



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LITERACY IN PUNJAB AND GUJARAT

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*Abstract: Literacy and level of education are prime indicators of degree of development accomplished by a nation. Spread of literacy is normally related with vital traits of modern civilization such as industrialization, urbanization, modernization etc. which play an important role in bringing about structural change. It is vital for a nation's social, economic, and individual development. It empowers individuals, promotes social mobility, and contributes to economic growth, national development and global competitiveness. The growth and developmental patterns of a region can be understood in terms of the region's education, political and economic structure. In the present paper, the states of Punjab and Gujarat have been chosen to highlight the pattern of literacy with respect to gender and rural-urban location. The Indian Census data has been taken from time period 1981 to 2011 to have a comprehensive analysis of the transition of literacy over the period of the study. A comparison of the results of both the sub-national economies has also been made by the All-India level.*

**Keywords:** Literacy, economic development, gender-gap

## INTRODUCTION

Literacy and level of education are prime indicators of degree of development accomplished by a nation. Spread of literacy is normally related with vital traits of modern civilization such as industrialization, urbanization, modernization etc which play an important role in bringing about structural change. It is vital for a nation's social, economic, and individual development. It empowers individuals, promotes social mobility, and contributes to economic growth, national development and global competitiveness.

In 1981, the All-India literacy rate was 43.56 percent, consisting of 56.37 percent for males and 29.75 percent for females. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa showed a dismal picture by having literacy rates in both categories of male and female less than the All-India level. States of

Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal were above the national figures. Kerala was the only state which performed well with 81.56 percent for total literacy rate, 87.74 percent for males and 75.75 percent for females respectively.

In 1991, the literacy rates in India improved to a certain degree with 52.20 percent for total, 64.13 percent for males but only 39.29 percent for females. During this time period also the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh performed badly. The states of Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, Punjab were average. Kerala was again ranked first by having 89.81 percent total literacy rate, 93.62 percent for males and 86.13 percent for females.

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and with the passage of a couple of years since the introduction of economic reforms, India's literacy rates did not show a bright picture. The overall literacy rate was 64.83 percent comprising 75.26 percent of literate males while only 53.67 percent of literate females. During 2001 also, Kerala topped the position with 90.92 percent literate population with 94.20 percent literate men and 87.86 percent literate women. Bihar again remained at bottom with less than 50 percent literate population with just one-third of the female population being literate. States like Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka and West Bengal improved their literacy rates to some extent.

The literacy rate for India in Census 2011 worked out to be 74.04 percent. The corresponding figures for males and females were 82.14 percent and 65.46 percent respectively. Literacy rate has increased from 64.83 percent in 2001 to 74.04 percent in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21 percent. The increase in literacy rate in males and females during 2001-2011 is in the order of 6.88 percent and 11.79 percent respectively. The worst performers were Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, Punjab remained in the middle. While Kerala ranked first once again by having 93.91 percent overall literacy rate, 96.02 percent for males and 91.98 percent for females.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature on literacy studies in India is as follows:

Kothari Commission (1964) emphasized the importance of literacy in national development. Research during this period explored the relationship between literacy and economic growth, social mobility, and civic engagement.

ASER (2020) The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) has been tracking literacy rates and educational outcomes in rural India since 2005. ASER reports highlight the challenges faced by rural communities in accessing quality education.

Bhattacharya (2013): Studies have explored the relationship between literacy and economic development in India. Research has shown that literacy has a positive impact on economic growth, poverty reduction, and social mobility.

Jeffery, (2013) has highlighted the persistent social inequalities in literacy rates in India. Studies have shown that literacy rates vary significantly across caste, class, and gender lines.

Kumar (2014) has argued that literacy education in India often reinforces dominant power structures and social inequalities. Critical literacy approaches emphasize the need to challenge these power dynamics and promote more inclusive and empowering literacy practices

Bhattacharya (2015) has explored the relationship between literacy and power in India. He has shown that literacy can be both empowering and disempowering, depending on the social and cultural context.

The gaps in literature highlights that there is a need for more regional and local studies on literacy in India, exploring the specific challenges and opportunities faced by different communities.

## NEED OF THE STUDY

The growth and developmental patterns of a region can be understood in terms of the region's education, political and economic structure. In the present paper, the states of Punjab and Gujarat have been chosen to highlight the pattern of literacy with respect to gender and rural-urban location. The Indian Census data has taken from time period 1981 to 2011 to have a comprehensive analysis of the transition of literacy over the period of the study. A comparison of the results of both the sub-national economies has also been made by the All-India level.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data on literacy for total, rural-urban and male-female population were gathered from the census reports 1981,1991, 2001 and 2011 covering the time period 1980-81 to 2010-11. Since Census data are collected on decadal basis, it is not yet available for 2021 for the states for all the variables included in this study till the time of publication of this paper. Thus, to maintain uniformity, the time period for the present paper had to be limited till 2011.

### Definition of Literacy Rate

In various Censuses till 1981, the literacy rate was calculated by taking into account the total population. Later it was observed that as literacy rate will be more meaningful if the sub-population in the age group 0-6 is excluded from the total population. Thus, it was decided in 1991 to calculate literacy rate for the population seven years and above. The same concept has been retained in all census reports since 1991.

The literacy rate which is calculated by taking into account the total population in the denominator has now been termed as 'crude literacy rate', while the literacy rate taking into account the age 7 and above population in the denominator is called the 'effective literacy rate'. As per the Census (2011), the method for computing crude literacy rate and effective literacy rate is as follows:

$$\text{Crude Literacy Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Literate persons} \times 100}{\text{Total Population}}$$

$$\text{Effective Literacy Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Literate persons aged 7 and above} \times 100}{\text{Population aged 7 and above}}$$

This section lays emphasis on the indicator of literacy rate in Punjab and Gujarat in order to have an in depth view of the relationship between education and development during the transition of the two sub-national economies.

## Overall Literacy Rate and Gender Gap

Tables 1, 2 and graphs 1, 2 depict the total, male and female literacy rates of Punjab and Gujarat from 1981-2011.

