

**CONSISTENCY OF VOTER
LISTS IN BANGLADESH
1973-2001: AN ANALYSIS OF
MACRO AND MICRO
EVIDENCE**

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MACRO AND MICRO EVIDENCE**

A DISSERTATION

BY

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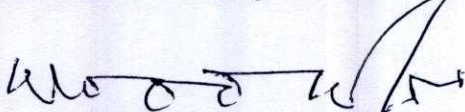
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ABSTRACT

A voter's list is the compilation of persons eligible to vote for a particular electoral area to conduct elections for elective bodies. An accurate and consistent voter's list is one of the key elements for conducting free, fair and impartial election. Voter registration is important in exercising voting rights in producing genuine democratic elections. It can act as a mechanism to ensure the equality to exercise the right to vote. Properly compiled voter's lists can discourage attempts at double voting and also makes attempts of false voting difficult. In this paper, issues related to voters registration process and existing rules regarding preparation of voter's list in Bangladesh are discussed. In Bangladesh, the accuracy of voter's list has become a major bone of contention. The ongoing controversy regarding preparation of voter's list is also touched in this paper. This paper tries to ascertain whether the registered voters exceed the voting age population only in Bangladesh or similar problem exists in other countries. The voter's lists of four selected villages are compared with the demographic data to examine the accuracy of the voter's list. This paper also tries to find out anomalies of the voter's list and possible solutions. This study also suggests measures for preparing a better voter list.

The major finding of this study is that over-enumeration of the voters is not a problem unique to Bangladesh. Similar problems exist in almost seventy one countries. The inaccuracy of voter list is not confined to developing countries. Inaccuracy of voter list is also a problem in industrial countries like Spain, Portugal and Ireland. It was also found that over-enumeration of the voters exists both in large and small countries. On the other hand, under enumeration is found to be a problem in many Muslim countries.

An analysis of the voter list at village level suggests in some cases minority voters have been excluded. There are also serious problems in recording age and names of the voters.

This study suggests that the consistency of a voter list should be checked with other available data like the census data. Further research by the social scientists in this area will be useful for making the voter list more accurate.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Name of the topic	Page no.
1. Introduction	1
▪ Plan of study	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Literature Review	6
▪ Issues about voter registration	7
▪ Compulsory Vs Voluntary Registration	7
▪ State initiative Vs Self initiative	8
▪ Specific Voter's List Vs Civil Registry	8
▪ Periodic Voter's List Vs Continuously Updated Voter's List	9
4. Preparation of voter's list in Bangladesh	11
▪ The Constitutional Provision	11
▪ Election Management Body	12
▪ Existing Rules Regarding Voter Registration System	12
▪ Registration Process	13
▪ Ongoing Controversy regarding preparation of voter's list in Bangladesh	19
5. Cross country comparison	22
▪ Analysis of the voter's list of Bangladesh	23
▪ Cross Country Analysis	26
6. VOTER'S LIST AT VILLAGE LEVEL	38
▪ Description of The Study Area	38
▪ Data Analysis	40
7. Microanalysis, EKDALA Village	48
8. CONCLUSION: MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	57
▪ Main Findings of the Study	57
▪ Recommendations	58
▪ Areas for further research	60
9. Bibliography	61

LIST OF TABLES

No	Name of table	Page
Table-1	Primary information of four selected villages	5
Table-2	Registered voters as % of voting age population of parliamentary elections of Bangladesh	22
Table-3	District wise comparison of voting age population and voters in Bangladesh in Presidential election in 1983	24
Table-4	List of the countries depending on the ratio of registered voters to voting age population	27
Table-5	Registered voters as % of voting age population in the Parliamentary elections of Lebanon	32
Table-6	Range of over-enumeration in parliamentary elections in the countries where registered voters always exceed the voting age population	32
Table-7	Top-20 countries with highest population size	34
Table-8	Top-20 countries with lowest population size	35
Table-9	Registered voters as % of voting age population in the parliamentary elections in established democracies.	36
Table-10	Feature of population and registered voters of Kapasia Upazilla	39
Table-11	General information about the selected villages	39
Table-12	Population and registered voters as percentage of voting age population of Kotbajalia in the parliamentary elections	40
Table-13	Information of registered voters of Kotbajalia	41
Table-14	Population and registered voters as % of voting age population of Chinaduli	42
Table-15	Information of registered voters of Chinaduli	42
Table-16	Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Chinaduli	43
Table-17	Population and registered voters as % of voting age population of Baghia	44

Table-18	Information of voters of Baghia	44
Table-19	Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Baghia	45
Table-20	Data regarding population and voters of Ekdala	45
Table-21	Information of voters of Ekdala	46
Table-22	Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Ekdala	46
Table-23	Age group of male voters in 2000	48
Table-24	Age group of female voters in 2000	49
Table-25	Age group of male and female voters in 2000	49
Table-26	Age group of male voters in 1995	50
Table-27	Age group of female voters in 1995	50
Table-28	Age group of male and female voters in 1995	51
Table-29	Age group of male and female voters of Ekdala in 1995 and 2000	51
Table-30	Information of excluded voters from the voter list of Ekdala, 1995	52
Table-31	Information of included voters in voter list of Ekdala, 2000	53
Table-32	Comments of the respondents from Ekdala village	54

LIST OF GRAPHS

No	Name of graph	Page
Graph-1	Age group of male voters in 2000	48
Graph-2	Age group of female voters in 2000	49
Graph-3	Age group of male and female voters in 2000	49
Graph-4	Age group of male voters in 1995	50
Graph-5	Age group of female voters in 1995	50
Graph-6	Age group of male and female voters in 1995	51
Graph-7	Age group of male and female voters of Ekdala in 1995 and 2000	52
Graph-8	Information of excluded voters from the voter list of Ekdala, 1995	52
Graph-9	Information of included voters in voter list of Ekdala, 2000	53

LIST OF ANNEXURE

	Name of annexure	Page
ANN-1	Countries Where Registered Voters Always Exceed the VAP (Always over enumerated)	64
ANN-2	Countries where registered voters sometimes exceed the VAP (Occasionally over enumerated)	67
ANN-3	Countries where registered voters never exceed the VAP (Normal or under enumerated)	72
ANN-4	Countries with population size	81
ANN-5	Questionnaires for Interview	87

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

RO	Registration Officer
RA	Revising Authority
ERO	Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982
ERR	Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982
VAP	Voting Age Population
EU	European Union
EMB	Election Management Body

SECTION ONE

Introduction

Election is the gateway through which the governed agree to delegate their authority to those who govern (Pintor and Gratschew). It is the link between the legitimacy of political governance and the liberty of human beings.

The first important step in the election process is the preparation of the voter list. A voter list is a comprehensive record of all eligible voters of an electoral area or constituency that is prepared for conducting elections. An accurate voter list is an essential precondition for free and fair elections. Accuracy implies that the voter's list does not include names of ineligible persons. Such ineligible voters include persons who are under- aged or disqualified for voting and whose names are included more than once either in one place or in different places. Accuracy also requires that the eligible voters are not excluded from the list. Using a voter's list, the Election Management Bodies (EMB) can ensure and verify eligibility of voters and control the legitimacy of the voting process. A properly compiled voter list is an impediment to double and fake voting. The voting by ineligible voters may bias the election results. A faulty voter list may undermine the very legitimacy of the whole election process.

The exclusion of eligible voters from the voter's list is as harmful as fake votes. Such exclusion virtually takes away the voting rights of people. In many countries minorities are denied voting rights through this means. In early stages of modern democracy legal restrictions were imposed to exclude some sections of the society such as women, minority groups, and illiterate persons.

A voter's list is an instrument in organizing voting operations such as allocating voters to polling stations and providing voting materials. According to Maley, another major benefit of undertaking initiatives to registration of voters before or at the beginning of the election period is that it allows disputes about the right of a person to vote to be dealt

with in a measured way well before the polling takes place, and thereby minimizing disputes on Election Day (Maley, 2000, 9).

The preparation of an accurate voter list is one of the most important tasks of Election Management Bodies. Unfortunately, the accuracy of the voter's list has become a major bone of contention in Bangladesh politics. The main complaints as articulated in newspapers are inclusion of ineligible voters and exclusion of minority voters. The very procedure for preparation of voter list was challenged in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. It was argued that the total number of voters in the list prepared by Election Commission exceeded the total voting age population.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore ways of examining the accuracy of voter's lists in Bangladesh. Accuracy of a voter list may be tested on the basis of statistical sampling or by comparing the voter list with another list prepared with special care in some selected areas. Such statistical methods are time consuming and expensive. Alternatively, the accuracy of a voter list may be tested by comparing the consistency of voter list data with other available data. Comparing demographic data with data generated by voter's list could serve this purpose. It is also useful to compare the data on voter's list in Bangladesh with similar data from other countries.

This paper seeks to examine the reliability of voter's lists in Bangladesh by comparing their consistency with other available data in two ways. First, the ratio of voters and voting age population in 170 countries will be compared to ascertain whether the voter's lists in Bangladesh are consistent with those of other countries. In this connection, an attempt will be made to determine a plausible range of the ratio of registered voters to voting age population. Second, the consistency of the voter list in four villages will be analyzed by comparing the voter's list in 1995 with the voter's list in 2000. The consistency of the voter lists will also be tested by comparing these with population census data. Because the voter list for 2006 has not been officially published as yet, this study could not examine the new list.

Table-1: Primary information of four selected villages

Sl No	Name of the village	Area of the village(acres)	Distance from upazilla headquarter	Population in 1991
1	Kotbajalia	521	13 km	1573
2	Chinaduli	392	5.5 km	1557
3	Baghia	856	6 km	2231
4	Ekdala	161	11.5 km	1221

Source: Data collected from the office of statistics

Total rural area of Bangladesh is 137993.1 square kilometer that is 34098785 acres (total area of Bangladesh is 147570 square kilometer and urban area is 9576.9 square km) and total number of village is 86038 in Bangladesh. Average village size of Bangladesh is 396.32 acres. Average population size per village is 1235.6. Compared to the average village and population size of the village, two out of four selected villages are larger than the average village and one is smaller than average village size.

Ekdala village was selected for detailed analysis for two reasons. First, it is not located near any urban centre. Secondly, this is the smallest village in the sample and it was easy to collect accurate information on this village.

voting system. The most fundamental form of taking part in forming democratic government is the right to vote in free and fair election. “ The ability to exercise the democratic right to vote is premised on the existence of a comprehensive and inclusive electoral register or voters list which is rigorously maintained to ensure as much as possible, that each eligible citizen is registered to vote once and only once” (Archer).

Issues About Voter Registration

There are several systems for voter registration based on four main principles:

- whether the voter registration would be compulsory or voluntary
- whether the registration would be through state-initiative or self-initiative
- whether there would be a specific voter's list or civil registers would be used as voter's list
- Whether the voter's list would be continuously updated on the basis of a permanent voter's list or a new register for each election known as periodic voter's list should be prepared.

These issues are not mutually exclusive. The voter's registration system in each country is laid down taking into accounts the strengths and weaknesses of these procedures.

Compulsory Vs Voluntary Registration

Compulsory voter's Registration System is based on the principle that voting is not only simply a right but also responsibility of citizenship in a democracy. The registration of voters is made compulsory in this system. Not registering and voting is considered as denying one's responsibility. For this reason; it is an obligation for the citizens eligible to vote to register for an election. Compulsory registration places obligation on the state to inform voters of the requirements to register in the voter's list or make changes in the continuous voter's list by providing updated personal information to the officials. The participation rate in the election tends to be generally high in countries where registration is mandatory.

On the other hand, in Voluntary Registration System, the key principle is that voting is a right of citizenship but not necessarily an obligation. Registration in the voter's list is not compulsory. Voters have the right to choose to register or not to register for an election. The exercise of voting right is optional and at the voter's discretion. Initiatives can be taken for registration either by the individual voter or the election authority. This system is less expensive compared to compulsory registration system. Voter's turn out rate in this system is low compared to Compulsory Registration System.

State initiative Vs Self initiative

The key principle of State-initiated Registration System is that the responsibility of registering all eligible voters lies with the state. It is the obligation of the state to ensure that the opportunity to be registered in the voter's list is comprehensive, convenient, fair and non discriminatory. The election administration officials take initiatives to enlist the voters through door-to-door enumeration or maintenance of a continuously updated voter's list or a civil registry. The state bears the responsibility for establishing first contact with all citizens. For this reason, this system is comparatively expensive.

In the Self-initiative Registration System, the responsibility to contact the election administrative officials to ensure his registration is shifted to the citizens similar to Voluntary Registration. The difference of Self-initiated Voter's Registration System from the Voluntary Registration System is that in Self-initiated System the citizen is responsible to contact with the election administration for registration. On the other hand, initiatives can be taken either by the state or by individual voters for registration in the Voluntary Registration System. The rate of registration tends to be lower because of the voluntaristic characteristics of registration.

Specific Voter's List Vs Civil Registry

Voter Specific Registers are standard practice all over the world. In Sweden and Denmark there is no separate register of voters. The civil registry is a list of basic information on all citizens, such as name, address, citizenship, age, identification number, and other data. The voters' list is produced from information already collected through

the national civil registry. It is maintained by the state. Computerized database is needed for maintaining a civil registry. The data in a civil registry normally is updated regularly that enables to generate a current voter list on a short notice. For this reason it provides reliable, up-to-date information. It is a very costly system to establish and maintain. However the cost of maintaining a civil registry is spread over years. As a result, no lumpy expenditure at the time of election is involved. Such data should not be allowed to be used in unauthorized commercial purposes. The civil registry makes the election authority dependent on the government for the voter list.

