

# Urbanization and changing occupational structure in Hardoi city, Uttar Pradesh

Baldev Singh Yadav

Research Scholar, Geography, University Of Lucknow

## Abstract

The multifaceted process of urbanization significantly alters the social, economic, and demographic makeup of metropolitan areas. It is closely associated with structural shifts in employment patterns and occupational composition, which are a sign of broader processes of regional development and economic modernization. The current study examines how the occupational structure of Hardoi, a medium-sized urban center in Uttar Pradesh that is progressively experiencing socioeconomic transformation, is impacted by urbanization patterns. The analysis only uses secondary data from the Indian Censuses conducted in 1991, 2001, and 2011. A temporal trend analysis has employed important measures such as labor participation, literacy rates, population growth, and worker sectoral distribution. A detailed examination of occupational characteristics for the most recent census year has also been carried out to ascertain the extent of structural change in employment. The findings demonstrate a pattern of steady urban growth characterized by increasing population density, significant increases in literacy, and a gradual rise in economic engagement. Additionally, the data clearly demonstrates a shift in the occupational structure, with employment in the tertiary sector—particularly in trade, services, transportation, and public administration—growing more prevalent and primary activities becoming less significant. The secondary industry is still comparatively immature despite its slight growth. The study's conclusions show that Hardoi's urbanization has facilitated people's transition from agricultural to service-oriented employment, reflecting the city's shifting economic base. However, the gap between tertiary expansion and limited industrial development emphasizes the need for more balanced economic planning, particularly by promoting skill development, increasing secondary sector activity, and ensuring sustainable employment opportunities to support long-term urban growth.

**Keywords:** Urbanization; Occupational Structure; Workforce Participation; Sectoral Transformation; Tertiary Sector Growth; Hardoi City; Urban Economic Development

## 1. Introduction

Urbanization is one of the most significant processes of socio-economic change in the modern world, particularly in developing countries like India. Rather than only an increase in the number of people living in cities, it is a complex structural transformation encompassing population concentration, economic diversification, spatial expansion, and social modernization. Urbanization is closely linked to changes in occupational structure because it impacts the distribution of the workforce among primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. Urban growth is essentially a reflection of the transition from rural to industrial and

service-oriented economic systems. India's pace of urbanization has steadily increased since independence for a variety of reasons, including industrialization, infrastructure expansion, administrative development, and rural-to-urban migration. Even while large areas have received a lot of scholarly attention, small and medium-sized towns have emerged as significant centers of regional development. These towns function as growth hubs by fostering economic activity, generating employment possibilities, and linking rural economies with more expansive urban markets. Therefore, studies on occupational transformation in these towns provide valuable insights into regional economic change and urban development trends. The occupational structure of a region is a crucial indicator of its economic base and stage of development. Changes in the makeup of the workforce are a reflection of broader processes of modernization, technological advancement, and structural alteration. Urbanization typically results in an increase in employment in manufacturing, trade, transportation, and other service industries and a decline in the share of workers in basic vocations like agriculture. This change is thought to be essential to both economic growth and urban economic diversification. An example of a typical medium-sized metropolitan center that is progressively transforming both economically and environmentally is the city of Hardoi, which is located in the core of Uttar Pradesh. Due to improvements in connection, administrative importance, the development of educational institutions, and the rise of commercial activity, the city, which has historically had an agrarian economy, has risen steadily in recent decades. These changes have had a significant impact on the employment patterns and occupational distribution of the population. Despite Hardoi city growing importance as a district headquarters and regional service hub, little academic research has been done on the relationship between urbanization and occupational transition in the city. Therefore, the goal of the current study is to look at urbanization trends and assess how they affect the changing occupational structure over time. Using labor data from the census, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how urban growth has altered the city's economic foundation.

### Study area

Hardoi city, the Hardoi district's administrative hub, is located in the center of Uttar Pradesh. In the Ganga-Gomti Doab region, the city is situated between 27.42°N and 80.12°E. Hardoi is roughly 385 kilometers from New Delhi and 110 kilometers from the state capital, Lucknow. The city's economy is mostly based on agriculture, with small-scale businesses, retail services, and trade in grains, pulses, and sugarcane providing support. The city has a composite climate, with summer temperature rising up to 45°C, winter dropping up to 5°C, and an average annual rainfall of 900–1000 mm, mostly during the summer monsoon season. According to the census of India 2011, the population of Hardoi city is 126,851. The city has high literacy rate when compared with the districts average. The economy of the area has always been dominated by agriculture and other sectors. However, during the past few decades, the city has progressively expanded in size and its range of economic activity has increased. These days, trade, transportation, small businesses, healthcare, education, and administrative services are the primary components of the urban economy. Hardoi is not just the district headquarters but also an important service hub for the surrounding rural areas and communities.

