RAJIV GANDHI
INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

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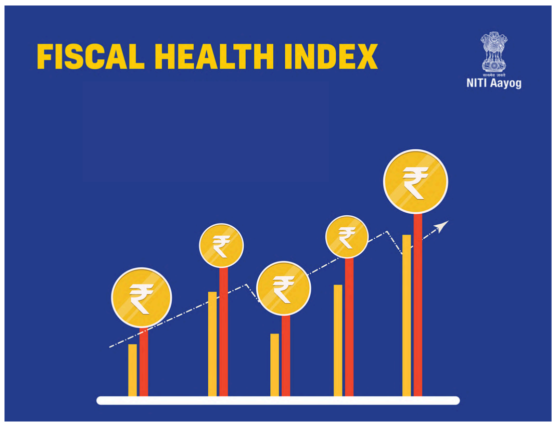
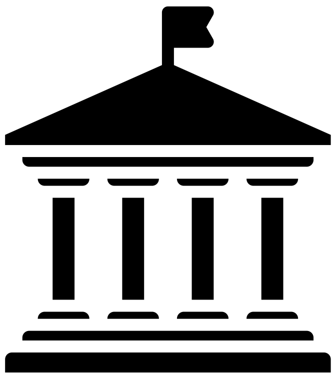
Governance and Development





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1. Editorial

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) is the knowledge affiliate of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. RGICS carries out research and analysis as well as policy advocacy on contemporary challenges facing India. RGICS currently undertakes research studies on the following five themes:

- Constitutional Values and Democratic Institutions
- Growth with Employment
- Governance and Development
- Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainability
- India's Place in the World

We bring out the monthly Policy Watch on each of these themes sequentially and every sixth issue is a Special Issue, where we carry articles from each theme. This issue is on the theme Governance and Development.

We carry six articles here, some taken from other publications, and republished because of their relevance to the contemporary challenges of Governance and Development in India. Other articles have been put together by the RGICS staff.

The first article by Arun Maira and Sarthak Shukla is at the level of the philosophy of Governance and development. They make the point that States are systems composed of political, social, and economic institutions. They assert that the system of governance of a state is composed of: (1) two sets of institutions – economic institutions which measure outcomes in money values and social institutions which measure outcomes in human values; (2) interactions of these institutions with the natural environment; and (3) the process of governance that shapes the state's policies.

The conflicts between money values and human values guide the various actors whose interactions form the policies of the state. They assert that the well-being of individuals depends on the well-being of their societies and natural environment. Impacts of public policies should be measured by the strengthening of local community systems, rather than delivery of benefits to individuals within them. To truly be a democracy, people must participate in the formation of the policies by which they will be governed. Experts must listen to the people. That is the only sustainable way to create harmony and improve the well-being of everyone.

From this philosophical level of values and institutions, we move to excerpts from a 2015 classic work by Prof Sudipto Mundle and his colleagues Samik Chowdhury and Satadru Sikdar. After delving into what is governance, and an extensive literature survey of how it can be assessed, they chose governance indicators derived from the three pillars of the state, i.e., the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. "However, given the context of a developmental state, the emphasis is on the executive branch of government that is responsible for delivering most public services either directly or indirectly. Moreover, the choice of indicators has been limited to official data on objective variables. No data on perceptions of 'experts' or even random sample perception surveys have been used.

Fourteen indicators have been selected that capture delivery of five broad classes of outputs, namely, infrastructure; social services; fiscal performance; justice, law & order; and quality of the legislature."

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Google Images (free to use images)
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They then constructed a Governance Performance Index (GPI) from these 14 variables and a Development (GSDP per capita) Adjusted Governance Index (DSGI). They then computed the GPI for 2001 and 2011 and the DAGI for 2011. Their analysis ranked Gujarat, followed by Tamil Nadu, as the two best performing states in 2001 as well as 2011. But in terms of the DAGI, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh ranked no 1 and 2 while Tamil Nadu came down to the 4th and Gujarat to the 6th rank. Bihar which was ranked 19th and last in GPI, rose up to the middle 10th rank when the DAGI was ranked.

Unfortunately, the pioneering study by Mundle et al was never replicated in later years. So, we looked at the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) compiled by the World Bank since 1996 every year, using 30 data sources. This is described in the next article put together by RGICS staff. The WGI has five components - Voice and Accountability; Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law and Control of Corruption. We compared the WGI of India with the other four BRICS countries for 2024 and we also looked at India’s WGI from 2003 every five years. Both the comparisons yield very interesting results.

As governance and fiscal health are linked to each other, we carry excerpts from the recent Fiscal Health Index (FHI) of States for 2022-23 report released by the Niti Ayog. The study identifies five major sub-indices to calculate the composite FHI and assess states’ fiscal health. The five major sub-indices are Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilization, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability. Further, nine minor sub-indices are developed, based on specific fiscal metrics, that reflect key aspects of fiscal performance. Based on this analysis, Odisha and Chhattisgarh come out at the top with scores of 67.8 and 55.2, whereas Andhra Pradesh and Punjab are at the very bottom with scores of 20.9 and 10.2. It is hoped that the FHI rankings will lead to more prudent fiscal behaviour by the states, as it is bound to be used by creditors to these states.

As the GST is a major part of any state’s revenue, we look at the GST, first by reproducing an article by Pradep S Mehta and Tasmita Sengupta of the CUTS Foundation and then adding some analysis of GST Statistics for seven years, published by the government. We show that 90% of the 1.46 crore GST registered businesses contribute only 20% of the GST and suggest that a much more simplified regime can be established for them, in such a way that the government would not lose any revenue.

Finally, we carry an article by the RGICS team on the Promise vs Performance of the PM Internship Scheme.

We hope the readers find the articles interesting and Policy Makers use some of the lessons to design better policies and programs with people’s participation.

Vijay Mahajan,
Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies

2. The values that govern us: Reforming the state

Arun Maira and Sarthak Shukla [1]

“We the people” form a nation. The feeling of a shared identity about who ‘we’ are, is formed by a shared history which makes us into a ‘nation’ distinct from others. ‘States’ are systems of institutions with jurisdiction within a geographically defined political boundary. The boundaries of nations and states do not always coincide.

2.1 States and Institutions

Governance jurisdictions of states have been redrawn over the centuries through wars spurred by religious and ethnic differences.

The seventeenth century Westphalian Peace Treaty, which created the concept of nation-states, sought to end continuous wars in Europe by establishing the principle of inviolable state boundaries. The UN Charter is founded on the Westphalian principle that countries should not interfere in other’s internal affairs, including the rights of all the citizens within the geographical boundary of a state to choose how they will govern themselves. New nation-states have been created since the founding of the UN which do not correspond with historically defined ethno-cultural boundaries: Pakistan and India, Israel and Palestine, and the Sudan, for example. Nevertheless, under international law, the people within the geographical boundaries of a nation-state must be free to choose their own form of state – ‘secular’ or ‘religious’, and their own form of governance – ‘socialist’ or ‘capitalist’.

Signing of the Westphalia Treaty

Source: Image

[1] This article first appeared in The Wire on 06/Dec/2024 https://thewire.in/economy/the-values-that-govern-us-reforming-the-state

States are systems composed of political, social, and economic institutions. Douglas North, who won the Nobel prize for Economics in 1993 for his work on institutions, defined institutions as “the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction. They are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, and constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behaviour, conventions, and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics.”

Socio-political systems are complex, *self*-adaptive systems in which the minds of their designers are situated *within* and formed by the system. Whereas designers of complex, machine-like systems sit *outside* the system they design on an external, objective perch.

Twentieth century, mathematised models of economies view an economy as a machine-like system in general equilibrium. Human emotions are externalities in their rational models.

Movements of socio-political change are propelled by aligned aspirations, not by written constitutions. Change comes first, and the constitution afterwards. A written constitution may be a sufficient expression of the aligned aspirations of a nation at one moment in its history.

All citizens were not granted equal rights in the US constitution in 1787: women and coloured people obtained these rights later, and people of various genders have begun to be treated equally only in this century. These new rights, not explicitly mentioned in the US constitution, have emerged from an ongoing civilisational debate peppered with struggles – some peaceful, some violent.

Conceptions of “freedom”, “liberty”, and “human rights” are not cast in stone. They are always works in progress. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln said, “We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word, we do not mean the same thing.” Written constitutions, which courts must follow, state what the will of the people was at some prior time in history.

The will of the people changes as ideas of human rights and liberties evolve. Therefore, good democratic governance requires a robust process for those who govern the people to continuously listen to the people. Because people, not courts, shape the norms – the “unwritten rules”– of their societies.

Citizens want many things and may not agree about everything. Human beings’ preferences are formed by combinations of many factors in their histories and their present circumstances; also, by what they value most, which may not be the same as other citizens.

Therefore, true democracies are created when citizens listen deeply to the points of view of people who they think are “not like them” in their own societies.

With deeper listening to others’ perspectives, they will see the shape of the whole system and realise that their insistence that their solutions with their biases must be imposed on all, which powerful people and powerful nations can, will harm the resilience of the system of which they are only a part. This is the cause of the tragedy of humanity in this millennium.

2.2 Systemic reform

The health of a complex system can be destroyed when reforms of one part harm its other parts. This is a principle good doctors understand. Improving the health of the heart alone with specialised solutions can harm the health of the liver, or vice versa. Therefore, medical specialists who wish to improve the well-being of a human person must begin with a good general map of how the various biological and mental systems of a human being interact with each other. Similarly, all socio-economic reformers must have a map showing the connections between the sub-systems of the state.

Systems thinkers often use a diagram of an iceberg in the ocean to explain structures of complex systems. Visible above the waterline are the trends of data which reveal the performance of institutional structures which are less visible below the waterline. Deeper beneath them are the values and beliefs upon which institutions are formed.

Broadly, the system of governance of a state is composed of: (1) two sets of institutions – economic institutions and social institutions; (2) interactions of these institutions with the natural environment; and (3) the process of governance that shapes the state's policies.

The system diagram below places the values driving the governance system in its centre from where they radiate into the principles of formation of social and economic institutions and guide the process of policy formation.

