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PUNJAB-HARYANA REGION: SIZE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS OF
HOUSELESS POPULATION, 2011

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Census taking in India is a complete count of country's entire population including all those who either live in a household or those who are known to be residing in the household or even those who do not have a house/institution to live in and are designated as houseless population by the Census. A *household* is; thus, the primary unit of Census taking in India and consists of usually a group of persons, who normally live together and may or may not have kinship ties, but they take their meals from a common kitchen. Persons living in such a household may be related or unrelated or a mix of both. However, they will qualify for a household only if they take their meals from a common kitchen. Taking meals from a common kitchen is, thus, the qualifying criterion unlike kinship ties which constitute the basis for *family* although a virtual synonymity between the two also cannot be ruled out, especially in case of houseless population in India.

Houseless households are such households who do not live in a building or a census house but live in the open on roadside pavements, in hume pipes, under flyovers and staircases, or in the open spaces of places of worship, *mandaps*, railway platforms, in *verandas* in front of shops etc. Houseless population generally consists of those who have no work to earn wages and may include beggars, rag pickers, petty criminals, thieves,

vagrants, orphans etc. all doing no paid or unpaid work. Present map series is an attempt to portray the spatial dimension of size of such houseless households in the Punjab-Haryana region.

Size of households in an area is, by and large, a function of rate of natural increase of population, incidence of nuclearization of family, incidence of in- and out- migration, process and degree of urbanisation, and public policies aimed at social welfare etc. Rate of natural increase is basic determinant of size of household. Normally a positive correlation between the two has been observed implying that higher the rate of natural increase of population, larger is the household size and vice-versa. Joint family system had been ingrained in Indian society for centuries, but recent decades have witnessed an increasing process of nuclearization of Indian family structure. Consequently, a negative correlation between the household size and extent of nuclearization process has been observed meaning thereby that higher the extent of nuclearization, smaller is the size of household. Such a nuclearization may get initiated by socio-economic necessities or may get triggered by social welfare policies of the government, such as providing a home/shelter to each family. Migration too affects size of the household, but it has limited role in case of houseless population because