Periodic Voter's List Vs Continuously Updated Voter's List

The periodic register of voters, or periodic list, is one in which a new voters list is prepared for each election by the election administration authorities without maintaining or updating this list for the future. Periodic list is often used for only one electoral event, and are normally created just prior to the election.

The periodic voter list has its advantages and disadvantages. The voter registration period is more specific with identifiable beginning and endpoint. It is highly salient and focused. Permanent election administrative apparatus is not needed. It provides for a limited timeframe for a voter education campaign. It is not dependent on high-tech computer hardware and software. It is more accurate in accordance with the age and residence of the voters.

The main disadvantage of a periodic list of voters is that the periodic list is made in a hurry to finish within a time frame. It leads to a compromise on the quality of information and the list. Dropout may be high in a periodic voter list. The periodic list is more costly. There is a risk for disruption due to unpredictable situation, as it has to be completed within a limited period. The fund and resources required to properly carry out a periodic list can be a burden for the treasury in many developing countries.

A continuous list of voters is one in which the electoral register is maintained and continuously updated by the election administration. This requires adding the names for

those who are satisfying eligibility requirements, such as citizenship, residency and voting age, as well as deleting the names of those who no longer meet eligibility requirements, through death or change of residency. An appropriate infrastructure is required to maintain the voter list in this system. Continuous voter registration system is mostly found in many countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Australia, Peru, Guatemala.

The important characteristic of a continuously updated voter list is that it is updated on a regular basis to include the names of eligible voters and exclude the names of dead or ineligible voters. A permanent election administration is needed in a continuous voter registration system.

The main advantage of Continuously Updated Voter List is that the voter list is updated and kept current on a regular basis. The people can inspect the list at any time during the year, not only during a specified period of election. The cost of registering voters is spread across the entire period between elections. So the cost is not lumpy and congenial to budgetary planning. There is a relatively long time frame for making changes and corrections to the voters list. The continuous list can provide opportunities for developing efficiencies in the creation of a voter list. A continuous list can result in higher rates of voter registration because of the ongoing character of the registration process.

The continuously updated voter's list also has disadvantages. Technical sophistication, particularly with computing hardware and software is needed to maintain and continually update information. Citizens have to comply with requests to provide updated information. It requires the electoral authority to be diligent in maintaining the accuracy of the list. To complete the updating of the list on an ongoing basis, a considerable cooperation among several branches of government is needed. An appropriate administrative structure and administrative culture must be in place to respond to these requirements.

SECTION FOUR

Preparation of voter's list in Bangladesh

The Constitutional Provision

Article 119 of the Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh vests the responsibility of preparing voter list to the Election Commission. According to Article 119 of the Constitution, the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for elections to the office of President and to Parliament and the conduct of such elections shall vest in the Election Commission which shall, in accordance with this Constitution and any other law -

- (a) hold elections to the office of President
- (b) hold elections of members of Parliament ;
- (c) delimit the constituencies for the purpose of elections to Parliament ; and
- (d) prepare electoral rolls for the purpose of elections to the office of President and to Parliament .

Article 121 of the Constitution lays down that there shall be one electoral roll for each constituency for the purposes of elections to Parliament, and no special electoral roll shall be prepared so as to classify electors according to religion, race, caste or sex.

According to the Article 122 of the Constitution, the parliamentary elections shall be held on the basis of adult franchise. A person shall be eligible and entitled to be enlisted as elector on the electoral roll for a constituency delimited the purpose of election to Parliament if he/she fulfils the following conditions:

- the person has to be a citizen of Bangladesh;
- he/she has to be not less than eighteen years of age;
- the person is not declared of unsound mind by a competent court; and
- the person is or is deemed by law to be a resident of that constituency.

The Constitution lays down that the Election Commission will prepare voter list in accordance with laws enacted by the Parliament. In 1982 the Ordinance no LXI of 1982 entitled the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 was passed to provide for the preparation of electoral rolls for the purpose of conducting elections to different elective bodies. The Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982 was formulated by the government in exercise of the powers conferred by section 16 of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982. It describes the rules and regulations for preparation of electoral rolls for a particular electoral area. The Electoral Rolls Rules mainly contains the regulations and process of registration of a person as voter of an electoral area and the inclusion of the name of that voter in the final voter's list prepared in accordance with these rules. The constitutional provisions will have to be interpreted in the light of these laws and rules.

Election Management Body

Article 118 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of an Election Commission for Bangladesh consisting of a Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners. Article 126 of the Constitution and Articles 4 and 5 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972 provide that it shall be the duty of all executive authorities to assist the Election Commission in the discharge of its functions. The Commission has the power to require any person or authority to perform such functions or render such assistance for the purpose of election as it may direct.

Existing Rules Regarding Voter Registration System

The Election Commission has a full-fledged Secretariat headed by a Secretary to the government, which was created to carry out the decisions and orders of the Commission. Assisting the Election Commission for preparation of electoral rolls for use in all national and local bodies' elections is one of the main functions of the Election Commission Secretariat.

It is the mandatory responsibility and constitutional obligation of the Election Commission to prepare electoral rolls for the purpose of election to Parliament. It is also

the responsibility of the Election Commission to prepare such rolls for the purpose of election to the local bodies under relevant laws. A person shall be entitled to be enrolled as elector on the electoral roll for a constituency delimited for the purpose of election to Parliament as stated in the article 122 of the constitution.

Registration Process:

Ordinance number LXI of 1982 entitled the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 is formulated to provide instructions for the preparation of voter lists. The Election Commission prepares voter's list under the guidance of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance. The Ordinance describes the process of enlisting voters, the process of making revisions by the aggrieved persons and the process of resolving the disputes. To carry out the instructions of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 properly regarding the preparation of the voter list, the government made rules under section 16 of the Ordinance namely the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. In these rules the process of preparation of voter lists are described elaborately.

Section 4 of the ordinance vests the power to the Election Commission to recruit required numbers of persons or any authority to perform the functions or assist the Commission. Section 5 of the Ordinance provides the provision of making electoral rolls upon registration of voters for each electoral area or constituency for the purpose of conducting elections to different elective bodies.

The Election Commission entrusts the task of supervision of the preparation of voter's list to Registration and Assistant Registration Officers. A Registration Officer is defined in section 3(f) of this Ordinance as a Registration Officer appointed under section 6 of the Ordinance and includes an Assistant Registration Officer performing the functions of a Registration Officer.

The process of preparation and publication of the voter list is described in Section 7 of this ordinance. According to this section, it is the duty of a registration officer appointed for an electoral area or constituency to prepare a draft electoral roll or voter list for the particular area under the supervision, direction and control of the Election Commission.

The draft voter list is prepared containing the names of every person who will fulfill the requirements of article 122 of the constitution.

Following are the main stages in the preparation of voter's list in accordance with the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 and the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982:

- a) A statement with detailed information of eligible voters in a specific prescribed form (form-2) has to be collected by the enumerator through door to door visit according to section 7(1) of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance and rule-4(1) of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. Rule 5 of the Electoral Rolls Rules provides the process of applying for being enlisted in the voter's list.
- b) Supervisors are to be appointed to verify each statement submitted by the enumerators. The supervisors have to certify to the effect that the information have been verified or corrected after door-to-door visit under rule 4(2) of Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982.
- c) On the basis of the statements, the draft voters' list is prepared thereafter under rule 6(1) of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. At least 10 percent entries of the draft electoral roll have to be verified through house-to-house survey by an authorized officer under rule 6(2). Along with this, a notice inviting claims or objections related to enlistment of names in the electoral roll has to be served under rule 6(4) and claims and objections have to be lodged within fifteen days of the publication under rule 7 of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. After proper verification by the authorized officer, the draft voter list is published by the Registration Officer under section 7(2) of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance and rule 6 of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982.
- d) The Election Commission will appoint the Revising Authority under rule 9 of the Electoral Rolls Rules to resolve the disputes. Revising Authority is defined as a person appointed by the Commission to hear claims and objections relating to electoral roll for one or more electoral areas. The process of lodging claims and objections is mentioned in details in rule 8 and rule 10. According to rule 10, each dispute is to be submitted addressing the Revising Authority and presented to the

Revising Authority or the Registration Officer or the Assistant Registration Officers.

- e) The Revising Authority is required to issue notice under rule 14 in the prescribed form and serve personally or by post for hearing of disputes under rule 15 of the ERR. The objections have to be heard and disposed of after considering the verbal or written objections. Inquiry or summary of inquiry can also be conducted if required. The process of resolving claims and objections are mentioned in rule 11, 12, 13, 16, 17 of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982.
- f) The decisions taken by the Revising Authority is considered final
- g) The Registration Officers have to take necessary actions to make required changes and incorporate them in the draft voter list under section 7(3) of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance. Then the draft voter list is published in the prescribed manner under rule 18 of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982.

Even after final publication of electoral rolls, there are provisions for its amendments, i.e. correction, inclusion or deletion and revision of electoral rolls in the prescribed manner. Amendments and corrections in the final voter's list can be made under section 10 of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance along with the rule 20 of the Electoral Rolls Rules. According to section 10, necessary amendments and corrections may be done on the electoral roll in the prescribed manner depending on the following:

- a) "to correction any entry or supply any omission therein; or
- b) to include the name of any qualified persons whose name does not appear on such roll or who has since its preparation or its last revision becomes qualified to be enrolled on such roll; or
- c) to delete therefrom the names of the persons who has died, or who is or has become disqualified for enrolment on such roll."

The provision of making revision of the electoral roll is described in section 11 of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance and describes the process in rule 21 of the Electoral Rolls Rules. Updating of the electoral rolls is thus a continuous process.

Section 8 of the Ordinance describes meaning of residence of the voters. The provision of residence for the government officials and their family members and the persons under detention in prison or other legal custody at any place in Bangladesh are also described in this section. Section 9 of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance provides the following restriction on enrollment in voter list

- to be enlisted more than once for any electoral area
- to be enlisted in more than one electoral area.

To prevent false voting and to avoid duplication and to ensure the voter's right to vote, it is important to identify the voter correctly and properly. For this purpose, enactments were made for issuance of voter's Identity Card in 1994. Act 23 of 1994 was passed by the Parliament amending the Representation of the People Order, 1972 by which it has made obligatory for a voter to produce his/her Identity Card at the time of voting. Act 24 of 1994 has given the mandatory responsibility to Bangladesh Election Commission to issue ID card to every voter (Chowdhury, 1997).

Clause (1) of Article 31 of the Representation of People Order, 1972 was amended by the Act 23 of 1994 which says:

“(1) Where an elector presents himself at the polling station to vote, the Presiding Officer shall, after satisfying himself about the identity of the elector with reference to his identity card, issue to him a ballot paper.

(1A) No ballot paper shall be issued to an elector unless he is in possession of a valid identity card and the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the identity card is genuine.

(1B) An identity card shall not be accepted as valid unless the photograph of the elector in the identity card and his signature/ thumb impression therein and the signature of the issuing officer of the Commission and the seal of the Commission there on are distinct and clear”.

Section 11(A) was inserted in the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 by Act 24 of 1994 to provide the provision of preparation and issuance of identity cards to the voters. This section states

1. "The Election Commission shall issue an identity card to every elector.
2. The identity card shall be laminated and bear ---
 - a) a photograph of the elector
 - b) the name and signature or thumb impression of the elector;
 - c) the serial number of the elector in the electoral rolls;
 - d) the signature of an officer of the Commission authorized in this behalf;
 - e) the seal of the Commission; and
 - f) such other particulars, if any, as the Commission deems fit to specify.
3. An identity card may be renewed after such period as the Commission may determine in this behalf.
4. The form, shape and pattern of the identity cards and the manner of issuing them to the electors shall be such as may be prescribed by the Commission."

In pursuance of Act 24, rules (22-27) were made by the Election Commission for preparation, issuance, cancellation, confiscation, disposal of unclaimed identity card, amendment of register and electoral roll pursuant to cancellation etc. of identity card and issue of duplicate identity card (Chowdhury, 1997).

The Election Commission launched a scheme for preparation and distribution of ID cards and the process started in mid-1995. But the Election Commission could not complete the project. The web site of Election Commission explains the situation in the following words: "when about one-third of the work was completed, the schedule for June 1996 election of Parliament was announced. As a result, the work for preparation of identity cards was suspended. The Election Commission has in the meantime prepared a revised scheme to complete the work so that identity cards can be issued to all voters before the next elections, and also used for multiple purposes".

“It may be mentioned that the application of provisions (1, 1A & 1B) contained in article 31 of the Representation of People Order, 1972 were postponed by Ordinance No. 7 of 1996 before “15 February, 1996 Parliamentary Election” and by Ordinance No. 13 of 1996 before “12 June, 1996 Parliamentary Election” as well. It was done only because of the fact that identity cards could not be issued to all voters of Bangladesh, by that time” (Chowdhury, 1997).

Sub clause 3(8) was inserted in article 31 of the Representation of People Order, 1972 by Act XIII of 1996 (w. e. f. 25.04.1996) which states, “Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the provisions of clause (1), (1A) and (1B) of this Articles, as substituted for clause (1) thereof by section 10 of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1994 (Act 23 of 1994) shall remain suspended until they are revived by the Commission on a date to be specified by it, by notification in the official Gazette, in that behalf and during the period of such suspension clause (1), for which such substitution was made shall have effect as if no such substitution was ever made by the said section 10.”

