belt characterised by too small landholdings has been the traditional area of emigration / out-migration where the remittances sent by such

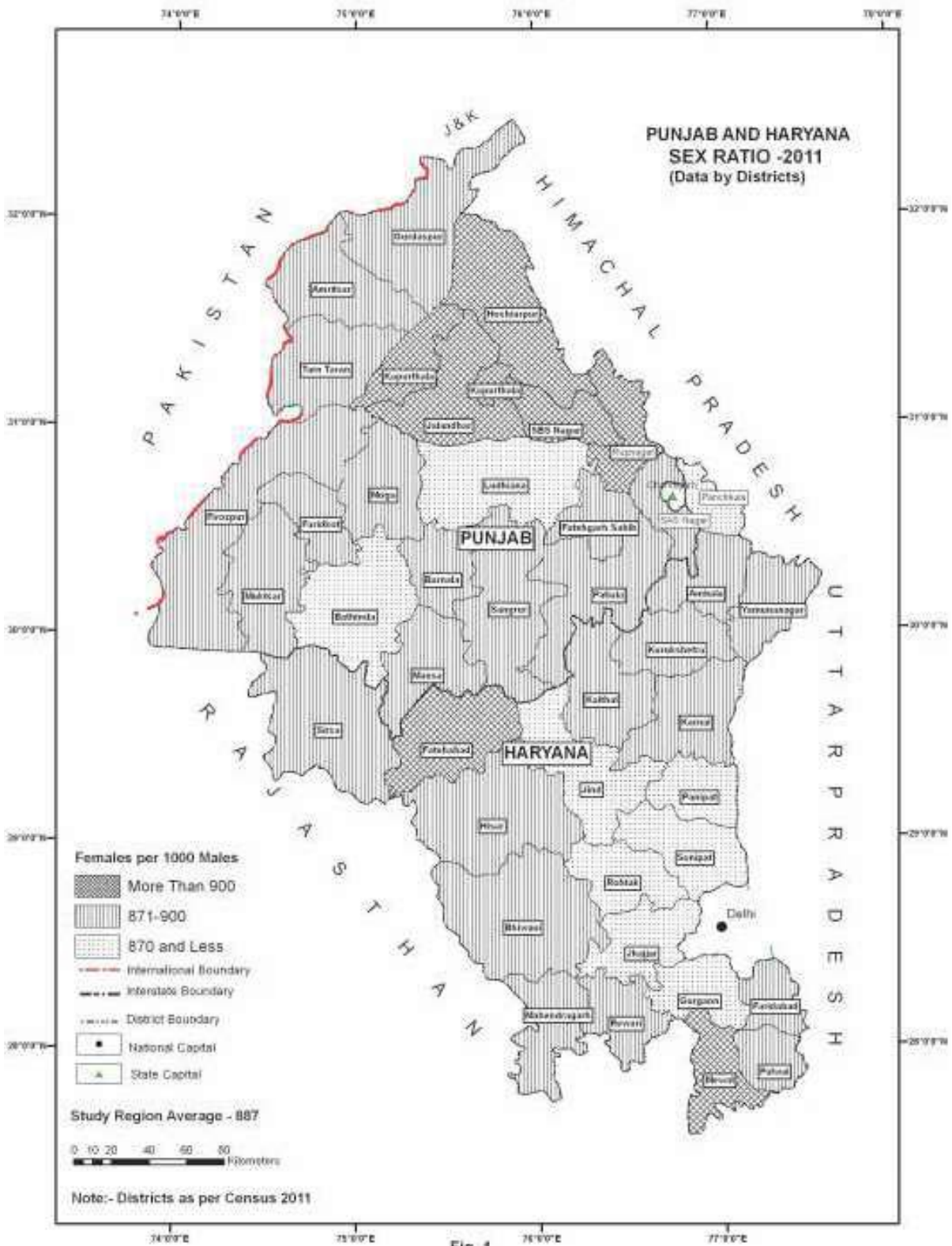
Table 1
Punjab-Haryana Region: Sex Ratio General and 0-6 Age Group - 2011