**Table: 1 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in Punjab (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	40.86	58.51	69.95	76.70
<b>Males</b>	47.16	65.66	75.63	81.50
<b>Females</b>	33.69	50.41	63.55	71.30
<b>Gender Gap</b>	13.47	15.25	12.08	10.2

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 1 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in Literacy, Punjab (1981-2011)**

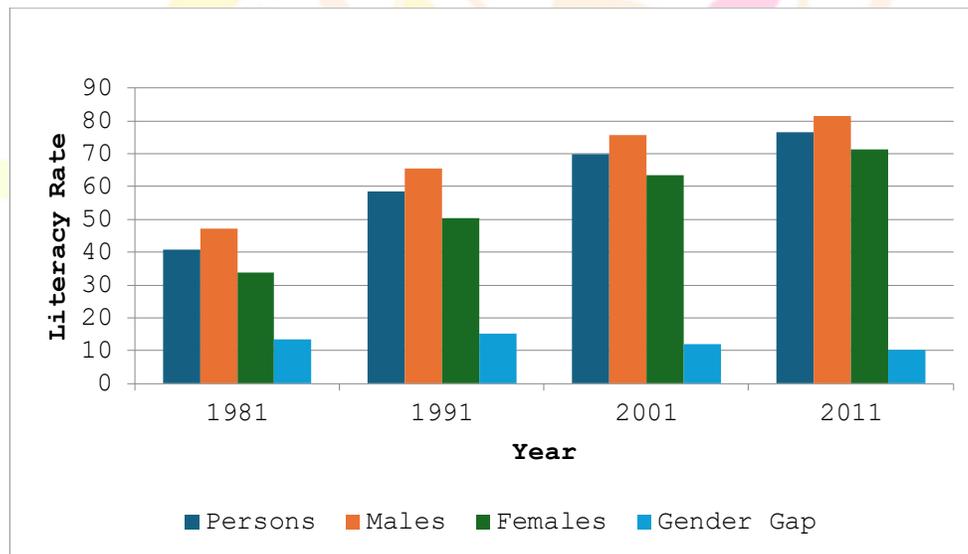
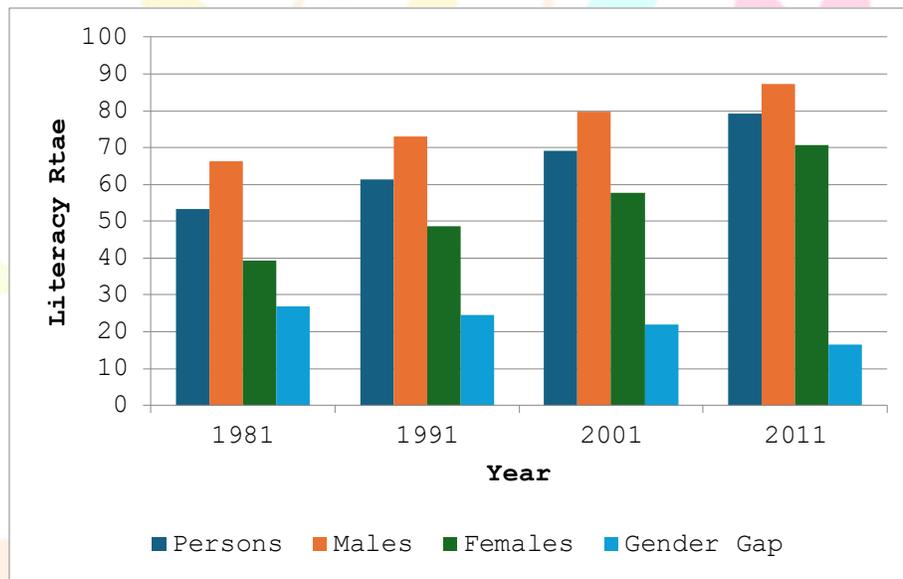


Table 1 and graph 1 reveal that the overall literacy rate in Punjab was 40.86 percent in 1981 which gradually increased and became 76.70 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate was 47.16 percent in 1981. It showed a significant increase to reach 65.66 percent in 1991 and then gradually became 81.5 percent in 2011. The female literacy rate also increased overtime. It rose from 33.69 percent in 1981 to 50.41 percent, 63.55 percent and 71.30 percent in 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. The gender gap in Punjab fluctuated a little, from 13.47 percent in 1981, it became 15.25 percent in 1991, declined to 12.08 percent in 2001 and settled at 10.2 percent in 2011.

**Table: 2 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in Gujarat (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	53.30	61.29	69.14	79.31
<b>Males</b>	66.36	73.13	79.66	87.23
<b>Females</b>	39.42	48.64	57.80	70.73
<b>Gender Gap</b>	26.94	24.49	21.87	16.50

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 2 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in Literacy, Gujarat (1981-2011)**

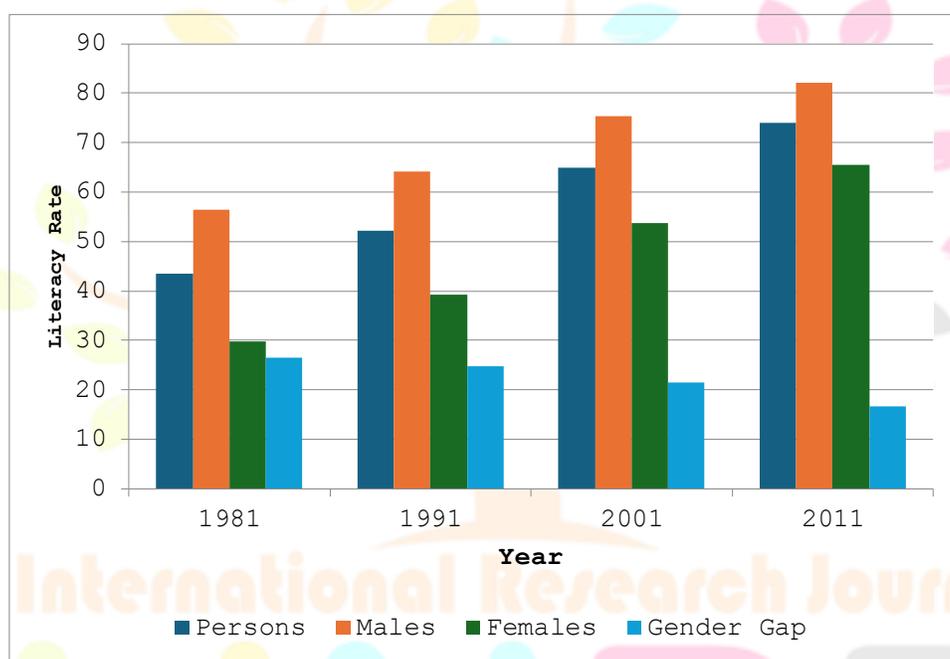
In Gujarat as depicted in table 2 and graph 2 the literacy rate grew from 53.30 percent in 1981 to 79.31 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate was 66.36 percent in 1981 for Gujarat which showed a gradual increase in the following decades and became 87.23 percent in 2011. The female literacy rate was 39.42 percent in 1981, showing a gradual improvement it became 70.73 percent in 2011. The gender gap was 26.94 percent in 1981, 24.49 percent in 1991, 21.87 percent in 2001 and finally 16.50 percent in 2011 in Gujarat.