After the amendment of the Representation of People Order, the Election Commission has not taken further initiative to revive the provision of preparation and issuance of identity card to the voters. The research officer of the Election Commission mentioned that like other countries, the identity card is not prepared for multiple uses in our country. This makes people unwilling to get identity card for election purpose only. This is one of the major reasons of failure of the project in two phases and the non-enforcement of the provisions of clause (1), (1A) and (1B) in article 31 of the Representation of People Order, 1972 by the Election Commission.

The punishment for making false declarations and the breach of duties in the process of construction of voter list is laid down in section 18 and 19 of the ordinance.

According to the Election Commission, the field level officials have to face certain problems during the registration process. Some of the important problems faced by the officials appointed to conduct the process mentioned by the EC are:

- non-availability of the dwellers in the proper place during working hours,
- lack of holding number in rural areas including in some cases in urban areas,
- there is no reliable information on age,
- changes of occupation and residence,
- illiteracy,
- lack of proper identification of individuals and the like.

One of the ways to check the consistency of voter list is to compare voter list with existing data. The Election Commission has not done so as yet. However, the web site of Election Commission states, "To explore the possibility of simplification of the existing registration system and to resolve the field problems, the Election Commission has planned to undertake an exercise in this behalf with the assistance of a consultant. In this process, the census mechanisms and existing linkages between local government, health department and other relevant governmental agencies, which are used for population statistics and voter's list will be reviewed. Steps have also been taken in the meantime to simplify the registration form which is considered to be complicated by some quarters. With a view to ensuring continuous updating process of registration, necessary proposals are also under consideration for computerized electoral database. Steps are also being taken for mass awareness and voter education which include workshops, motivation rallies, awareness campaign, producing and disseminating posters, leaflets, and television and radio spots. Steps are also being taken for comprehensive training programmes, updating the Training of Trainers Manual, other manuals and strengthening the Election Commission."

Ongoing Controversy Regarding Preparation of Voter's List in Bangladesh

Before every election, allegations are leveled that the ruling party manipulates the voter's list. Such manipulation includes the registration of false names in the voter list, the exclusion of the minorities and the supporters of the opposite parties from the list, non-exclusion or and inclusion of the names of the dead and absentees from the constituency

with a view to arrange fake votes. Such allegations are raised on the assumption that the government will engage in manipulating the voter registration with the intention to influence the result of the election in their favor.

In 2005, the Election Commission started consultation with all political parties and decided to make a new voter list. The main opposition party refused to become a part of the discussion and to accept the decision. The EC started the preparation of fresh voter's list from January 01, 2006. A numbers of reports were published in the media focusing on various irregularities in the on going process in preparing fresh voter list. In the mean time, a writ petition was filed to the High Court Division by Awami League (AL) leaders and lawmakers Abdul Jalil, Rahmat Ali and Asaduzzaman Noor on December 12, 2005, challenging the legality of the unilateral decision to prepare a fresh voter list taken by the Election Commission.

Considering the writ petition, the court asked the Election Commission to update the existing one instead of preparing a fresh voter list. "On January 4, 2006, a Division Bench of the High Court held that the EC is indeed a composite body and it must act collectively. However, the Court found that the Commission's decision of August 6, 2005 to prepare the electoral roll was not unilateral. More importantly, the Court directed that:

(III) The Commission should prepare Electoral Roll taking the existing Roll maintained under section 7(6) of the Ordinance as a major basis. If there is a computerised database the Commission should make the best use of it and if not, a computerised electoral roll with database should always be maintained to avoid future controversy, costs and labour.

(IV) The persons whose names are already in the existing electoral roll cannot be dropped from that roll unless they are dead or have been declared to be of unsound mind or ceased to be residents or ceased to be deemed to be residents of that area or the constituency."
(The Daily Star, 01.07.2006)

The Chief Election Commission filed an appeal with the Supreme Court Appellate Division on February 1, challenging two of the five directives given by the High Court on 04 January and continued with the preparation of a new voter's list. The new voter's list

contained 9.13 crores voters whereas voting age population was estimated 8.02 crores. The number of registered voters exceeded the voting age population by 13.8 percent.

Finally, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court rejected the EC appeal on May 23, upholding the HC decisions for revising the existing voter list with slight modifications. The Supreme Court made the following decisions:

- "The EC should prepare the electoral rolls taking into consideration the existing one under section 7(6) of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance 1982.
- If there is a computerized database, the commission should make the best use of it and if not, a computerized electoral roll with database should always be maintained to avoid further controversy, costs and labor,"
- The persons whose names are already on the existing list cannot be dropped unless they are dead or have been declared to be of unsound mind or less than 18 years of age or ceased to be citizen of Bangladesh, or ceased to be deemed by law to be residents of the electoral area/constituency following sub-rules 3 and 4 of the rule 20 of the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982." (The Daily Star, 24.05.06)

The Election Commission complied with the decision of the Supreme Court directives and decided to revise the existing voter's list prepared in 2000 and canceled the newly prepared draft voter's list. Under the ruling of Supreme Court, the Election Commission will have to maintain permanent voter's list. The Supreme Court judgment finally settled the question of whether to prepare a new voter's list or to update the previous one. According to this judgment the Election Commission is no way authorized to make periodic new voter's list for all electoral areas or constituencies prior to every election violating the directives of section 7(6) of the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982. This is a significant departure from the past practices of the Election Commission.

SECTION FIVE

CROSS COUNTRY COMPARISON

An analysis of voter's list in Bangladesh shows that in many cases the total number of registered voters exceeds total voting age population (see table-2). It is, therefore, important to understand whether this anomaly is unique to Bangladesh or whether similar problems exist in other countries.

This section provides an overview of trends of voter registration by cross-country comparison of ratios of registered voters to voting age population. For this purpose data on voter's lists for three parliamentary elections in 170 countries are analyzed. The purpose of this analysis is three fold. First, it tries to ascertain in how many countries registered voters exceed voting age population. Second, an attempt is made to ascertain a likely range of registered voters to voting age population in countries where free and fair elections are held. Third, the likely reasons for registered voters exceeding voting age population are explored.

The analysis is based on the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) database of elections. It covers election information of 170 independent states. The numbers of elections covered in this database vary from country to country. This study tries to pursue a uniform policy and for each country, data for last three parliamentary elections up to 2001 were used. However, data for all countries for last three parliamentary elections were not available. Out of 510 elections ought to be covered in this study; data were available for 451 elections. Out of 170 countries, data for last three parliamentary elections are available in 127 countries. Data for last two parliamentary elections are available in 27 countries and that of one election are available in 16 countries.

Analysis of the voter's list of Bangladesh

After independence seven voter lists for parliamentary elections were prepared in Bangladesh. A comparison of the number of registered voters and voting age population is placed in table-2. Out of seven lists, the number of registered voters exceeded voting age population thrice. The registered voters exceeded voting age population in 1973. The difference is however small. The estimate of the voting age population in 1973 may not

Table -2: Registered voters as % of voting age population of parliamentary elections of Bangladesh

YEAR	REGISTRATION	VAP	PERCENTAGE
1973	35,205,642	35,140,800	100.18
1979	38,363,858	41,588,640	92.25
1986	47,876,979	48,803,040	98.10
1988	49,863,829	53,311,320	93.53
1991	62,181,743	56,038,800	110.96
1996	56,716,935	66,408,120	85.41
2001	74946364	71230000	105.22

Source: International IDEA database

be very reliable as the last population census was conducted in 1961 and the subsequent census could not be held in ten year intervals. In 1991 the registered voters exceeded by ten percent and in 2001 it exceeded by five percent. In these two cases the evidences strongly suggests that the number of registered voters exceeded the voting age population.

The anomaly in the voter's list is noticed long before 2006. In 1984, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) pointed out that the number of voters in 1983 for Presidential election exceeded the voting age population. Table 3 summarizes the main findings of the BBS.

Table 3: District wise comparison of voting age population and voters in Bangladesh in Presidential election in 1983

Former Districts	Population (18 years and above)			Voters in 1983		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Bandarban	92	52	40	108	59	49
Chittagong	2728	1486	1242	2965	1636	1329
Ctg. H. T	296	170	126	336	182	154
Comilla	3231	1591	1640	3438	1847	1591
Noakhali	1735	829	906	2227	1258	969
Sylhet	2772	1426	1346	3155	1656	1499
Dhaka	5037	2797	2240	5393	2967	2426
Faridpur	2261	1120	1141	2740	1413	1327
Jamalpur	1159	579	580	1301	671	630
Mymensingh	3181	1621	1560	3612	1892	1720
Tangail	1153	577	576	1361	708	653
Barisal	2214	1131	1083	2605	1359	1246
Jessore	1832	946	886	2226	1186	1040
Khulna	2117	1123	994	2259	1176	1083
Kushtia	1023	527	496	1201	611	590
Patuakhali	871	440	431	1083	560	523
Bogra	1317	673	644	1479	746	733
Dinajpur	1522	789	733	1702	878	824
Pabna	1557	793	764	1882	981	901
Rajshahi	2441	1242	1199	2756	1380	1376
Rangpur	3063	1555	1508	3476	1772	1704
Bangladesh	41603	21467	20136	47305	24938	22367

Source: BBS and Election Commission

The same issue was raised by the European Union in 2003. The European Union expressed its concerns about the voter list of 2000 through a letter addressing the former CEC in September, 2003. According to the EU, 7.48 crore, the number of voters enlisted in 2000 is too high compared to a population of 13 crore. It argued that about 55 percent

people of Bangladesh are in the age group of over 15 years. Even the required age of being eligible to be a voter is reduced to 15 years, the maximum number of voters cannot be more than 7.15 crore (The Daily Star, 05.05.06).

US state Department Report, 2006 also pointed at the existence of 8 percent fake voters on the voter's list prepared in 2000(The daily star, 05.05.06).

An NDI (a Washington-based National Democratic Institute) survey in 2005 reported that the voter list of 2000 contained 6.4 million ghost voters.

The census report in 2001 shows that out of 13 crore adjusted population, 6,80,80,940 people in the age group of 18 years and above. But the voter list prepared in 2000 showed a total number of 7.48 crore voters raising doubts about the validity of voter list (The Daily Star, 05.05.06).

The Election Commission did not take any precaution to ensure that anomalies of 2000 are not repeated in 2006. Starting from January 01, the Election Commission published draft voter list on May 03, 2006 enlisting a total number of 91314592 voters. The total increase in the draft voter list is around 1.65 crore which is about 22% higher than the number on the previous list prepared in 2000. The total increase in the voter list seems to be unusual which has made the voter list unacceptable to many quarters. Newspaper reports and politicians of the opposition complained that many eligible adults left out despite the increase of 22 percent voters.

According to BBS, eligible voters on the basis of 2001 census data should not exceed 8.02 crore. The BBS census report pointed out the number of people in the age limit of 13 years and above at 8.02 crore in 2001 who has become eligible to be enlisted in the voter's list in 2006. If we consider that no death occur during this period and every eligible person is enlisted, then total voter in the draft list should not cross maximum of 8.02 crore.

The figure should remain less than 8.02 crore because a large number of people in the age group of 18 and above died in the meantime and it is not possible to enlist all people of

this age group. If we consider standard error of the calculation, at least 5% eligible people cannot be able to be enlisted for various reasons.

In the existing voter list, 57.53 percent population out of 13 crore was registered as voters. On the other hand, over 65 percent of around 14 crore present population of the country is registered as voters in the new draft list. The ratio of voters to population and the ratio of the voters to voting age population in the fresh list are much higher than all the seven lists prepared since 1973.

The actual number of registered voters in this list published by the Election Commission was 13.84 percent higher than the voting age population. Subsequently, the Election Commission under the order of the Supreme Court canceled this list. According to newspaper reports there are 9.14 crore voters in the revised voter's list prepared by the Election Commission. This is 13.96 percent higher than the voting age population.

Cross Country Analysis:

If we go through the International IDEA database of parliamentary elections for 170 countries of the world, it is found that a significant number of people who are eligible to vote are not registered as voters in many countries whereas in some countries, the numbers of registered voters exceed the number of voting age population. Depending on the ratio of registered voters to voting age population in last three parliamentary elections the countries are categorized into three groups.

- A. Registered voters always exceed the VAP
- B. Registered voters exceed the VAP once or twice
- C. Registered voters never exceed the VAP

The name of the countries of each category is shown in table-4.

