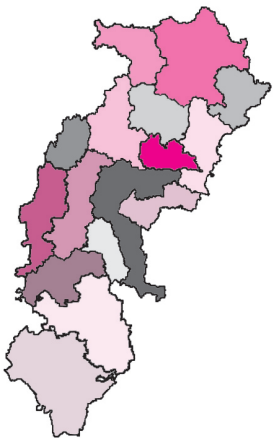


Chhattisgarh: A Profile



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Chhattisgarh is one of the youngest States of the Indian nation. Constituted on 1st November, 2000, Chhattisgarh is located in the heart of India, and shares its borders with six States of the country; Uttar Pradesh to the north, Jharkhand to the north-east, Orissa to the east, Madhya Pradesh to the west and north-west, Maharashtra to the south-west and Andhra Pradesh to the south-east. The geographical area of the State covers over 135,000 square kilometres and the total population in 2001 was 20,833,803 (2.08 crores¹).

Chhattisgarh is situated between 17 to 23.7 degrees north latitude and 8.40 to 83.38 east longitude. (The Tropic of Cancer runs through the State). The climate of Chhattisgarh is mainly tropical, humid and sub-humid. The Mahanadi is the principal river of the State. The other major rivers are - Sheonath, Hadeo, Mand, Eeb, Pairi, Jonk, Kelo Udanti, Indrawati, Arpa and Maniyari.

Regional Characteristics

Chhattisgarh can be divided into three distinct regions:

Northern region: To the north lie dense forests, hills and water reservoirs. The districts that are part of this region are Korea, Surguja, Jashpur, Raigarh, and Korba. These districts have similar geographical, climatic and cultural conditions. Many of the indigenous tribes like

the Paharikorba and the Pando live in these areas. Life here is governed by tribal customs, culture and traditions.

In the rural areas of the region, people are dependent largely on agriculture and minor forest produce. Due to the available natural resources, the level of migration from this region is comparatively limited. There are no urban centres except Korba and Ambikapur. Korba is the largest town, and the limited industry is concentrated here. There are coal mines in Surguja and Korea districts.

Central plains region: The districts that fall in the central plains region are Raipur, Bilaspur, Janjgir-Champa, Kabirdham, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Dhamtari and Mahasamund. The river Mahanadi flows through the area and meets the ever-increasing water requirement of the region, for irrigation and domestic use. The central plains of Chhattisgarh are known as the 'rice bowl' of Central India, because of the large number of indigenous varieties of rice that are grown here. Bilai and Durg are well known urban centres, both with large steel plants. There are a large number of rural artisans in this region, and the silk weavers of Janjgir-Champa are well known.

The region is densely populated. Raipur and Durg account for almost half the total urban population of Chhattisgarh. The other districts,

¹ One crore is 10 million

apart from Bilaspur and Rajnandgaon, have less than six percent of the urban population.

Southern region: The southern region of Chhattisgarh is known for its varied and rich forests, its diverse tribal population and unique culture. The districts in this region are Kanker, Bastar and Dantewada. These districts are bordered by the States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. The people of the region are dependent on traditional agriculture and forests for their livelihood. The Bailadila mines in Dantewada district represent the limited industry in the region.

Population

The total population of the State according to the 2001 Census, is 2.08 crore. Of this, 80 percent of the people live in rural areas and 20 percent live in urban areas. The State has a low-density of population, 151 persons per square kilometre². The sex ratio for the State is 989 females per 1,000 males. In rural Chhattisgarh, however, there are more women than men, and the ratio is 1,004 women per 1,000 men, while in urban Chhattisgarh the ratio is 932 women

Table 1 **Urban-rural population of Chhattisgarh**

Population	Total	Urban	Rural
Male	10,474,218	2,166,775	8,307,443
Female	10,359,585	2,018,972	8,340,613
Total	20,833,803	4,185,747	16,648,056

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table 2 **Population according to category**
(in percent)

Category	Percent
Scheduled Castes	11.61
Scheduled Tribes	31.80
Other communities including Backward Classes	56.59

Source: Census of India, 2001

per 1,000 men. Rajnandgaon (1,023 women per 1,000 men) and Dantewada (1,016 women per 1,000 men) districts have the highest sex ratios in the State.

Almost a third of the population belongs to Scheduled Tribes³ and about 11.61 percent of the population is listed as Scheduled Castes⁴. Other communities including a large number of people belonging to the Backward Classes⁵ constitute the rest of the population. The bulk of its people are concentrated in the central plains region, while the northern and the southern regions have a considerably lower density of population.

Culture

Chhattisgarh enjoys a unique culture, peopled as it is by a number of tribes and communities, each with its distinct identity and way of life. In spite of a number of tribes, its people share certain commonalities and a philosophy which is central to many tribal cultures; the veneration of natural resources – water, forests and land on which life is dependent – a regard for community values and traditions, a practical recognition of the interdependence between different communities and peoples, and a refreshing spirit.

Richly endowed with resources like forests and minerals (diamonds, gold, iron-ore, coal, corundum, bauxite, dolomite, lime, tin and granite to name a few), the people hold the earth and its forests in high regard and esteem. Over centuries, they have evolved a way of life, which while dependent on these resources uses them in a sustainable way. Indigenous knowledge regarding the growing of rice and herbal medicines is well developed but is disappearing fast, due to the influx of modern scientific practices and medicines as well as the absence of any documentation of these valuable systems.

² Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Chhattisgarh

³ Scheduled Tribes refer to communities listed in the Constitution of India as such, because they reside largely in areas that are designated as part of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. Their social and economic backwardness stems from their long term habitation in geographically remote areas.

⁴ The Scheduled Castes are notified in a separate schedule of the Constitution of India. They have been at the lowest end of the Hindu social caste hierarchy, based on birth and have been disadvantaged for generations.

⁵ The term Backward Classes refer to other communities who are considered to be particularly disadvantaged both socially and economically.