

# Official count puts number of transgenders at 4.9 lakh

Rema Nagarajan | TIC

There is finally an official count of the third gender in the country — 4.9 lakh. While transgender activists estimate the numbers to be six to seven times higher, they are thrilled that such a large number of people identified themselves as belonging to the third gender, despite the fact that the census happened well before the Supreme Court order gave legal recognition to the third gender in April this year.

Of the total number of transgenders identified by the census, almost 55,000 are in the 0-6 age group. This has come as a big surprise to the community as they did not expect so many parents to identify their children as belonging to the third gender.

"After the disappointment of the election commission's efforts, this is fantastic news for the transgender community. We were extremely disappointed because during the voter registration process only 28,341 people registered as belonging to the third gender," said Kalki Subramaniam, transgender rights activist and founder of the Sahodari Foundation. She added that she was even more amazed that parents would come out and accept and identify their children as being transgender. Anjali Gopalan of Naz Foundation said that even



Activists are thrilled that such a large number of people identified themselves as belonging to the third gender. **The number stands at 20,000 in Odisha**

the current figure of 4.9 lakh was on the lower side as it was unlikely that the number of people declaring themselves as transgender would ever give an accurate figure.

Over 66% of the population identified as third gender lived in rural areas, very close to the 69% of the overall population that lives in villages. The census data also revealed the low literacy in the community, just 46%, compared to 74% literacy in the general population. "I am not surprised that the literacy is so low because it is not uncommon at all for people of transgender to drop out of school because of the harassment and discrimination they face," said Gopalan.

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