Table-4: List of the countries depending on the ratio of registered voters to voting age population

Countries where registered voters always exceed the VAP (Always over enumerated)	Countries where registered voters sometimes exceed the VAP (Occasionally over enumerated)	Countries where registered voters never exceed the VAP (Normal or under enumerated)
Algeria, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Comoros Islands, Costa Rica, D R of Congo, Dominica, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon,	Albania, Argentina, Aruba, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cap Verde, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Indonesia, Japan, Malawi, Mali,	Andorra, Angola, Anguilla, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burma,

Maldives,	Mauritania,	Burundi,
Nigeria,	Malta,	Canada,
Palau,	Namibia,	Cameroon,
Portugal,	Nepal,	Central African Republic,
Seychelles,	Niger,	Chad,
Spain,	Panama,	Chile,
St. Lucia,	Paraguay,	Colombia,
St. Vincent,	Papua New Guinea,	Cook Island,
Suriname,	Poland,	Cote d'Ivoire,
Trinidad & Tobago,	Republic of Korea,	Cyprus,
Uruguay	Romania,	Denmark,
	San Marino,	Djibouti,
	Slovakia,	Dominican republic,
	Slovenia,	Egypt,
	Solomon Islands,	El Salvador,
	Sri Lanka,	Estonia,
	St. Kitts & Nevis,	Ethiopia,
	Thailand,	Fiji,
	Togo,	France,
	Tonga,	Gambia,
	Uganda,	Guatemala,
	Vanuatu,	Guinea,
	Western Samoa,	Germany,
	Zambia	Guinea
		Bissau,

		Guyana, Honduras, Iran, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique,
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		<p>Nauru,</p> <p>New Zealand,</p> <p>Netherlands,</p> <p>Nicaragua,</p> <p>Norway,</p> <p>Pakistan,</p> <p>Peru,</p> <p>Palestinian Authority,</p> <p>Philippines,</p> <p>Russia,</p> <p>Sao Tome e Principe,</p> <p>Senegal,</p> <p>Sierra Leone,</p> <p>Singapore,</p> <p>South Africa,</p> <p>Sudan,</p> <p>Sweden,</p> <p>Switzerland,</p> <p>Syria,</p> <p>Taiwan,</p> <p>Tajikistan,</p> <p>Tanzania,</p> <p>Tunisia,</p> <p>Turkey,</p> <p>Tuvalu,</p>
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		Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Yemen, Zimbabwe
Total-29	Total-42	Total-99

Source: International IDEA database of elections and Appendix 1,2 and 3

The highest ratio of registered voters to the voting age population is noticed 202.15 percent in Lebanon in 1992 whereas the lowest ratio is 10.00 percent in Kuwait in 1985. Probably for political instability, it was not possible to conduct proper population census in Lebanon. As a result, the ratio of registered voters is too high in comparison to voting age population. In Kuwait, there is no voting right for the women as the registered voters include only men. Furthermore, every adult do not enjoy voting right. For these reason, the registered voters as percentage of voting age population are the lowest amongst the countries.

From the database, it is found that out of 170 countries, there are 29 countries where the registered voters always exceed the voting age population in the last three parliamentary elections. The complete list with registered voters as percentage of voting age population is provided in Annexure-1. Of the 29 countries where registered voters always exceeded voting age population, there are seven European countries. They are Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The largest democracy in the world India belongs to this group. An advanced Asian country like Israel is also included in this

category. The rest are developing countries. The problem of over enumeration is most acute in Lebanon. Detailed information for Lebanon is shown in table 5.

Table-5: Registered voters as % of voting age population in the Parliamentary elections of Lebanon

YEAR	REGISTRATION	VAP	PERCENTAGE
1992	2383345	1179000	202.15
1996	2577979	1375980	187.36
2000	2748674	2022400	135.91

Source: International IDEA database

Among the 29 countries, the over-enumeration of voters ranges from 100.50 to 202.15 percent in 84 parliamentary elections of these countries. Detailed information regarding this is stated in table 6.

Table 6: Range of over-enumeration in parliamentary elections in the countries where registered voters always exceed the voting age population

Range	Number of elections
100 to below 105 percent	22
105 to below 110 percent	28
110 to below 115 percent	10
115 to below 120 percent	5
120 percent to above	19
	Total- 84

Source: International IDEA database

The second category includes countries where registered voters exceeded voting age population in at least one out of three last elections. There are 42 countries in this category. Most of the countries in this category are developing countries. There are, however, some striking exceptions. The over enumeration of voters is often a problem in Japan. It also exists in middle-income countries like Argentina, Brazil, Poland and Republic of Korea. The major Asian Countries in this category are: Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand and Srilanka. The statistics shows that in the countries of this category the number of registered voters either exceeds the voting age population or remains very close to VAP. This range covers 90 to 100 percent registration of eligible voters. For example, in Bangladesh seven voters' lists were prepared for the parliamentary elections, which are shown in table-4. In these voters lists it is found that in the voter's list prepared in 1973, 1991 and 2001, the ratio of voters registered to the VAP are higher. In 1979, 1986, 1988 and 1996 the percentage of registered voters is 92.25, 98.10, 93.53 and 85.41 respectively. The list of countries of category two is enclosed in annexure 2.

Third category includes 99 countries where the number of registered voters never exceeds the number of voting age population. Developed countries with high per capita income like Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, USA etc. are the example of this category. There are some developing countries in this category such as Egypt, Pakistan and Malaysia. The detailed information of this category where voter enumeration is normal or under enumerated is enclosed in annexure-3.

The level of economic development influences voter registration process. A country with a well established administrative infrastructure could achieve the desired registration objectives. The administrative framework includes capacity for overall administrative planning, logistical planning, registration, data collection, procurement policies, worker selection and training, implementation etc that involves very high cost. All countries cannot afford the cost of establishing and maintaining such appropriate infrastructure. Developed countries such as UK, Denmark, Sweden, Australia, France, Japan, Germany etc have succeed to reach very close to registration of the eligible voters.

An analysis of twenty most populous countries in this sample shows that there is no definite correlation between the size of population and quality of voter's list (see table 7).

Table-7: Top-20 countries with highest population size

SI	Country	Population	Category
1	India	986856301	Always over-enumerated
2	USA	284970789	Normal or under-enumerated
3	Indonesia	207152973	Occasionally over-enumerated
4	Brazil	161790311	Occasionally over-enumerated
5	Russia	157065478	Normal or under-enumerated
6	Pakistan	137649330	Normal or under-enumerated
7	Japan	126996466	Occasionally over-enumerated
8	Bangladesh	122978000	Occasionally over-enumerated
9	Nigeria	108258359	Always over-enumerated
10	Mexico	95529212	Normal or under-enumerated
11	Germany	82172259	Normal or under-enumerated
12	Philippines	73052254	Normal or under-enumerated
13	Turkey	64504287	Normal or under-enumerated
14	Thailand	62862098	Occasionally over-enumerated
15	Iran	62638000	Normal or under-enumerated
16	Ethiopia	61679843	Normal or under-enumerated
17	United Kingdom	59434645	Normal or under-enumerated
18	Egypt	59135000	Normal or under-enumerated
19	France	58581450	Normal or under-enumerated
20	Italy	57684294	Always over-enumerated

Source: International IDEA database

According to table 7, only three highly populated countries out of twenty most populous countries experienced the problem of chronic over-enumeration where the number of registered voters exceeds the voting age population. The chronic over-enumeration is a problem in 15 percent most populous countries. The occasional over-enumeration is a problem in 5 out of twenty countries. In this category, registered voters occasionally exceeded voting age population. In sixty percent populous countries, the number of registered voters is either normal or under enumerated. The size of population is not an impediment to preparation of an accurate voter list.

Table-8: Top-20 countries with lowest population size

Sl	Country	Population	Category
151	St. Lucia	145077	Always over-enumerated
152	Sao Tome e Principe	135000	Normal or under-enumerated
153	St. Vincent	114417	Always over-enumerated
154	Aruba	111000	Occasionally over-enumerated
155	Tonga	96829	Occasionally over-enumerated
156	Grenada	89018	Always over-enumerated
157	Seychelles	78845	Always over-enumerated
158	Dominica	74429	Always over-enumerated
159	Andorra	70000	Normal or under-enumerated
160	Antigua & Barbuda	69750	Always over-enumerated
161	Kiribati	61000	Normal or under-enumerated
162	St. Kitts & Nevis	40976	Occasionally over-enumerated
163	Liechtenstein	33644	Normal or under-enumerated
164	Monaco	32580	Normal or under-enumerated
165	San Marino	26986	Occasionally over-enumerated
166	Palau	19092	Always over-enumerated
167	Cook Islands	17000	Normal or under-enumerated
168	Anguilla	12132	Normal or under-enumerated
169	Nauru	12088	Normal or under-enumerated
170	Tuvalu	7000	Normal or under-enumerated

Source: International IDEA database

This proposition is also supported by all analysis of the quality of voter list in twenty countries with lowest population size (Table-8). In seven out of twenty least populous countries, chronic over-enumeration is a problem. In four out of twenty such countries, voter list experienced occasional over-enumeration problem. In only nine out of twenty least populous countries, voter registration was normal or under- enumerated. There is no definite relationship between the size of population and quality of voter list.

An analysis was also made on the impact of the culture and religion of the countries on voter list. It appears that found that mostly Muslim countries the experience the problem of under registration of voters. Bahrain, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Sudan, Tanzania, Yemen etc are the countries where the rate of registration is very low.

The overall political environment of a country can have a broad impact on voter's registration process. The political situations of new democracies and established democracies differ. Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Luxemburg, Malta, Mauritius, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, USA and Venezuela-these thirty six countries have been identified as established democracies by Arend Lijphart. These countries with established democracies tend to have a higher percentage of registration in the voter's list compared to other countries. Though in some countries the numbers of registered voters are larger than that of eligible voters where democracy is already established. Table-9 shows the number of registered voters as percentage of voting age population in three parliamentary elections of different countries where the democratic norms are mostly established.

Table-9: Registered voters as % of voting age population in the parliamentary elections in established democracies.

Country	Election Year-1	Election Year-2	Election Year-3
1 Australia	85.88	86.13	87.14
2 Belgium	91.80	91.28	91.79
3 Canada	89.31	85.16	91.71
4 Denmark	96.72	97	97.07
5 France	88.08	88.91	87.86
6 Germany	91.63	91.67	94.01
7 Netherlands	95.76	95.49	97.19
8 Norway	97.87	98.55	98.18
9 Sweden	95.48	94.86	95.42
10 Switzerland	80.86	84.41	72.33
11 United Kingdom	96.94	97.1	96.82
12 USA	96.19	67.51	74.4

Source: International IDEA database

According to table-9, the number of registered voters as percentage to voting age population varies between 67.51 to 98.18 percent. However, in most cases, they vary

between 91 to 97 percent. It is obvious that it is not possible to register 100 percent voters in a country. The poor and the under privileged may not come forward to register. From statistical point of view, registration of 91 to 97 percent voters may be regarded as the ideal situation.

To sum up, the major findings of the analysis in this chapter are as follows:

- (i) There was over enumeration of voters in three out of seven parliamentary elections in Bangladesh.
- (ii) Over enumeration of voters in the sense of total voters exceeding voting age population is not unique to Bangladesh. It is a problem in seventy-one out of 170 countries in the world.
- (iii) In about 20 percent cases of over enumeration, total voters exceeded voting age population by 20 percent. In about 60 percent cases of over enumeration of voters, the extent of over enumeration is below 10 percent.
- (iv) The problem of over enumeration exists in both developing and developed countries. For example, this problem exists in Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Japan. Over enumeration of voters is a chronic problem in India.
- (v) Over enumeration may occur in both small and large countries.
- (vi) In established democracies, about 91 to 97 percent voters are registered. This may be used as a standard for assessing the accuracy of a voter list in a developing country.

SECTION SIX

VOTER'S LIST AT VILLAGE LEVEL

This chapter of the study examines voter's lists at village level. It compares the voter lists of 1995 and 2000 in four selected villages, which were collected from the Election Commission and upazilla election office, Kapasia. It examines the consistency of the data with demographic statistics. The demographic statistics of these selected villages were collected from the Bangladesh Bureau of statistics.

Description of The Study Area

Four villages of Kapasia upazilla under Gazipur district were selected for the study. This upazilla is 62 km away from the Dhaka city. The area of this upazilla is 356.98 acres. It is an upazilla consisting of 11 unions, 165 mouzas and 231 villages. The total population of this upazilla recorded in population census, 1991 was 303710, which include 154363 male and 149347 female. The population was 317920 in 2001 including 157620 male and 160300 female and 178140 people were eligible to vote in 2001.

No official statistics on the number of population in 1995 is available from the BBS as no population census was held in 1995. To ascertain the number of population of Kapasia upazilla, it was calculated on the basis of the number of population recorded in the population census of 1991 and 2001. The population and statistics of the number of registered voters of Kapasia upazilla are provided in table-10. From the information collected through population census and voter's list it is found that out of a total population of 3,17,920, a total number of 1,99,767 were enlisted in the voter's list prepared in 2001, which covers 62.83% of the population of the upazilla. In this year the number of population above 18 years or the voting age population was 1,78,140. The ratio of registered voters to voting age population of Kapasia was 112.14% in the year 2001. Descriptions of the selected villages are given below in table-11.

Table-10: Feature of population and registered voters of Kapasia Upazilla

Year	Population			Voting age Population	Registered Voters		
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
1991	154363	149347	303710		72912	75599	148511(1995)
1996	155991	154823	310814		72912	75599	148511
2001	157620	160300	317920	178140	100071	99696	199767

Source: BBS and the Election Commission

Table-11: General information about the selected villages

Name of the village	Union	Area in acres	Households	Population in 1991		
				Male	Female	Total
Kotbajalia	Chandpur	521	311	772	801	1573
Chinaduli	Targaon	392	279	739	818	1557
Baghia	Targaon	856	419	1137	1094	2231
Ekdala	Durgapur	161	242	595	626	1221

Source: Community Series, Gazipur, 1991

The accuracy of the voter's list in selected four villages can be examined by comparing the data collected from the voter's list with the census report. The last census report was published in 1993 containing the information of the year 1991. The community series of 2001 for Gazipur district has not yet been published. On the basis of the population of 1991 and the population growth rate 1.501 which exists for the period between 1991 and 2001, the population of the selected villages for 1995 and 2000 is calculated. The number

of voting age population is calculated from the number of people categorized in broad age group in the Community Series, Gazipur, 1991.

The main concern of this microanalysis is to find out how much accurate the voter's list is in comparison to the existing census estimate. The accuracy of the voter's list demands the inclusion of all eligible voters without discrimination to religion or gender. From this perspective we have to find out the number of registered voters compared to the existing voting age population and all population, male or female; Muslim or non-muslims above 18 years are included in the voter's list or not.

Data Analysis

In 1991, total population of Kotbajalia was recorded 1573 including 772 male and 801 female by the Bureau of Statistics. The total figure of population, number of eligible people to vote in 1991, 1995 and 2000; and the number of registered voters in 1995 and 2000 are given in table-12.