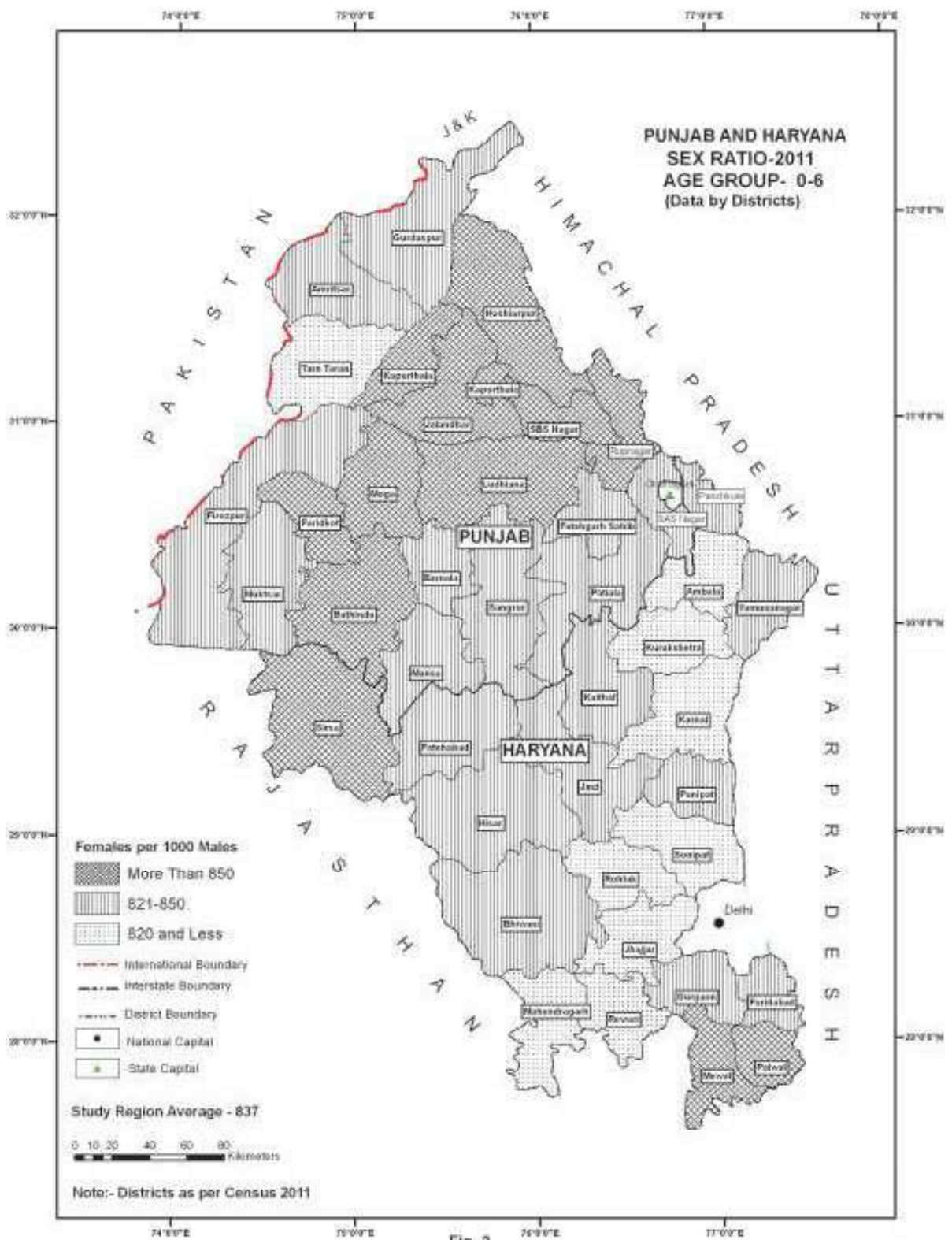
State/District	Sex Ratio General	Sex Ratio (0-6 Age Group)	State/District	Sex Ratio General	Sex Ratio (0-6 Age Group)
Punjab	893	846	Haryana	877	830
Gurdaspur	895	824	Panchkula	870	850
Kapurthala	912	872	Ambala	882	807
Jalandhar	913	874	Yamunanagar	877	825
Hoshiarpur	962	859	Kurukshetra	889	817
SBS Nagar	954	879	Kaithal	880	821
Fatehgarh Sahib	871	843	Karnal	886	820
Ludhiana	869	865	Panipat	861	833
Moga	893	863	Sonipat	853	790
Firozpur	893	846	Jind	870	835
Muktsar	895	830	Fatehabad	903	845
Faridkot	889	851	Sirsa	896	852
Bathinda	865	854	Hisar	871	849
Mansa	880	831	Bhiwani	884	831
Patiala	888	835	Rohtak	868	807
Amritsar	884	824	Jhajjar	861	774
Tarn Taran	898	819	Mahendragarh	894	778
Rupnagar	913	866	Rewari	898	784
SAS Nagar	878	842	Gurgaon	853	826
Sangrur	883	835	Mewat	906	903
Barnala	876	847	Faridabad	871	842
			Palwal	879	862

Regional Average: Sex Ratio 887, Sex Ratio (0-6 Age Group) 837
 Source: Census of India, 2011, Provisional Population Tables

emigrants provide positive feedback to stimulate further migration especially of males in search of greener pastures; (ii) the least literate Muslim dominated district of Mewat in Haryana with no evidence of female foeticide and no psychological pressure for restricting the family size was bound to produce comparatively higher sex ratio ; (iii) the rapidly growing industrial belt along the G.T. Road provided rich ground for male -selective immigration to generate low sex ratio; (iv) the menace of female foeticide was prevalent

ubiquitously except in Muslim dominated district of Mewat but was found to be most stubborn in case of Haryana sub-region due to low female literacy, low status of females in Haryana and continuing hold of traditional *Khaps* that still look down upon women while the government continues to be the silent spectator due to its vote bank policy, what surprises the academia is that despite significant improvement in literacy rates of both males and females in Haryana, the traditional hold of older generation does not





relent; (v) on the contrary, the most literate belt of Bist-Doab and Malwa belt in Punjab has shown visible signs of improvement in their child sex ratio. The persistent campaigns of the government, NGOs and the electronic media against the menace of female foeticide seems to have paid rich dividends in this regard.

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