Research Through Innovation

**Table: 3 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in India (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	43.57	52.21	64.83	74.04
<b>Males</b>	56.38	64.13	75.26	82.14
<b>Females</b>	29.76	39.29	53.67	65.46
<b>Gender Gap</b>	26.62	24.84	21.59	16.68

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 3 Literacy Rate and Gender Gap in Literacy, India (1981-2011)**

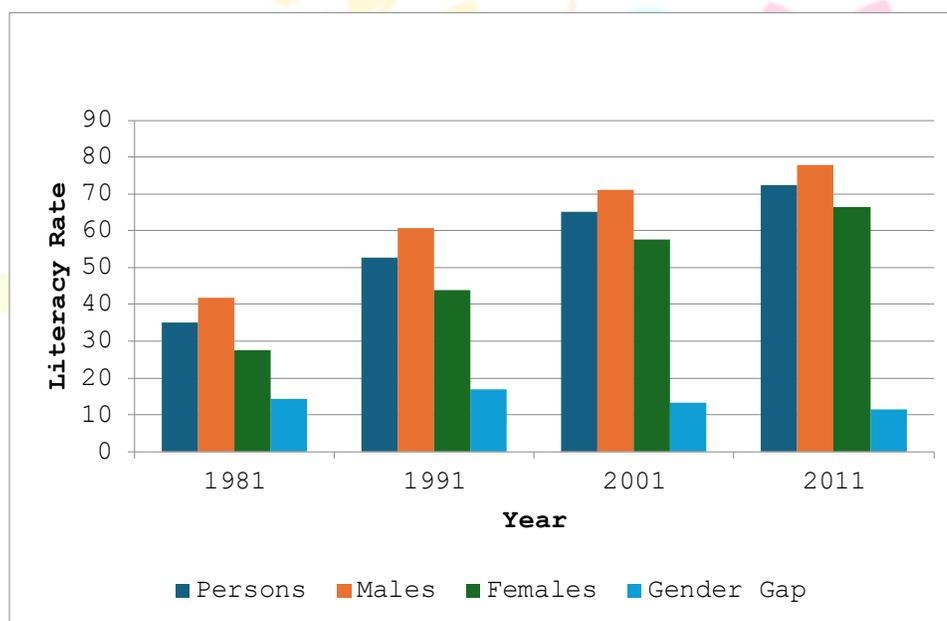
The overall, male and female literacy rates for India have also been discussed for the time period 1981-2011. In case of India as revealed through table 3 and graph 3 the literacy rate grew from 43.57 percent in 1981 to 74.04 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate was 56.38 percent in 1981 which showed a gradual increase in the following decades and became 82.14 percent in 2011. The female literacy rate was 29.76 percent in 1981, showing a gradual improvement it became 65.46 percent in 2011. The gender gap was 26.62 percent in 1981, 24.84 percent in 1991, 21.59 percent in 2001 and finally 16.68 percent in 2011 in India.

It was seen that the overall literacy levels for the entire time span 1981 to 2011 in Gujarat (53.30 in 1981 to 79.31 in 2011) witnessed a rising trend and were found to be more than Punjab (40.86 in 1981 to 76.70 in 2011) with the figures for the same for India being (43.57 in 1981 to 74.04 in 2011). The literacy rates of males were also found to be the highest in Gujarat (66.36 in 1981 to 87.23 in 2011) for all four census years. It was followed by India in 1981 (56.38) and 2011(82.14) and by Punjab in 1991 (65.66) and 2001 (75.63). The female literacy rate in 1981 was highest in Gujarat (39.42) followed by Punjab (33.69) and then India (29.76). It was from 1991 onwards that Punjab (50.41 in 1991 to 71.30 in 2011) outperformed and took the lead followed by Gujarat (48.64 in 1991 to 70.73 in 2011) and India (39.29 in 1991 to 65.46 in 2011). Although the gender gap declined over the decades, it was narrower in case of Punjab (13.47 in 1981 to 10.2 in 2011) due to a comparatively higher female literacy rate in the later decades as compared to Gujarat (26.49 in 1981 to 16.50 in 2011) and India (26.62 in 1981 to 16.68 in 2011).

**Table: 4 Rural Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap in Punjab (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	35.20	52.77	64.7	72.45
<b>Males</b>	41.91	60.71	71.0	77.92
<b>Females</b>	27.63	43.85	57.7	66.47
<b>Gender Gap</b>	14.28	16.86	13.3	11.45

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Graph 4 Rural Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, Punjab (1981-2011)**

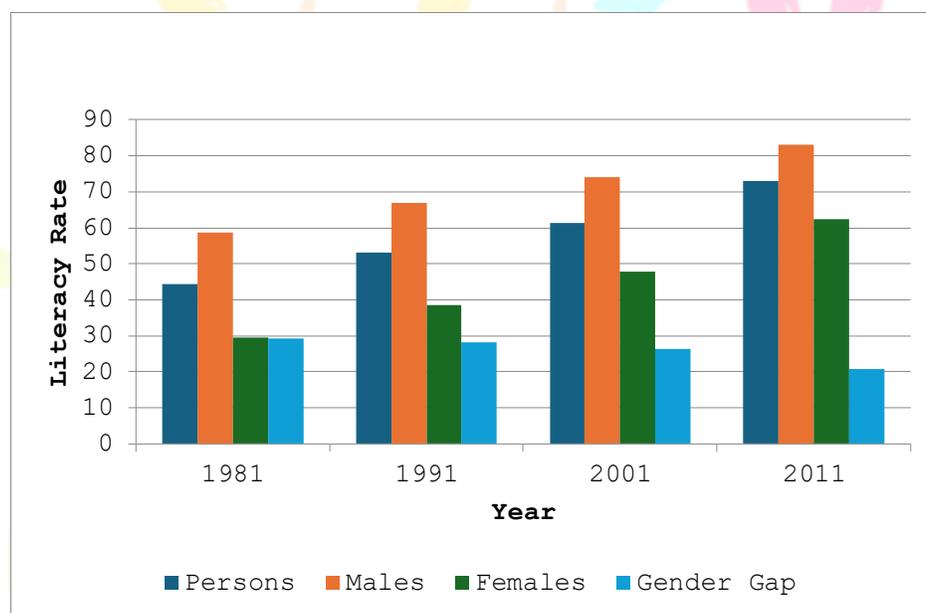
### Rural Literacy Rate and Gender Gap

Table 4 and graph 4 show that Punjab witnessed a literacy rate of 35.20 percent in 1981 which took a major leap to 52.77 percent in 1991, thereafter rose gradually to 64.7 percent in 2001 and further to 72.45 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate in Punjab rose from 41.91 percent in 1981 to 77.92 percent in 2011. Punjab showed a spectacular increase in its rural female literacy rate in the very first decade. It was 27.63 percent in 1981, rose by approximately 16 percent to 43.85 percent in 1991 thereafter adding another 14 percent to become 57.7 percent in 2001 and finally reaching to 66.47 percent in 2011. The gender gap in Punjab rose from 14.28 percent in 1981 to 16.86 percent in 1991 but thereafter showed a declining trend to 13 percent in 2001 to 11.45 percent in 2011.

