

# Education Scenario of Scheduled Tribes: Evidences from Census (2011) and Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) 2017–2018 Data

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## Abstract

The study examined and compared various demographic and human developmental indicators, especially education and its allied aspects such as literacy, enrolment, promotion, repetition, retention, dropout and transition rates of tribal children at various school education stages. And to assess these indicators, data have been collected from secondary sources. Census reports of India, Jammu and Kashmir and Ganderbal, 2001 and 2011 have been reviewed to obtain the data related to demography and literacy. The information related to various educational indicators has been collected from Unified District Information System for Education 2017–2018. Thus, the present study is a desk research. The data have been expressed in tabular and graphical forms. The study concluded that the tribals figure significantly below the overall population on educational parameters such as literacy, enrolment, gross enrolment ratio, promotion, retention, dropout and transition rates. Moreover, variations and gaps have been found among tribals of India, Jammu and Kashmir and Ganderbal district. Gender disparities/gaps, prominent among females, raise question marks on the efficiency and management of the educational system as well as affirmative action and intervention policies of the government in mitigating disparities based either on gender, social category or location.

## Keywords

Scheduled tribes, regional disparity, gender disparity, literacy, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rate

## Introduction

India as a country is known for its sociocultural, religious, lingual and ethnic diversity. The persisting hierarchical social status, the caste system, the dominant, marginalized and disadvantaged grouping,

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actually evolves from a 'spaghetti bowl' (Bagai & Nandy, 2009) of these diverse ethnic, religious, lingual and social groups which many a time create disparities, tensions and divide. Some groups receive extra impetus, while as some are deprived and excluded educationally, socially, economically etc. The current educational system is designated for dominant and powerful groups. The marginal underprivileged groups or communities such as tribals are left unattended. The upliftment of tribal communities has been a challenging task for governments (central and state), policymakers, economists, educators, social scientists, reformers and other concerned organizations and agencies (Sofi, 2013). Since seven decades of independence, scheduled tribes (STs) face discrimination, exploitation and, to date, have been perceived as uncivilized, downtrodden and backward; they are not socially accepted by majoritarian people belonging to upper social status and castes. Psychosomatically, experiencing triviality, inequality and prejudice, tribals are often excluded from access, opportunities, participation and equity in education, economic, health, sanitation, basic needs, judiciary, transport, land and forest rights, economic and employment fields (Basu et al., 1990; Chantia & Mishra, 2015; Sen, 2000). Mohanty (2000) studied the post-independence development of STs and lauded the government efforts in terms of protective measures, socio-economic and political equity, but still a majority of the tribal communities are poverty ridden. Ironically, remotely located tribes have not reaped the benefits of such schemes and measures. An empirical study conducted by Gautam (2003) reported that school education and pedagogy appear alien to the cultural milieu of tribals and school education needs to be compatible with their lifestyle skills and cultural milieu. Burman (2009) criticized Indian policymakers for setting goals for tribal communities without actually immersing and understanding their conventional customary traditions, lifestyle and cultural milieu. While comparing STs of India with South African tribes, Sarkar et al. (2006) found that tribal regions are 'under-provided', lacking road accessibility (Anbuselvi & Leeson, 2015), basic amenities, medical and educational resources in comparison to other regions of the country and their development and deprivation are quite akin to poverty-ridden ethnocultural tribes of African sub-Saharan countries. As Manojan (2018) pointed out, the existence of the duality of social exclusion in the educational system, the failure of institutions to accept, accommodate and serve tribal children, and unrelated-cum-alien educational ecosystem hampers their active involvement in education. Numerous factors such as earning compulsion, domestic labour, school inaccessibility, inappropriate school timing and ignorance of parents are mainly responsible for the abandonment of school among tribal children (Banik & Neogi, 2015).

## **Scheduled Tribes: An Overview**

Demographically, globally there are about 370 million aboriginal people around, constituting less than 5% of the world population, representing 500 diverse cultures across 90 different countries (UNDP, 2020). Various nations have various terms for their indigenous populations; in India, they are referred to as 'STs'. When compared to other countries, India's population of 'STs' is second only to that of South Africa. In India, hundreds of tribal communities have been recognized, yet there is ambiguity about the exact numbers, although there is a reputable overall figure to work with. Variations have been observed in the Census of India 2011 and the Anthropological Survey of India 1985–1991 figures (Brahmanandam & Basu, 2015). Anthropological Survey identified that 4,635 communities are living in Indian states/union territories (UTs) ([ansi.gov.in](http://ansi.gov.in)). The number of indigenous communities among them was 732 (Das, 2016) and primitive communities were 74 (Basu, 2000). However, with the addition of one more PTG during the 5th–8th five-year plans, that is, from 1974–1979 to 1992–1997, the number rose to 75 (Sharma, 2006). According to the Census 2011 figures, there are 705 STs notified in the Indian