

## ● POLITY

## ● ECONOMICS

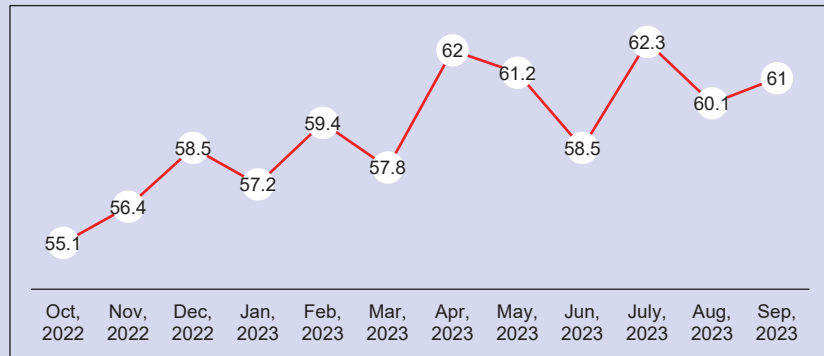
## ● TECHNOLOGY

## ● ECOLOGY

## ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

SERVICES PMI SIGNALS  
SEPTEMBER BOOST

**CONTEXT:** New orders rose to its second-fastest rate since June 2010 pushing the S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) from 60.1 in August to 61 in September.



Participants cited growth in demand from clients in Asia, Europe and North America. Growth in new international orders slowed to a three-month low, yet was one of the quickest since September 2014. The S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) reading in September is lower than July's 13-year high of 62.3. The input cost inflation slowed to one of the lowest levels since late 2010, services firms raised prices at the slowest pace in six months.

Services charges rose at a softer rate as cost pressures receded to one of the lowest in two-and-a-half years. Although the latter indicates that near-term output price inflation may cool, worries about potential fluctuations in food prices due to El Niño means the RBI is highly unlikely to cut rates until early next year. Improved optimism and buoyant demand conditions augured well for further growth in the sector.



*"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."*  
—Benjamin Franklin

## ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

'SEPT. FOOD INFLATION MAY  
HAVE EASED ON CHEAPER  
TOMATO, LPG'

**CONTEXT:** Retail food inflation may have eased in September, thanks to a reduction in tomato and LPG cylinder prices, even as onion prices rose further during the month.

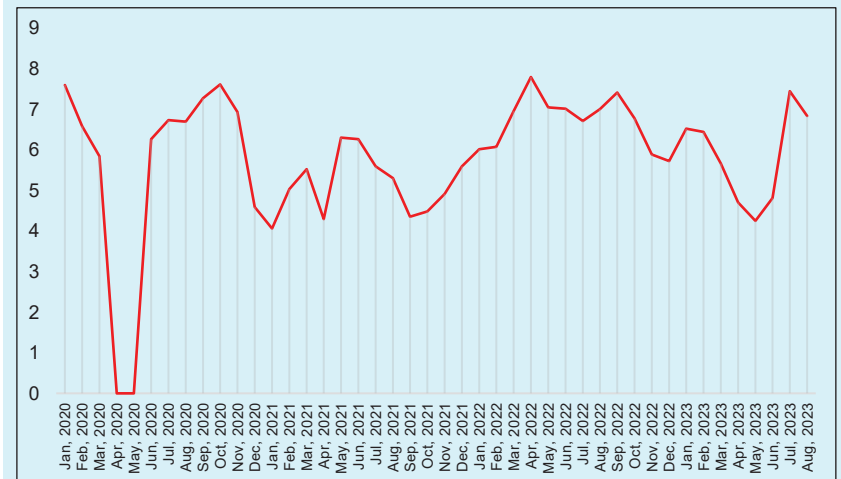


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the Consumer Food Price Index based inflation.

Retail inflation had dropped to 6.83 % in August from a 15-month high of 7.44% in July, but food price inflation stood at about 10 %. The cost of a vegetarian thali in September fell 1 % year-on-year (Y-o-Y) and 17 % from August levels. Fuel costs, which accounts for 14 % and 8 % of total cost of vegetarian and non-vegetarian thalis, respectively, declined about 18 % in September as the cost of a 14.2 kg LPG cylinder fell to ₹ 903 from ₹ 1,103. Tomato prices declined around 62 % from ₹ 102 per kilogram (kg) in August to ₹ 39 per kg. The cost of a non-vegetarian thali in September increased 1 % year-on-year (Y-o-Y) from August levels, declining at a slower pace of 9% from August due to a 2-3% estimated increase in the price of broiler, which accounts for more than 50% of the total thali cost. The onion prices rose about 12% between August and September, a 31% decline in chili prices over the previous month offered some comfort.