**Table: 5 Rural Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap in Gujarat (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	44.41	53.09	61.29	73.00
<b>Males</b>	58.75	66.84	74.11	83.10
<b>Females</b>	29.49	38.65	47.84	62.41
<b>Gender Gap</b>	29.26	28.19	26.27	20.69

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Graph 5 Rural Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, Gujarat (1981-2011)**

On the other hand, as depicted by table and graph 5 Gujarat showed a good start with the literacy rate being 44.41 percent in 1981 which was around 9 percent greater than Punjab. It rose to 53.09 percent in 1991, 61.29 percent in 2001 (the only year when Punjab was ahead of Gujarat) and thereafter 73.00 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate grew gradually over the given time period from 58.75 percent in 1981 to 83.10 percent in 2011. The rural female literacy rate in Gujarat rose from 29.49 percent in 1981 to 38.65 percent in 1991, 47.84 percent in 2001 and finally to 62.41 percent in 2011. Lastly, the gender gap in rural literacy rate declined over time for Gujarat from 29.26 percent in 1981 to 20.69 percent in 2011.

**Table: 6 Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, India (1981-2011) (Rural)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	36	36	59.4	78.57
<b>Males</b>	49.6	56.96	71.4	67.8
<b>Females</b>	21.7	30.17	46.7	58.75
<b>Gender Gap</b>	27.9	26.79	24.7	9

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Graph 6 Rural Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, India (1981-2011)**

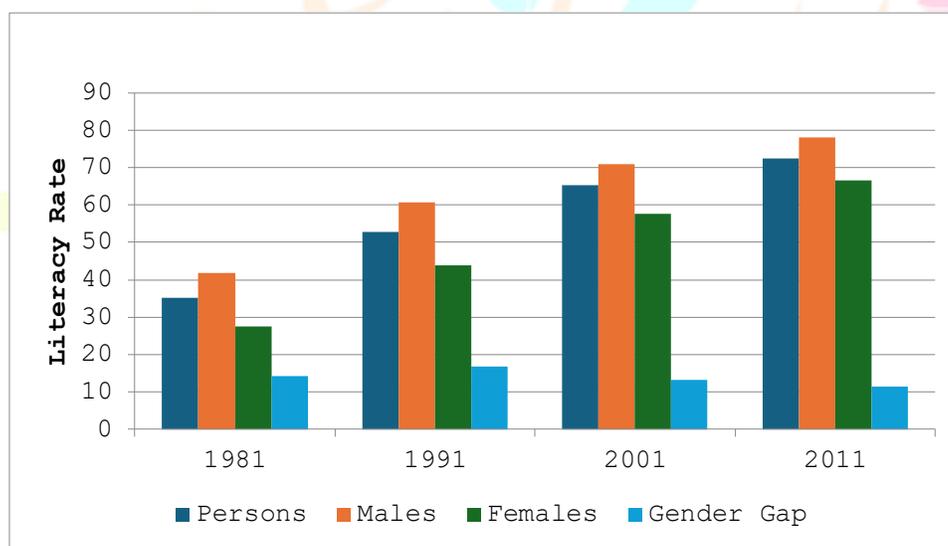


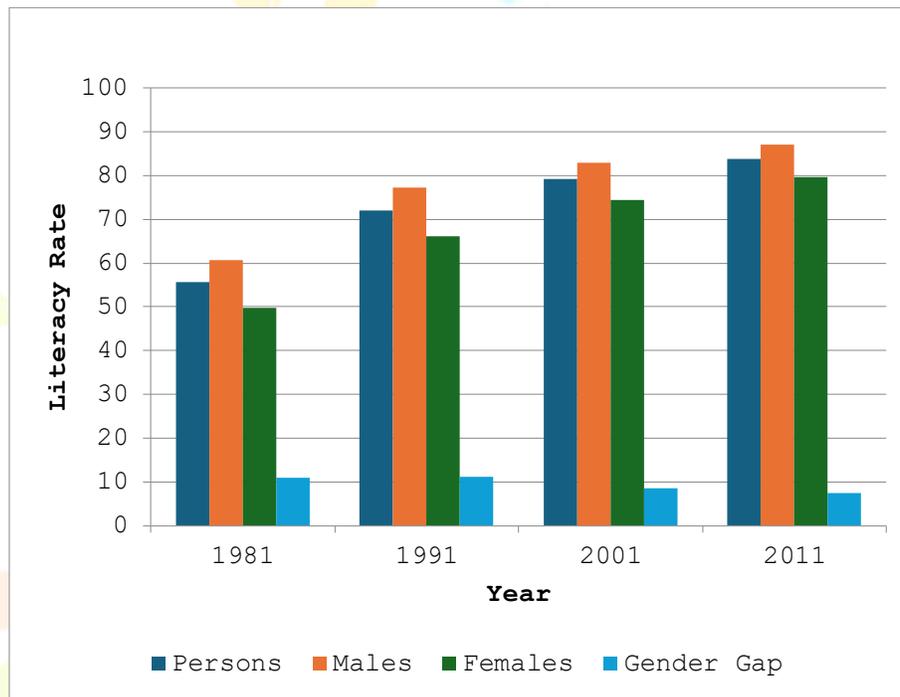
Table and graph 6 reveal that India witnessed a literacy rate of 36 percent in 1981 and 1991 which took a major leap to 59.4 percent in 2001, thereafter rose to 78.57 percent in 2011. The male literacy rate rose from 49.6 percent in 1981 to 56.96 percent in 1991, thereafter to 71.4 percent in 2001 but witnessed decline in 2011 and became 67.8 percent. India witnessed an increase in its rural female literacy rate over the decades. It was 21.7 percent in 1981, rose to 30.17 percent in 1991 thereafter adding another 16 percent to become 46.7 percent in 2001 and finally reaching to 58.75 percent in 2011. The gender gap in India declined from 27.9 percent in 1981 to 26.79 percent in 1991 but thereafter showed a declining trend to 24.7 percent in 2001 to 9 percent in 2011.

Thus, the overall rural literacy rate in Punjab, Gujarat and India show a rising trend for the said time period with Gujarat (44.41, 53.09) showing higher rates than Punjab (35.2, 52.77) and India (36, 36) in 1981 and 1991 respectively. In 2001 Punjab (64.7) outperformed Gujarat (61.29) and India (59.4) while in 2011 Gujarat (73) and Punjab (72.45) were lower values than the national figure (78.57). In case of the male literacy rate in the rural sector, Punjab (41.91 in 1981 to 77.92 in 2011) and Gujarat (58.75 in 1981 to 83.10 in 2011) witnessed a steady rise throughout the time period with Gujarat performing better than Punjab. This indicator grew gradually in India (49.6 in 1981 to 67.8 in 2011) with a mild decline in 2011. In case of female literacy rate Punjab (27.63 in 1981 to 66.47 in 2011) was a step forward than Gujarat (29.49 in 1981 to 62.41 in 2011) for the time period barring 1981 with India (21.7 in 1981 to 58.75 in 2011) holding the lowest rank among the three. The gender gap decreased over the decades, it was found to be the narrowest in case of Punjab (14.28 in 1981 to 11.45 in 2011) as compared to India and Gujarat due to a comparatively higher female literacy rates in the state.

