SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF OFFICERS
IN THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

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The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) is the highest cadre of the civil services in India and is the successor to the erstwhile Indian (Imperial) Civil Service of British India. Under supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs, IAS officers hold key positions in the government both at the Centre and in the states. Officers are assigned, after selection, to a State IAS cadre, but not necessarily to their `home' State. During the normal course of a career, they are posted at the Sub-Division, and District, and serve in the State Secretariat or as Head of Departments. Officers may move from positions at the State, under deputation, to the Centre and back again.

`Regular' recruitment to the IAS is by a national competitive Civil Service Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). Subject papers may be answered either in English or in any of the languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Success in a qualifying paper in English is mandatory at the standard of Matriculation.

The IAS examination is supposed to extend equal opportunity to all candidates for selection regardless of academic specialization, residence in rural or urban areas, sex, religion or caste community. A reservation of 15 per cent of vacancies for Scheduled Castes and 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribes, along with some concessions, is permitted as part of the national policy for protective discrimination. All candidates, at a minimum, must have a graduate degree from a university: in practice, a majority of candidates hold post-graduate degrees. Each year nearly 40,000 to 50,000 candidates compete for 200 to 300 positions. The final selection is made after evaluating the candidates' overall performance, including marks received on an oral interview.

A secondary source of recruitment to the IAS is by promotion from the senior ranks of the State Civil Service, from posts of Deputy Collector or their equivalent. However, opportunities are not uniform across states for inclusion in the IAS Select List, and in about half of all States, twenty years or more of service is required. In general, officers recruited through promotion enter the IAS toward the end of their careers.

This study examines the social background of IAS officers according to recruitment method, sex, religion, age, caste, and State from which the officer was recruited. The primary source of information is the Consolidated Civil List which provides names and related data on all IAS officers as on 1 January, 1985. The total number of IAS officers stood at 4,284.[1]

A summary of the methodology is provided in the Annexure. The greatest difficulty was encountered in classifying individuals by caste, a procedure which relies on identifying their surnames. The obstacles occur for a number of reasons: the same surname may be used in different States by castes or religious groups, that are not similar in social

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[1.] While the Civil List puts the total strength as 4,286 officers, basic information is given for 4,284.

background; the tendency to drop surnames has increased; and this tendency is probably most marked among the lower castes as a means of facilitating greater social acceptability. One result is that the data presented here does not include separate categories of officers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

There is a relatively large `residual' of unidentified IAS officers at 25.5 per cent. It should not be assumed that this category is constituted mainly by members of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes, even though the percentage of reserved positions is 22.5 per cent. The Department of Personnel, Home Ministry, does not release aggregate figures for the representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the IAS, so that it is not known whether the vacancies of 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent for these groups respectively have actually been filled. At least through the early 1970s, vacancies were being carried over from one year to the next, that is, prescribed quotas were not being met (Union Public Service Commission, Twenty-Third Report, 1 April, 1972-3 March, 1973). Data published for 1978-79 indicated that only about one-third of the posts reserved for Scheduled Castes and about one-seventh of the posts reserved for the Scheduled Tribes were being filled annually. [*Report of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, (July 1978-March 1979), First Report, Delhi, 1980, 162-3]. This data was consistent with shortfalls reported under the similar scheme of reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for admission to degree courses in undergraduate and post-graduation university programmes. (*Report of the Working Group on the Development of Scheduled Castes During the Seventh Five Year Plan*, 1985-90, January 1985: 38). The situation may have improved over the last decade, but in the absence of official data, it is not possible to assess the extent to which the backlog of reserved posts has been filled.

An indirect method of estimating the percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among IAS Officers is to identify recruits who entered the Service through competitive examination above the upper age limit fixed by the Union Public Service Commission of 26 years. The assumption underlying this approach is that such officers benefited from `age exemptions' for the examination as part of the programme for protective discrimination. As shown in Table 1, 13.8 per cent of IAS officers at the time of allotment under regular recruitment were 27 years or older. Once this proportion is subtracted from the category of unidentified officers, the residual for whom no information is available declines to 14.3 per cent. This group may include additional members of Scheduled Castes

Table 1

**Distribution of IAS Officers According to their Age at the
Time of Allotment to the IAS**

Age	Regular	Others	Total
19-26	2689	35	2724
	(85.4)	(3.1)	(63.6)
27-30	383	86	469
	(12.2)	(7.6)	(10.9)
31 and above	51	1009	1060
	(1.6)	(88.9)	(24.7)
Not Available	26	5	31
Total	3149	1135	4284
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

and Scheduled Tribes who were regularly recruited at the normal upper age limit, and others, who for various reasons do not use their surname, or have surnames which cannot be identified by caste.

Table 2 summarizes the source of recruitment of IAS officers. The large majority, almost three-fourths, are recruited through the national competitive Civil Service Examination.

