



## Urbanization in Kerala-Trends and Consequences

### KEYWORDS

Kerala, Urbanization and Consumption

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**ABSTRACT** *The urban populace of Kerala has registered a huge growth over the last decade as the number of towns in the State increased three times during the period. The Kerala society by and large can be termed as urbanized. Kerala has been witnessing rapid urbanization since 1980. This paper focused on the trends and consequences of urbanization in Kerala. The main reason for urban population growth is the increase in the number of urban areas and also urbanization of the peripheral areas of the existing major urban centers. The shift in the consumption pattern and the lifestyle of Kerala is an important consequence of urbanization and modernization. During the last few decades, dramatic changes have taken place in habits, items and quantum of food consumption.*

### Introduction

Kerala is a small state situated in the South West corner of India with a geographical coverage of 38,863 Sq.km. It has a population of 3,33,87,677 people according to 2011 Census as against the 3,18,38,619 of 2001. The urban populace of Kerala has registered a huge growth over the last decade as the number of towns in the State increased three times during the period. This paper focused on the trends and consequences of urbanization in Kerala.

Urbanization trend in the state of Kerala shows marked peculiarities. The main reason for urban population growth is the increase in the number of urban areas and also urbanization of the peripheral areas of the existing major urban centers. However unlike the other parts of the country the Urbanization in Kerala is not limited to the designated cities and towns. The difference between rural and urban agglomerations is very negligible as far as Kerala is concerned. The Kerala society by and large can be termed as urbanized. Kerala has been witnessing rapid urbanization since 1980.

The urban sector in Kerala comprise of five Municipal Corporations and 53 Municipalities. 47.72% of the population lives in urban areas. This is very high when compared to the National average (31.16%). According to the Census 2011, the urban population of the State has grown by 92.72 per cent over the last decade. The Census of India 2001 recorded an urban population of 82,67,135 in the state which is 25.97% of the total population of 3,18,38,619 and is spreaded over 159 census towns in the state. When the urban content of the total population increased from 18.74 in 1981 to 26.44 in 1991, it showed a declining trend during the decade 1991 - 2001, with an urban content of 25.97 in 2001. The percentage decennial growth of urban population in the state was 60.89 during 1981-91. But during 1991-2001 it is only 7.64 %. The table 1 reveals the growth of rural-urban population of Kerala from 1901 to 2011 and its decadal growth rates. It shows a high urban growth rate of 92.72% from 2001 to 2011 whereas a negative growth rate is observed in the case of rural population. The total population decadal growth rate also shows a declining trend from 9.45% to 4.86%.

**Table 1 Population and its Growth from 1901-2011 in Kerala**

Sl. No.	Years	Population in Lakhs			Decadal Growth Rates		
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1	1901	59.4	4.5	63.9	-	-	-
2	1911	66.2	5.3	71.5	11.5	17.8	11.89
3	1921	71.2	6.8	78.0	7.6	28.3	9.09
4	1931	85.9	9.2	95.1	20.6	35.3	21.92
5	1941	98.3	12.0	110.3	14.4	30.4	15.98
6	1951	117.2	18.3	133.5	19.2	52.5	22.85
7	1961	143.5	25.5	169.0	22.4	39.3	24.72
8	1971	178.8	34.7	213.5	24.6	36.1	26.33
9	1981	206.8	47.7	254.5	15.7	37.5	19.20
10	1991	214.1	76.8	290.9	3.5	61.0	14.30
11	2001	235.7	82.7	318.4	7.7	10.1	9.45
12	2011	174.6	159.3	333.9	-25.96	92.72	4.86

Source: Various Census Reports

The percentage of urban population in Kerala has shown a tremendous growth in 2011 Census with 47.72%. This implies that about 50% of the population of Kerala is living in urban areas. Table 2 shows the rate of urbanization in Kerala.

**Table 2 Rate of Urbanization in Kerala**

Sl. No.	Years	% of urban Population
1	1901	7.04
2	1911	7.41
3	1921	8.07
4	1931	9.67
5	1941	10.87
6	1951	13.70
7	1961	15.08
8	1971	16.25
9	1981	18.74
10	1991	26.39
11	2001	25.97
12	2011	47.72

Source: Various Census Reports

The main reason behind the urbanization of Kerala is the increase in the number of towns due to the transformation of peripheral areas of existing urban centers in to urban areas. The development of tertiary sector in Kerala is the reason behind urbanization. Due to the job vacancies in tertiary sector many people migrated from rural to urban areas in search of employment which also contributed to the growth of urbanization. The Census report of 2011 states Ernakulam(68.07)as the most urbanized district and Wayanad (3.86) the least urbanized one. Thrissur district occupies second place in urbanization with a high percentage in urban population (67.18) .There is only a slight difference in the percentage of urban population (0.89) between Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. This means that we can expect Thrissur in the first place in the near future itself.