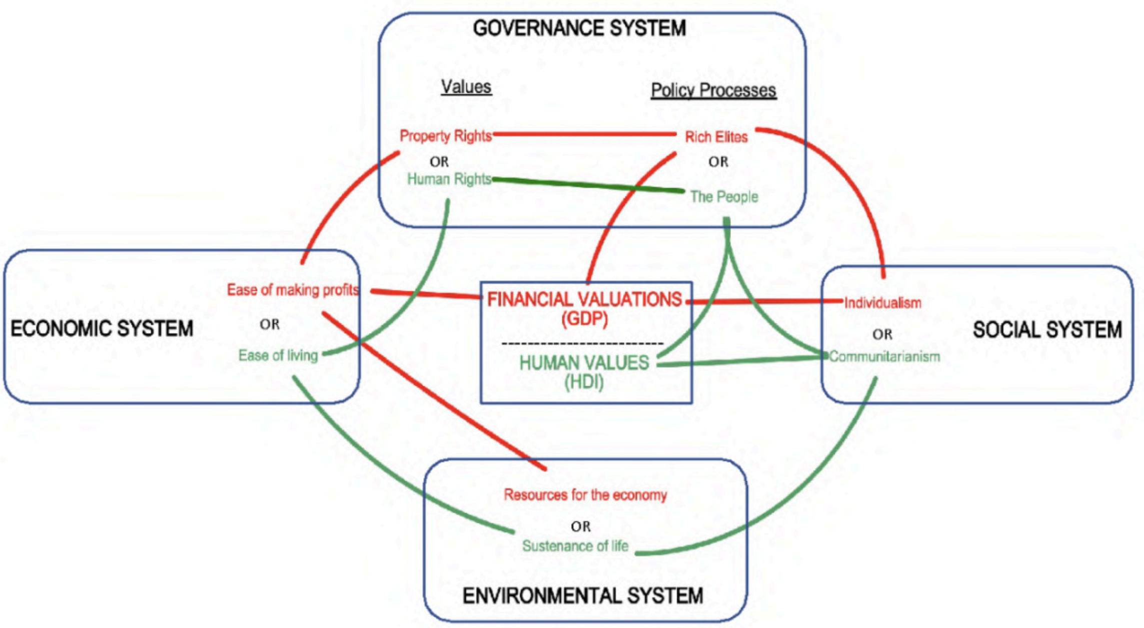


Figure 1: Conflicting Value Systems (Representation by Arun Maira)

The diagram reveals the conflicts between money values and human values that guide the various actors whose interactions form the policies of the state – politicians, economists, business executives, think tanks, consultants, civil society organisations, and others. The greater the weight of private sector economic actors in policy formulation, the larger is the weight of money values in the governance of the state.

Business leaders are admired for taking bold decisions to increase investor's profits regardless of impacts on the lives of people. US President Donald Trump has tasked Elon Musk to clean out the US government.

The Trumpian right idolises Javier Milei, Argentina's president, who says his "contempt for the state is infinite". The Economist (November 28, 2024) says Milei has applied "one of the most radical doses of free-market medicine since Thatcherism."

It reports that though a battered economy is showing signs of recovery, austerity has caused an increase in the poverty rate which has jumped to 53% in the first half of 2024 from 40% a year earlier.

Bold surgeries create disruptions in the functions of complex systems. Good doctors understand that radical surgery of any diseased organ within the system can damage other organs. Also, that their patient's weakened health is most vulnerable during the post recovery period even after a successful surgery. All-round benefits of radical economic reforms take many years to be realised.

The poorest, who are already the most vulnerable, suffer the most during transitions. They are exhorted to endure their sufferings for the sake of the good of the economy; while taxes of the rich are reduced, and ease of making profits is improved so that they can get better returns from their investments.

After the 2008 financial crisis, 'too big to fail' financial institutions were protected, while 'too small to survive' citizens sacrificed their homes and livelihoods.

The poorest and most vulnerable citizens, who will be most affected during the transition, must be consulted before the reforms.

The burdens they must bear should be anticipated, and measures planned beforehand for their mitigation. Otherwise, there will be political resistance to implement the reforms, as highlighted in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) analysis on resistance to IMF-compliant reforms.

Source: Image

2.3 Reforming the process of policy formulation

In our view processes of policy formulation at the global level and within India have become excessively dominated by economic and financial valuations with less weight for community and human values.

The top-down institutional structure of governance is also failing because it is based on an un-systemic view of global problems. Let's think scientifically for a moment. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All of them must be addressed faster. Moreover, none of them can be solved by themselves because they are interlinked with others.

Each of the SDGs is not manifested in the same way everywhere. Problems of environment and climate are not the same in Alaska and Barbados, or in Uttarakhand and Kerala. Problems of livelihoods are quite different in the slums of New York and rural Bihar. Therefore, all problems must be solved locally. And, everywhere in the world, at least seven of the 17 problems of the SDGs must be solved urgently.

Source: Image

Forecasters estimate that SDGs will be achieved only by 2087 if we persist with the present top-down and siloed approach of problem-solving, whereas the aim was to achieve them by 2030. Let's do some mathematics.

How many different combinations can there be of seven problems at a time taken out of 17? 94 million. The problems of the 17 SDGs are manifested on the ground, and they take different shapes everywhere.

Clearly, one size solutions developed by global climate scientists or global health experts will not fit local realities everywhere. We need a new paradigm of problem-solving. Local, community-led systems solutions are the way to solve global systemic problems of inequality, social disharmony, and environmental degradation.

The well-being of individuals depends on the well-being of their societies and natural environments. Medical science has established that social and environmental conditions significantly impact the biological and mental health of individuals.

Furthermore, research suggests that more sustainable and cost-effective solutions for improving public health lie in enhancing the social and environmental conditions in which people live, rather than relying solely on high-tech medical solutions. These scientific insights require changes in the design of public policies and measurements of their outcomes. Policies should focus on interventions in the conditions of social, environmental, and economic systems in which citizens live rather than on benefits for individuals. Impacts of public policies should be measured by the strengthening of local community systems, rather than delivery of benefits to individuals within them.

The governance of environmental, social, and economic systems must be aligned. The prevalent approach to organising at scale involves breaking down systemic problems into manageable parts, which are then addressed by specialists. Solutions in silos often harm other parts of the system. Solutions to grow the economy with man-made infrastructure destroy the environment.

Solutions for increasing the productivity of agriculture by applying more chemicals and replacing farmers with machines, reduce the productivity of soils and so more chemicals are required. Meanwhile, displaced farmers are unable to find employment in manufacturing because, simultaneously, humans in factories are being replaced by robots to increase the productivity of factories.

The 21st century paradigm of governance has too much "I" and too little "We"; too many silos with too much competition and too little collaboration. The architecture of global governance must be reformed. Local systems solutions collaboratively developed by communities is the scientific way to solve global systemic problems. And since the natural boundaries of environmental, social, and economic systems do not match, multiple, overlapping, democratic forums, cutting across boundaries, are required for good governance. All must not be forced into a top-down vertical structure of political control.

Policies must not be imposed on Indian citizens by foreign powers and foreign experts. "We the people" within the boundaries of India delineated on a map in 1947 adopted a constitution to guide us in 1951. We adopted the democratic principle that government must be not only ***of*** and ***for*** the people, but ***by*** the people too. The people must choose, together, what type of society they want to live in, and what form of economy suits their evolving needs.

A government formed of the people, with elections of representatives of the people, is not sufficient to make a democracy. To truly be a democracy, people must participate in the formation of the policies by which they will be governed. Policies must not be imposed on them without their participation.

Experts must listen to the people. Also, we the people must learn to listen to each other to understand different points of views of the citizens of our diverse country, who have different ethnic histories, cultural diversities, and speak different languages. That is the only sustainable way to create harmony and improve the well-being of everyone.

Arun Maira is a former member of the Planning Commission and former chairman of BCG India. Sarthak Shukla is a doctoral student at the Department of Urban and Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala.

3. Governance performance of Indian states 2001-02 and 2011-12

Sudipto Mundle, Samik Chowdhury and Satadru Sikdar [2]

[The above paper has been excerpted here. The footnotes and references in the original have been omitted. Those interested in all the details may please refer to the full paper available at the weblink below in the footnote.]

Source: Image

3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to help develop a usable framework for evaluating the performance of state governments in the delivery of core public services.

The Indian Constitution lays down the jurisdiction of different tiers of government in the Seventh Schedule under Article 246. There is some overlap, especially for subjects in the Concurrent list, and in recent years a few subjects of the Union government has fallen into the jurisdiction of the states. Nevertheless, the constitutional demarcation of subjects that are the responsibility of the Union and those that are the responsibility of the states is very clear.

[2] National Institute of Public Finance and Policy New Delhi Working Paper no 164 https://sudiptomundle.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Governance-Performance-of-Indian-States-2001-02-and-2011-12-coauthor-NIPFP-working-paper-No.-164-March-2016.pdf
The authors are respectively Emeritus Professor, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi; Assistant Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi, & Research Associate, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi. In the preparation of this paper we have benefitted a great deal from comments received in seminars that were given at the Asian Development Bank, Manila, February, 2015; the Global Observer Foundation, New Delhi, February, 2015; The Institute for South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore, April, 2015 and the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, October, 2015. However, the authors are solely responsible for the views expressed and results reported in the paper.

The 1991 liberalization reforms largely covered subjects in the Union list. The focus of second generation reforms has subsequently shifted to state subjects. The awards of successive Finance Commissions, especially the most recent Fourteenth Finance Commission, have also considerably enhanced the fiscal autonomy of the states, better enabling them to make their own choices in public action. Moreover, the performance of incumbent state governments is now beginning to count, alongside the arithmetic of traditional identity politics, in determining electoral outcomes.

These are welcome developments. They have helped to promote performance competition among states. Such competition works best when consumers, in this case voting citizens in states, are well informed and have the necessary data to objectively assess the performance of state governments. Performance league tables of state governments of the kind proposed in this paper are intended to facilitate such objective assessments, thereby promoting performance competition among state governments.

The second part of this paper deals with the concept of governance and presents the case for assessing governance through the lens of service delivery. Part 3 of the paper develops a statistical framework for assessing governance as service delivery. The framework is then applied to assess the performance of state governments in 2001-02 and 2011-12, and changes in their performance over this period. The results are presented in Part 4. Part 5 concludes.

3.2 The concept of Governance

There are varying conceptions of 'governance'. These range from a simple statist interpretation, that governance is what governments do, to a much wider interpretation of governance as the way in which individuals, groups, and institutions, both public and private, manage their affairs and resolve conflicts of interest in an orderly manner (Weiss 2000, DARPP 2009, Shome 2012). For this paper, which attempts to assess the performance of state governments in India, the statist interpretation is the most appropriate. Further, following Fukuyama (2013), governance may be defined as, "… a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services …"

This statist interpretation has a historical lineage going back two and a half millennia, stretching across different regions of the world. In its concept of governance, the Arthashastra, the authoritative traditional Indian text on statecraft dating back to the 4th century BCE, states that the king must exercise coercive authority (Danda) but also outlines the principles for its fair application to serve the common good (Dharma). This Danda - Dharma duality, the importance of authority and an order preserving government to ensure peace, security and prosperity of the people, was also evident in other contemporary philosophies of governance in geographies stretching from China's Shang empire in the east to the then centre of the western world in Greece, i.e., Plato's concept of the optimal Athenian state (Spengler 1969).

This core concept of good governance, the duality of authority and service, has survived over the centuries through Machiavelli, Hobbes (1651), Adam Smith (1776), and many other philosophers of statecraft down to our own times, adapted to our own conditions. Kenneth Arrow (1974) described this as authority combined with responsibility and Francis Fukuyama (2013) has recently defined governance as "a government's ability to make and enforce rules and to deliver services".

Similar concepts of governance have been articulated, and its quality assessed, in seminal studies by La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer and Vishny (1999) and Besley and Persson (2011) among others. While adopting the Fukuyama definition for this paper it is noted that the authority of a government (ability to make and enforce rules) is not an end but a means to an end, i.e., delivering services.