Table 2

Distribution of IAS Officers by Method of Recruitment

Source	Number	Percent
1. Regular Recruitment	3149	73.51
2. Others	1135	26.49
Total	4284	100.00

There is no special reservation for women in the IAS services. Their entry is on merit alone. 331 of the total of 4,284 IAS officers are women. This proportion is substantially higher than their share of propositions among the corporate elite in which they constituted a negligible number. The percentage of women in the administrative service

stood at 7.7 per cent, with recruitment almost entirely through competitive examination (See Table 3).

Table 3

Distribution of IAS Officers by Sex

Sex	Regular Recruitment	Others	Total	Percent of Total
Male	2829	1124	3953	92.3
Female	320	11	331	7.7

Table 4 shows the distribution by State of male and female IAS officers, based on the States to which the officers were assigned *after* selection. The highest absolute number of female IAS officers were in U.P. (35). However, the greatest relative percentage of female IAS officers were allotted to Himachal with 18 officers out of 103, i.e. 17.5 per cent. Other States showing relatively high percentages were Haryana (12.5 per cent), Punjab (12.3 per cent); and the Union Territories (12.2 per cent). At the other end of the spectrum were the States of Manipur (2.0), Assam (2.9); Orissa (4.2) and Jammu and Kashmir (4.3). The regional spread may not be a reflection of any design but it is a matter of some curiosity that Himachal, Haryana and Punjab (forming a geographic bloc) had the highest female density of IAS officers.

Out of the 4,284 officers it was possible to identify the religion of 3.675 on the basis of their surnames. Distribution of the IAS officers, according to their religion is given in Table 5.

The data is most meaningful within a comparison between the representation by religion of IAS officers and the percentage of each religion in the population as a whole. using this criterion, the Jain, Sikh and Christian religious minorities are represented roughly at or above their share of the population, which in 1981 was 1.2 per cent, 2.0 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively. Muslims, by contrast, are significantly under-represented at 2.1 per cent, compared to their percentage in the population of 11.4 per cent. Hindu officers at 75.5 per cent were represented at less than their population percentage of 82.6 per cent, but it is likely that this disparity would decrease if the residual `unidentifieds' were to be identified.

Table 6 presents a distribution of the officers on the basis of their sex and religion.

The total number of women for whom it was possible to determine religion was 281. The data show that females within each religion have roughly the same

Table 4

Distribution of Officers in State by Sex

State	Female	Male	Total	Percent of Females
Andhra Pradesh	15	286	301	5.0
Assam/Meghalaya	5	166	171	2.9
Bihar	20	305	325	7.6
Gujarat	16	159	175	9.1
Haryana	21	147	168	12.5
Himachal Pradesh	18	85	103	17.5
Jammu & Kashmir	3	67	70	4.3
Karnataka	19	201	220	8.6
Kerala	8	135	143	5.6
Madhya Pradesh	27	319	346	7.8
Maharashtra	19	290	309	6.1
Manipur	2	97	99	2.0
Nagaland	3	38	41	7.3
Orissa	8	184	192	4.2
Punjab	20	142	162	12.3
Rajasthan	20	203	223	9.0
Sikkim	3	32	35	8.6
Tamil Nadu	32	248	280	11.4
Uttar Pradesh	35	452	487	7.2
West Bengal	16	246	262	6.1
Union Territories	21	151	172	12.2
Total	331	3953	4284	7.7

Table 5

Distribution of IAS Officers by Religion

Religion	Number	Percent
Hindu	3235	75.5
Jain	38	0.9
Muslim	88	2.1
Sikh	228	5.3
Christian	86	2.0
Unidentified	609	14.2
Total	4284	100.00

Table 6

Distribution of IAS Officers by Sex and Religion

Religion	Male	Female	Total
Hindu	2994	241	3235
	(75.7)	(72.8)	(75.5)
Jain	33	5	38
	(0.8)	(1.5)	(0.9)
Muslim	83	5	88
	(2.1)	(1.5)	(2.1)
Sikh	205	23	228
	(5.2)	(6.9)	(5.3)
Christian	79	7	86
	(2.0)	(2.1)	(2.0)
Unidentified	559	50	609
	(14.1)	(15.8)	(14.2)
Total	3953	331	4284
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

proportion relative to the males, with some minor variations. whereas among Jains, Sikhs and Christians, the percentage of females is somewhat higher than that of males, among Muslims, the proportion of male officers is comparatively higher.

The entry of women into the IAS is a post-Independence phenomenon. Out of 320 female IAS officers, who entered through regular recruitment, none belongs to the pre-1950 year of allotment (See Table 7). During 1951-60 only 17 women were recruited. The next decade witnessed the entry of 77 women and during the 1970s, 180 women were successful in the IAS examinations. However, from 1981 onwards, the female to male ratio of IAS officers declined to 10.8 per cent compared to 14.2 per cent during the 1970s. It is too early to say if this represents a permanent reversal of the earlier upward trend.

Table 8 shows the distribution of the 3235 Hindu officers according to the caste. The largest single group is that of the *brahmans* at 37.6 per cent. The second largest number is claimed by the *kayasthas* at 13.3 per cent. These two traditional *literati* castes together account for approximately 51 per cent of Hindu Officers. Altogether, the upper castes, including *kshatriyas* and *vaishyas* make up 68 per cent of the total. The Shudras, by contrast, are represented at a minimal level of two per cent.