**Table 3 Ranking of Districts in Kerala on the basis of Urban Population (2001-2011)**

Sl. No.	Districts	% of Urban Population		Ranks in 2001	Ranks in 2011
		2001	2011		
1	Thiruvananthapuram	33.78	53.7	4	6
2	Kollam	18.02	45.1	8	7
3	Pathanamthitta	10.03	10.9	11	12
4	Alappuzha	29.36	54.0	5	5
5	Kottayam	15.35	28.57	9	10
6	Idukki	5.10	4.69	13	13
7	Ernamkulam	47.65	68.07	2	1
8	Thrissur	28.21	67.18	6	2
9	Palakkad	13.62	24.09	10	11
10	Malappuram	9.82	44.18	12	8
11	Kozhikode	38.25	67.15	3	3
12	Wayanad	3.79	3.86	14	14
13	Kannur	50.46	65.04	1	4
14	Kasargod	19.41	38.78	7	9

**Source: Census Reports 2001 and 2011**

The huge growth in urban population during the past decade could be attributed to the manifold increase in the number of towns in the State. The table 4 highlights a six fold growth in the number of census towns of Thrissur Districts from 21 in 2001 to 128 in 2011. The number of towns increased to 520 in 2011 from 158 in 2001. Similarly, total census towns in Kerala also shows an appreciating growth from 99 in 2001 to 461 in 2011.

**Table 4 District wise Classification of Towns in Kerala (2001-2011)**

Sl. No.	Districts	2001			2011		
		Statutory Towns	Census Towns	Total	Statutory Towns	Census Towns	Total
1	Thiruvananthapuram	5		5	5	26	31
2	Kollam	3		3	3	24	27

Sl. No.	Districts	2001			2011		
		Statutory Towns	Census Towns	Total	Statutory Towns	Census Towns	Total
3	Pathanamthitta	3		3	3	1	4
4	Alappuzha	5	6	11	5	33	38
5	Kottayam	4	2	6	4	13	17
6	Idukki	1		1	1		1
7	Ernamkulam	9	16	25	9	47	56
8	Thrissur	7	21	28	7	128	135
9	Palakkad	4	1	5	4	17	27
10	Malappuram	5		5	5	39	44
11	Kozhikode	3	10	13	3	48	52
12	Wayanad	1		1	1		1
13	Kannur	7	38	45	7	60	67
14	Kasargod	2	5	7	2	25	27
15	Kerala	59	99	158	59	461	520

**Source: Census Reports 2001 and 2011**  
**Consequences of Urbanization in Kerala**

Consumption pattern of the people in Kerala exhibits some interesting features. The shift in the consumption pattern and the lifestyle of Kerala is an important consequence of urbanization and modernization. Kerala occupies first place on the basis of rural MPCE among other states of India. But in the case of urban MPCE, Kerala got 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2004-05 where as it occupied 1<sup>st</sup> place in 2009-10. The MPCE of urban Kerala has shown an increasing trend from Rs.1291 in 2004-05 to Rs.2663 in 2009-10. In the case of rural Kerala, the MPCE has increased from Rs.1013 in 2004-05 to Rs.1850 in 2009-10. We can see that among the other states of India, the percentage share of food in total expenditure is very less as far as Kerala is concerned. Kerala is spending less on food consumption both in rural (37.83%) and in urban areas (31.03%). Assam is spending more in both rural (60.93%) and urban (50.43%) areas.

When we analyze different Rounds of NSSO we can see the percentage share of food expenditure in urban Kerala is reducing rapidly from 59.79% in 1987 – 88 to 31.03 in 2009 – 10. In the case of rural Kerala, it is also decreased from 59.94% in 87-88 to 37.83 in 2009-10. But in the case of India similar picture can be seen, but it is not so rapidly as in the case of Kerala.

The rural urban disparity is showing an increasing trend from 73.98% in 1970-73 to 84.69% in 2009-10. But decreasing trend is exhibiting in the case of India from 78.75% in 72 – 73 to 68.33 in 2009-10 .It is revealed that the difference between the rural and urban food expenditure shows a wide disparity in the case of Kerala.

The composition of food habits has been changed in the form of movement from the traditional articles of food consumption to costlier and fast food materials. Apart from this, non food consumption expenditure also increased tremendously in the recent years. The people of Kerala have a fascination towards durable goods, particularly electronic

items and vehicles. Competitive spending and conspicuous consumption has become the order of the day. Unable to pay back the loans taken from individuals and financial institutions, many are driven to suicide.

### Conclusion

During the last few decades, dramatic changes have taken place in habits, items and quantum of food consumption. The people in Kerala recognize consumption as a yardstick to measure socio economic status and prestige. Demonstrative and luxurious consumption has resulted in heavy financial commitment for the people. High urbanization, emergence of new rich middle class having demonstration effect in their consumer behaviour, high literacy and high social development of Kerala along with highly developed service sector would accentuated the extravagant consumer behaviour of Kerala.

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