**Table: 7 Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap in Punjab (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	55.63	72.08	79.1	83.70
<b>Males</b>	60.73	77.26	83.0	87.08
<b>Females</b>	49.72	66.12	74.5	79.62
<b>Gender Gap</b>	11.01	11.14	8.5	7.46

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Graph 7: Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, Punjab (1981-2011)**

### Urban Literacy Rate and Gender Gap

The overall urban literacy rate in Punjab as depicted in table and graph 7 did not show a good picture in 1981 being only 55.63 percent. It showed a significant improvement by leaping around 17 percent to 72.08 percent in 1991. Thereafter it showed a gradual increase to 79.1 percent in 2001 and 83.70 percent in 2011. In case of male literacy rates, Punjab witnessed a literacy rate of 60.73 percent in 1981 thereafter taking a major jump of around 17 percent to become 77.26 percent in 1991. In 2001 its literacy rate became 83.0 which finally rose to 87.08 percent in 2011. The female literacy rate in Punjab was 49.72 percent in 1981 which added around 17 percent to it to become 66.12 percent in 1991. In the later years the literacy rates showed a gradual rise and became 74.5 percent in 2001 and lastly 79.62 percent in 2011. The gender gap in case of Punjab it was 11.01 percent in 1981 and declined to 7.46 percent in 2011.

**Table: 8 Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap in Gujarat (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	72.64	76.54	81.84	87.58
<b>Males</b>	82.40	84.56	88.34	92.44
<b>Females</b>	61.78	67.70	74.50	82.08
<b>Gender Gap</b>	20.62	16.86	13.84	10.36

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

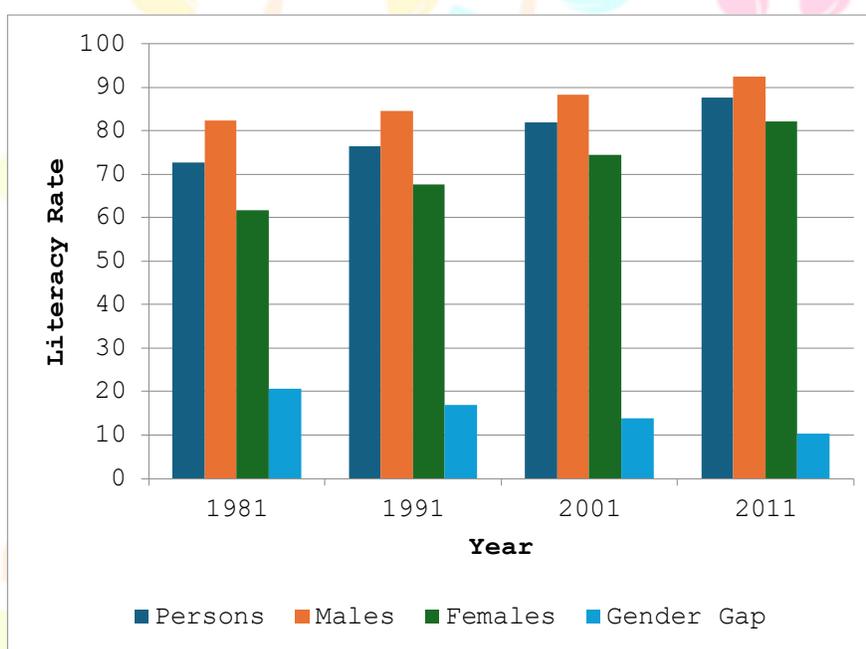
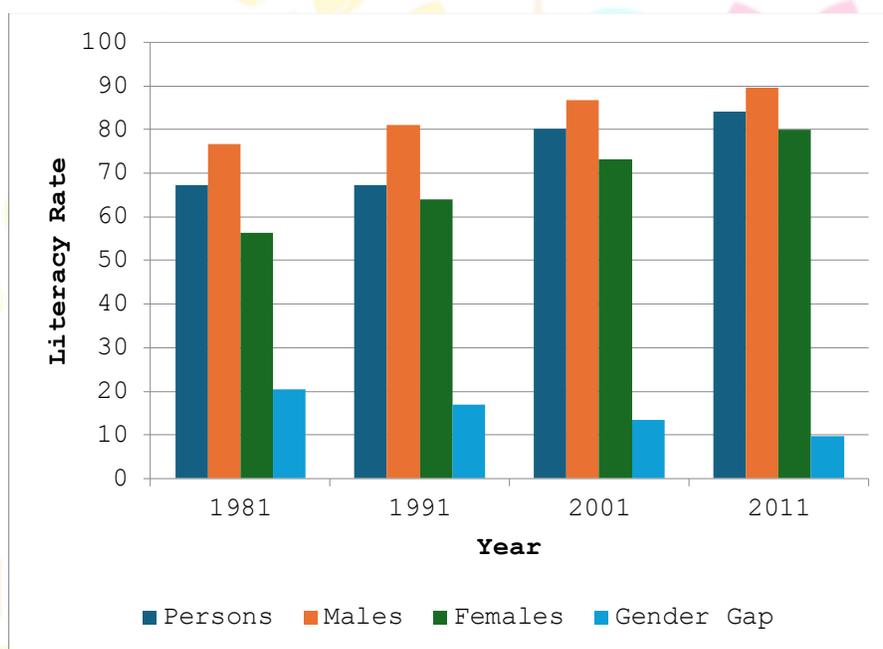
**Graph 8 Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, Gujarat (1981-2011)**

Table and graph 8 show that Gujarat having a strong hold in the very beginning itself witnessed a literacy rate of 72.64 percent in 1981 which was around 17 percent more than that of Punjab in the same year. Its literacy rates underwent a slight increase in the succeeding decades by becoming 76.54 percent in 1991, 81.84 percent in 2001 and finally reaching to 87.58 percent in 2011. In case of male literacy rates Gujarat once again had a strong footing in the initial year itself by witnessing a literacy rate of 82.40 percent in 1981 which was around 22 percent above than that of Punjab. Its literacy rate increased gradually in the latter years as they rose to 84.56 percent, 88.34 percent and 92.44 percent in 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. In case of female literacy rate in urban areas too, Gujarat showed an impressive start by having a literacy rate of 61.78 percent in 1981 (around 11 percent more than Punjab) which rose slowly to 82.08 percent in 2011. In Gujarat the gender gap was almost double than that of Punjab in 1981 i.e. 20.62 percent, it witnessed a decrease over the years till it became 10.36 percent in 2011 which occurred due to an increase in the female urban literacy rate over the years.