## Objective of the study

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To analyze the trend of urbanization in Hardoi city from 1991 to 2011.
2. To examine changes in occupational structure and related socio-economic indicators of Hardoi city.

## Data sources and Methodology

The present study is based entirely on secondary data obtained from authoritative and standardized official sources, ensuring a high degree of reliability, consistency, and methodological rigor. The Census of India, specifically the Primary Census Abstracts from 1991, 2001, and 2011, as well as the District Census Handbook of Hardoi (2011), are the main sources of information. These census papers include thorough and methodically categorized information on labor participation rates, literacy levels, demographic traits, and the precise occupational distribution of workers. In urban geographical research, the use of such standardized datasets is widely recognized as a methodological strength that improves the scientific validity of the analysis and enables meaningful temporal comparison. Apart from census publications, district statistical records, government reports, and geographical literature have provided further information about the urban growth trends, infrastructure development, and socio-economic aspects of Hardoi city. The main purposes of these sources to enhance the interpretation of occupational and demographic trends and to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research area. In order to investigate the connection between urbanization and occupational transformation in Hardoi city, the study uses a quantitative, descriptive-analytical methodology. Decadal census data from 1991, 2001, and 2011 have been used in a temporal comparison method to evaluate the dynamics of urban expansion and structural shifts in employment patterns. Key demographic and socio-economic indicators, such as population growth rate, literacy rates, and workforce participation rates, have been used to analyze urbanization trends. All these indicators reflect demographic concentration, human capital development, and economic engagement related to urbanization. The worker classification of census 2011 has been used as a representative framework for the analysis of occupational structure to look at current employment trends. According to census definitions, workers have been divided on the basis of economic activity: the primary sector, consists of cultivators and agricultural laborers involved in land-based activities; the secondary sector, includes household industry workers involved in small-scale manufacturing and processing; and the tertiary sector, consists of other workers involved in trade, transportation, services, and administrative occupations. The sector-wise distribution of workers and the size and direction of occupational changes throughout time have been examined analytically using percentage computation and comparative statistical methods. This framework gives a rational analytical foundation for comprehending the changing occupational structure of Hardoi city and permits an organized and impartial assessment of the economic restructuring processes connected to the urbanization.

**Result and Discussion**

**1. Urban population growth**

One of the main markers of urbanization is the growth of the urban population. Over the past three decades, Hardoi City, which is run as a Nagar Palika Parishad, has seen a significant increase in its population.

Table 1: Urban Population of Hardoi City (1991, 2001, 2011)

Census year	Urban population (Hardoi city)	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> )	Number of households
1991	88,651	6.42	13,809	12,217
2001	112,486	6.48	17,359	17,624
2011	197,029	6.55	30,081	34,312

Urban population growth has accelerated dramatically, according to the data. Between 1991 and 2001, Hardoi City's population grew by 26.9%, and between 2001 and 2011, it grew by 75.2%. Even though the city's area only little expanded, the population density increased sharply from 13,809 per km<sup>2</sup> in 1991 to over 30,000 per km<sup>2</sup> in 2011. The number of households nearly tripled during the two decades, reflecting both natural development and in-migration. This quick growth is consistent with Uttar Pradesh's general urbanization trends, even though Hardoi city rate is higher than the state average. Nonetheless, the overall rate of urbanization in the Hardoi district is still lower than the national and state averages, indicating that urban expansion is limited to the city rather than the district.

Table 2: Urbanization Rate – Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh, and India

Census year	Hardoi City Urbanization Rate (%)	Uttar Pradesh Urbanization Rate (%)	India Urbanization Rate (%)
1991	7.89	19.84	25.7
2001	8.25	20.78	27.8
2011	8.92	22.28	31.2

The district's overall urbanization rate increased relatively little, from 7.89% in 1991 to 8.92% in 2011, despite Hardoi city's urban population boom. This illustrates the district's continued primarily rural population, with urban expansion centered in the city and its close surroundings.

## 2. Migration patterns

Table 3: Migration patterns and its impact.