Table-12: Population and registered voters as percentage of voting age population of Kotbajalia in the parliamentary elections

Year	Population			Voting Age Population			Registered Voters		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	772	801	1573	377	423	800			
1995	819	850	1669	400	449	849	351	367	718
2000	883	916	1799	431	484	915	442	423	865

Source: BBS and Election Commission

From the information of table-12, it is found that 718 people are registered as voters out of a total population of 1669 in 1995. This covers 43.02 % of the total population and 84.57% of the voting age population. The ratio of registered voters to the voting age

population for men in 1995 was 87.75 % and 102.55% in the year 2000. On the other hand, 81.75% eligible female was registered as voters in 1995 and in 2000 this figure increases to 87.40%. More eligible female voters are excluded in comparison to the male both in 1995 and 2000. No non-muslim voters are found in the voter's list of Kotbajalia though 2.48% people of this village are non- muslims according to the BBS report of 1991. This shows that members of religious minority were excluded from the voter list in this village.

Table-13: Information of registered voters of Kotbajalia

Year	No of Registered Voters			Common		Excluded		Included	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	351	367	718	265	298	86	69		
2000	442	423	865	265	298			177	125

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

In Table-13, detailed information is presented from which we can calculate the numbers of voters who have been excluded from the voter's list of 1995. From the table, it is found that 24.50% male and 18.80% female voters were excluded from the list prepared in 1995. On the other hand, 40.04% male and 29.55% female new voters were included in the list of 2000. In total, 21.58% voters were excluded from the list of 1995 and 34.91% new voters were included in the voter's list of Kotbajalia in 2000.

The detailed information regarding population, voting age population and number of registered voters in Chinaduli village are given in table-14. The table shows that 46.19% of the total population and 94.20% of the voting age population was registered as voters in 1995. The ratio of registered voters to total population of Chinaduli in 2000 was 55.96% and the ratio of registered voters to voting age population was 114.02%, which was very high.

Table-14: Population and registered voters as % of voting age population of Chinaduli

Year	Population			Voting Age Population			Registered Voters		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	739	818	1557	353	410	763	—	—	—
1995	784	868	1652	375	435	810	372	391	763
2000	845	935	1780	404	469	873	478	518	996

Source: Community Series, Gazipur, 1991 and voter's list, 1995 and 2000.

99.20% of the eligible males were enlisted in the voter's list prepared in 1995 and the percentage was 118.32 in the list of 2000. In case of female voters, the ratio of voters and VAP was lesser than that of male. The number was 89.89% in the voter's list of 1995 and 110.45% in that of 2000.

Table-15: Information of registered voters of Chinaduli

Year	No of Registered Voters			Common		Excluded		Included	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	372	391	763	271	305	101	86		
2000	478	518	996	271	305			207	213

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

Information in brief regarding the voter's list of 1995 and 2000 for Chinaduli is described in table 15 and table 16. From table 15, it is found that 27.15% male and 21.99% female voters were excluded from the list prepared in 1995. On the other hand 43.30% male and 41.11% female new voters were included in the list of 2000. In total, 24.50% voters were

excluded from the list of 1995 and 42.16% new voters were included in the voter's list of Chinaduli in 2000.

Table-16: Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Chinaduli

	Excluded from the list of 1995			Included in the list of 2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Muslim	90	76	166	186	201	387
Non-Muslim	11	10	21	21	12	33
Total	101	86	187	207	213	420

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

102 non-muslims were enlisted in 1995 and the number was 114 in the list of 2000. The BBS report showed 15.93% of population belonged to Hindu community (1309 Muslims and 248 Hindus) in 1991 in this village. Inclusion rate of non muslims in both voter's list of 1995 and 2000 is satisfactory as the number represents 13.36% and 11.94% of the registered voters respectively. Table-16 shows in details the number of excluded and included voters.

The information related to the village, Baghia is presented in table-17. Out of 2368 total population in Baghia 1261 people are eligible to vote, a total number of 1128 persons are registered as voters in 1995. This figure shows registration of 47.64% of the total population and 89.45% of the voting age population. In the voter's list prepared in 2000 the rate of registration of voters significantly increases. The percentage of voter's registration compared to total population and VAP was 59.98 % and 112.67% respectively in 2000.

Table-17: Population and registered voters as % of voting age population of Baghia

Year	Population			Voting Age Population			Registered Voters		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	1137	1094	2231	607	581	1188			
1995	1207	1161	2368	644	617	1261	537	591	1128
2000	1300	1251	2551	694	664	1358	742	788	1530

Source: BBS and Election Commission

The ratio of registered male voters to voting age population was 83.39% in 1995 and 106.92% in 2000 and the respective figures for female voters were 95.79% and 118.67%. In 1991, the number of Muslims in Baghia was 2102 which indicates that 5.78% residents of this village were non-muslims. In the voter's list in 1995 and 2000, the number of enlisted non-muslims was 75 (38 male and 37 female) and 92 (51 male and 41 female) respectively out of which 63 was common in both the voter's lists. The detailed information of voters of Baghia is presented in table-18 and table-19.

Table-18: Information of voters of Baghia

Year	No of Registered Voters			Common		Excluded		Included	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	537	591	1128	378	409	159	182		
2000	742	788	1530	378	409			364	379

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

Table-19: Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Baghia

	Excluded from the list of 1995			Included in the list of 2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Muslim	152	177	329	344	370	714
Non-Muslim	07	05	12	20	09	29
Total	159	182	341	364	379	743

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

From table-18, it is found that the exclusion rate from list of 1995 is 29.60% for male and 30.79% for female voters. In total, 30.23% voters were excluded from the list of 1995. On the other hand the rates of inclusion in voter's list of 2000 were 49.05% and 48.09% for male and female respectively. This shows an overall 48.56% inclusion of new voters in the list of 2000. The inclusion rate of non-muslims is high which is shown in table 19.

Table-20: Data regarding population and voters of Ekdala

Year	Population			Voting Age Population			Registered Voters		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1991	595	626	1221	316	334	650			
1995	632	664	1296	335	354	689	265	288	553
2000	680	716	1396	361	382	743	365	367	732

Source: BBS and Election Commission

Table-20 contains the overall information of Ekdala. Total population of Ekdala in 1995 is 1296, where actual voters are 689 and registered voters are 553, it shows registered

voters in comparison with population and voting age population is 42.67% and 80.26% respectively. In 2000, the percentage of registered voters corresponds to population and VAP is 52.44% and 98.52% respectively. In 1995 male registered voters in comparison with VAP is 79.10% and in 2000 is 101.11 and female registered voters in comparison with VAP is 81.36% and in 2000 is 96.67%.

The detailed information regarding the voter's list of Ekdala is expressed in table-21. The table presents the numbers of voters excluded from the list of 1995. The figure is 25.66% for male and 35.42% for female. The percentage of inclusion in the voter's list prepared in 2000 for male and female was 46.03% and 49.32% respectively. The break-up of excluded and included figures is presented in table-22.

Table-21: Information of voters of Ekdala

Year	No of Registered Voters			Common		Excluded		Included	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1995	265	288	553	197	186	68	102		
2000	365	367	732	197	186			168	181

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

Table-22: Information about exclusion and inclusion of voters of Ekdala

	Excluded from the list of 1995			Included in the list of 2000		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Muslim	66	102	168	158	170	328
Non-Muslim	02	00	02	10	11	21
Total	68	102	170	168	181	349

Source: Voter's list prepared in 1995 and 2000

13 Non-Muslim voters (07 male and 06 female) in 1995 and 32 non-Muslims including 17 female and 15 male voters were enlisted in 2000 voter's list. 05 male and all Non-Muslim female voters were enlisted in both the voter lists of 2000 and 1995.

The following finding may be summarized on the basis of the above analysis:

(i) There was over enumeration of voters in three out of four villages. Only in one village, registered voters constituted 98 percent of voting age population (see table-18). This suggests that the voters are over enumerated in majority of villages.

(ii) The minority voters were discriminated against. In one village, they were altogether excluded. However, the level of exclusion was less in other villages.

(iii) A comparison of the voter lists in 1995 and 2001 shows that the voter list of 2000 was not based on the voter list of 1995. In all the four villages, a significant percentage of voters were excluded (probably because of death or migration) and the new voters were enlisted.

(iv) Many clerical mistakes are found in the voter's lists while comparing the voter's list of 1995 and 2000 in four selected villages. Such as father's name of Mr. Aynuddin of Kotbajalia was enlisted as late Abdur Rab in the list of 1995, which was enlisted as late Abdur Rauf in the list of 2000. Age of Aynuddin was recorded 45 in the list of 1995 whereas it became 65 in the list of 2000. Age of Momena Khatun of Kotbajalia was recorded as 51 in the voter's list of 1995, which is, enlisted 50 in the list of 2000.

(v) Some names were enlisted in the voter's list that does not fulfill the requirement of minimum age described in the constitution. For example, in the voter's list of 2000 for Baghia, under aged people were enlisted. Age of Zakir Hossen was only 12(twelve) years. Proloy Chandra Biswas of Baghia was of 17(seventeen) years.

SECTION SEVEN

Microanalysis, Ekdala Village

This section deals with an in-depth analysis of the voter list in Ekdala village. The number of registered voters is the lowest in this village compared to other three villages. For time constrain, the village with lowest voters is selected for the study of this part. In this analysis, the voter's list of 1995 and 2000 are compared, identical features of these voter's lists are identified. An attempt is taken to identify important questions that may arise from these voter's lists and also to find out the possible answers of these questions. For an in-depth analysis, a questionnaire with nine questions was constructed and 25 (twenty five) people of this village were interviewed. The completed questionnaires may be seen in Appendix-5.

The voter's list of 1995 and 2000 for Ekdala is studied and analyzed in details. The voters are grouped into ten broad age groups with an interval of five years. The data is organized and presented in tables. Graphical presentation is also made for the convenience of analysis.

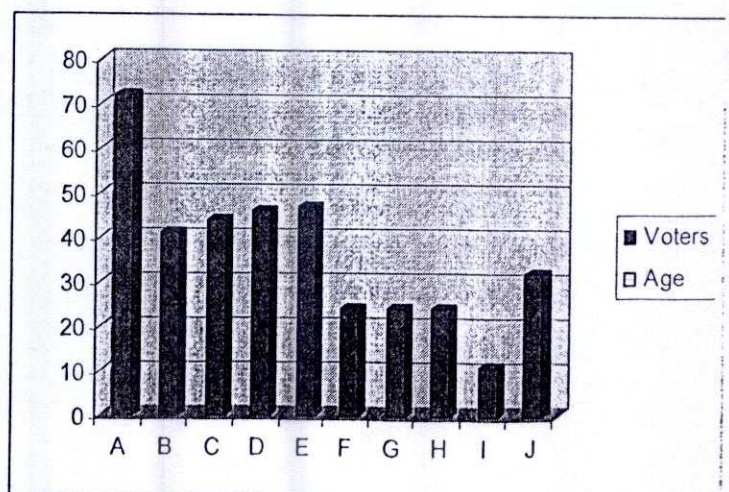
Table-23: Age group of male voters in 2000

	Age	Voters	Perccnatge
A	18-22	72	19.73
B	23-27	41	11.23
C	28-32	44	12.05
D	33-37	46	12.60
E	38-42	47	12.88
F	43-47	24	6.58
G	48-52	24	6.58
H	53-57	24	6.58
I	58-62	11	3.01
J	63-Above	32	8.77

365

Source: Election Commission

Graph-1: Age group of male voters in 2000



Source: Election Commission

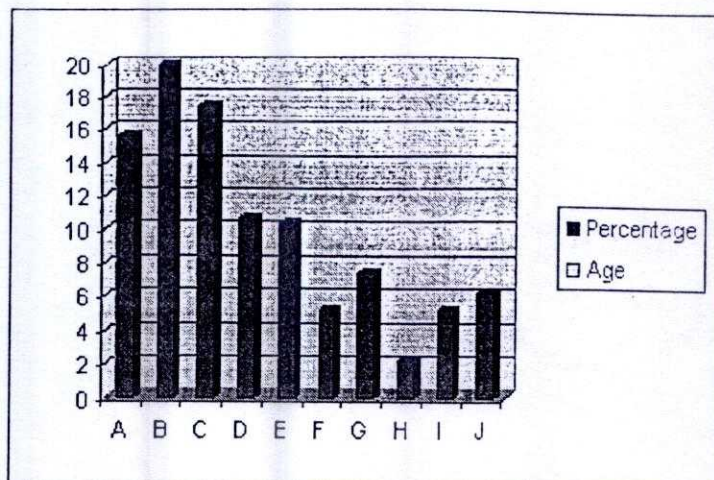
**Table-24: Age group of female voters in
in 2000**

	Age	Voters	Percentage
A	18-22	57	15.53
B	23-27	73	19.89
C	28-32	64	17.44
D	33-37	39	10.63
E	38-42	38	10.35
F	43-47	19	5.18
G	48-52	27	7.36
H	53-57	8	2.18
I	58-62	19	5.18
J	63- Above	23	6.27