The distinction between ends and means is critical in choosing an approach for evaluating the quality of governance. Fukuyama outlines four broad approaches: procedural measures, capacity or input measures, output measures, and measures of bureaucratic autonomy. He argues that good governance will follow a path of optimal balance between bureaucratic capacity and bureaucratic autonomy, with the desired level of autonomy rising with increasing bureaucratic capacity.


Francis Fukuyama

While the above proposition is reasonable, Fukuyama has not provided any method or calibration rule for measuring the two variables capacity and autonomy.

More importantly, he has not provided any precise explanation of how these two variables relate to the two core components of his own definition of governance, i.e., authority and service delivery. In other words, he has not specified the functional rule that relates bureaucratic capacity and autonomy to either authority or service delivery, or some combination of the two that can be described as the quality of governance as per his definition.

The difficulty with Fukuyama's proposal for evaluating the quality of governance is that procedure, bureaucratic capacity or bureaucratic autonomy are not ends in themselves but only means to an end i.e. inputs. The only result is the delivery of services. That is the output. Indeed, as noted above, even the first part of Fukuyama's dual concept of governance, authority is not an end but a means to an end i.e. service delivery. Hence, it is the contention of this paper that output, the quality of service delivery, is the appropriate measure of the quality of governance.

It is necessary at this point to address some of the concerns that led Fukuyama to reject the output measure of quality of governance. His main difficulty with the output measure was that important service outputs like education and health are not simply the consequences of public action, a concern that may be shared by others. However, this concern is based on a flawed interpretation of Fukuyama's own definition of governance.

Recall that in his definition, service delivery is not a function of governance, but itself, the constitutive element of governance. As such, the determinants of the quality (including level) of service delivery are not relevant to the quality of governance in his definition. The level or quality of service itself is the quality of governance. The other elements, or inputs, are to be seen as determinants of the quality of governance.

As a supplementary argument, grant for a moment the flawed interpretation of Fukuyama's governance definition, namely, that service delivery is not itself governance but only a function of governance defined in some other way, say, an amalgam of all the other measures he cites ,i.e., bureaucratic procedure, capacity and autonomy. Assume that governance so defined is a significant determinant of service delivery, along with other factors. Then it is reasonable to infer that a change in the quality of service delivery reflects, at least partly, a change in the quality of governance.

Analytically, if service delivery S is a function of governance G and other determinants D1……Dn ,
S = f (G, D1,…..,Dn)
then, we can write the inverse function
G = f-1(S, D1,….,Dn)

And if we can control for the other determinants of service delivery, then the observed change in service delivery becomes a measure of the change in quality of governance.

Thus, the service delivery measure of governance quality survives even this modified definition of governance, unless we make the extreme assumption that governance is not at all a significant determinant of service delivery. Fukuyama does not make any such assumption. Moreover, such an assumption would be quite absurd in the Indian context where most key services like education, health, transport and other infrastructure, justice, law and order, etc. are all substantially provided by the government, either directly or indirectly by creating the necessary enabling environment.

However, it is not the contention of this paper that governance inputs such as bureaucratic capacity, processes, etc. are unimportant. On the contrary, if objective measures are available for such inputs, that would be excellent. Relating the quantity or quality of inputs to service delivery outputs would then enable us to assess the ‘efficiency’ of governance. However, governance inputs should not be confused with outputs.

Governance, defined as service delivery, is closely correlated with economic development as Besley-Persson (2011), La Porta et al. (1999) and many others have emphasized. To put it differently, outputs of service delivery such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, etc., are all significantly correlated with per capita GDP, the latter being taken as a proxy measure for the level of development.

This closed co-relation is partly because service delivery outputs and per capita GDP are dependent on the same underlying determinants. It is also partly because these outputs and per capita GDP are mutually and causally interdependent. Therefore, governance quality and development tend to move together over time or across geographies. Besley and Persson refer to this phenomenon as the emergence of ‘development clusters’.

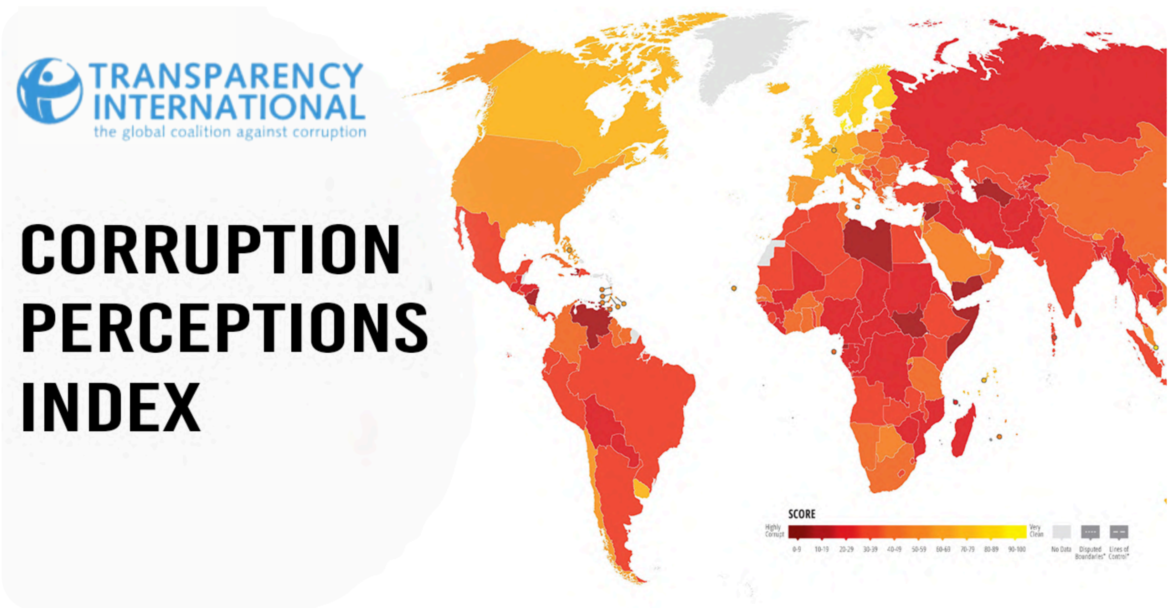
Thus, two states may have an identical package of governance inputs, e.g., authority, bureaucratic capability, autonomy and processes, but different levels of service delivery if their levels of per capita GSDP are different. Hence, if we are interested in analyzing the pure impact of governance inputs on governance outputs (service delivery), then we need to control for the impact of development. This has important implications for the measurement of governance.

Source: Image

3.3 The method of rating governance quality

Exercises in rating the quality of governance fall into two broad methodological categories. One category consists of analyses based on large data processing. A wide range of indicators bearing on the quality of governance are processed into measures of five or six major dimensions of governance. The indicators include data from official sources and private sources, secondary data as well as survey data, objective data as well as perception data, data from large random surveys as well as responses from a few selected observers, and so on.

The other parsimonious approach is to focus on a small set of carefully selected variables that best capture different dimensions of the quality of governance, or some aspect of it. Thus, Transparency International focuses on the corruption aspect of governance and produces the annual Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International 2014), the UNDP focuses on human development (UNDP 2014), Freedom House assesses governance from a libertarian perspective (Freedom House 2015) and so on. The earlier cited studies by La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shliefer & Vishney (1999) and Besley & Persson (2011) are two important examples of this parsimonious approach. They assess the overall quality of governance in a country based on a small set of selected indicators.



Source: Image

Most of these studies assess the quality of governance at the country level, though they may also be capturing some aspects of governance at sub-national levels in the country rating. The data they draw on are also mostly available at the country level. Sub-national assessments of the quality of governance are quite rare.

India is an exception to this pattern. Several state level assessments have been published in recent years, though most focus on specific aspects of state level governance. The first overall governance ratings for Indian states were published in 2012 (Mundle, Chakraborty, Chowdhury, Sikdar 2012), and the present study is an update of that earlier exercise.

Debroy and associates have adapted the methodology of the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index for countries to rate Economic Freedom in Indian states since 2005 (Debroy, Bhandari, Aiyar 2013). Bhandari (2013) rated states in terms of their delivery of infrastructure, education and health services (Bhandari 2013).

Malhotra published his state level Policy Effectiveness Index in 2014 (Malhotra 2014). Earlier this year the Asian Competitiveness Institute at Lee Kuan Yu School of Public Policy, Singapore, produced its Competitiveness Index for Indian States. Most recently, the World Bank has produced its Ease of Doing Business index for Indian states (World Bank 2015).

Our study belongs to the 'parsimonious' genre of governance rating studies. This is partly because the kind of voluminous data of different varieties used for the 'large data' exercises simply would not be available at the state level in India. But it is also because, in our view, assessing governance based on a limited number of strategically selected and objective key indicators is more transparent and efficient. Broadly similar approaches have been followed by Besley- Persson, Debroy & associates and Malhotra. However, there are differences in the choice of indicators as well as in the methods of analysis and aggregation of the indicators.

Our choice of governance indicators is derived from the three pillars of the state, i.e., the executive, the judiciary, and the legislature. However, given the context of a developmental state, the emphasis is on the executive branch of government that is responsible for delivering most public services either directly or indirectly. Moreover, the choice of indicators has been limited to official data on objective variables. No data on perceptions of 'experts' or even random sample perception surveys have been used.

Fourteen indicators have been selected that capture delivery of five broad classes of outputs, namely, infrastructure; social services; fiscal performance; justice, law & order; and quality of the legislature. These have been listed in Table 1. It needs to be emphasized, that only those indicators have been used that relate to outputs in the domain of state governments.

To illustrate, in the case of infrastructure, we have only selected that category of roads for which the state government is responsible, standard state highways, not total highway kilometers in a state nor minor and village roads for which the panchayat is responsible.

For the same reason, we have chosen state highway density rather than an alternative like village connectivity, since providing that 'last mile' connectivity is the responsibility of the panchayat rather than the state government. We have combined state highway density with the availability of power, for which again the state government is responsible. Similarly, for fiscal performance, we have taken only the states own tax revenue effort and the share of development expenditure relative to total expenditure in the state's annual budget.

Table 1: List of Indicators

Services	Infrastructure	Social Services	Fiscal Performance	Justice, Law & Order	Quality of legislature
Indicators	Road. Standard State Highway (in kms.) per 100 sq. km. of Area.	Health 1. Infant Mortality Rate 2. Maternal Mortality Rate 3. Life Expectancy at Birth	Development Expenditure ÷ Total Expenditure (%)	Proportion of trials completed in less than 3 years (%)	Proportion of MLA's with serious criminal charges pending (%)
	Power Per capita consumption of electricity (kWh)	Education 1. Literacy rate 2. Gross Enrolment Rate 3. Average Years of Schooling	Own Tax Revenue ÷ GSDP (%)	Rate of Violent Crimes (number per lakh population)	Proportion of women MLA's(%)

Finally, as noted earlier, we have largely limited our choice to output data. Process or input data have generally not been used. The only exception is quality of legislature. While the number of laws passed in a session or in a year can be a measure of output, it is difficult to quantify either the quality of the laws passed, or their importance.