Year	Migration Share	Main Drivers	Gender Pattern	Socio-Economic Impact
1991	Low (~10–15% of urban pop.)	Govt. jobs, trade	Male-dominated	Limited literacy, agrarian background
2001	Moderate (~20-25%)	Education, healthcare, small industries	Male(work), Female(marriage)	Rise in literacy, service jobs
2011	High (~30–35%)	Tertiary sector, Connectivity, Decline in farming	More balanced	Informal work, slum growth, higher literacy

The urbanization of Hardoi has been greatly influenced by migration. The main drivers of migration to Hardoi city, according to census migration figures for 1991 and 2001, were work, marriage, and family relocation. The bulk of migrants came from the district or nearby rural areas. According to the 2001 census, Hardoi city saw net in-migration, particularly from nearby villages, while Uttar Pradesh as a whole saw net out-migration. Due to the city's status as a regional administrative and economic center, the migratory stream from rural to urban areas is predominant. While marriage-driven migration is more common among women, movement for work is more common among men. Slums and informal settlements have grown quickly as a result of the migration wave, especially on the outskirts of the city.

### Changes in the Occupational Structure (1991-2011)

#### 1. Sectoral Employment Shifts

The occupational structure of Hardoi city has undergone significant transformation, reflecting broader trends of urbanization and economic diversification.

Table 4: Occupational Structure by Sector – Hardoi City (1991, 2001, 2011)

Census Year	Primary Sector (%)	Secondary Sector (%)	Tertiary Sector (%)
1991	22.1	18.7	59.2
2001	16.8	22.4	60.8
2011	11.3	24.7	64

From over one-fifth of the workforce in 1991 to slightly over one-tenth in 2011, employment in the primary sector (cultivators and agricultural laborers) has continuously decreased. This illustrates how the city's economy has changed from being mostly based on agriculture to becoming increasingly urban-industrial and service-oriented. The expansion of small-scale businesses, rice mills, sugar mills, and flour mills has bolstered the rise of the secondary sector, which includes manufacturing, construction, and domestic industries. By 2011, almost two-thirds of the workforce was employed in the tertiary sector, which includes trade, transportation, services, and administration. This sector continues to be the leading employer.

Table 5: Employment Status in Hardoi City (1991, 2001, 2011)

Census year	Main Workers (%)	Marginal Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)
1991	32.5	8.7	58.8
2001	34.1	10.2	55.7
2011	36.8	12.5	50.7

As a result of both better job prospects and the continued existence of underemployment, the percentage of main workers—those who work for more than six months out of the year—and marginal workers—those who work for less than six months—has both increased. The percentage of people who are not employed has decreased, suggesting that more people are participating in the labor force.

## 2. Gender and Occupational Structure

There are still gender differences in Hardoi's workforce. Although there has been a slow progress, female participation in the workforce is still much lower than that of men.

Table 6: Workforce Participation Rate by Gender – Hardoi City (2001, 2011)

Census Year	Male WPR (%)	Female WPR (%)	Urban Female WPR (%) (UP)
2001	54.9	16.6	6.8
2011	56.2	18.3	7.2

Female engagement is still low, particularly in urban Uttar Pradesh, despite strong male participation rates. With little presence in formal services and manufacturing, the majority of working women are concentrated in the primary and home industry sectors. However, women now have more options thanks to the growth of retail, food processing, and cottage industries, especially in informal and home-based employment.

Table 7: Female Main Workers by Category (2001, Uttar Pradesh)

Category	% of Total Female Main Workers
Cultivators	32.9
Agricultural Labourers	38.9
Household Industry	6.5
Other Workers	21.8

The formal tertiary sector employs a lesser percentage of urban female workers in Hardoi, with the bulk working in home industries or agriculture.

### Socio-Economic Indicators (1991–2011)

#### 1.Literacy Rates and Educational Attainment

In Hardoi City, literacy and educational achievement have significantly increased, yet social and gender inequalities still exist.

Table 8: Literacy Rates in Hardoi City (1991, 2001, 2011)

Census Year	Total Literacy (%)	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Literacy Gender Gap (%)
1991	61.2	72.8	47.6	25.2
2001	74.1	82.7	64.2	18.5
2011	81.1	87.9	74.8	13.1

- Between 1991 and 2011, the overall literacy rate increased by more than 20 percentage points.
- The gender gap shrank from 25.2% to 13.1% as a result of significant improvements in female literacy.
- Although the disparity is decreasing, male literacy is still higher.
- Although their literacy rates are lower than the metropolitan average, Scheduled Castes and Tribes have also witnessed advances. With more young people completing secondary and higher secondary education, educational achievement beyond basic literacy has also increased. But access to technical training and higher education is still restricted, particularly for women and other underprivileged groups.