**Table: 9 Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap in India (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Persons</b>	67.2	67.2	80.3	84.1
<b>Males</b>	76.7	81.09	86.7	89.67
<b>Females</b>	56.3	64.05	73.2	79.92
<b>Gender Gap</b>	20.4	17.04	13.5	9.75

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 9 Urban Literacy Rate by Gender and Male-Female Gap, India (1981-2011)**

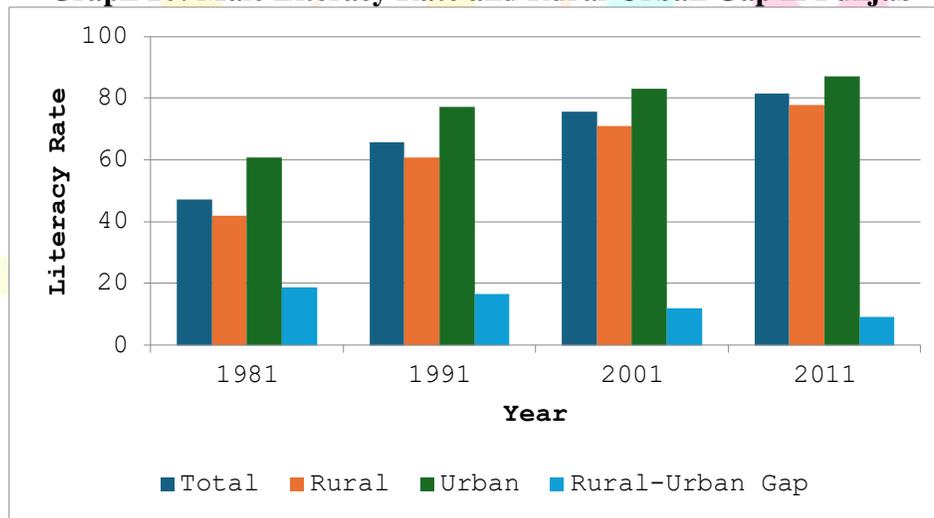
In India, as depicted in table and graph 9 the literacy rate saw a gradual rise from 67.2 percent in 1981 and 1991 to 80.3 percent in 2001 and finally reaching to 84.1 percent in 2011. In case of male literacy rates India witnessed a literacy rate of 76.7 percent in 1981 which increased gradually in the latter years and rose to 81.09 percent, 86.7 percent and 89.67 percent in 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. In case of female literacy rate in urban areas India showed a literacy rate of 56.3 percent in 1981 which rose slowly to 79.92 percent in 2011. In India the gender gap witnessed a decrease over the years till it became 9.75 percent in 2011.

Thus, on comparing the urban literacy rates of both, Punjab and Gujarat with the all India figures it was seen that all three economies witnessed an increase over the three decades and once again Gujarat (72.64 in 1981 to 87.58 in 2011) fared better than Punjab and India in the overall urban literacy rates. The urban male (82.4 in 1981 to 92.44 in 2011) and urban female literacy rates (61.78 in 1981 to 82.08 in 2011) in Gujarat also showed a better picture than Punjab and India for the majority of time period. The gender gap declined in all the three economies over the years. This gap was once again found to be the least in case of Punjab (11.01 in 1981 to 7.46 in 2011) throughout when compared with Gujarat (20.62 in 1981 to 10.36 in 2011) and India (20.4 in 1981 to 9.75 in 2011).

**Table: 10 Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Punjab– (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	47.16	65.66	75.63	81.48
<b>Rural</b>	41.91	60.71	71.0	77.92
<b>Urban</b>	60.73	77.26	83.0	87.08
<b>Gap</b>	18.82	16.55	12	9.16

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 10: Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Punjab**

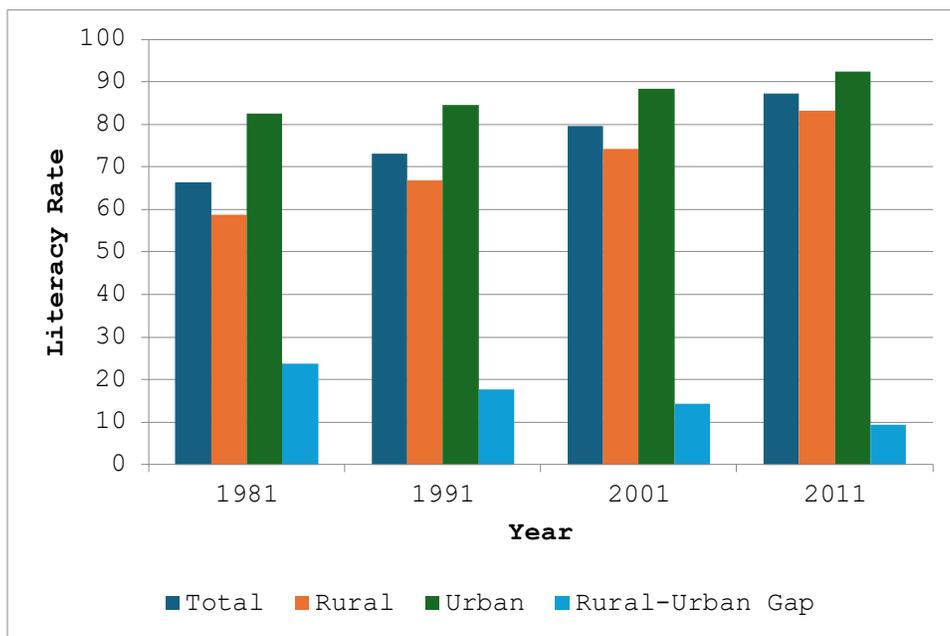
### Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap

Table and graph 10 depict that in Punjab the male literacy rate was 47.16 percent, 65.66 percent, 75.63 percent and 81.48 percent for the years 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. The rural male literacy rate was 41.91 percent, 60.71 percent, 71.0 percent and 77.92 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. In urban sector the literacy rates rose from 60.73 percent in 1981 to 87.08 percent in 2011. The urban-rural gap in literacy rates for males in case of Punjab it was 18.82 percent, 16.55 percent, 12 percent and lastly 9.16 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively.

**Table 11: Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Gujarat – (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	66.36	73.13	79.66	87.23
<b>Rural</b>	58.75	66.84	74.11	83.10
<b>Urban</b>	82.40	84.56	88.34	92.44
<b>Gap</b>	23.65	17.72	14.23	9.34

Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Graph 11 Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Gujarat**

The total male literacy rate as denoted in table and graph 11 rose from 66.36 percent in 1981 to 87.23 percent in 2011 respectively. The rural male literacy rate was 58.75 percent, 66.84 percent, 74.11 percent and 83.10 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. In urban sector the literacy rates rose from 82.40 percent in 1981 to 92.44 percent in 2011. The rural urban gap in Gujarat gradually declined from 23.65 percent in 1981 to 17.72 percent in 1991 to 14.23 percent in 2001 and finally to 9.34 percent in 2011.

