

Gujarat

Gujarat is one of the richest and most industrialised states in India. The state is a manufacturing hub and produces a number of items on a large scale. However, despite being comparatively developed, Gujarat scores below the Indian average on the Human Development Index, and ranks at 13th out of 17 in the India State Hunger Index.¹

Geography & Climate

Gujarat is located on the western coast of India, and shares borders with Pakistan to the north west, and the Indian states of Rajasthan to the north, Madhya Pradesh to the east, and Maharashtra to the south east. The state's topography varies greatly, ranging from seasonal salt deserts in the north western district of Kutch, arid and semi-arid scrubland in the central region of the Kathiawar Peninsula, to wet, fertile, coastal plains in the south eastern part of the state, north of Mumbai.²

The majority of Gujarat has a semi-arid climate. Winter, occurring from November to February is relatively warm and dry, with average temperatures ranging from 12-28°C. Summer, taking place between March and May is hot, with temperatures rising well above 40°C during the day, and even during night, not tending to drop below 30°C. Gujarat is drier in the north than in the south. In the north west, rain may total less than 15 inches annually, while the central region can expect 40 inches, and south eastern Gujarat is close to 80 inches per year.³

History

Gujarat draws its name from the Gurjara, supposedly a sub-tribe of the Huns, who ruled the area during the 8th and 9th Centuries AD.⁴ Portugal was the first European power to arrive in Gujarat, acquiring several enclaves along the coast. The British East India Company established a factory in Surat in 1614, forming their first base in India, but this was eclipsed by Bombay after the English acquired it from Portugal in 1668. In the 18th Century, Gujarat came under the control of the Maratha Empire, who controlled a large amount of Southern Asia at the time. The British East India Company took control of much of Gujarat from the Marathas during the Second Anglo-Maratha War, from 1803-1805. Many of the local rulers made peace agreements with the British, acknowledging British sovereignty in exchange for retaining self-rule. From 1818 to 1947, most of present-day Gujarat was divided into hundreds of princely states, though several districts in central and southern Gujarat, namely Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Kheda, Panchmahal, and Surat, were ruled directly by the British.⁵

Many of the leaders of India's independence movement, including Mahatma Gandhi, came from Gujarat, and the region played a major role in the struggle for independence. Following independence, Gujarat formed part of Bombay state, with a mostly Gujarati speaking north,

Gujarat⁷



- Population: 60.4m
- Language: Gujarati
- Capital: Gandhinagar
- Rural Population: 62.6%
- Human Development Index: 20th of 35 states and territories
- Juvenile Sex Ratio: 886 girls to 1000 boys
- GDP Per Capita (PPP): US\$1350

and a mostly Marathi speaking south. The movement by both Gujarati and Marathi people to have separate states led to Bombay state being split along linguistic lines in 1960, creating the current states of Gujarat and Maharashtra.⁶

Demographics

The people of Gujarat can be broadly categorised into two groups, either Indic (northern derived) or Dravidian (southern derived). Scheduled Castes (mostly Dalits) and Scheduled Tribes form roughly one-fifth of the state's population. Portions of the mountainous region of south eastern Gujarat are populated almost entirely by tribal peoples. About 60% of the population is living in rural areas, while the main concentration is in the eastern part of the state, surrounding the major cities of Ahmedabad, Surat and Baroda.

89.1% of the population is Hindu, Muslims make up 9.1%, Jains 1.0% and Sikhs 0.1%.⁷ As one of the most industrialised states in India, Gujarat attracts a large number of people from other states, and Gujarati's are one of the largest groups of Indian migrants worldwide. Gujarat is a stronghold for the Jain community, and the religion has heavily influenced Gujarati society and culture. Jainism preaches non-violence to all living creatures and vegetarianism. As a result of Jain beliefs, meat is rare in Gujarat, and alcohol is prohibited. There are a number of beautiful Jain temples in Gujarat, chief of which are the temples of Palitana, near Bhavnagar, the largest Jain religious site in the world.

Language

Gujarati is the state's most widely spoken language. It is an Indo-Aryan language evolved from Sanskrit, and part of the great Indo-European language family. Gujarati has approximately 46.1 million speakers worldwide, making it the 26th most spoken native language in the world. The majority of the states population speak Gujarati, while people from the Kutch region in the north west also speak Kutchi. When broken down by religion, 71% of Hindus in Gujarat speak Gujarati, while the other 29% speak Hindi. Almost 88% of Muslims speak Gujarati, while the other 12% speak Urdu. Almost all Jains speak Gujarati. Marathi is spoken by a large number of the people living in south eastern Gujarat, along the border with Maharashtra.⁸

Economy

Though the climatic and geographic conditions are not ideal, agriculture remains a major component of the state's economy, employing about half of the workforce. Gujarat is rich in minerals, including limestone, gypsum, calcite, and bauxite, and the state's output of soda ash and salt amounts to a significant proportion of the national yield. Gujarat is one of India's leading states in the manufacturing sector, and in 2010, Forbes listed Ahmedabad as the world's third fastest growing city.⁹

Between 1960 and 1990, Gujarat established itself as a leader in various industrial sectors, including textiles, engineering, chemicals, petrochemicals, drugs and pharmaceuticals, dairy, cement and ceramics, and gems and jewellery, amongst others. Post-liberalisation of the Indian economy, the state's economy grew rapidly, posting an average real GDP growth rate of 14% per annum between 1994 and 2002. Between 2004 and 2009, Gujarat had the fastest growing economy in India, a country with one of the fastest growing national economies in the world.¹⁰

Politics

Gujarat is governed by a Legislative Assembly of 182 members, 13 of which are required to be from Scheduled Castes (Dalits), and 26 from Scheduled Tribes. The leader of the largest party in the Assembly becomes the Chief Minister, and they hold most executive power. The President of India appoints a Governor who acts as the states ceremonial head. Between independence and 1995, the left of centre Indian National Congress party held almost continuous control over the Assembly. However since 1998, the right of centre Bharatiya Janata Party has been in power, and since 2001, the Chief Minister has been Narendra Modi.

