

Demographic aspects of Puducherry Economy:

While Pondicherry Union Territory has been defined as an administrative unit, it is difficult to clearly delineate the economy as an autonomous entity. The Union Territory consists of four separate geographical areas, viz. Pondicherry and Karaikal near Tamil Nadu, Mahe in Kerala and Yanam in Andhra Pradesh. The economy of each of these four sub-units is related to its hinterland in the respective state, and has little to do with the rest of the Union Territory as such. This is particularly true of Mahe and Yanam which are economically integrated with Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, and cannot be said to have an autonomous existence. Even in the case of Pondicherry, the land area is non-contiguous, since there are several enclaves of Pondicherry within Tamil Nadu.

A very mobile factor of production is labour which moves freely between the adjoining states and the administrative units of the Union Territory depending on the availability of employment, both seasonal and permanent. This is clear from the demographic profile of Pondicherry. Migration from outside the Union Territory accounted for 25 per cent of the increase in the population in 1991. Again, the unemployment rate in Pondicherry, as recorded by the NSS, in 1993-94, was among the highest in the country, presumably because there were many outsiders looking for jobs in the Union Territory. Also, a considerable segment of the organised sector of employees both in government and in the private sector have been recruited from outside. It is also possible that highly trained people from Pondicherry have moved to the adjoining states

The Union Territory of Pondicherry has experienced significant population growth over the last few decades. Whereas the population was 3,69,079 in 1961, at the

latest Census count in 2001 (provisional) it had increased to 9,73,829. Table 2.1 gives both the population and the decadal population growth rates between 1961 and 2001. As can be seen, the decadal growth rates for 1961-71, 1971-81, 1981-91 and 1991-2001 were 27.81, 28.15, 33.64 and 20.56 per cent, respectively.

There are significant differences within the Union Territory. The decadal growth rate of the Pondicherry region which has been over 30 per cent for all the decades between 1961-91, dropped to 20.82 per cent in 1991-2001. Yanam which had a moderate decadal growth rate of 17.90 per cent between 1961-71 has experienced phenomenal growth thereafter, namely 40.28 per cent, 74.51 per cent and 54.52 per cent between 1971-81, 1981-91 and 1991-2001 respectively. On the other hand, decadal growth rates in Karaikal and Mahe have been around 20 per cent throughout with a declining trend in 1991-2001. Significantly decadal growth rates, throughout the Union Territory have dropped in the last decade and the overall decadal growth rate was only 20.56 per cent.

Population Density

Population densities have also increased over these decades. Whereas the population density was only 769 persons per sq. km in 1961 for the territory as a whole, it increased to 1,683 by 1991 (Table 2.3). Also, while population growth rates have slowed down after 1991, the density has increased to 2,029. Again there are significant differences between the four regions. Mahe is the most densely populated area with a density of 4,091 persons per sq. km, followed by Pondicherry with a density of 2,534 persons per sq. km. Karaikal has a density of 1,060 and Yanam a density of 1,568.

Rural-Urban Population:

The rural-urban composition of the Union Territory has also changed significantly over the last few decades. Whereas in 1971, the rural population accounted for 57.96 per cent of total population and urban population accounted for 42.04 per cent in 2001, the rural population only accounted for 33.43 per cent while the urban population accounted for 66.57 per cent of the total population (Table 2.4). Although disaggregated data are not available for the four regions of the Union Territory, all the regions except Karaikal are predominantly urban.