367

Source: Election Commission

**Graph-2: Age group of female voters
in 2000**



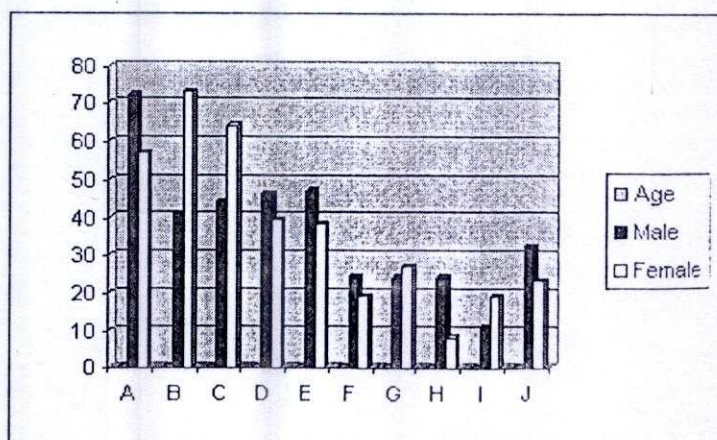
Source: Election Commission

**Table-25: Age group of male and female
voters in 2000**

	Age	Male	Female
A	18-22	72	57
B	23-27	41	73
C	28-32	44	64
D	33-37	46	39
E	38-42	47	38
F	43-47	24	19
G	48-52	24	27
H	53-57	24	8
I	58-62	11	19
J	63- Above	32	23

Source: Election Commission

**Graph-3: Age group of male and female
voters in 2000**



Source: Election Commission

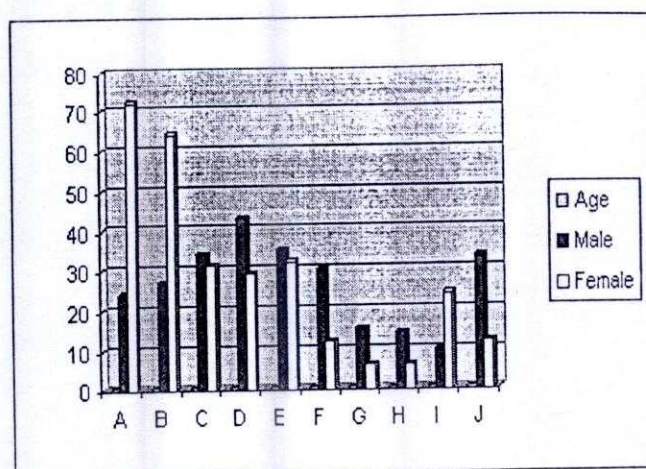
The percentage of young voters in the age group of 18-22 years is less among female than male voters. This might have resulted from the reluctance of guardians to reveal the actual age of unmarried daughters. It is likely that female voters in this category are under-enumerated.

Table-28: Age group of male and female voters in 1995

	Age	Male	Female
A	18-22	24	72
B	23-27	27	64
C	28-32	34	31
D	33-37	43	29
E	38-42	35	32
F	43-47	30	12
G	48-52	15	6
H	53-57	14	6
I	58-62	10	24
J	63-Above	33	12

Source: Election Commission

Graph-6: Age group of male and female voters in 1995



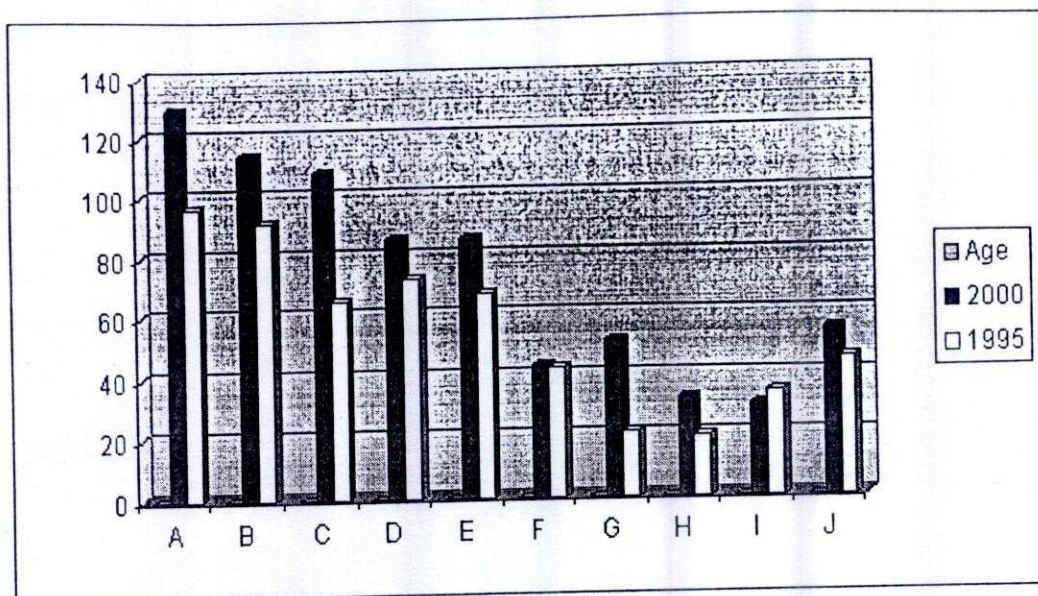
Source: Election Commission

Table-29: Age group of male and female voters of Ekdala in 1995 and 2000

	Age	2000		2000	1995		1995
		Male	Female		Male	Female	
A	18-22	72	57	129	24	72	96
B	23-27	41	73	114	27	64	91
C	28-32	44	64	108	34	31	65
D	33-37	46	39	85	43	29	72
E	38-42	47	38	85	35	32	67
F	43-47	24	19	43	30	12	42
G	48-52	24	27	51	15	6	21
H	53-57	24	8	32	14	6	20
I	58-62	11	19	30	10	24	34
J	63-Above	32	23	55	33	12	45
	Total	365	367	732	265	288	553

Source: Election Commission

Graph-7: Age group of male and female voters of Ekdala In 1995 and 2000



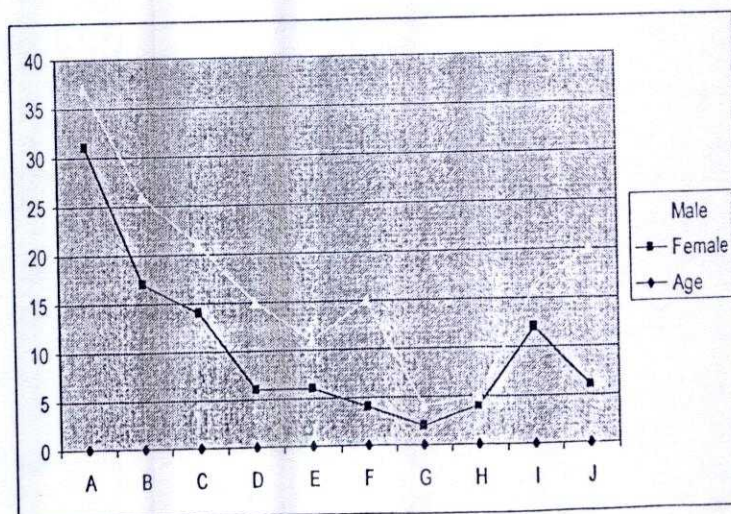
Source: Election Commission

Table-30: Information of excluded voters from voter list of Ekdala, 1995

	Age	Female	Male
A	18-22	31	6
B	23-27	17	9
C	28-32	14	7
D	33-37	6	9
E	38-42	6	5
F	43-47	4	11
G	48-52	2	2
H	53-57	4	1
I	58-62	12	4
J	63- Above	6	14

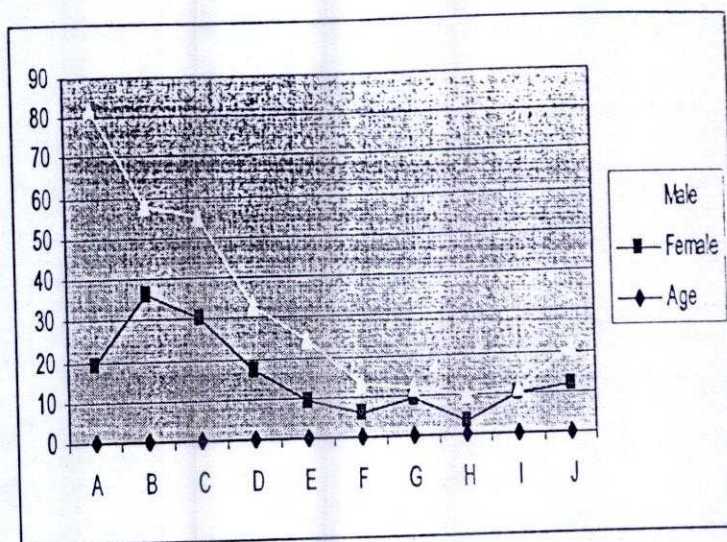
Source: Election Commission

Graph-8: Information of excluded voters from voter list of Ekdala, 1995



Source: Election Commission

	Age	Female	Male
A	18-22	19	63
B	23-27	36	22
C	28-32	30	25
D	33-37	17	16
E	38-42	9	15
F	43-47	6	7
G	48-52	9	3
H	53-57	3	7
I	58-62	10	1
J	63- Above	12	9



Source: Election Commission

Source: Election Commission

There is, however, significant difference in the age profile of voters in 1995 and 2000 voter lists. In 1995, the young voters in the age group of 18-22 years constituted 9.06 of male population whereas the corresponding figure for the same voter list is 19.73 in 2000. The percentage of female voters in the age group of 18-22 years in 1995 was 25 percent while the corresponding figure for 2000 was 15.53. There is no obvious explanation for these differences. There is a strong possibility that the age of the voters is not accurately recorded because the voters themselves do not know their actual age. A comparison of the age profile of voters in the voter lists of 1995 and 2000 show that the number of voters in the age group of 58-62 years declined. There is no obvious explanation for this. The inconsistencies of the data generated by voter list with demographic data cannot be explained without additional information from the voters.

To check the accuracy of the voter's list and find out possible reasons of some of the findings interviews of 25 respondents were conducted. The answers of the respondents are summarized in table-32.

Type of question	Comment	No of respondent		% of respondent	
		Yes/No	Don't know		
Are all names of eligible members of your family enlisted in the voter's list of 1995 and 2000?	Yes	25		100%	
Do you know any eligible person in this village whose name is not enlisted in the voter's list?	No, don't know	11	14	44%	56%
Do you know any person whose name is enlisted twice or in two constituencies?	No, don't know	16	09	64%	36%
Do all voters reside in this village?	Yes, don't know	21	04	84%	16%
Can you recognize any voter from the voter's list who is not the resident of this village?	No, don't know	21	04	84%	16%

Source: Interview conducted in Ekdala village

All of the respondents opined in response to the question whether all eligible family members are enlisted in the voter list of 1995 and 2000 that all eligible members of their family were enlisted in both the voter lists. Out of 25 respondents, 11 stated that all eligible persons of this village were enlisted in the voter list and 14 were not sure about the enlistment of all eligible voters in the village. 16 out of 25 people stated that no voter was enlisted twice or in two constituencies and the rest were unable to give any information on this. 21 respondents stated that all voters in the voter list reside in the

not know anything about the residence of the voters enlisted in the voter list.

In response to question regarding the reason of exclusion of voters in the list of 2000, most of the respondents opined that most of the exclusion occurred due to death of the voter. Some people responded that the exclusion occurred due to migration of those voters to other place for their service.

One of the intriguing features of the voter list in this village is that female voters outnumber male voters in the voter list of both 1995 and 2000 (see tables 23, 24, 26 and 27). This is inconsistent with national demographic statistics where male voters outnumber female voters. The male-female ratio in Bangladesh was 106.1 in 1991 and 106.6 in 2001. An attempt was made to elicit the opinion of the villagers on this issue. Most of the respondents think that the reason for increase of female voters compared to the male voters are presence of increased numbers of widows in this village. The number of unmarried girls is also a good reason. A large number of male reside in their working place instead of staying in the village. Sometimes the enumerators come to include the names in such a time when male members remain outside the residence for their daily work. So they only enlist the names of female members and other available members of that family and do not come twice to that particular family. In this way, the number of female in the list turns out to be more than the males. The number of migrants from this village is also high in this village, which may be a reason for higher number of female voters.

In fact, it appears that the number of female voters in this village might have been under enumerated. According to the villagers interviewed for this study, the names of many eligible unmarried female voters were not at all included in the voter list. The following reasons were cited in the interviews as reasons excluding unmarried girls in the voter's list: to hide the actual age, lack of knowledge and concern about the importance of enlistment and the belief unmarried girls are eligible to vote and unwillingness of some enumerators to enlist the unmarried girls in the voter's list owing to their bias against women.

them record the age of marriage as per the requirement of the government. Only three out of 25 people mentioned above 18 years as the normal age of marriage.

It is interesting to note that minimum age of marriages is below 18 years though all of them record the age of marriage as per the requirement of the government. Only three out of 25 people thought 18 years as the normal age of marriage.

The main findings from this analysis of voter list in Ekdala village are as follows:

(i) The recorded age of the voters in the voters list is not at all reliable. In the absence of the system of birth registration this problem cannot be solved.

(ii) There are more female voters in this village than male voters. This is inconsistent with national demographic trends. However, the female voters only would have been higher if all unmarried eligible female voters were enlisted.

(iii) The male voters are likely to be under enumerated if the enumerators visit the homes of the voters for enlistment during working hours.

(iv) The villagers believe that all eligible voters in the village were enlisted.

(v) About a third of the villagers do not rule out the possibility that the name of the same voters might have been included in voters list in more than one place.

(vi) Maximum inclusion of female voters in the voter's list of 2000 ranges from 23 to 32 years rather than the minimum required age for registration. Some voters are also included in the list at the age of 58 years and above. Maximum inclusion of male voters occurs at the age of 18 to 22 years. A good number of male are enlisted in the list at the age of 23 to 42 whose names are supposed to be included in the previous list.

