

Stories of Displacement: Religious Persecution and Migration Among Hindus from Bangladesh

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Background

- Hindu population share in Bangladesh has declined since the mid-20th century.
- Prior work links minority migration to property insecurity and everyday discrimination.
- Weak protection and uneven justice can make safety feel uncertain over time.
- Rumor and digital hate can intensify fear and deepen exclusion.

Research Questions

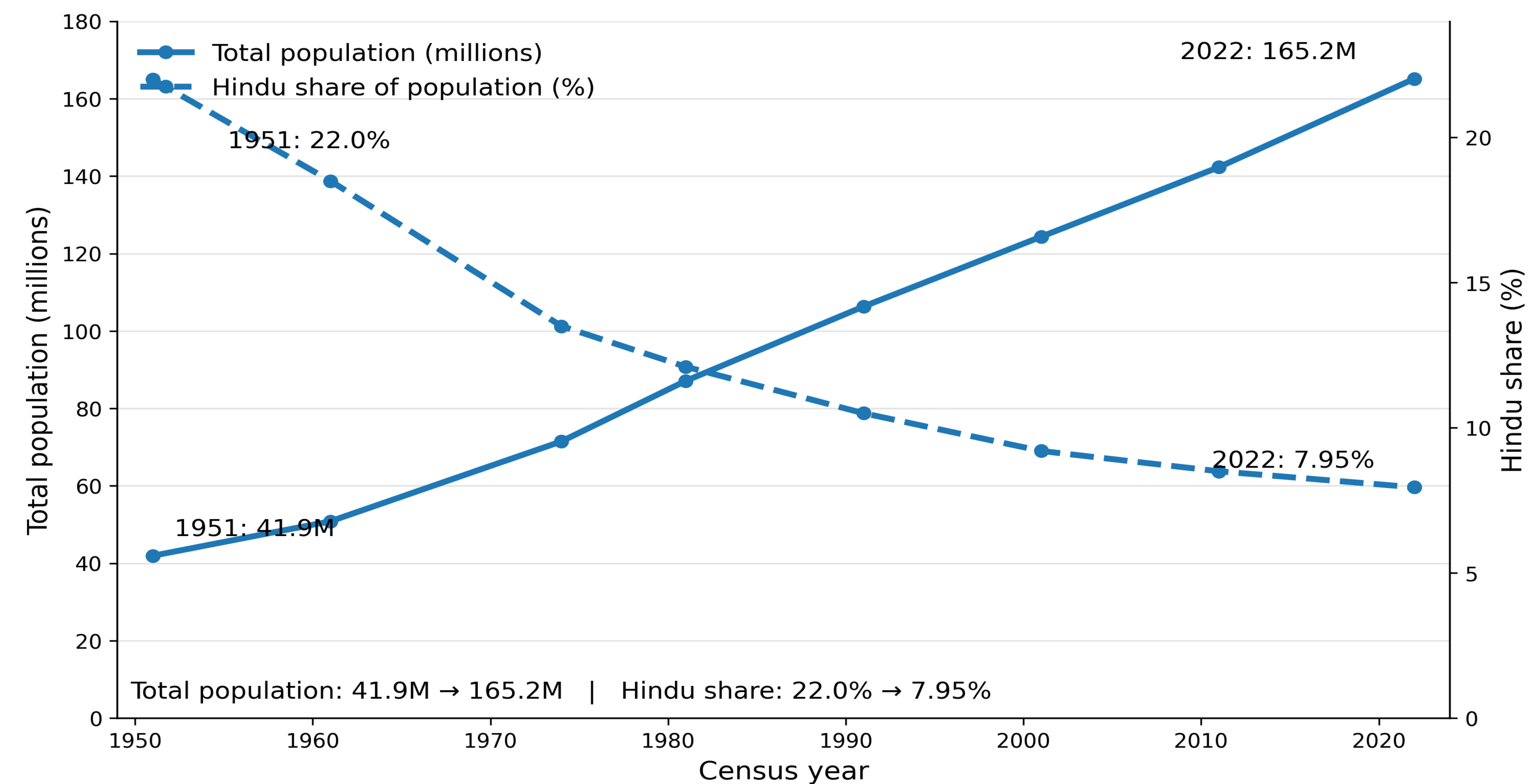
- How do Bangladeshi Hindus in the U.S. describe religious discrimination and decisions to leave Bangladesh?
- What visible and invisible harms accumulated over time (dispossession, harassment, violence, online threats)?
- What do these narratives reveal about broader patterns of marginalization and displacement?

Data & Methods

- Qualitative semi-structured interviews (N=15) with Bangladeshi Hindu migrants in the U.S.
- Interviews conducted in Bengali; translated and transcribed.
- Iterative thematic coding (violence, land loss, fear, identity, resistance).
- Emergent focus: online hate/digital surveillance linked to safety and self-censorship.

Key Findings

- Land loss: people describe losing ancestral property because of threats, legal manipulation, and weak protection.
- Everyday discrimination: exclusion in housing and work leads some to hide their identity for safety.
- Digital hate: rumors and hate posts increase fear and affect daily life online and offline.
- Early decision to migrate: over time, these pressures lead many to plan migration early for safety, dignity, and children's future.



Population growth with declining Hindu share (Bangladesh, 1951–2022 censuses).
Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (Population & Housing Census series).



Hindu minority community protest calling for safety and rights.
Photo: Fatima Tuj Johora (Dhaka, Aug. 9, 2024).



Mob violence linked to social media rumor/hate
Photo: AFP

Participant Voices

- “We lost the land, the hope, and finally, the country.” - Kanika
- “I had to hide my identity just to get a place to live.” - Prity
- “They burned my uncle’s shops. Then they burned me online.” - Kunal
- “No one wants to leave their country. But sometimes, you’re left with no choice.” - Kunal

Conclusion

- These stories show systemic discrimination, not isolated incidents.
- Cumulative harms, property insecurity, discrimination/violence, exclusion, and digital hate, produce fear and silence.
- Many participants described early exit planning as a strategy for safety and dignity.
- “Why waste my life in a place that won’t let me live it?” - Sumi

Selected References

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