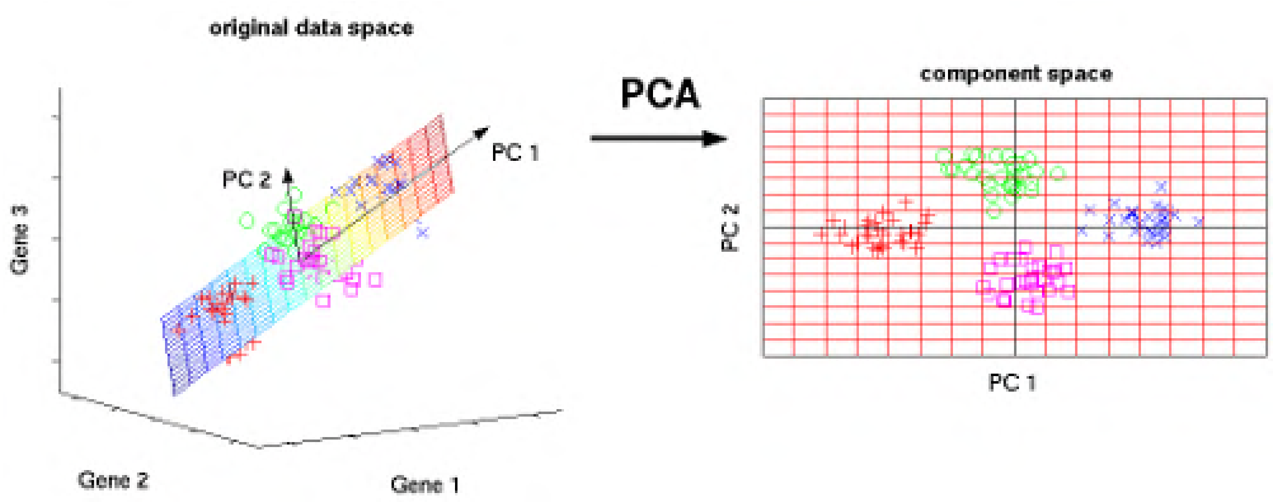
It was felt that the quality of the legislators themselves, whether they have serious criminal charges or not, and the share of women legislators might be a better measure of the quality of the legislature.

Reciprocals have been taken in the case of negative indicators such as infant mortality rate (IMR) to make all indicators unidirectional. Furthermore, since the indicators have different dimensions, they have all been transformed to a uniform (0, 1) scale to make them comparable.

Sub-indicators for an output, e.g., social services, have been averaged to arrive at a state's score for that output and the output scores have in turn been averaged to arrive at the Governance Performance Index (GPI) for the state.

In our earlier paper (Mundle et al. 2012) we had used different methods of aggregation to construct the GPI for states to verify the sensitivity of governance rankings to choice of aggregation rule: Principal component analysis (PCA), Borda scoring, and average of averages.

This time we have only used the average of average method of aggregation because we found this the simplest and most transparent aggregation rule. However, we have verified that the broad governance ranking of states, especially the best and worst performers, is similar using the PCA technique.



Source: Image

Finally, to control for the impact of development on governance outputs, we have projected the expected value of a given indicator in a state for its level of development (GSDP) and taken the average of deviations from predicted indicator values to arrive at the state's development adjusted governance (DAG) score for that output.

The sectoral DAG scores have then been averaged to arrive at the 'development adjusted governance index' (DAGI) for the state. Further details of the methodology adopted have been provided in the Appendix 1. [not reproduced here. Please see original paper.]

3.4 Governance performance of states

Our empirical exercise covers 19 major states for which all the required data was available for our reference period. Together they account for 96% of the population. The methodology described above has been applied to arrive first at the individual output scores, and then the overall GPI for each state in 2001 and 2011. The same has been done for the DAG scores of individual service delivery outputs and the overall DAGI for each state. The empirical results have presented in Table 7 below.

[Tables 2 to 6 pertaining to the five components are not reproduced here. Please see original paper.]

Table 7: Governance Performance Index (GPI) & DAGI

GPI 2001			GPI 2011				DAGI 2011			
1	Gujarat	0.66	1	Gujarat	(0)	0.65	1	Chhattisgarh	(+7)	0.64
2	Tamil Nadu	0.60	2	Tamil Nadu	(0)	0.61	2	Madhya Pradesh	(+11)	0.63
3	Punjab	0.60	3	Andhra Pradesh	(+3)	0.59	3	Karnataka	(+3)	0.62
4	Kerala	0.57	4	Kerala	(0)	0.59	4	Tamil Nadu	(-2)	0.61
5	Haryana	0.55	5	Punjab	(-2)	0.58	5	Andhra Pradesh	(-2)	0.61
6	Andhra Pradesh	0.53	6	Karnataka	(+1)	0.57	6	Gujarat	(-5)	0.60
7	Karnataka	0.51	7	Uttarakhand	(+7)	0.56	7	Punjab	(-2)	0.58
8	Maharashtra	0.50	8	Chhattisgarh	(+2)	0.54	8	Rajasthan	(+4)	0.58
9	Himachal Pradesh	0.50	9	Haryana	(-4)	0.53	9	Kerala	(-5)	0.57
10	Chhattisgarh	0.48	10	Maharashtra	(-2)	0.50	10	Bihar	(+8)	0.55
11	West Bengal	0.44	11	Himachal Pradesh	(-2)	0.50	11	Uttarakhand	(-4)	0.50
12	Assam	0.43	12	Rajasthan	(+4)	0.50	12	Haryana	(-3)	0.50
13	Madhya Pradesh	0.38	13	Madhya Pradesh	(0)	0.49	13	Maharashtra	(-3)	0.46
14	Uttarakhand	0.36	14	Assam	(-2)	0.35	14	Himachal Pradesh	(-3)	0.46
15	Odisha	0.35	15	West Bengal	(-4)	0.34	15	Uttar Pradesh	(+4)	0.45
16	Rajasthan	0.34	16	Odisha	(-1)	0.31	16	West Bengal	(-1)	0.43
17	Jharkhand	0.27	17	Jharkhand	(0)	0.3	17	Odisha	(-1)	0.42
18	Uttar Pradesh	0.19	18	Bihar	(+1)	0.29	18	Assam	(-4)	0.41
19	Bihar	0.16	19	Uttar Pradesh	(-1)	0.29	19	Jharkhand	(-2)	0.41

Note: Figure in parenthesis indicate "the change in ranks under 2011 is with respect to 2001, while the change in ranks under DAGI 2011 is with respect to GPI 2011"

The Quality of Governance: The scores for individual service delivery outputs have been pulled together to yield the overall governance performance indices (GPI) and the development adjusted governance indices (DAGI) in Table 7. The two main features that stand out from composite GPI and DAGI ranks is the relative stability of the composition of best and worst performing states, and the sharp changes that appear when the rankings are adjusted to control for the impact of development.

Thus, Gujarat, followed by Tamil Nadu, were the two best performing states in 2001 as well as 2011. Also, five of the six best performing states in 2001 remained the best performing in 2011: Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Punjab. At the other end, four of the six worst performing states in 2001 remained the worst performing in 2011: Odisha, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.

Bengal and Assam slipped down to the bottom category in 2011, while Rajasthan and Uttarakhand moved out of this category. In fact, these were the two states that gained the most in their relative ranking, with Uttarakhand moving up seven ranks and Rajasthan by four ranks. The maximum decline in relative rankings was noted in Haryana and West Bengal, both of which dropped 4 ranks each.

The rankings adjusted for development impact, DAGI, result in some sharp changes in relative ranks. Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh are the biggest gainers, going up by eleven ranks, eight ranks and seven ranks respectively.

Conversely, Gujarat and Kerala drop down by five ranks each and Uttarakhand and Assam drop down by four ranks each. Thus, in addition to the quality of administrative inputs, a positive or negative development legacy seems to have a strong cumulative impact on the quality of governance measured as service delivery.

It was mentioned earlier that there are several studies available now that evaluate state level performance. These are evaluations from different perspectives: economic freedom, competitiveness, ease of doing business, policy effectiveness.

It is interesting to compare how the states measure up when viewed through these different lenses and our own evaluation of states in terms of service delivery. It turns out that there is a high level of similarity according to these different criteria.

Though most of the studies do not purport to assess the overall quality of governance in a state, they do touch on some aspect of governance or another.

For instance, economic freedom, competitiveness and ease of doing business all look at some aspects of efficiency in the business environment. Hence, the robustness of the rankings across studies points to the close quality correlation between different aspects of governance.

Several studies have pointed out that development and the quality of governance are also highly correlated as we noted earlier. These correlations point to the importance of 'development clusters', the mutual inter-dependence between development and governance discussed above that was originally identified by La Porta et al. (1999) and Besley-Persson (2011) among others.

Source: Image

3.5 Conclusion: Governance and Development

Governance has been defined to mean different things in different contexts. In this paper it has been defined to mean service delivery, a concept of governance originally developed over two millennia ago in the Arthasashtra that has been maintained over the ages down to our own times (Arrow 1974, Fukuyama 2013). Governance measured as service delivery has been used to rate the performance of state governments during the period 2001-02 to 2011-12.

Such rating of state government performance acquires a special significance in the context of India's maturing democracy where the performance of governments is increasingly playing role alongside traditional identity politics in determining election outcomes. Significantly empowered by the devolution and grant awards of successive Finance Commissions, the states are increasingly competing with one another in terms of performance. Transparent and objective rating of State government performance is important for nurturing such competition.

The choice of service delivery outputs as the measure of governance quality clearly implies their priority compared to inputs such as governance capacity, institutions and processes. If these inputs impact outputs, then they will be reflected in the outputs and should not be double counted along with the outputs. If they do not effect outputs, then perhaps they do not count for much.

What would it mean to say a government is excellent in its institutions, capacity, and processes if those inputs do not result in a high level of service delivery outputs. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that institutions, capacity and processes are unimportant.

On the contrary, such inputs are arguably the key determinants of the quality of governance. There are a variety of theories about the determinants of good governance. Apart from institutions and capacity, other candidates include the size of government (La Porta et al.); political polarisation and fractionalisation (Alesia, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, Wacziarg 2003), including ethnic, linguistic or religious fractionalisation (Charron 2009); competition (Greenwood 2004, DeSouza 2011); etc.