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As life expectancy rises and birth rates decline, a nation begins to see a larger proportion of its population ageing. India will soon approach a critical juncture where the proportion of the elderly will peak, placing an overwhelming strain on the working-age populace. Women, who generally outlive men, are at the centre of this crisis. As a high share of them are out of the labour force, they lack savings. They are more prone to health issues compared to men and often find basic tasks more challenging during their sunset years. They are also less aware about government schemes than men

■ The share of elderly population is estimated to double to 20.8% by 2050. Also, elderly women will outnumber senior men

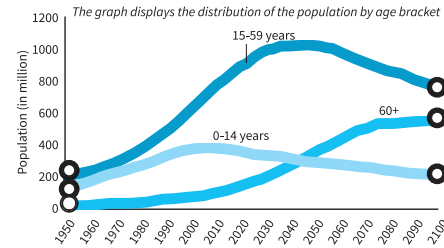
■ Close to 30% of women above 60 years have one morbidity and nearly 25% suffer from two morbidities

■ 30% of elderly women have difficulty getting out of bed, while 25% find it tough to take a bath and eat without assistance

■ Less than 25% of elderly women are aware of concession schemes given by the government for senior citizens

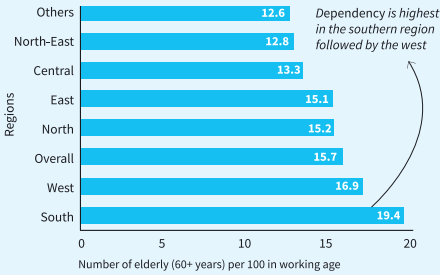
**Chart 1: Greying India**

The number of senior citizens (aged 60+) in India has markedly increased since 2010, while there has been a drop in the population aged under 15. By the year 2100, seniors are projected to constitute 36% of India's total population



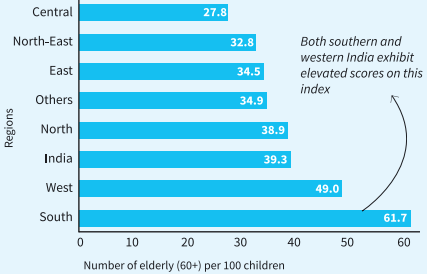
**Chart 2A: Dependency by region**

The graph displays the old-age dependency ratio, which represents the number of individuals aged 60 and above for every 100 people in the 15-59 age bracket. A heightened ratio indicates a significant demand for care within families



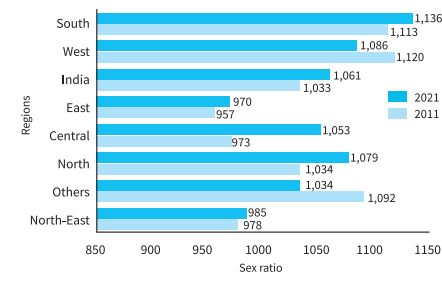
**Chart 2B: Elderly and young**

The graph presents the ageing index, which signifies the number of seniors (60 years and above) for every 100 children (under 15 years of age). A rise in the ageing index points to reduced fertility rates



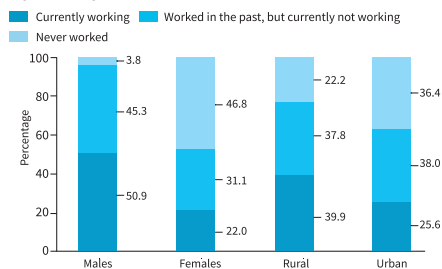
**Chart 3: Sex ratio among elderly**

The chart shows the number of old women per 1,000 old men in 2021 and 2011. Elderly women outnumber senior men in most regions



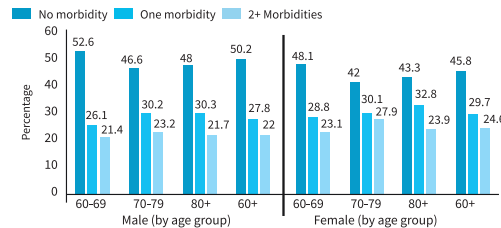
**Chart 4: Working status**

The graph illustrates the employment status of the senior population, segmented by gender and location. Merely 22% of senior women are employed



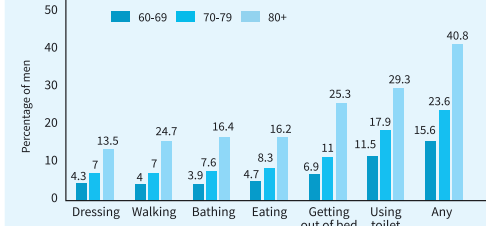
**Chart 5: Disease prevalence**

The chart shows the prevalence of chronic morbidities among older men and women. Elderly women had a higher prevalence of such health conditions than men