2002 saw major communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat. Beginning with an attack on a train by a Muslim mob that killed 58 Hindu pilgrims, mostly women and children, large-scale retaliatory attacks were carried out against Muslim communities, and communal riots occurred in many cities in Gujarat. In total, 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed in the violence, and 223 more people were reported missing.¹¹ 523 places of worship were damaged: 298 Muslim shrines, 205 mosques, 17 temples, and 3 churches. 61,000 Muslims and 10,000 Hindus fled their homes, and 27,901 Hindus and 7,651 Muslims were arrested. The violence remains politically controversial in India. Some commentators have characterised the massacre of Muslims as a genocide in which the state was complicit, while government sources have stated that the Muslim dead were victims of mere riots and disturbances.¹²

Bhavnagar

Shaishav works in Bhavnagar, an industrial city in the south west of Gujarat, near the Gulf of Cambay and the Arabian Sea. Bhavnagar is the fifth largest city in Gujarat, with a population of 517,708.¹³ The city was founded in 1723 by Bhavsinhji Gohil, and named after its founder. The development of heavy industry has been limited, but informal, small-scale industries proliferate in low-income areas. The district is home to over 10,000 small-scale industrial units.¹⁴ The main industries are diamond polishing, plastic rope making, weaving, and recycling. Bhavnagar has the second largest diamond industry in India, following Surat, also in Gujarat. It is also a large producer of salt, with 34,500 tons being produced annually. Approximately 50 km from Bhavnagar is Alang Ship Yard. Alang is the largest ship recycling yard in the world, recycling about half of all the world's salvaged ships, and employing many of its labourers from Bhavnagar.

The city is well connected to the rest of Gujarat and beyond, through rail and long distance coaches. Bhavnagar also has an airport with daily flights to Mumbai. The city includes a university as well as a number of Engineering, Medical, Nursing, Ayurvedic, and Physiotherapy colleges and industrial training institutes.¹⁵

Bhavnagar⁷



- Population: 517,000
- Literacy Rate: 76.8%
- Sex Ratio: 931 females to 1000 males
- Child Sex Ratio: 885 females to 1000 males
- Annual Population Growth: 1.65%

Places of Interest



Palitana

Approximately 50 km south west of Bhavnagar, Palitana is a major pilgrimage centre for Jains. It includes over 850 temples atop sacred Mount Satrunjaya, many of which date back to the 15th and 16th Centuries, and some of which are even older. The top is reached by climbing 3,572 steps.



Alang

Alang, approximately 50 km south east of Bhavnagar, is the largest ship-breaking yard in the world. Alang recycles around half of all ships salvaged across the world. Ships are beached during high tide, and labourers dismantle each ship, salvaging what they can and reducing the rest to scrap.



Gir National Park

Gir is the only place where it is still possible to see Asiatic Lions in the wild. The park is also home to Indian Leopards, Mongooses, Sloth Bears, Striped Hyenas and Golden Jackals. The park was established in 1965, and covers almost 1500 km².



Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad is the largest city in Gujarat, and the 7th largest in India. The city contains the former home of Mahatma Gandhi, the Sabarmati Ashram, now a national monument. The city also has a large number of museums and galleries, as well as temples, palaces, and forts.



Great Rann of Kutch

A seasonal salt marsh located in the Thar Desert, covering close to 30,000 km². During the monsoon, the flat desert of salty clay fills with standing waters, interspersed with sandy islands, becoming breeding grounds for flamingos and other wildlife.



Diu

Located off the coast of Gujarat and directly administered by the Indian government, Diu was under Portuguese rule until 1961. The island has become a popular tourist destination, both for Gujarati's and foreign tourists.

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- ¹ India State Hunger Index, 'Comparisons of Hunger Across States', *International Food Policy*
- ² Encyclopædia Britannica, 'Gujarat', *Britannica Online Encyclopædia*, 2011, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/249059/Gujarat>>.
- ³ See 2
- ⁴ See 2
- ⁵ Gujarat, 'All About Gujarat: History', *Official Gujarat State Portal*, 2009, <<http://www.gujaratindia.com/about-gujarat/history-1.htm>>.
- ⁶ See 5
- ⁷ Census of India 2011, <<http://www.censusindia.gov.in>>.
- ⁸ See 2
- ⁹ DNA India, 'Cheers Ahmedabad! City is racing ahead', *Daily News & Analysis*, 16 Oct 2010, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_cheers-ahmedabad-city-is-racing-ahead_1453361>.
- ¹⁰ Government of Gujarat, 'Gujarat: The Growth Engine of India', *Vibrant Gujarat*, 2009, <<http://www.vibrantgujarat.com/documents/why-gujarat/why-gujarat.pdf>>.
- ¹¹ BBC News, 'Top BJP man seeks Gujarat probe', *BBC News Online*, 13 May 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4543177.stm>.
- ¹² BBC News, 'Report damns Gujarat Government', *BBC News Online*, 25 April 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1951284.stm>.
- ¹³ See 7
- ¹⁴ Government of Gujarat, 'Bhavnagar: A Snapshot', *Vibrant Gujarat*, 2011, <<http://www.vibrantgujarat.com/documents/profiles/bhavnagar-district-profile.pdf>>.
- ¹⁵ See 14