**Table: 12 Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in India– (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	56.38	64.13	75.26	82.14
<b>Rural</b>	49.6	56.96	71.4	67.8
<b>Urban</b>	76.7	81.09	86.7	89.67
<b>Gap</b>	27.1	24.13	15.3	21.87

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 12: Male Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in India– (1981-2011)**

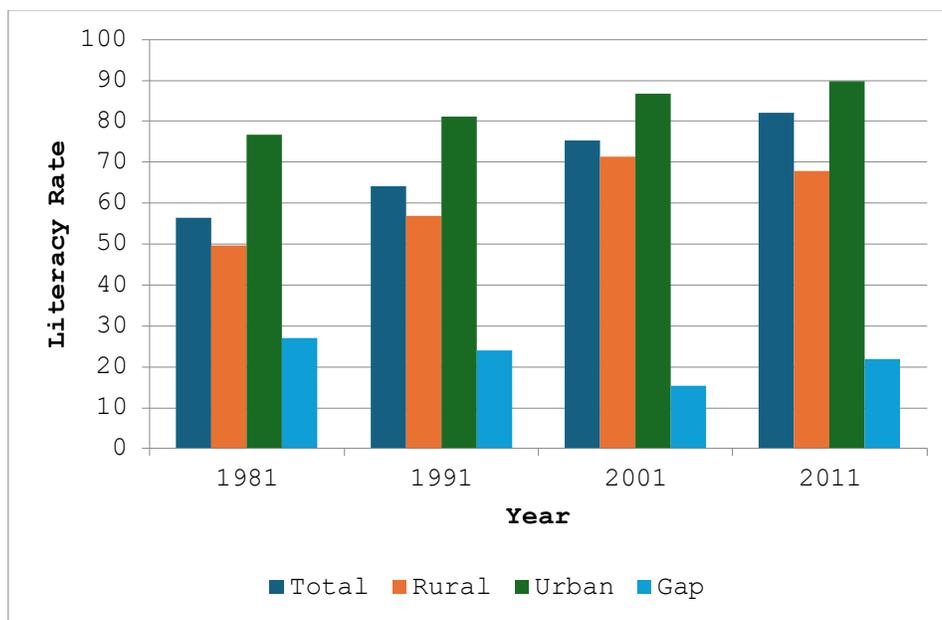


Table and graph 12 depict that in India the total male literacy rate saw a gradual rise from 56.38 percent in 1981 to 82.14 percent in 2011. The rural male literacy rate was 49.6 percent, 56.96 percent, 71.4 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and declined to 67.8 percent in 2011. In urban sector the literacy rates rose gradually from 76.7 percent in 1981 to 89.67 percent in 2011. The rural urban gap in India declined slowly from 27.1 percent in 1981 to 15.3 percent in 2001 but increased to 21.87 percent in 2011 which occurred due to a fall in the rural literacy rate in this decade.

On comparing both, Punjab and Gujarat with the all India figures it was seen that all three economies have shown an increase in the male literacy rates in the past decades and once again Gujarat has performed better than Punjab and India in the overall male literacy rates as well as the male urban and rural literacy rates. The overall and rural male literacy rate was highest for Gujarat followed by India in 1981 and 2011. Punjab followed Gujarat during 1991 and 2001 with India having the lowest figures during these decades.

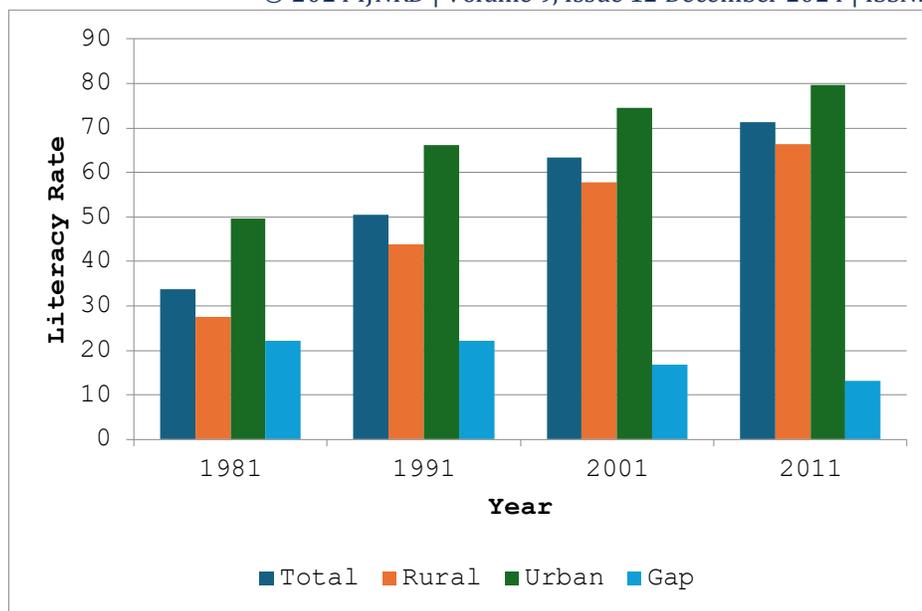
The urban male literacy rate for Gujarat was more than India with Punjab having the least values for the entire time period. The rural urban gap in male literacy rate declined at the national and state level, the gap being the least for Punjab followed by India and Gujarat.

**Table: 13 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Punjab (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	33.69	50.41	63.4	71.34
<b>Rural</b>	27.63	43.85	57.7	66.47
<b>Urban</b>	49.72	66.12	74.5	79.62
<b>Gap</b>	22.09	22.27	16.8	13.15

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 13 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Punjab (1981-2011)**



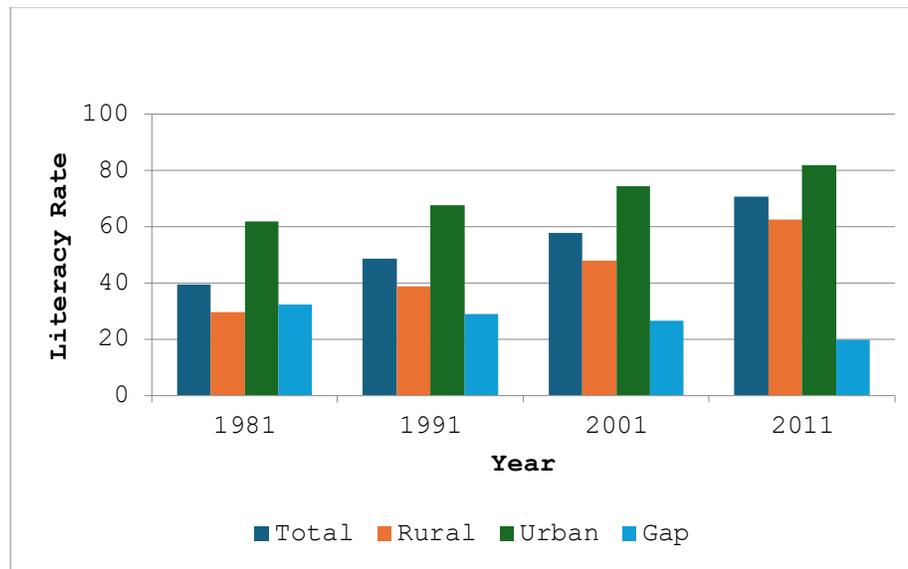
### Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap

Tables 13 and 14 present the literacy rate and urban-rural gap in literacy in case of females in Punjab and Gujarat. A perusal of these tables reveal that the total female literacy rate in Punjab was 33.69 percent, 50.41 percent, 63.4 percent and 71.34 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. The rural female literacy rate was 27.63 percent, 43.85 percent, 57.7 percent and 66.47 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. In urban sector the literacy rates rose from 49.72 percent in 1981 to 79.62 percent in 2011. The rural-urban gap for females was narrow to an extent that it was 22.09 percent in 1981, showed a miniscule increase to 22.27 percent in 1991 thereafter fell to 16.8 percent in 2001 and finally became 13.15 percent in 2011.

**Table: 14 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Gujarat (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	39.42	48.64	57.80	70.73
<b>Rural</b>	29.49	38.65	47.84	62.41
<b>Urban</b>	61.78	67.70	74.50	82.08
<b>Gap</b>	32.29	29.05	26.66	19.67

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

**Graph 14 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in Gujarat (1981-2011)**

Similarly, a study of table and graph 14 denotes that the total female literacy rates in Gujarat were 39.42 percent, 48.64 percent, 57.80 and 70.73 percent in the respective years. Rural female literacy rate was 29.49 percent, 38.65 percent, 47.84 percent and 62.41 percent in the respective years. The urban literacy rates in Gujarat gradually increased from 61.78 percent to 82.08 percent in 2011. The rural-urban gap for females was 32.29 percent in 1981, 29.05 percent in 1991, 26.66 percent in 2001 and finally 19.67 percent in 2011 in Gujarat.

**Table: 15 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in India (1981-2011)**

	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Total</b>	29.76	39.29	53.67	65.46
<b>Rural</b>	21.7	30.17	46.7	58.75
<b>Urban</b>	56.3	64.05	73.2	79.92
<b>Gap</b>	34.6	33.88	26.5	21.17

**Source:** Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011

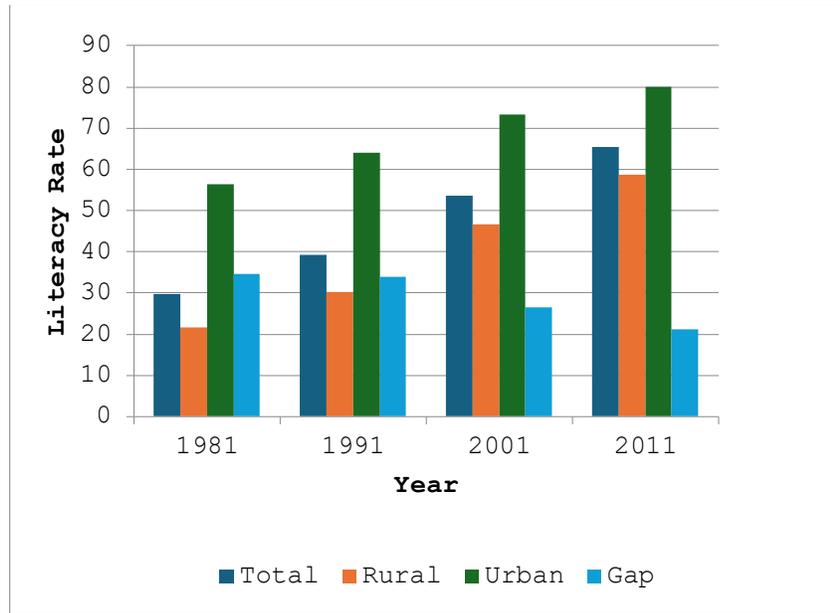
**Graph 15 Female Literacy Rate and Rural-Urban Gap in Literacy in India (1981-2011)**

Table and graph 15 denote that in India the total female literacy rates were 29.76 percent, 39.29 percent, 53.67 and 65.46 percent in 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. Rural female literacy rate was 21.7 percent, 30.17 percent, 46.7 percent and 58.75 percent in the respective years. The urban literacy rates in India gradually increased from 56.3 percent to 79.92 percent in 2011. The rural-urban gap for females was 34.6 percent in 1981, 33.88 percent in 1991, 26.5 percent in 2001 and finally 21.17 percent in 2011.

## CONCLUSION

A comparison among the two sub-national economies and India brings to light that the overall literacy rates, literacy rates in the rural and urban sector have witnessed a rising trend in Punjab, Gujarat and India. Barring 1981, the total and rural literacy rates of females in Punjab were better than Gujarat with India showing the least values. The urban literacy rate for females was maximum for Gujarat in 1981, 1991 and 2011 barring 2001 when Punjab got the highest rank. India fared second after Gujarat in 1981 and 2001 while it had the least values in 1991 and 2001. The rural-urban gap for females witnessed a decrease over the years in both the states and India. It is noteworthy to mention here that rural-urban gap for females was least in Punjab followed by Gujarat and India as was the case in rural-urban gap for males. The rural-urban gap in male literacy rate declined at the state and national level, the gap being the least for Punjab (18.82 in 1981 to 9.16 in 2011) followed by Gujarat (23.65 in 1981 to 9.34 in 2011) and India (27.1 in 1981 to 27.87 in 2011). The rural-urban gap for females witnessed a decrease over the years in both the states and India. It is noteworthy to mention here that rural-urban gap for females was least in Punjab (22.09 in 1981 to 13.15 in 2011) followed by Gujarat (32.29 in 1981 to 19.67 in 2011) and India (34.6 in 1981 to 21.17 in 2011) as was the case in rural-urban gap for males.

Thus, literacy is the cornerstone of India's development, both at the national and state level. It is imperative that states prioritize literacy initiatives to empower their citizens. To achieve this, states should focus on implementing effective literacy programs, increasing access to quality education, and addressing the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities. Additionally, states should leverage technology to enhance literacy rates, promote adult education, and provide vocational training to equip individuals with marketable skills. By making literacy a collective priority, Indian states can unlock the full potential of their human capital, drive socio-economic growth, and pave the way for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

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