(vii) The enumerators are not trained up properly before collecting information of the voters. A portion of the respondents opined that some of the enumerators did not consider the unmarried women eligible to be registered in the voter's list.

CONCLUSION: MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A voter's list is complete to the extent that it includes all eligible voters. It is current to the extent that the data available on voters is consistent with their status on the date of the election (e.g., their current address is reported or newly eligible voters are registered). The voters' list is accurate to the extent that the data on individuals has been recorded correctly, for example, without spelling or other errors.

Main Findings of the Study:

- An analysis of the consistency of the voter list with demographic data shed useful light in testing the accuracy of a voter list. It can identify the main weakness of a voter list.
- The trend of total number of registered voters exceeding the voting age population is not unique to Bangladesh. This anomaly exists in many other countries of the world, even in some established democratic countries. There are 29 countries where the number of registered voters always exceed the voting age population in all three parliamentary elections examined in this study.
- Population of a country does not play any direct or indirect role in preparing an accurate vote list. It is found that among the countries with large and small population, there are countries where the number of registered voters exceeds the voting age population in all three parliamentary elections and there are countries where this anomaly is found in one or two parliamentary elections.
- The economic condition of a country has direct impact on the preparation of voter list. In the developed countries, the administrative framework for preparation of voter's list is strong and efficient enough and they can afford the cost of enlisting

infrastructure for enlistment of voters. Such countries can enlist the eligible voters accurately in the way that the registered voters can reach close to the voting age population.

- Cultural and religious characteristics of a country also affect the registration process. From this study, it is found that the ratio of registered voters as percentage to voting age population is very low in many Muslim countries. This may be attributed to the belief that females do not deserve equal voting right. So all women are not enlisted in the voter's list in such countries. This may explain why the ratio of registered voters as % to voting age population remains low in these countries.
- The normal ratio of registered voters as % to voting age population is acceptable in most of the established democratic countries may be used as standard for checking a voter list. It is found that, in most of the established democracies, the ratio ranges 91% to 97%. So the registration of 91% to 97% eligible voters may be considered as the ideal ratio in a developing country like Bangladesh.

Recommendations

It is not an easy task to prepare an accurate voter list. Accuracy of voter list means enrolment of all eligible voters once and only in one constituency and not to enroll non-eligible persons in the list, which is practically impossible in a country with a large population like Bangladesh. In this connection, the following recommendations may be considered:

- A permanent voter's list should be maintained on the basis of the existing voter list, which would be continuously updated.
- The Election Commission should maintain a computerized database for the preparation of voter's list. This would help the Commission to keep the voter list continuously updated.

applying his voting right. For this purpose, identity cards have to be issued to every eligible voter enlisted in the list.

- The form (form-2), which is used to register eligible people in the voter's list, is clumsy. This form also contains unnecessary information, which is not relevant to registration of voters. Information like marital status, educational qualification, profession and designation are not required for registration of voters. Voter registration forms should be simplified.
- A person eligible to vote whose name is not in the existing list has to apply in form-7 with a package of documents. The required documents are a receipt of municipal tax or house rent or payment to village guards to prove his locality, an affidavit of proof of age or an attested copy of SSC certificate. In a country with low literacy rate, it is unlikely that the eligible voters will be able to procure all required documents and come to the district or upazilla headquarter personally to apply to be enlisted. This would discourage the enlistment of voters. The Election Commission should simplify the existing rules.
- The Election Commission should delete the names of dead persons from the voter's list by using the death register used by the Local Government (LG). So, along with the enumerators, the Election Commission should use the registers of LGs in updating the voter's list.
- The Election Commission should conduct voter education campaign to increase consciousness among the voters to exercise their voting rights. Media can play a vital role for this purpose. Political parties and local elites can be invited to participate voluntarily to help the Election Commission in making amendments and corrections in the existing electoral roll.
- The Election Commission has to take special initiative to check the accuracy of the electoral rolls by comparing demographic data. If the voter's list is inconsistent with the demographic data, measures have to be taken to correct the voter's list as much as possible.

information of the eligible voters should be given proper training so that they can properly perform their duties.

- Care should be taken to correct the spelling mistakes and other errors in the voter's list.

Areas for further research

This study is primarily based on macro data. However, more detailed analysis should be made on the basis of constituency wise disaggregated data. The analysis of village level data in this study is based on data in four villages in one upazilla. Further analysis may be made of village data on voter list from various geographic areas. The demographic, social, economic and administrative characteristics of areas where over enumeration is high should be studied. Hopefully, disaggregated data on voters and voting age population will shed more light on the problems of voter registration in Bangladesh.

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11	Haiti	1995	3668049	3448320	106.37
		1990	3271155	3113750	105.06
12	Hungary	1998	8062700	7742951	104.13
		1994	7959228	7900970	100.74
		1990	7822764	7773750	100.63
13	Iceland	1999	201525	196604	102.50
		1995	191973	190990	100.51
		1991	182768	180600	101.20
14	India	1999	620394065	565780483	109.65
		1998	602340382	556651400	108.21
		1996	592572288	562028100	105.43
15	Ireland	1997	2707498	2681821	100.96
		1992	2557036	2377830	107.54
		1989	2448810	2355050	103.98
16	Isreal	1999	4285428	3994784	107.28
		1996	3933250	3684850	106.74
		1992	3409015	3227490	105.62
17	Italy	2001	49358947	47332575	104.28
		1996	48846238	46363590	105.35
		1994	48135041	45641100	105.46
18	Lebanon	2000	2748674	2022400	135.91
		1996	2577979	1375980	187.36
		1992	2383345	1179000	202.15
19	Maldives	1994	109072	100860	108.14
		1989	90084	87780	102.62
20	Nigeria	1999	57938945	52792781	109.75
		1983	65300000	43620780	149.70
		1979	48499091	38142090	127.15
21	Palau	2000	13239	13159	100.61

22	Portugal	1995	8906608	7463960	119.33
		1991	8322481	7301580	113.98
23	Seychelles	1998	54847	52729	104.02
		1993	50370	45360	111.04
24	Spain	2000	33969640	31631640	107.39
		1996	32007554	31013030	103.21
		1993	31030511	30875570	100.50
25	St. Lucia	1997	111330	82140	135.54
		1992	97403	79597	122.37
		1987	83153	74834	111.12
26	St. Vincent	2001	84536	63986	132.12
		1998	76469	66812	114.45
		1994	71954	64491	111.57
27	Suriname	2000	264961	255841	103.56
		1996	269165	251930	106.84
		1991	246926	234320	105.38
28	Trinidad & Tobago	2000	947689	853781	111.00
		1995	837741	788020	106.31
		1991	794486	742200	107.04
29	Uruguay	1999	2402014	2329231	103.12
		1994	2330154	2216900	105.11
		1989	2319022	2123130	109.23

Countries where registered voters sometimes exceed the VAP (Occasionally over enumerated)

Sl. No.	Country	Year	Registration	VAP	Percentage
1	Albania	1997	1947235	2228430	87.38
		1996	2204002	2193030	100.50
		1992	2000000	2051430	97.49
2	Argentina	1999	24109306	23877270	100.97
		1998	23184491	23230160	99.80
		1995	22158612	22488050	98.54
3	Aruba	1997	52166	53174	98.10
		1994	64848	52560	123.38
		1993	45680	49680	91.95
4	Bangladesh	2001	74946364	71230000	105.22
		1996	56716935	66408120	85.41
		1991	62181743	56038800	110.96
		1988	49863829	53311320	93.53
		1986	47876979	48803040	98.10
		1979	38363858	41588640	92.25
		1973	35205642	35140800	100.18
5	Bosnia & H	2000	2508349	3053221	82.15
		1998	2656758	3256197	81.59
		1996	2900000	2572520	112.73
6	Brazil	1998	106101067	102802554	103.21
		1994	94782803	97590050	97.12
		1990	83817593	92622720	90.49

7	Bulgaria	1997	4289956	6414519	66.88
		1994	6997954	6501110	107.64
8	Cambodia	1998	5395595	5488029	98.32
		1993	4764430	4654000	102.37
9	Cap Verde	2001	260275	213973	121.64
		1995	207648	199920	103.87
		1991	166818	175000	95.32
10	Croatia	2000	4244558	3484951	121.80
		1995	3634233	3464230	104.91
		1992	3558913	3591750	99.09
11	Czech Republic	1998	8116836	7827723	103.69
		1996	7990770	7859160	101.67
		1992	11515699	11640940	98.92
12	Ecuador	1998	7072496	6892210	102.62
		1996	6662007	6665580	99.95
		1994	6175991	6100400	101.24
13	Finland	1999	4152430	4155857	99.92
		1995	4088358	3941630	103.72
		1991	4060778	3860780	105.18
14	Georgia	1999	3990890	3631394	109.90
		1995	3121075	3929760	79.42
		1992	3466677	3863820	89.72
15	Indonesia	1999	118217393	128717433	91.84
		1997	124740987	119535245	104.35
		1992	107565697	111625800	96.36
16	Japan	2000	100433798	103155387	97.36
		1996	97909655	96672730	101.28
		1995	97320000	96460210	100.89
17	Malawi	1999	5071822	4419210	114.77
		1994	3775256	4446670	84.90

18	Mali	1992	4780416	4613520	103.62
19	Malta	1998	281078	279515	100.56
		1996	271746	269370	100.88
		1992	259423	261360	99.26
20	Mauritania	1996	1040855	1135690	91.65
		1992	1174087	1074570	109.26
21	Namibia	1999	861848	876828	98.29
		1994	654189	780000	83.87
		1989	701483	669630	104.76
22	Nepal	1999	13518839	11738680	115.16
		1997	6496365	11203628	57.98
		1994	6413172	6721260	95.42
23	Niger	1999	4587684	4739028	96.81
		1995	4376021	4114800	106.35
		1993	3878178	3762450	103.08
24	Panama	1999	1746989	1744041	100.17
		1994	1500000	1575630	95.20
		1984	917677	1195040	76.79
25	Papua New Guinea	1997	3414072	2272626	150.23
		1992	1987994	2272626	87.48
		1987	1843128	1775820	103.79
26	Parguay	1998	2049449	2777725	73.78
		1993	1698984	2476980	68.59
		1989	2226061	2161170	103.00
27	Poland	2001	29364455	28469123	103.14
		1997	28409054	27901720	101.82
		1993	27677302	27723600	99.83
28	Republin of Korea	2000	33482387	34364710	97.43
		1996	31488294	30805360	102.22
		1992	29003828	27944320	103.79

29	Romania	1996	17218654	16737320	102.88
		1992	16380663	16408080	99.83
30	San Marino	2001	30688	22024	139.34
		1998	30117	30117	100.00
		1993	28191	28191	100.00
31	Slovakia	1998	4023191	4297856	93.61
		1994	3876555	3849840	100.69
		1992	11515699	11640940	98.92
32	Slovenia	2000	1586695	1543425	102.80
		1996	1542218	1499960	102.82
		1992	1490434	1497000	99.56
33	Solomon Islands	1997	201584	194824	103.47
		1993	165620	173950	95.21
		1989	125106	145700	85.87
34	Sri Lanka	2000	12071062	11110498	108.65
		1994	10945065	11254950	97.25
		1989	9374880	10263250	91.34
35	St. Kitts & Nevis	2000	34166	25892	131.96
		1995	31726	31185	101.73
		1989	26481	26775	98.90
36	Thailand	2001	42759001	42663353	100.22
		1995	37817983	36997720	102.22
		1992	32432087	36620740	88.56
37	Togo	1994	2000000	1885440	106.08
		1985	1318979	1483720	88.90
38	Tonga	1999	54912	52065	105.47
		1996	49830	66796	74.60
		1987	42496	40920	103.85

39	Uganda	1996	8477320	9875250	85.84
		1980	4899146	6062340	80.81
40	Vanuatu	1998	107297	89820	119.46
		1995	105631	97362	108.49
		1991	87695	88458	99.14
41	Western Samoa	2001	93213	100416	92.83
		1996	78137	64220	121.67
		1991	57000	57400	99.30
42	Zambia	1996	2267382	4467520	50.75
		1991	2981895	3869520	77.06
		1968	2981895	1924800	154.92

**Countries where registered voters never exceed the
VAP (Normal or under enumerated)**

Sl. No	Country	Year	Registration	VAP	Percentage
1	Andorra	2001	13342	68338	19.52
		1997	10837	10837	100.00
		1993	9675	9675	100.00
2	Angola	1992	4828486	4986230	96.84
3	Anguilla	2000	7520	8531	88.15
		1999	6578	8231	79.92
4	Armenia	1999	2198544	2500788	87.91
		1995	1195283	2338700	51.11
5	Australia	1998	12056625	14039112	85.88
		1996	11668852	13547920	86.13
		1993	11384638	13065440	87.14
6	Austria	1999	5838373	6463384	90.33
		1995	5768009	6306300	91.46
		1994	5774000	6263129	92.19
7	Azerbaijan	2000	4241550	4709852	90.06
		1995	4132800	4310340	95.88
8	Bahamas	1997	129946	175463	74.06
		1992	122000	163680	74.54
		1987	102713	142190	72.24
9	Bahrain	1973	24883	59800	41.61
10	Belarus	1995	7445800	7652340	97.30
11	Belgium	1999	7343464	7999572	91.80
		1995	7199440	7887360	91.28
		1991	7144884	7783620	91.79