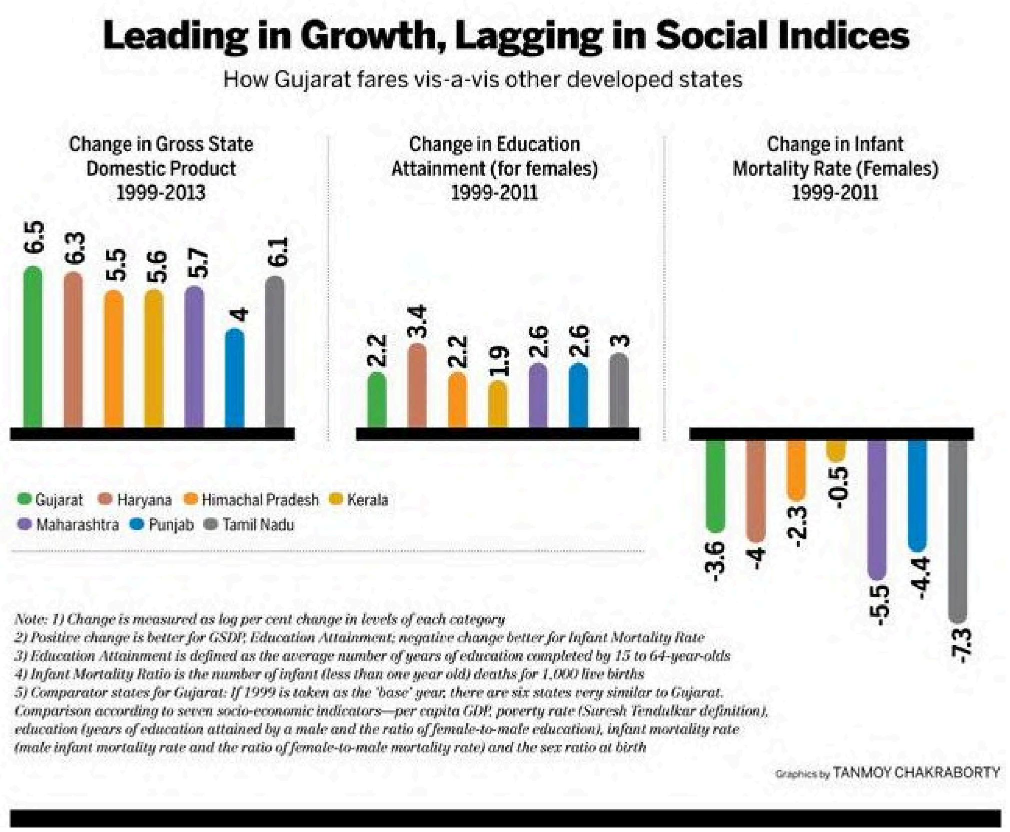
However, the purpose of this paper was to rate the quality of governance, defined as service delivery, across Indian states, not identify the determinants of governance quality. Hence this question has not been explored in this paper, other than the interaction between governance and development which is discussed further below.

One of the main empirical results emerging from this exercise is the relative stability over time of groups of good and bad performing states. Thus, five of the six best performing states of 2001, led by Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, were also the best performers in 2011. Similarly, four of the six worst performers of 2001 were also among the worst performers of 2011.

An important consequence of such stickiness of rankings at the top and the bottom is growing regional disparity between the more and less developed states. ‘Development clusters’, combinations of quality service delivery and high per capita income, are emerging among the more developed states in the south and west of the country. They are now pulling away from and leaving behind the less developed states, especially in the eastern region.

Interestingly, after adjusting for the level of development, some of the less developed states like Bihar and Chhattisgarh move up quite significantly in the service delivery ranking. Evidently, governments in these states are attempting to offset their negative legacy of relative backwardness, delivering a much better quality of services than would be expected at the relatively low level of development of these states.

This has led to the emergence of two quite distinct paths of development in the more and less developed states. In the former state governments mainly play an enabling role, providing good infrastructure, efficient administrative processes etc. for private enterprise-led development. In some of these advanced states like Tamil Nadu such an enabling role is combined with a high level of social service delivery. But in others, like Gujarat, the challenge is their deficit in social development. Thus, Gujarat tops the list for overall governance and for infrastructure but comes lower down the list for social service delivery. It drops down even further when the ratings are adjusted for its level of development.



Source: Image

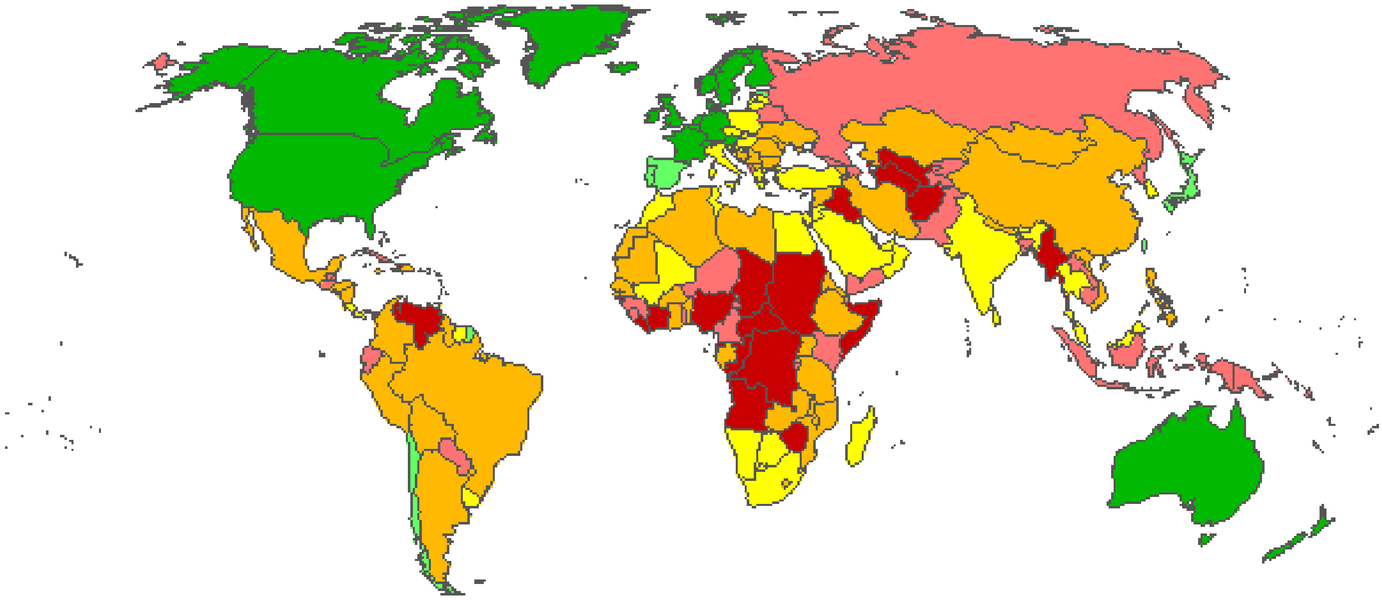
In the other path, seen in less developed states like Bihar, governments play the dominant role in development since private enterprise is quite weak. Governments need to drive both public investments led growth as well as social development.

It is a moot question whether this government led path of development will enable these less developed states to 'catch up' with the developed states, will there be convergence or divergence across Indian states in the years ahead?

Source: Image

The Union Government and Finance Commissions have a key equalising role in this context. But whether such equalising interventions will be sufficient for catch up is not clear. If not, regional disparities will continue to widen, with potentially severe political consequences.

4. Worldwide governance indicators compiled by the World Bank[3] with analysis by RGICS



Source: Image

WGI are a global compilation of data capturing households, business, and citizen perceptions of the quality of governance in more than 200 economies.

Good governance is essential for development. It helps countries increase economic growth, build human capital, and strengthen social cohesion. The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) describe broad patterns in perceptions of the quality of governance across countries and over time.

The WGI are based on existing data sources produced by more than 30 think tanks, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private firms around the world.

The data sources (1) produce original primary data using their own well-defined methodologies, (2) report respondents' perceptions of relevant dimensions of governance, (3) cover multiple countries, and (4) are regularly updated. The data reflects the diverse views of tens of thousands of survey respondents and experts worldwide.

The data sources report the views and experiences of citizens, entrepreneurs, and experts in the public, private and NGO sectors from around the world, on the quality of various aspects of governance.

3 https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/documentation#1

- The data sources must provide **subjective perceptions of relevant dimensions of governance**, as the WGI are based exclusively on this type of data.

- The sources must provide **original primary data** produced using a **well-defined methodology**.

- The data sources must **cover multiple countries**, so that cross-country comparisons are possible.

- The data sources must be **updated regularly**, ideally every year, although some WGI data sources are updated once every two or three years.

The WGI draws on four different types of source data:

- **Surveys of households and firms**, including the Afrobarometer surveys, Gallup World Poll, and Global Competitiveness Report survey,

- **Commercial business information providers**, including the Economist Intelligence Unit, S&P Global, and Political Risk Services,

- **Non-governmental organizations**, including Global Integrity, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, and

- **Public sector organizations**, including the Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIA) assessments of World Bank and regional development banks.

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored, and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

4.1 Components and what they capture

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) report on six broad dimensions of governance for over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996-2023:

- **Voice and Accountability**
- **Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism**
- **Government Effectiveness**
- **Regulatory Quality**
- **Rule of Law**
- **Control of Corruption**

- **Voice and Accountability** captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens can participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media.

- **Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism** measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence, including terrorism.

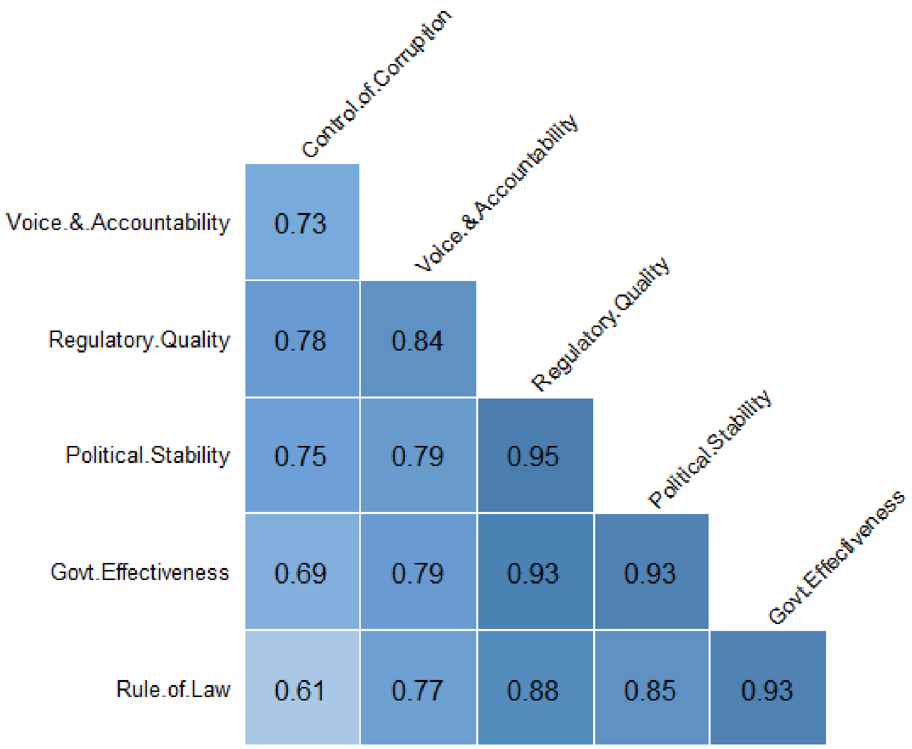
- **Government Effectiveness** captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.

- **Regulatory Quality** captures perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private sector development.

- **Rule of Law** captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

- **Control of Corruption** captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests.

The WGI are composite governance indicators based on over 30 underlying data sources. These data sources are rescaled and combined to create the six aggregate indicators using a statistical methodology known as an Unobserved Components Model (UCM).



Correlation Matrix of Worldwide Governance Indicators (2012)

Source: Image

A key feature of the methodology is that it generates margins of error for each governance estimate. These margins of error need to be considered when making comparisons across countries and over time.