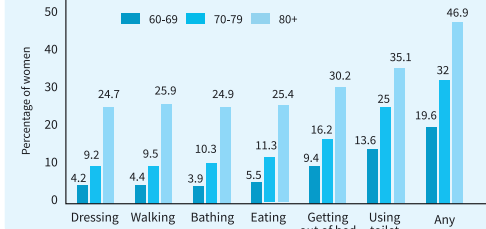
**Chart 6A: Challenges faced with basic activities (elderly men)**

The chart shows the % of older men experiencing difficulty in performing basic activities. The two most difficult activities were getting out of bed and using the toilet



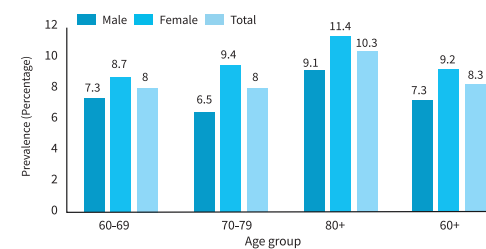
**Chart 6B: Challenges faced with basic activities (elderly women)**

The charts show the % of older women experiencing difficulty in performing basic activities. A relatively higher share of women than men faced difficulties



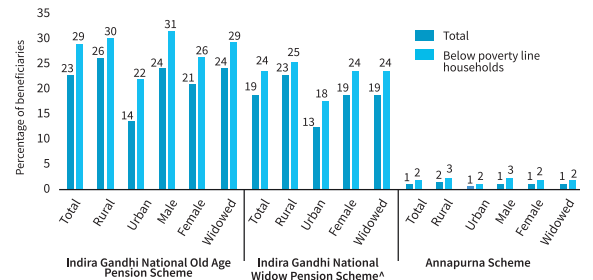
**Chart 7: Depression among the elderly**

The chart shows the prevalence of depression among the elderly by age and sex. The incidence of depression was higher among elderly women across age groups



**Chart 8: Utilisation of security schemes**

The chart shows the share of elderly who benefit from various social security schemes. Only 24% of widowed women in BPL households receive benefits through the IGWPS\*



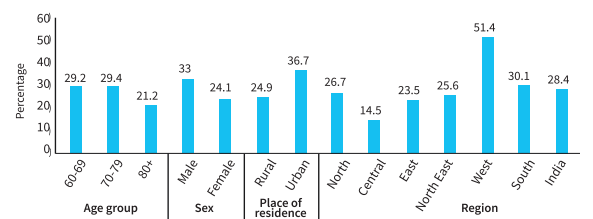
**Chart 9: Hindrances in receiving benefits**

The table shows the share of elderly in BPL households not utilising social security schemes. Over 47% of elderly widows believe that they are not eligible to get benefits under IGWPS\*

Reasons	Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme		Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme*	Annapurna Scheme	
	Men	Women	Women	Men	Women
No need	7.2	5.9	10.3	12.1	8.7
Not eligible	19.9	22.5	47.4	38.4	46.3
Not having documents	8.3	6.9	5.2	10.5	8.6
Not yet applied	25.6	24.5	14.9	19.9	17.3
Process is cumbersome	35.1	36.5	20	18.4	18.3
Other reasons	3.8	3.7	2.2	0.6	0.8

**Chart 10: Awareness of concessions**

The chart shows the share of elderly who are aware of concession schemes given by the government. The awareness of concessions is lower in rural areas and among women



## ART AND CULTURE

## NORWAY'S JON FOSSE WINS NOBEL FOR LITERATURE

**CONTEXT:** Norwegian playwright Jon Fosse, aged 64, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature as announced by the Swedish Academy.

Fosse's global renown stems from his innovative contributions to the world of contemporary theatre and prose, which offer a voice to the unexpressed. His works are primarily written in the Norwegian Nynorsk language and encompass a diverse range of literary forms, including plays, novels, poetry collections, essays, children's books, and translations. Notable among his major works are "Boathouse" and "Melancholy I and II."

Fosse's literary journey began in 1983 with his debut novel "Red, Black," a narrative that seamlessly navigates through time and various perspectives. His most recent work, "Septology," stands as a semi-autobiographical magnum opus, spanning seven parts across three volumes, totalling 1,250 pages without a single full stop. The third volume of "Septology" was shortlisted for the 2022 International Booker Prize.

Jon Fosse's route to fame took an unexpected turn in the early 1990s when, struggling to make ends meet as an author, he was asked to write the beginning of a play. He discovered a deep affinity for the art form and ended up writing the entire play titled "Someone is Going to Come," which marked his international breakthrough when it premiered in Paris in 1999. Fosse continued to gain international acclaim with his subsequent work, "And We'll Never be Parted," in 1994. His literary contributions have been translated into approximately 50 different languages, solidifying his place as one of the most influential contemporary playwrights and writers worldwide.

#### Nobel Prizes

The Nobel Prizes are prestigious international awards presented annually in recognition of outstanding achievements in various fields. They were established in accordance with the will of Alfred Nobel, a Swedish inventor, scientist, and philanthropist, who left a substantial portion of his fortune to fund these prizes.