12	Belize	1993	94470	102300	92.07
		1989	82556	89670	93.93
13	Benin	1999	2533399	2697063	97.16
		1995	2536234	2610380	90.06
		1991	2069343	2297830	88.97
14	Bolivia	1997	3200000	3596616	69.30
		1993	2399197	3461850	69.22
		1989	2136587	3086880	54.44
15	Botswana	1999	459662	844338	58.30
		1994	370173	634920	70.20
		1989	367069	522900	92.72
16	Burkina Faso	1997	4985352	5376800	79.04
		1992	3727843	4716500	97.26
		1978	2887550	2969000	88.06
17	Burma	1990	20619500	23415280	68.15
		1956	7442770	10920800	82.53
18	Burundi	1993	2360090	2859840	61.78
19	Cameroon	1997	3844330	6222978	73.31
		1992	4019562	5482800	74.21
		1988	3634568	4897350	89.31
20	Canada	2000	21243473	23786167	85.16
		1997	19663478	23088803	91.71
		1993	19906796	21705750	91.70
21	Central African Rep.	1998	1427691	1556887	74.02
		1993	1191374	1609560	51.13
22	Chad	1997	1757879	3437910	83.76
23	Chile	1997	8069624	9634638	90.05
		1993	8085439	8978450	91.10
		1989	7556613	8295040	

24	Colombia	1994	17003195	21057200	69.70
		1991	15037526	19376190	77.61
25	Cook Islands	1999	10600	10808	98.08
26	Cote d'Ivoire	2000	5517613	7301400	75.57
		1990	4408809	4686800	94.07
27	Cyprus	2001	467543	552887	84.56
		1996	409996	486850	84.21
		1991	381323	457380	83.37
28	Denmark	1998	3993009	4128398	96.72
		1994	3988787	4111950	97.00
		1990	3941499	4060600	97.07
29	Djibouti	1997	165942	316290	52.47
		1992	151066	278460	54.25
30	Domonican Republic	1998	4129554	4795282	86.12
		1996	3750502	4746550	79.02
		1994	3300000	4578400	72.08
31	Egypt	1995	20987453	33115600	63.38
		1990	16326229	28980050	56.34
		1987	14324162	26487000	54.08
32	El Salvador	2000	3264724	3275328	99.68
		1997	3004174	3258790	92.19
		1994	2722000	2933320	92.80
33	Estonia	1999	857270	1071447	80.01
		1995	791957	1117500	70.87
		1992	689319	1142560	60.33
34	Ethiopia	2000	20252000	30386448	66.65
35	Fiji	1999	437195	522310	83.70
		1994	303529	407680	74.45
		1992	303172	373000	81.28

36		1993	38968660	45020320	87.86
		1988	36977321	42088500	77.46
37	Gambia	1997	420507	542850	99.04
		1992	400000	403880	67.01
		1987	249376	372140	91.63
		1998	60762751	66313874	91.67
38	Germany	1994	60452009	65942100	94.01
		1990	60436560	64285650	77.08
		1999	4458744	5784820	71.33
39	Guatemala	1995	3711589	5203310	68.81
		1994	3480196	5057780	96.85
		1999	3049262	3148530	91.44
40	Guinea	1995	3049262	3148530	91.44
41	Guinea Bissau	1999	503007	550101	80.48
		1994	396938	493194	79.10
42	Guyana	2001	440185	556488	90.66
		1997	461481	509040	78.65
		1992	381299	484800	94.64
		1997	2901743	3066060	97.73
43	Honduras	1993	2734000	2797500	99.58
		1989	2366448	2376480	94.61
		1996	32000000	33824520	74.56
44	Iran	1997	1182292	1585760	66.01
		1993	1002571	1518930	75.23
		1989	1078760	1434000	55.97
		1997	1480000	2644116	63.36
45	Jamaica	1993	1002571	1518930	53.66
		1989	1078760	1434000	29.74
		1997	1480000	2644116	
46	Jordan	1993	1501279	2369280	
		1989	1020446	1901640	
		1997	1480000	2644116	
47	Kazakhstan	1995	3308897	11125400	

		1992	7855880	11308000	69.47
49	Kiribati	1983	25011	25620	97.62
		1982	22816	25200	90.54
		1978	18523	23520	78.75
50	Kuwait	1996	107169	375120	28.57
		1992	81440	375120	21.71
		1985	56745	567600	10.00
51	Kyrgystan	2000	2505763	2638707	94.96
		1995	2200000	2663610	82.59
52	Latvia	1998	1341942	1858210	72.22
		1995	1334436	1894500	70.44
		1993	1245530	1939500	64.22
53	Lesotho	1998	860000	1001034	85.91
		1993	736930	893780	82.45
		1970	374272	437100	85.63
54	Liechtenstein	2001	16350	26195	62.42
		1997	14765	23840	61.93
		1993	13999	22050	63.49
55	Lithuania	2000	2646663	3053037	86.69
		1996	2597530	2751320	94.41
		1992	2549952	2731660	93.35
56	Luxembourg	1999	221103	336027	65.80
		1994	217131	316790	68.54
		1989	218940	298620	73.32
57	Macedonia	1998	1572976	1621599	97.00
		1994	1222899	1477980	82.74
58	Madagaskar	1998	5234198	7745460	67.58
		1993	6000000	6649920	90.23
		1989	5741974	5837280	98.37
59	Malaysia	1999	9694156	13411519	72.28
		1995	9012370	10175010	88.57
		1990	8000000	8882000	90.07

60	Mauritius	1999	712818	788330	95.74
		1991	682000	695500	93.06
61	Mexico	2000	52789209	62684899	84.21
		1997	52208966	55406943	94.23
		1994	45729053	53944640	84.77
62	Moldova	2001	2295288	2518141	91.15
		1998	2431218	2949470	82.43
		1994	2356614	2914500	80.86
63	Monaco	1998	4932	27564	17.89
		1993	4582	25420	18.03
		1988	4244	23780	17.85
64	Mongolia	2000	1247033	1448576	86.09
		1996	1147260	1377040	83.31
		1992	1085120	1204690	90.07
65	Morocco	1997	12790631	14852810	86.12
		1993	11398987	13816570	82.50
		1984	7414846	10510080	70.55
66	Mozambique	1999	7099105	8303686	85.49
		1994	6148842	8140860	75.53
67	Nauru	2000	3829	6784	56.44
		1995	2952	5940	49.70
		1987	2443	4860	50.27
68	Netherland	1998	11755132	12275387	95.76
		1994	11455924	11996400	95.49
		1989	11112189	11433730	97.19
69	New Zealand	1999	2509872	2794955	89.80
		1996	2418587	2571840	94.04
		1993	2321664	2484720	93.44

70	Nicaragua	1990	1752000	1581000	98.14
		1984	1551597	3446050	97.47
71	Norway	2001	3358856	3360083	98.55
		1997	3311215	3320240	98.18
		1993	3259957	60565705	89.47
72	Pakistan	1997	54189534	54032880	93.24
		1993	50377915	49301560	95.46
		1990	47065330	1035235	100.00
73	Palestinian Authority	1996	1035235	15429603	96.61
74	Peru	2001	14906233	15186617	95.92
		2000	14567468	13649720	91.03
		1995	12425164	40287296	84.80
75	Philippines	1998	34163465	37652450	96.71
		1995	36415154	34699860	92.52
		1992	32105782	109211997	98.96
76	Russia	1999	108073956	110864250	96.96
		1995	107496856	111390000	94.44
		1993	105200000	63536	78.13
77	Sao Tome e Principe	1998	49639	58750	95.08
		1994	55862	56870	90.75
		1991	51610	4655275	60.32
78	Senegal	2001	2808253	4513760	70.12
		1998	3164827	3994480	66.34
		1993	2650000	2029720	61.32
79	Sierra Leone	1996	1244601	2076210	36.86
80	Singapore	1997	765332	1851210	45.79
		1991	847716	1741330	83.26
		1988	1449838	25411573	71.53
81	South Africa	1999	18177000		

		1998	6603129	6915438	95.48
83	Sweden	1994	6496365	6848400	94.86
		1991	6413172	6721260	95.42
84	Switzerland	1999	4638284	5736298	80.86
		1995	4593772	5442360	84.41
		1991	4510784	6236000	72.33
85	Syria	1994	6037885	6368240	94.81
86	Taiwan (Republic of China)	1996	14130084	14340580	98.53
		1995	14153424	14273013	99.16
		1992	13421170	13576697	98.85
87	Tajikistan	2000	2873745	3135743	91.64
		1995	2684000	3112530	86.23
88	Tanzania	2000	10088484	16055200	62.84
		1995	8928816	14256000	62.63
89	Tunisia	1999	3387542	5563704	60.89
		1994	2976366	4715820	63.11
		1989	2711925	4113200	65.93
90	Turkey	1999	37495217	40262996	93.13
		1995	34155981	36812460	92.78
		1991	29979123	31529300	95.08
91	Tuvalu	1981	3368	3368	100.00
		1977	2862	2862	100.00
92	Ukraine	1998	37540092	38939136	96.41
		1994	38204100	39451600	96.84
93	United Kingdom	2001	44403238	45804132	96.94
		1997	43784559	45093510	97.10
		1992	43240084	44658460	96.82
94	USA	2000	205800000	213954023	96.19
		1998	141850558	210116120	67.51
		1996	146211960	196511000	74.40

Countries with population size

Sl	Country	Population
1	India	986856301
2	USA	284970789
3	Indonesia	207152973
4	Brazil	161790311
5	Russia	157065478
6	Pakistan	137649330
7	Japan	126996466
8	Bangladesh	122978000
9	Nigeria	108258359
10	Mexico	95529212
11	Germany	82172259
12	Philippines	73052254
13	Turkey	64504287
14	Thailand	62862098
15	Iran	62638000
16	Ethiopia	61679843
17	United Kingdom	59434645
18	Egypt	59135000
19	France	58581450
20	Italy	57684294
21	Ukraine	51235704
22	Republin of Korea	47203751
23	South Africa	42424823
24	Burma	41813000
25	Spain	39394773

27	Argentina	36554185
28	Colombia	36453120
29	Tanzania	33517000
30	Canada	31213580
31	Sudan	30507000
32	Algeria	29245552
33	Kenya	28784000
34	Morocco	28024000
35	Peru	26076958
36	Uzbekistan	24305971
37	Venezuela	24185517
38	Malaysia	22549627
39	Nepal	22341605
40	Romania	22303305
41	Uganda	22070329
42	Taiwan(Republic of China)	21311000
43	Ghana	20212000
44	Sri Lanka	19051116
45	Australia	18750982
46	Mozambique	17336171
47	Kazakhstan	17116000
48	Yemen	16900000
49	Madagaskar	16136000
50	Netherland	15661239
51	Cote d'Ivoire	14786000
52	Chile	14622354
53	Syria	13844000
54	Cameroon	13829000
55	Zimbabwe	13047482

57	Guatemala	11788030
58	Mali	11239000
59	Burkina Faso	10754000
60	Yugoslavia	10624000
61	Angola	10609000
62	Greece	10349420
63	Belarus	10341000
64	Niger	10318141
65	Czech Republic	10291000
66	Belgium	10199967
67	Cambodia	10192000
68	Hungary	10056000
69	Portugal	9953648
70	Senegal	9817462
71	Zambia	9712000
72	Malawi	9692808
73	Tunisia	9466018
74	Sweden	8780000
75	Bulgaria	8330544
76	Domonican Republic	8313630
77	Austria	8156351
78	Haiti	7841574
79	Azerbaijan	7623798
80	Bolivia	7340032
81	Switzerland	7214950
82	Chad	6741000
83	Guinea	6699000
84	Tajikistan	6244770
85	Honduras	6132000

87	El Salvador	6021403
88	Benin	6009635
89	Burundi	5958000
90	Jordan	5508576
91	Slovakia	5274335
92	Denmark	5225820
93	Finland	5180030
94	Parguay	5137440
95	Georgia	5087215
96	Nicaragua	4706000
97	Kyrgystan	4650010
98	Sierra Leone	4613000
99	Croatia	4584831
100	Norway	4494368
101	Bosnia & H	4269483
102	Papua New Guinea	4250935
103	Togo	3928000
104	New Zealand	3829188
105	Ireland	3807391
106	Armenia	3738582
107	Lithuania	3672338
108	Moldova	3657498
109	Albania	3510500
110	Uruguay	3313283
111	Costa Rica	3292112
112	Lebanon	3282000
113	Central African Rep.	3075001
114	Singapore	3009000
115	Panama	2808935

147	Belize	238500
148	Bahrain	230000
149	Vanuatu	186277
150	Western Samoa	182574
151	St. Lucia	145077
152	Sao Tome e Principe	135000
153	St. Vincent	114417
154	Aruba	111000
155	Tonga	96829
156	Grenada	89018
157	Seychelles	78845
158	Dominica	74429
159	Andorra	70000
160	Antigua & Barbuda	69750
161	Kiribati	61000
162	St. Kitts & Nevis	40976
163	Liechtenstein	33644
164	Monaco	32580
165	San Marino	26986
166	Palau	19092
167	Cook Islands	17000
168	Anguilla	12132
169	Nauru	12088
170	Tuvalu	7000

ANNEXURE-5

Questionnaires for Interview:

1. Are all names of eligible members of your family enlisted in the voter's list of 1995 and 2000?
1. Do you know any eligible person in this village whose name is not enlisted in the voter's list?
2. Do you know any person whose name is enlisted twice or in two constituencies?
3. Do all voters reside in this village?
4. Can you recognize any voter from the voter's list who is not the resident of this village?
5. What is the possible reason of exclusion of names in the voter's list of 2000 from that of 1995?
 - Due to death
 - Due to migration to other village
6. The number of female voters is larger than that of male in this village. Why?
7. Why is the number of unmarried voters low in the voter's list?
9. What is the minimum age for marriage in this village?