This page provides an overview of the WGI methodology. For a full description of the WGI methodology, please refer to the WGI methodology paper.

The six composite WGI measures are useful as a tool for broad cross-country comparisons and for evaluating broad trends over time. However, they are often too blunt a tool to be useful in formulating specific governance reforms in particular country contexts. Such reforms, and evaluation of their progress, need to be informed by much more detailed and country-specific diagnostic data that can identify the relevant constraints on governance in particular country circumstances.

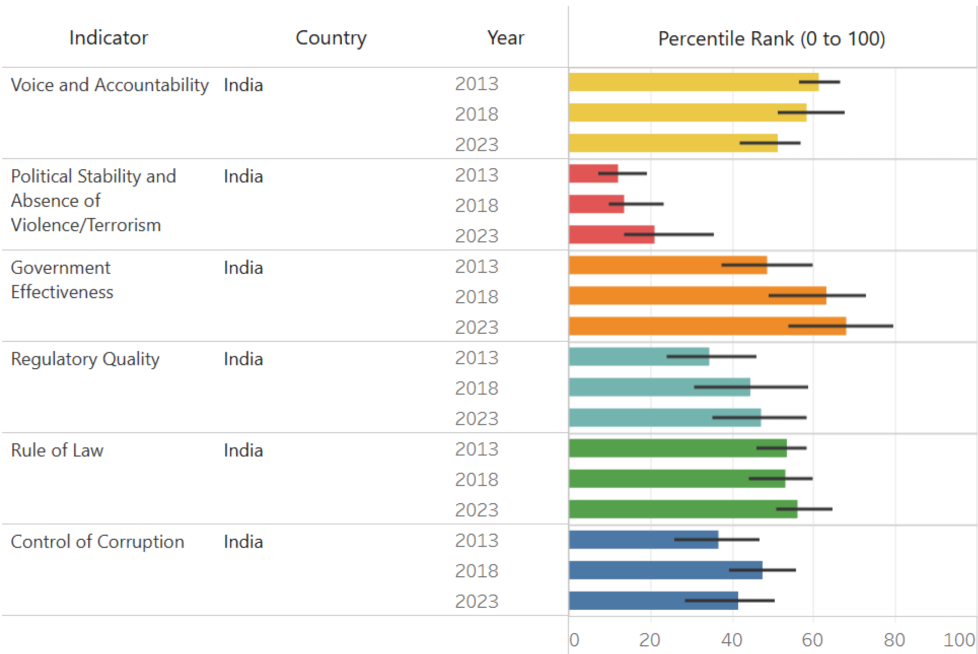
The WGI are complementary to many other efforts to construct more detailed measures of governance, often just for a single country. Users are also encouraged to consult the disaggregated individual indicators underlying the composite WGI scores to gain more insights into the areas of strengths and weaknesses identified by the data.

The WGI were developed by **Daniel Kaufmann** (President Emeritus, Natural Resource Governance Institute, and Brookings Institution) and **Aart Kraay** (World Bank) in 1999. Pablo Zoido and Massimo Mastruzzi also made major contributions to the development and updating of the WGI. ..The 2024 WGI update was produced by Aart Kraay, Charlotte Nan Jiang, and Thomas Romano.

The full list of WGI data sources is available at
https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/documentation#2

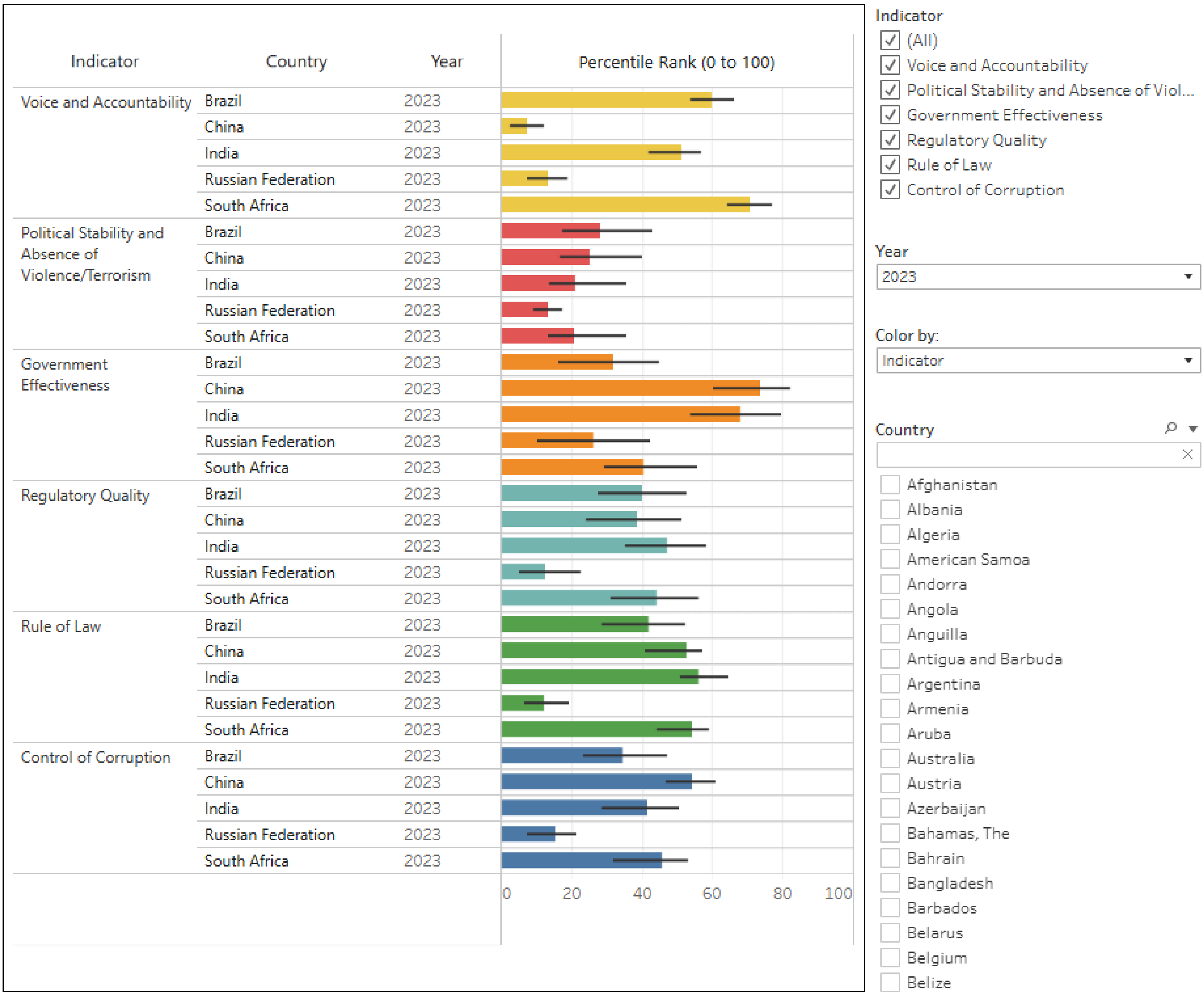
The six aggregate WGI indicators, and the underlying source data, are available interactively **here**. A key feature of the WGI is that all country scores are accompanied by standard errors. These standard errors reflect the number of sources available for a country and the extent to which these sources agree with each other (with more sources and more agreement leading to smaller standard errors). These standard errors reflect the reality that governance is difficult to measure using any kind of data. In most measures of governance or the investment climate they are however left implicit or ignored altogether.

In our graphical presentation of the data we transform these standard errors into 90 percent confidence intervals or "margins of error". These indicate the statistically-likely range for governance based on the available data for a country (see figure below). If when comparing two countries these margins of error overlap, the difference between the two countries should not be interpreted as signaling a statistically significant difference. For details on the interpretation of the composite indicators and margins of error, please refer to Section 5 of the methodology paper.



4.2 Governance indicators for India in comparison to the other BRICS countries

As can be seen from the chart below, on Rule of Law and Regulatory Quality, India is the highest among the BRICS and second on Government Effectiveness. On Control of Corruption India is in the middle, higher than Russia and Brazil. On Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, India is in the middle, higher than Russia and S Africa. India is also in the middle on Voice and Accountability, where India is higher than Russia and China but lower than Brazil and South Africa. Thus, India seems to be doing well.

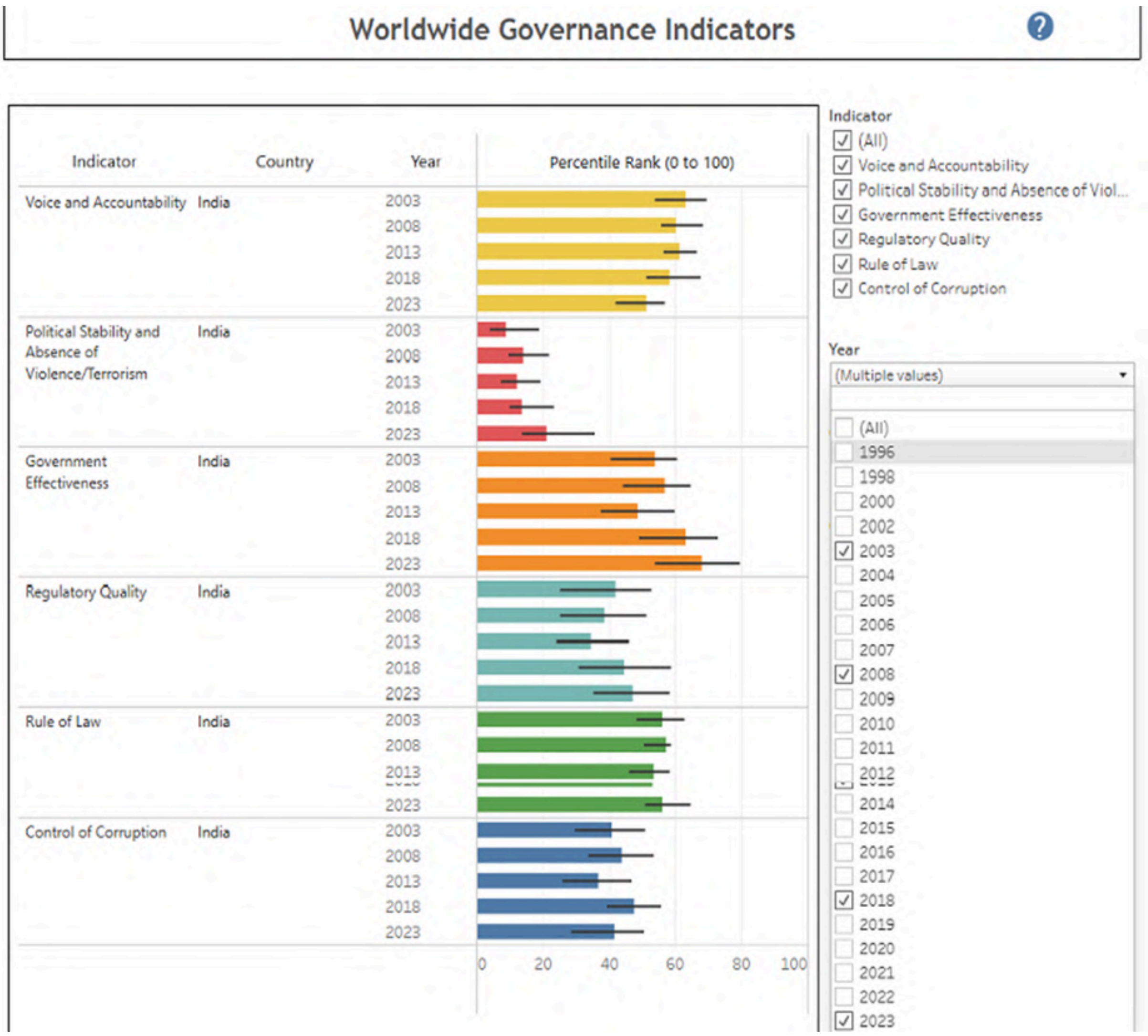


Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators (www.govindicators.org)*