The Nobel Prize has been conferred in the categories of physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and peace since 1901, with the addition of an economic sciences memorial prize in 1968.

#### Institutions and Disciplines

**The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences:** This institution is responsible for awarding the Nobel Prize in Physics and the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. These prizes recognize exceptional contributions to the fields of physics and chemistry.

**The Nobel Assembly at the Karolinska Institute:** This assembly awards the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. It acknowledges remarkable discoveries and achievements in the field of medical and life sciences.

**The Swedish Academy:** This academy presents the Nobel Prize in Literature, which recognizes outstanding literary work by an author, poet, or playwright.

**The Norwegian Nobel Committee:** Unlike the other prizes, the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo, Norway. It is presented by the Norwegian Nobel Committee and recognizes individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the promotion of peace and conflict resolution on a global scale.

**The Sveriges Riksbank (Swedish National Bank) Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel:** Often referred to as the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, this award recognizes outstanding contributions to the field of economics. It is presented along with the other Nobel Prizes and follows a similar format.

Each Nobel Prize is awarded in its respective discipline and is considered one of the highest honours in that field. The Nobel Laureates are selected through a rigorous nomination and evaluation process, and the prizes are awarded during ceremonies in Stockholm, Sweden, except for the Nobel Peace Prize, which is presented in Oslo, Norway.

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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

## BIHAR'S CASTE SURVEY

**CONTEXT:** The significance of Bihar conducting a comprehensive caste survey and subsequently publishing a caste-wise count of its population cannot be overstated. This survey, resembling a census in its scope and methodology, holds significant implications for both the state of Bihar and the nation as a whole.

### Revealing Caste Demographics

The caste survey in Bihar has yielded valuable data, indicating that a substantial 63% of the state's population, which stands at 13 crore, belongs to castes classified under the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories. While socio-economic profiles have been gathered, they are yet to be disclosed, potentially offering deeper insights into the state's demographics.

### National Implications

At the national level, Bihar's caste survey could serve as a catalyst for the political demand for a nationwide caste census. It may also influence the judicial discourse, encouraging a reconsideration of the 50% legal cap on total reservation in education and government services.

### Setting a Precedent

Bihar's approach to conducting the caste survey sets a noteworthy precedent for such endeavors. The methodology involved assigning a unique code to each of the 214 castes listed in the state's records. Additionally, sub-castes and sects were identified in advance and consolidated under broader caste names. This pragmatic approach allowed enumerators to efficiently categorize respondents' caste affiliations.

### Challenges of Caste Data

The Union government's reluctance to release caste-related details from its 2011 'Socio-economic and Caste Census' stemmed from the complexity and unwieldiness of the data. Shockingly, respondents listed a staggering 46 lakh different castes, sub-castes, sects, clans, and surnames. This bewildering array of data presented practical challenges in its utilization.

### Balancing Caste Data with Constitutional Goals

While obtaining precise caste statistics has functional benefits, it is crucial to remember that the ultimate goal of the Indian Constitution remains the creation of a casteless society. Affirmative action measures play a vital role in addressing social inequities. However, it is equally important for the state to actively work toward promoting equality of opportunity and the equitable distribution of resources, without exacerbating caste-based identities.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CENSUS DATA

In the history of independent India, every census conducted between 1951 and 2011 has consistently published data pertaining to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not for other castes. However, the situation was different before 1931, where data on caste was included in every census. It's noteworthy that during the 1941 census, caste-based data was collected but not made public. At that time, M.W.M. Yeats, who served as the Census Commissioner, explained this decision citing the impracticality of producing an extensive and expensive caste table, particularly during the challenging period of World War II.

### Data Gap for OBCs and Others

Due to the absence of caste-based data in recent censuses, there is a significant information gap concerning the population of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), various subgroups within the OBC category, and other caste groups. Various entities, including the Mandal Commission, have made estimations regarding the OBC population, which have ranged around 52%. Some estimations have relied on data from the National Sample Survey, while political parties have created their own estimates at the state and national levels during elections.

### Demand for Caste Census

With the Census 2021 facing multiple delays, opposition parties have voiced the strongest calls for a comprehensive caste census to address the existing data void.

### SECC and Caste Data Handling

In lieu of a full-scale caste census, in 2011, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted. In rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development oversaw the SECC, while the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation managed the process in urban areas. However, the SECC data that was made public did not include caste-related information. Instead, the raw caste data was entrusted to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Under the guidance of former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson Arvind Pangaria, an Expert Group was formed to classify and categorize the caste data.

In essence, the absence of caste data in recent censuses has created a void in understanding the demographics and socio-economic status of various caste groups, particularly OBCs. This has led to a growing demand for a dedicated caste census to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information for policy-making and equitable resource allocation.



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