Table 7

Year of Allotment by Sex and Distribution of IAS Officers

Period of Allotment of the IAS	Regular Recruitment			Others			Total		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1949-50	14	-	4	3	-	3	17	-	17
1951-60	408	17	425	46	-	46	454	17	417
1961-70	934	77	1011	240	1	241	1174	78	1252
1971-80	1092	180	1272	641	8	649	1733	188	1821
1981 onwards	380	46	426	-	-	-	380	46	426
Not Available	1	-	1	194	2	196	195	2	197
Total	2829	320	3149	1124	11	1135	3953	331	4284

Table 8

Distribution of Hindu Officers by Sex and Caste

Caste	Females	Males	Total	Percent of Total
Brahman	85	1133	1218	37.67
Kshatriya	45	264	309	9.56
Kayastha	25	406	431	13.33
Vaishya	16	231	247	7.64
Marwari	2	22	24	0.74
Lingayat	1	28	29	0.90
Shudra	6	60	66	2.04
Unidentified	61	848	911	28.12
Total	241	2992	3235	100.00

Data from Table 9 suggests that even this low level of representation of the *shudras* would be further reduced except for the relatively large contingent from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

A comparative analysis of IAS officers by caste in each state (Table 10) shows that *brahmans* represent the single largest group in all regions and that in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam-Meghalaya, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal) their numbers are more than 42 per cent of all Hindu officers.

Table 9

Distribution of Shudra Officers by State

State	Number	Percent
Andhra Pradesh	19	28.79
Assam/Meghalaya	2	3.03
Bihar	3	4.55
Gujarat	2	3.03
Haryana	1	1.52
Himachal Pradesh	1	1.52
Jammu and Kashmir	0	0.00
Karnataka	5	7.58
Kerala	5	7.58
Madhya Pradesh	2	3.03
Maharashtra	4	6.06
Manipur	2	3.03
Nagaland	1	1.52
Orissa	2	3.03
Punjab	2	3.03
Rajasthan	1	1.52
Sikkim	0	0.00
Tamil Nadu	5	7.58
Uttar Pradesh	2	3.03
West Bengal	6	9.09
Union Territories	1	1.52
Total	66	100.00

Table 10

Caste Background of Hindu Officers by State (per cent)

States	Brahman	Kshatriya	Kayasth	Vaish	Marwari	Lingayat	Shudra	Unidentified
Andhra Pradesh	49.6	3.5	3.1	4.3	0.4	0.8	7.4	31.3
Assam-Meghalaya	47.3	11.8	13.3	5.5	-	0.9	1.8	19.1
Bihar	29.5	11.4	30.6	4.1	1.1	-	1.1	22.2
Gujarat	36.4	7.7	15.5	10.1	-	0.8	1.6	28.8
Haryana	28.2	20.9	9.1	16.4	2.7	-	0.9	21.8
Himachal Pradesh	32.5	25.0	13.8	10.0	1.3	-	1.3	16.3
Jammu & Kashmir	39.4	24.2	9.1	6.1	-	-	-	21.3
Karnataka	37.1	3.4	4.6	5.1	0.6	-	2.8	46.4
Kerala	44.7	2.9	2.9	3.9	-	2.9	4.9	37.9
Madhya Pradesh	37.6	11.4	16.2	9.2	0.7	1.1	0.7	23.1
Maharashtra	50.7	8.5	3.7	7.2	0.5	0.9	1.8	23.9
Manipur	26.9	2.3	16.4	7.5	-	1.5	3.0	40.9
Nagaland	33.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	-	-	8.3	33.4
Orissa	54.1	3.1	8.9	5.1	0.6	0.6	1.3	26.2
Punjab	28.4	25.0	10.2	11.4	-	1.1	2.2	21.7
Rajasthan	30.8	13.9	14.0	11.0	4.1	1.2	0.1	25.0
Sikkim	22.2	11.1	-	11.0	-	-	-	55.6
Tamil Nadu	38.5	3.4	0.9	9.1	-	-	2.2	45.9
Uttar Pradesh	29.9	8.5	16.6	8.5	0.8	2.5	0.5	32.7
West Bengal	42.5	5.4	27.6	5.4	0.5	-	2.7	15.9
Union Territories	24.0	22.3	16.5	10.7	-	1.7	0.1	24.7
Total	37.7	9.5	13.3	7.6	0.7	0.9	2.04	28.1

Annexure

The procedure used in this study was as follows:
1. Listing the names of the IAS officers;
2. Arranging their surnames alphabetically and identifying their religion, caste;
3. Giving codes to each caste and religion;
4. Where religion and caste could not be identified from surname alone, the full name was taken for identification;
5. The sex of the officer was identified by considering the title pre-fix along with the Full name;
6. Listing the officers according to the codes given to each of the independent variables, i.e., religion and caste;
7. Codes were also given to sub-variables such as type of recruitment, age and year of allotment;
8. Tables were generated from the listings done using these variables.