Source: RGICS made the graphics using
https://www.worldbank.org/content/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/en/interactive-data-access.html

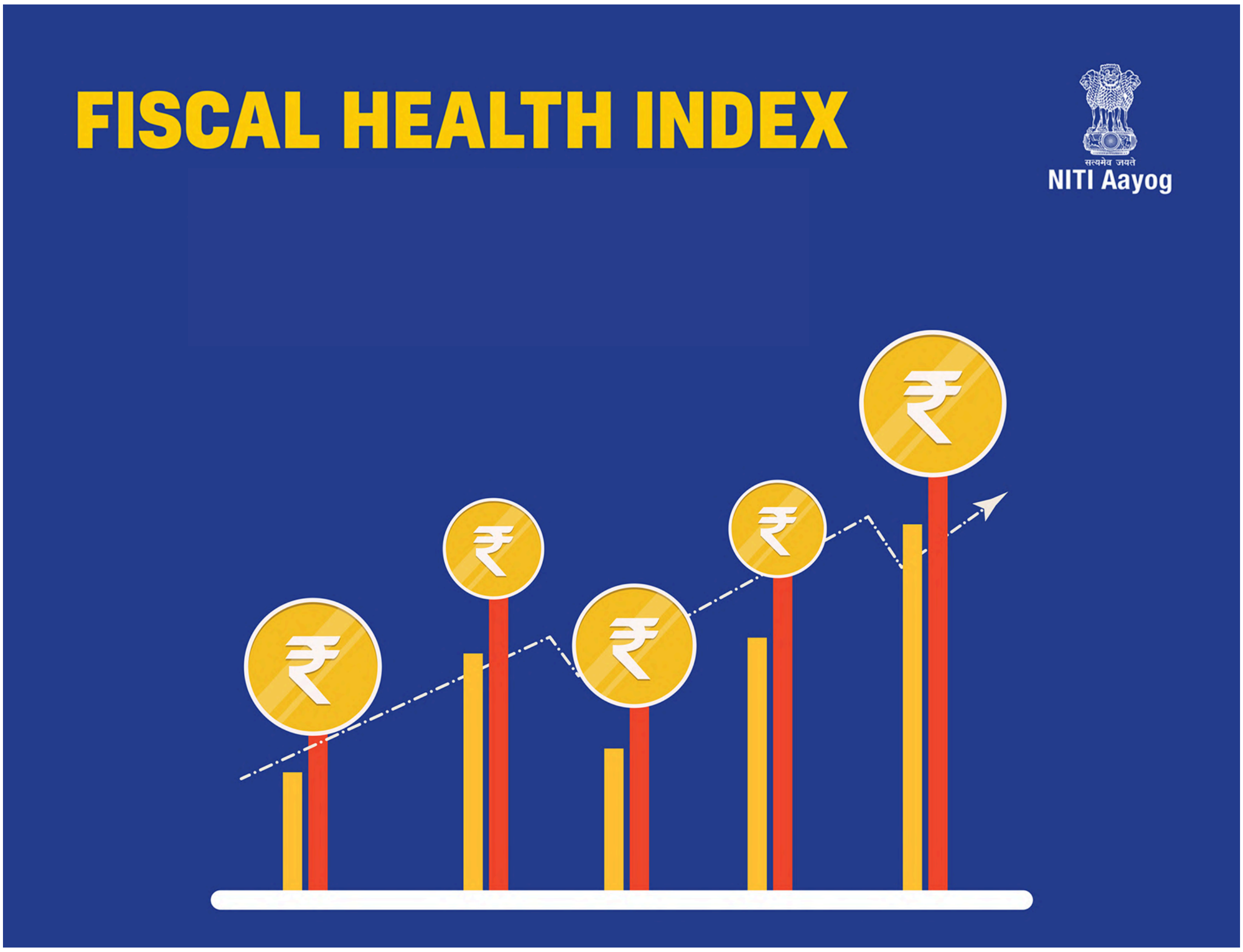
4.3 Governance Indicators for India over time: 2003 to 2023, every five years

As can be seen from the chart below, on the dimension Voice and Accountability, India has come down steadily since 2003. The scores on two other dimensions - Rule of Law and Control of Corruption have also come down over the years, with some gains in some years. However, on the other three dimensions - Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; Government Effectiveness, and Regulatory Quality, scores have gone up steadily since 2003 and more sharply after 2013, the period marked by the present government. The trade-off among the six dimensions seems to be obvious. A strong-willed leadership may achieve results at the cost of participation and freedom of speech. While small corruption may get reduced, eventually, the cronies of the regime want to cash in and that leads to reduction in the control of big corruption. Likewise, while initially the strong government reduces petty crime, eventually we begin to see a decline in the rule of law.



Source: RGICS made the graphics using
https://www.worldbank.org/content/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators/en/interactive-data-access.html

5. Fiscal Health Index of states for 2022-23 by Niti Ayog



[Source: Image]

5.1 Executive summary

The Fiscal Health Index (FHI) initiative by NITI Aayog aimed to evolve an understanding of the fiscal health of states in India. The FHI analysis covers eighteen major states that drive the Indian economy in terms of their contribution to India's GDP, demography, total public expenditure, revenues, and overall fiscal stability. As states are responsible for approximately two-thirds of public spending and one-third of total revenue, their fiscal performance is important for the country's overall economic stability. The FHI offers a systematic approach to assess the state's fiscal health, identify areas for improvement, and promote best practices across states. The report objectively evaluates each state's fiscal health through a composite index, facilitating comparisons and benchmarking against best practices.

The composite FHI has been developed using data from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), focusing on five sub-indices:

- Quality of Expenditure,
- Revenue Mobilization,
- Fiscal Prudence,
- Debt Index, and
- Debt Sustainability.

MAJOR SUB-INDICES	MINOR SUB-INDICES
1. Quality of Expenditure	1.1 Total Developmental Expenditure/Total Expenditure
	1.2 Total Capital Outlay/ GSDP*
2. Revenue Mobilization	2.1 State Own Revenue/ GSDP*
	2.2 State Own Revenue/ Total Expenditure
3. Fiscal Prudence	3.1 Gross Fiscal Deficit/ GSDP*
	3.2 Revenue Deficit/ GSDP*
4. Debt Index	4.1 Interest Payments/Revenue Receipts
	4.2 Outstanding Liabilities/ GSDP*
5. Debt Sustainability	5.1 Growth Rate of GSDP* - Growth Rate of Interest Payments

GSDP at current prices for the year 2022-23

Furthermore, based on the five key sub-indices, a comprehensive state-wise analysis is reported to bring out state-specific fiscal health issues. This analysis is supported by graphs that illustrate the trends of major fiscal indicators from the financial year 2014-15 to 2022-23. This detailed examination highlights individual state performances and provides valuable insights into broader fiscal trends, allowing for a better understanding of fiscal health across the country.

The analysis clearly highlights that strong revenue mobilization, effective expenditure management, and prudent fiscal practices are critical determinants of success. The top five high-performing states are Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, and Gujarat, while the aspirational five are Haryana, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab. However, the states' performance varies across the five subcategories.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have a good score under Quality of Expenditure, but they rank lower about Revenue Mobilization. Karnataka performs well across most indices, but it ranks amongst the three aspirational states in Debt Sustainability.

Odisha and Chhattisgarh have performed well under Revenue Mobilization, with their Own Non-Tax Revenue growing significantly due to high revenue collection from mining. However, regarding Debt Sustainability, Chhattisgarh ranks lower compared to some other states.

The fiscal landscape across states reveals a picture where progress and challenges coexist. As states navigate their unique fiscal challenges, the path forward hinges on a commitment to transparency, enhanced tax compliance, and targeted investments in social and economic infrastructure.

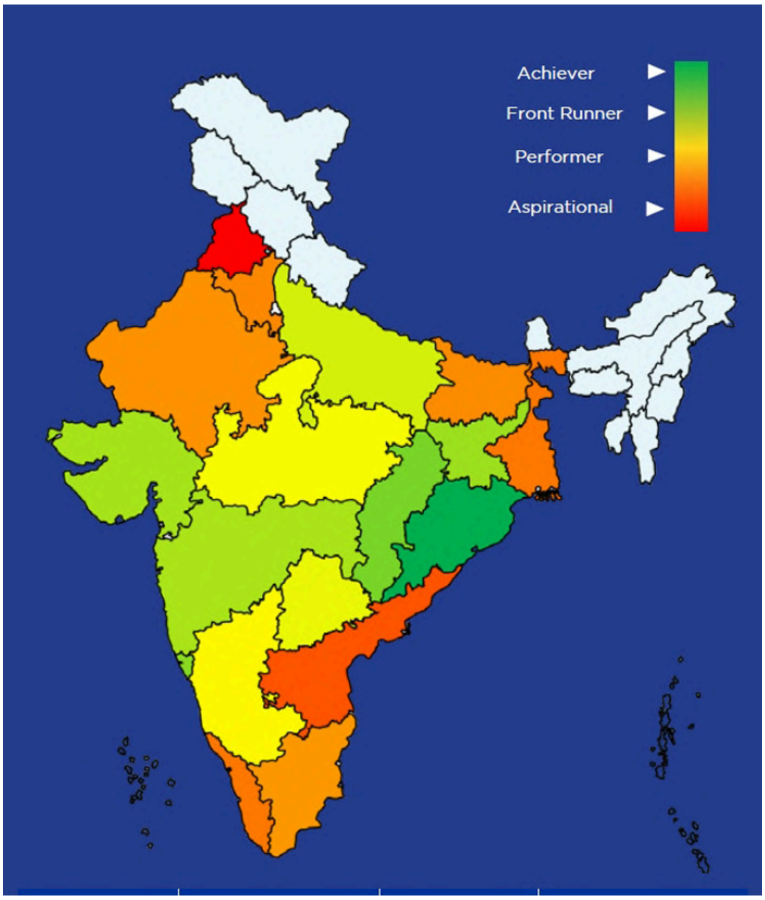
By fostering a culture of fiscal prudence and accountability, states can stabilize their economies and elevate the quality of life for their citizens, ensuring a resilient and prosperous future. High persistent deficits and varying fiscal performances among states underscore the urgency for reform and targeted interventions. The journey toward fiscal sustainability is complex, but with concerted efforts, it can lead to transformative outcomes that benefit all.

