

# Rural India lags in education, jobs as many households are landless, finds SECC survey

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NEW DELHI: A third of India's rural households are landless and depend on manual labour for an income, reflecting the extent of poverty that prevails in the villages, according to a census that the government described as being a crucial guide to bettering the lives of the poor.

As for education, about a fourth of the 17.91 crore households in the country's villages don't have a literate adult above the age of 25, according to the provisional findings of the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 for rural India.

The census was released by the government on Friday. The country has a total of 24.39 crore households, putting 73% of them in rural areas. This is the first such survey in more than eight decades.

Releasing preliminary findings was a matter of urgency because the government wants to get cracking on measures to improve lives of the poor, given the acute rural distress that's been reflected in recent [farmer](#) suicides amid fluctuations in weather patterns and a monsoon that started out well but has suddenly taken a break.

"The survey has been completed in all the 640 districts," the [finance ministry](#) said in a release. "It is provisional as final lists are being uploaded in some districts after addressing objections received. It is being released as use in evidence-based planning for rural development and poverty reduction needs to be undertaken immediately."

The first such census since 1932 will act as an important guide for policymakers, [Finance Minister Arun Jaitley](#) said while releasing the data. "It's going to be a very important document for all policymakers both at central and state governments," he said. "This document will help us target groups for support in terms of policy planning."

The ministry said this was the first paperless census conducted using hand-held electronic devices. Based on the SECC, about 40% of rural households are automatically excluded from welfare benefits targeted at the poor on the basis of 14 parameters, it said. These include those having certain types of transport and agricultural equipment, landline phones etc.

The census also reported that in about 74% of rural households, the income of the highest earning member is less than Rs 5,000 per month.

Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, CARE Ratings, highlighted the extent to which the landless depend on manual labour for an income. "This is an important statistic when we talk of fair compensation," he said. "The whole purpose of this data is to link it with the various developmental programmes in a targeted manner. For the first time they have given a data for deprived and non-deprived, which can be very effectively used."

Unseasonal rains a few months ago caused widespread damage to crops in [Madhya Pradesh](#), Uttar Pradesh, [West Bengal](#) and Rajasthan, leading to rural stress and a drop in demand.



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And, while the crucial June-September monsoon has been bountiful in the first month, some forecasters predict that the rain may taper off leading to a deepening of rural poverty, further economic gloom and pricing pressures.

The weakening of the rural economy has lowered India's growth prospects according to rating agencies. The downturn has also put a dent in the expectations of manufacturers of goods ranging from automobiles to consumer goods that have been seeking to expand further into rural markets as urban demand gets saturated.

Census data will be used to map household-wise progress and social support needs over the years and make evidencebased, targeted household interventions for poverty reduction possible. The rural development ministry will use SECC data in all its programmes. It will also be used to inform the government's Antyodaya skill development mission along with the Gram Panchayat Poverty Reduction Plan.

The census has generated information on a large number of social and economic indicators related to households in areas such as education, skills, housing, employment, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, social and gender mobilisation and entitlement.

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