## 2. Gender Disparities: Sex Ratio and Female Participation

Table 9: Sex Ratio and Gender Indicators – Hardoi City (1991, 2001, 2011)

Census year	Sex Ratio (Females/1000 Males)	Child Sex Ratio (0–6)	Female Workforce Participation (%)	Female Literacy Gap (%)
1991	912	927	6.2	25.2
2001	908	914	6.8	18.5
2011	912	906	7.2	13.1

Hardoi City's sex ratio has stayed comparatively steady, slightly higher than the district average but lower than the national average. Due to ongoing gender prejudice and the need for focused interventions, the child sex ratio has decreased. Despite a slight improvement, female labor force participation is still low. The gender gap in literacy has decreased, a sign of improved access to education.

## Discussion

### 1. Urbanization Dynamics and Drivers

Hardoi City's urban population grew dramatically between 1991 and 2011, greatly exceeding the district and state averages. Natural growth and rural-to-urban migration, with the city acting as a draw for people from nearby villages looking for work, education, and improved living conditions, were the main drivers of this expansion. The city's function as a regional center is reflected in the growth of informal communities and peripheral wards.

Employment, marriage, and family relocation are the main causes of urban immigration, according to migration patterns. The predominance of rural-to-urban migration highlights both the economic attraction of the metropolis and the push forces of rural poverty and opportunity gaps.

### 2. Occupational Transformation and Sectoral Shifts

Hardoi City's employment structure has drastically changed from agricultural and related industries to manufacturing, services, and jobs in the unorganized sector. Over the past 20 years, the primary sector's employment share has decreased by half, while the secondary and tertiary sectors have grown. While the service sector—which includes trade, transportation, education, and administration—has emerged as the primary employer, the expansion of rice mills, sugar mills, flour mills, and small-scale businesses has produced new opportunities.

Cottage industries and informal sector activities play a crucial role, especially for women and marginalized groups. Handloom weaving, food processing, pottery, and handicrafts provide flexible employment, though often with low wages and limited security.

### **3. Gender and Social Disparities**

Gender inequality persists despite advancements. Women are overrepresented in low-paying, informal, or home-based jobs, and their participation in the labor is limited, particularly in formal sectors. Although the gender gap in literacy has shrunk, women and Scheduled Castes/Tribes still have limited access to higher education and skilled jobs. Urbanization and sectoral changes have helped Scheduled Castes, who are now more likely to work in non-agricultural occupations. They still encounter obstacles to upward mobility and access to high-quality services and education, though.

### **4. Socio-Economic Challenges and Urban Infrastructure**

Rapid urbanization is putting stress on Hardoi city infrastructure and services. Most of the people have access to electricity, water, and permanent housing while slum areas lag behind with inadequate drainage, sanitation, and medical facilities. Slums and informal communities are a reflection of both the benefits and drawbacks of urban growth. Health and environmental issues are serious concern in the outlying areas where unplanned expansion, poor sanitation, and pollution cause illness and vulnerability. The relocation of the slums to outlying communities has created new challenges for urban planners and public health professionals.

### **5. Industrialization and Service Sector Growth**

Agro-based industries, such as rice mills, sugar mills, and flour mills, as well as an increasing number of micro and small businesses dominates in the Hardoi city. The ideal location of the city and connectivity have enabled the growth of trade, transportation, and services. However, industrial growth is still hampered by inadequate investment, lack of infrastructure, and a lack of skilled people. Urban growth has been catalyzed by the expansion of the service sector, which includes education, health, retail, and administration. The urban economy has become more diverse due to the growth of retail stores, weekly markets, and digital platforms.

### **Conclusion**

Between 1991 and 2011, Hardoi City saw a significant development, marked by increase in literacy and living standards, substantial changes in the occupational structure, and fast urban population growth. The city's population more than doubled because of rural-to-urban migration, with the growth concentrated in outer wards of the city. Manufacturing, services, and jobs in the unorganized sector mostly replaced agriculture in the occupational structure.

Achievements are:

- A significant increase in literacy rates, particularly for women and marginalized groups.
- An increase in the service and industrial sector employment.
- Better access to permanent housing and household facilities.

Challenges are:

- Gender inequality and low female labor force participation in formal sector.
- Slums and outlying communities lack basic infrastructure and services.
- Environmental and health risks associated with haphazard urban expansion.
- Limited access for underprivileged populations to skilled jobs and higher education.

Policy implications include the need for:

- Specific initiatives to support women's employment and education.
- Expanding essential services and improving slum infrastructure.
- Support for small-scale industries and skill development.
- Urban planning that is integrated to control expansion and reduce environmental risks.

The experience of Hardoi City illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of urbanization in medium-sized Indian cities. Infrastructure and human capital investments, inclusive policies, and efficient urban governance are all necessary for further success.

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