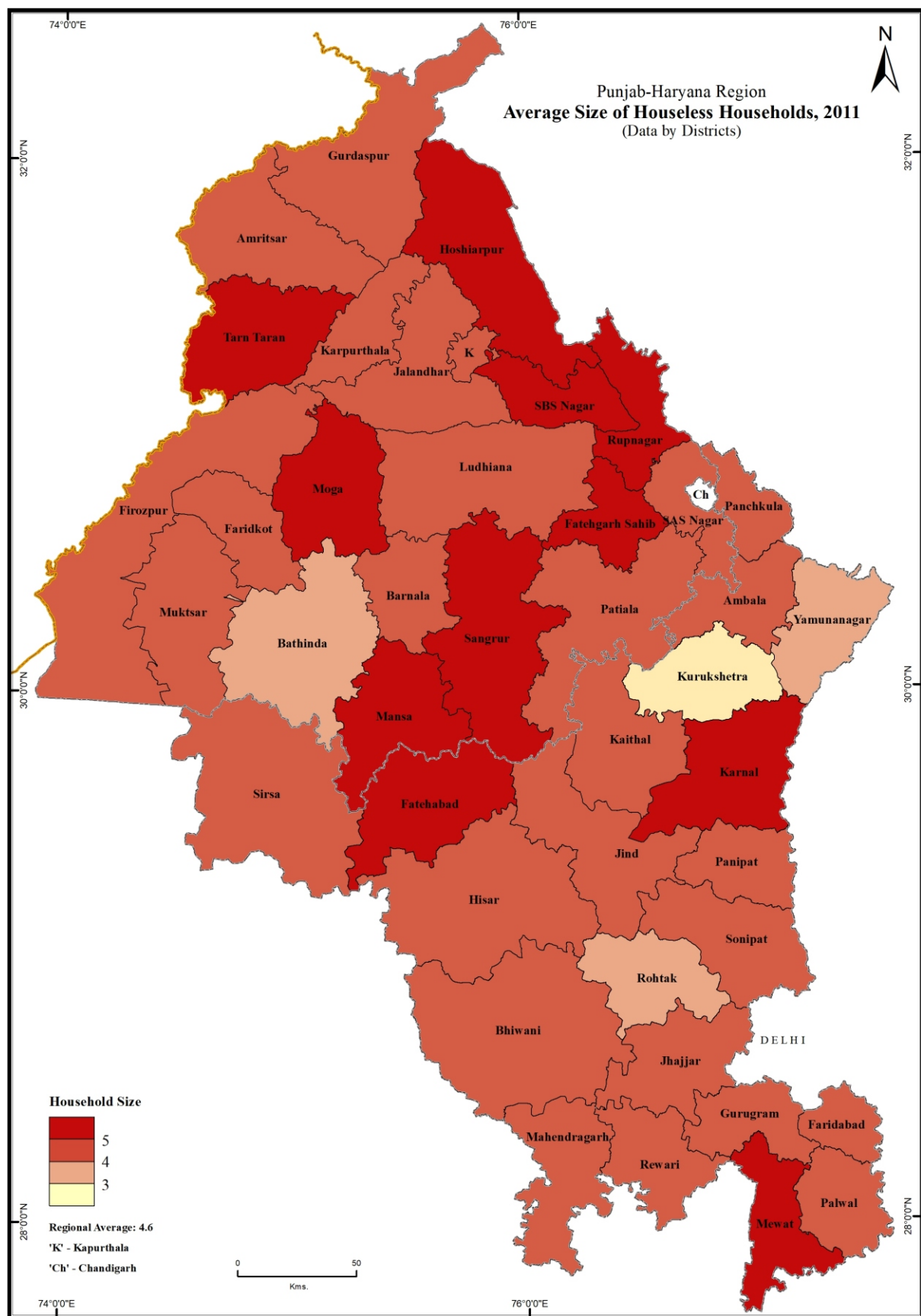


Fig. 1

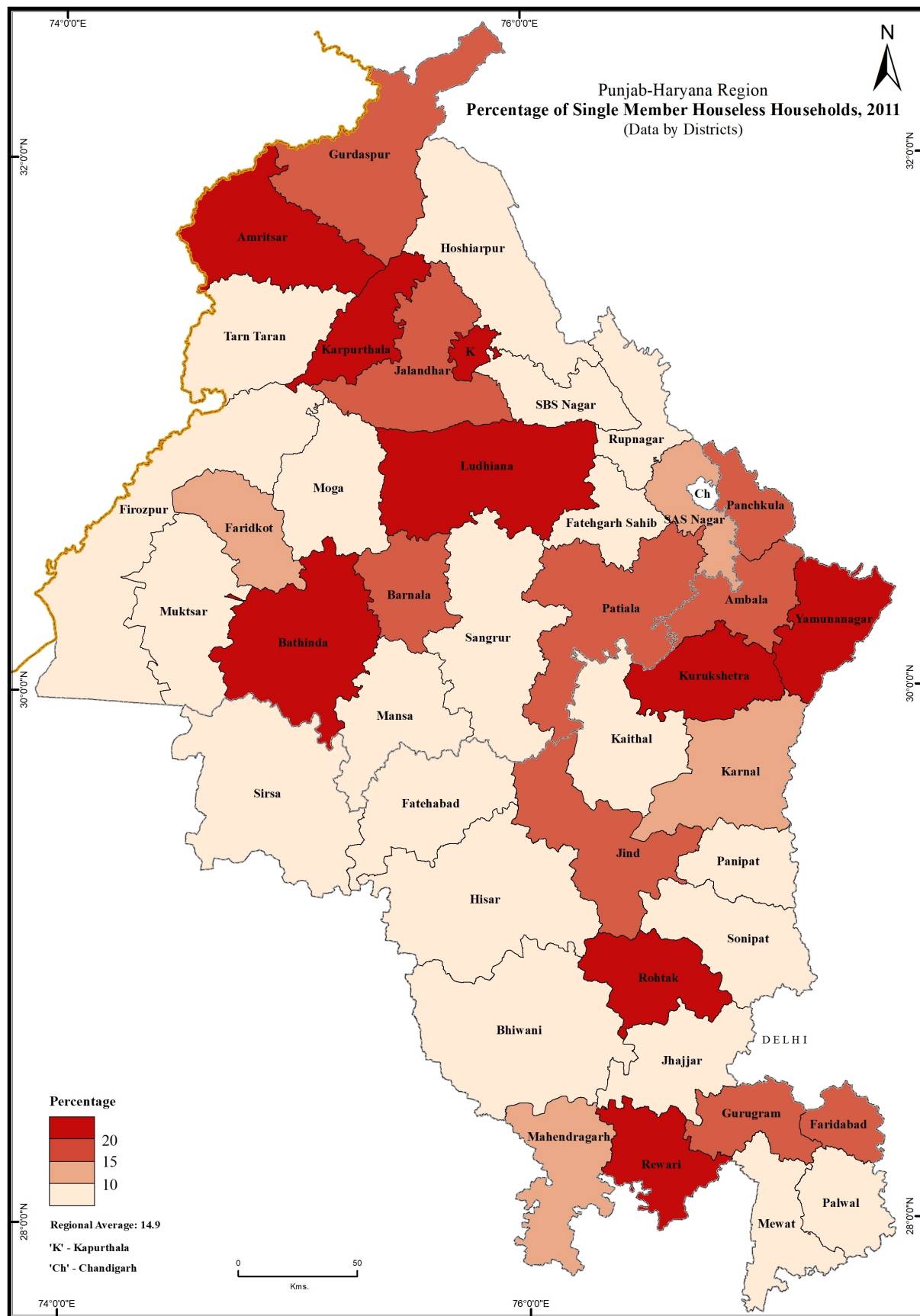


Fig. 2

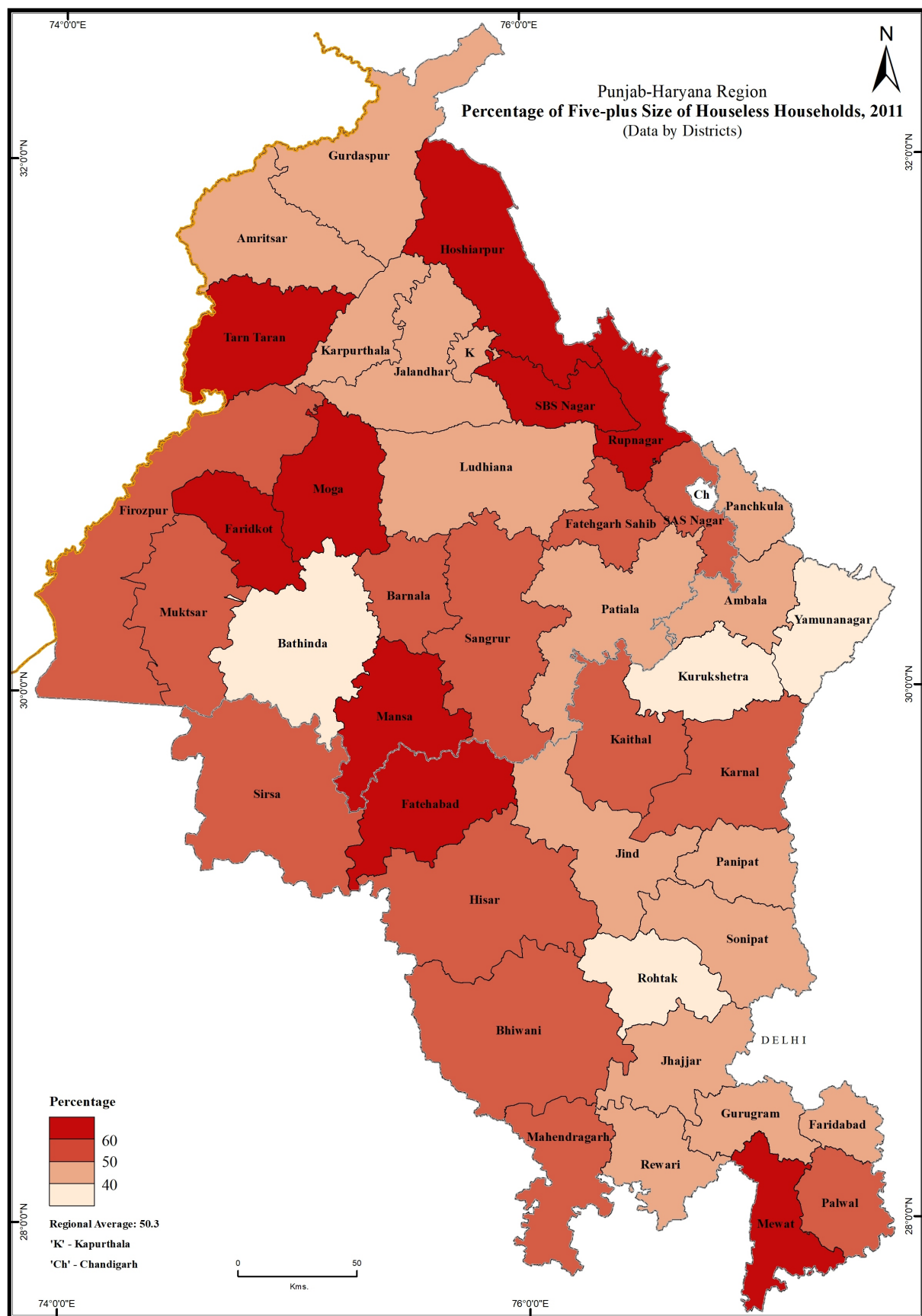


Fig. 3

of its negligible incidence. Stage of the urbanisation process and degree of urbanisation too seem to have impacted size of household as it generates movement of only working (age-group) members of the family from rural to urban areas thus affecting the size of household in both rural and urban areas. Moreover, the incidence of nuclearization is also higher in urban areas than that in the countryside resulting a cascading effect on size of the household in urban areas.

On an average, the houseless population in the country had 3.9 persons per household in 2011. Such an average was higher (4.3 persons) in rural areas than that in urban areas (3.7 persons) for reasons explained above. By comparison, study region of Punjab-Haryana displayed marginally larger size both in rural (5.1 persons) and urban (4.1 persons) areas. Interestingly, 50.3 per cent of the houseless households in the study region have more than 5 members and only 14.9 per cent of houseless households in the study region are single member households. Three maps have been prepared to portray average size of household (Fig. 1), single member households (Fig. 2) and 5 and more member households (Fig. 3). Although the region had an average size of 4.6 persons, it varied from the lowest of 1.8 persons in Kurukshetra district to 5.5 persons in Rupnagar district (Fig. 1). Mewat, the only district with considerable proportion of Muslim population had, on the other hand,

lowest proportion (3.6 per cent) of single member households. By comparison, Kurukshetra district had the highest proportion (77.9 per cent) of single member households amongst houseless population. Consequently, Kurukshetra district had only 11.2 per cent of its houseless households with 5 or more members. As pointed out earlier, Rupnagar district had 67.1 per cent of its houseless households with 5 or more members.

What emerges from above is that average size of the household among houseless population in the study region was larger than that in the country as a whole; rural areas had less of houseless population than their urban counterparts; average size of the household has been larger in the rural areas than that in urban areas both in the country as well as in the study region; and there have been wide spatial variations in the average size of the household among houseless population in the study region. The size of household among houseless population has been the product, among other factors, of rate of natural increase of population, incidence of nuclearization of family, magnitude of migration both in and out, process and degree of urbanisation and public policies especially aimed at social welfare/uplift.

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