

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q13

Though there have been several different estimates of poverty in India, all indicate reduction in poverty over time. Do you agree. Critically examine with reference to urban and rural poverty indicators.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS II · 12 marks · Poverty and Hunger

Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Core demand of the question

- Though there have been several different estimates of poverty in India, all indicate reduction in poverty over time. Do you agree. Critically examine with reference to urban and rural poverty indicators

Revision summary

Different poverty lines change the count of the poor, not always the direction of change.

Tendulkar and Rangarajan both showed a fall in the ratio between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

Rural poverty ratios remained higher; urban poverty is sensitive to rent, health and survey coverage of migrants.

Nutrition and vulnerability did not improve as neatly as the headcount.

Agree on long-run reduction; do not treat one line as the full rural-urban truth.

Introduction

Official and expert estimates of Indian poverty have used different lines, prices and surveys - **Planning Commission** / Tendulkar, the **Rangarajan committee**, World Bank international lines, and later multidimensional measures. They do not agree on how many people are poor. On the direction of change, most consumption-based series from the 1990s into the early 2010s showed a fall in the headcount ratio. Agreement should be careful: the fall is real on those series, but depth, urban informal poverty, and rural non-income deprivation still qualify the success story.

Body**Why several estimates exist**

- Poverty is not a single calorie number. Committees changed the basket, price indices, and whether health and education were built into the line (Lakdawala, Tendulkar 2009, Rangarajan 2014).
- NSSO consumption surveys, and later controversies over the 2017-18 round, mean the data itself can jump.
- A uniform all-India line hides State prices. Rural and urban lines are drawn separately because food, rent and transport differ.

- International dollars-a-day lines move when PPP is revised. National lines move when the committee changes.
- Hence "several estimates" is a fact of method, not proof that poverty is imaginary.

Direction of change: grounds for agreement

- **Planning Commission** estimates using the Tendulkar line showed a clear decline in the poverty ratio between 2004-05 and 2011-12, in both rural and urban India, and a large drop in the number of poor in that window.
- The **Rangarajan committee** used a higher line and found more poor people, but still reported a reduction over a similar period.
- Rural wage growth in the 2000s, MGNREGA, farm-price support in some years, and urban construction jobs are consistent with fewer people under a low consumption line.
- Asset and service indicators - electricity, pucca roofs, bank accounts, school enrolment - also improved, which matches a story of declining extreme deprivation even when income poverty is debated.

Critical caveats, rural and urban

- A falling ratio can coexist with a large absolute number of poor, especially when population grows. Reduction is not elimination.
- Rural poverty remains higher than urban poverty on official headcount in most series, but the gap and the nature of poverty differ. Rural poor face farm risk, landlessness and weak local services. Urban poor face rent, slum tenure, informal wages and out-of-pocket health shocks that a food-heavy line undercounts.
- Tendulkar's urban line was criticised as too tight for city living. Rangarajan raised both lines; the ranking of States can shift when the line moves.
- Calorie intake and nutrition (NFHS stunting, anaemia) did not fall as fast as the consumption-poverty ratio. Income-poverty decline is not the same as nutrition security.
- Urban poverty is often under-counted when migrants, pavement dwellers and circular labour are missed in household surveys.
- Inequality and the vulnerability of near-poor households mean a small shock (drought, illness, job loss) pushes people back across the line. A snapshot "reduction" can hide churn.
- After 2011-12, comparable NSS consumption data became politically and statistically contested, so the 2015 claim of a smooth continuing decline was already harder to certify.

Examine, do not deny

- Agreement is warranted on the broad historical decline in extreme consumption poverty from the 1970s through 2011-12 on official series.
- Disagreement is warranted on the level, on whether urban poverty is measured honestly, and on whether nutrition and decent work fell in step with the headcount.

Flow diagram

NSS consumption surveys -> Tendulkar line
NSS consumption surveys -> Rangarajan higher line
Tendulkar line -> Headcount down 2004-12
Rangarajan higher line -> Headcount down 2004-12
Headcount down 2004-12 -> Rural still higher urban undercount
Nutrition NFHS -> Decline incomplete

Conclusion

Yes, the main official estimates, despite different lines, pointed to a reduction in the poverty ratio over time up to the early 2010s, in both rural and urban India. Critical examination shows that rural headcounts stayed higher, urban poverty is easy to understate, nutrition lagged, and the exact number of poor depends on the committee. Policy should treat declining ratios as progress, not as a closed file on rural livelihoods or urban informal insecurity.

Facts & figures

Tendulkar Committee (2009)

Shifted the official line toward a broader consumption basket; used by the **Planning Commission** for 2004-05 and 2011-12 estimates.

Rangarajan Committee (2014)

Recommended a higher poverty line and found more poor people than Tendulkar, while still reporting a decline over time.

NSSO quinquennial surveys

The main household consumption data behind official poverty ratios; rural and urban samples are estimated separately.

Rural-urban gap

Official headcount ratios have typically been higher in rural India, even as both ratios fell in the 2000s.

NFHS nutrition

Child stunting and anaemia declined slowly relative to consumption-poverty ratios, showing a gap between money-metric poverty and human poverty.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-2/2015/though-there-have-been-several-different-estimates-of-poverty-in-india-all-indicate-reduction-in-poverty-over-time-do-you-agree-critically-examine-with-reference-to-urban-and-rural-poverty-indicators/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com