5.2 Introduction

Balanced regional development is vital for India's economic stability and growth, with each state playing a crucial role in managing public spending and revenue. The Fiscal Health Index (FHI) evaluates states on expenditure quality, revenue mobilization, fiscal prudence, debt index and debt sustainability. This index aims to help policymakers identify areas for reform and promote best practices across states.

The health of state finances has gained significant prominence, as fiscal well-being is essential for achieving long-term fiscal sustainability and over-all economic growth. States account for two-thirds of public spending and one-third of total revenue. The Indian Constitution assigns states, significant responsibilities in development and infrastructure, making their fiscal performance critical to the nation's development and stability.Variations in fiscal performance between states and the centre affect national fiscal stability, highlighting the importance of maintaining sound fiscal operations at the state level. The fiscal landscape across states reveals a picture where progress and challenges coexist. Monitoring the fiscal health of states is essential for ensuring financial stability, sustainable growth, and effective governance. It helps assess debt sustainability, fiscal deficits, and the efficient allocation of resources toward key sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

To assess state financial performance, a Fiscal Health Index (FHI) has been formulated in the report. This index evaluates states on five indicators: Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilization, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index and Debt Sustainability. The FHI provides a systematic approach for measuring state-level fiscal performance. By incorporating these dimensions, the FHI offers a comprehensive overview of state finances. This detailed examination highlights individual state performances and provides valuable insights into broader fiscal trends over time, allowing for a better understanding of fiscal health across the country.



Source: Image

The Fiscal Health Index (FHI) is designed to assist policymakers by offering insights into state fiscal health, helping identify areas requiring intervention and supporting the formulation of fiscal policies and reforms. By evaluating and showcasing the performance of different states, the FHI aims to promote the adoption of effective fiscal management strategies and lead to improved fiscal discipline across states. This, in turn, will support the broader economic goals of the country and ensure long-term economic resilience and equitable development.

5.3 Methodology

The composite fiscal health index for 18 major states has been calculated using the data from the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). The period of the analysis is Financial Year 2022-23.

A detailed, step-by-step explanation of each state's FHI score calculation is given as follows:

- The study identifies five major sub-indices to calculate the composite FHI index and assess states' fiscal health. The five major sub-indices are Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilization, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.

- Further, nine minor sub-indices are developed, based on specific fiscal metrics, that reflect key aspects of fiscal performance. These minor sub-indices are categorized under the five major sub-indices mentioned above. Four major sub-indices have two fiscal indicators, except the Debt Sustainability index, which has only one fiscal indicator.

- The values obtained from these minor sub-indices are then standardized through normalization, based on the following: The minor sub-indices are classified into one of two categories: the Improvement Index or the Deprivation Index, as defined below: o Improvement index: Improvement Index is a favorable index where higher values of the variable are rewarded.

- The Improvement Index is constructed in such a way that the higher the ratio for a state, the greater the index value assigned to it. The minor sub-indices under Quality of expenditure, Revenue Mobilization, and Debt Sustainability are considered as improvement indices.

$$\text{Improvement Index for a state i} = \frac{X_i - Min(X)}{Target(X) - Min(X)} * 100,$$

Where, Xi is the value for the minor sub-index under Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilization and Debt Sustainability. Min(X) is the minimum value for the minor sub-index across all states in the specified period, and the target value (Target(X)) is the highest value (of the maximum of all the states in each year) observed over the past 9 years. comparable regions

o Deprivation Index: A Deprivation Index is a deteriorating index where lower values of the variable are rewarded. The index is constructed in such a way that the lower the ratio for a state, the greater the index value assigned to it. The minor sub-indices under Fiscal Prudence and Debt Index are considered as Deprivation Indices.

$$\text{Deprivation Index for a state i} = \frac{Max(X) - X_i}{Max(X) - Target(X)} * 100,$$

Where, Xi is the value for the minor sub-index under Fiscal Prudence and Debt Index. Max(X) is the maximum value for the minor sub-index across all states in the specified period. The target value (Target(X)) is the lowest value (of the minimum of all the states in each year) observed over the past 9 years.

- The major sub-indices are then computed by taking arithmetic mean of the normalized values of the corresponding minor sub-indices for each state. For example, the value for the major sub-index "Quality of Expenditure" is the arithmetic mean of the normalized values of its associated minor subindices, viz Total Developmental Expenditure/Total Expenditure & Total Capital Outlay/GSDP.

- The final composite FHI score is computed by taking the arithmetic mean of the five major sub-indices computed in the above step. For instance, the FHI score for Gujarat is the arithmetic mean of the values for its five major subindices.

- Finally, states are ranked based on their computed FHI scores, with the top performing state receiving the first rank.

5.4 Results

E.1 Final Ranking of States for 2022-23

States	FHI Score	Rank 2022-23	Quality of Expenditure	Revenue Mobilization	Fiscal Prudence	Debt Index	Debt Sustainability
Odisha	67.8	1	52.0	69.9	54.0	99.0	64.0
Chhattisgarh	55.2	2	55.1	56.5	56.0	79.6	29.0
Goa	53.6	3	45.5	87.1	59.4	51.0	25.2
Jharkhand	51.6	4	47.3	45.7	62.4	66.9	35.7
Gujarat	50.5	5	40.0	48.7	52.7	69.0	42.0
Maharashtra	50.3	6	37.1	59.1	41.8	76.4	36.8
Uttar Pradesh	45.9	7	45.8	34.6	44.7	59.9	44.5
Telangana	43.6	8	36.9	75.2	40.8	53.3	11.7
Madhya Pradesh	42.2	9	59.7	27.6	35.6	61.0	27.2
Karnataka	40.8	10	47.4	43.9	43.9	62.2	6.7
Tamil Nadu	29.2	11	32.0	41.2	25.8	36.0	11.1
Rajasthan	28.6	12	38.3	35.4	19.9	32.3	16.8
Bihar	27.8	13	56.1	5.3	11.5	47.2	18.8
Haryana	27.4	14	24.8	47.8	26.1	24.1	14.3
Kerala	25.4	15	4.2	54.2	34.0	23.1	11.3
West Bengal	21.8	16	32.3	12.4	25.4	18.3	20.6
Andhra Pradesh	20.9	17	31.4	22.1	13.3	37.8	0.0
Punjab	10.7	18	4.7	28.1	5.6	0.0	15.2

6. Is GST a broken promise?

Pradeep S Mehta and Tasmita Sengupta[4]- Some analysis and suggestions by RGICS

[Source: Image]

As Benjamin Franklin rightly said, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” India’s goods and services tax (GST) was introduced as a landmark reform to simplify the country’s complex tax system, eliminate cascading levies, and create a unified market.

However, years later, it has deviated from its original promise, entangled in inconsistencies that burden businesses and disproportionately impact consumers — especially the middle class and the poor. With the Union Budget 2025 under parliamentary discussion, there is an urgent need to recalibrate the GST into a system that is truly rational, equitable, and growth-friendly.

India’s post-pandemic recovery has been K-shaped, benefitting the wealthy while leaving the most vulnerable behind. The growing economic divide raises a critical question: Does India’s tax system aim to uplift or further burden the disadvantaged? According to a sound research report, the poorest 50% contribute a disproportionate 64.3% of the total GST revenues, while the top 10% pay just 3.9%[5]. Rather than promoting redistribution, India’s tax structure has deepened inequality, with corporations paying far less than individual taxpayers, compounded by the regressive nature of indirect tax, precisely GST.

By 2020, the income share of the bottom 50% had plunged to just 13% of the national income, while they owned less than 3% of the country’s wealth. The stark reality? Nearly 70% of Indians cannot afford a basic, nutritious diet, leading to an estimated 1.7 million deaths annually due to diet-related diseases, underscores the report.

[4] This article first appeared in the Financial Express on 12th Feb 2025. https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/is-gst-a-broken-promise/3746465/

[5] See the Government’s Clarification on these numbers in the Lok Sabha, immediately after this article.

6.1 Inconsistent tax classifications

At the heart of GST's challenges lies its inconsistent tax classifications, often bordering on the absurd. According to the 55th GST Council meeting, there is an increase of GST on fortified rice — a crucial intervention to tackle malnutrition is one such case. Higher tax rates on such essentials make them less affordable for those who need them the most, contradicting government efforts to address food insecurity.

Source: Image

The recent popcorn controversy exemplifies further regulatory mess as unpacked, unlabelled salted popcorn is taxed at 5%, its pre-packed variant at 12%, and caramel popcorn at 18% under the sugar confectionery category. The outcome? Artificial market segmentation, compliance burdens for small businesses, and a direct impact on consumer prices — all at odds with GST's promise of a "good and simple tax".

This isn't an isolated case. Recall the infamous paratha vs roti debate, or the tax disparities between packaged and unpackaged lassi. Such inconsistencies have always fuelled avoidable litigation, created confusion, and weakened public trust in the tax regime. It further hits the middle- and lower-income groups the hardest, where a small price hike on household essentials impacts household budget significantly.

The classification chaos extends beyond nutritional food items and snacks. High and inconsistent taxes on second-hand vehicles, or on health insurance schemes limit affordability and market fluidity. Such tax distortions ripple across industries, affecting demand and competitiveness.

Even the hospitality industry advocates for a reduction in GST rates for hotel rooms and restaurants, besides tax incentives, to boost sector viability. As a result, there will be a lowering cost of operations and improved affordability for travellers. This can attract more investment into the sector, creating more job opportunities and thus contributing to economic growth.

A well-structured, targeted tax relief system for essential goods is crucial to enhance economic inclusivity, stimulate domestic demand, and position India as a globally competitive market.

6.2 GST must live up to the promise of being a Good and Simple Tax

At the heart of GST's challenges lies its inconsistent tax classifications, often bordering on the absurd. According to the 55th GST Council meeting, there is an increase of GST on fortified rice — a crucial intervention to tackle malnutrition is one such case. Higher tax rates on such essentials make them less affordable for those who need them the most, contradicting government efforts to address food insecurity.

Source: Image

The GST must return to its core objective — simplicity, fairness, and efficiency. The government must take bold steps to correct the distortions. India's multi-tiered GST structure needs rationalisation. A simple system with lesser slabs, as seen in countries like New Zealand and Singapore, would eliminate unnecessary complexities, particularly for small businesses that struggle with compliance costs and rent-seekers. Introduction of GST help desk, chatbots, and online training modules for these businesses can help in understanding and complying with GST regulations. In short, creating a more inclusive tax policy can prevent economic disparities from widening further.

Lower tax rates on research and development investments and innovation-driven industries will not only spur growth but also attract foreign investment, making India a manufacturing and services powerhouse. Encouraging ethical business practices through tax relief for environmentally and socially responsible companies can drive sustainable economic development. Artificial intelligence-driven compliance mechanisms can reduce the bureaucratic red tape, allowing businesses to focus on expansion rather than cumbersome tax filings.

India's GST regime needs a fundamental shift — from arbitrary classifications to a streamlined, transparent, and growth-oriented framework. The tax system should foster economic inclusivity rather than perpetuate inequalities. Instead of addressing individual cases in isolation, moving to a broader category or fewer slabs can eliminate ambiguities. Further, by aligning with global best practices and reducing compliance burdens, the GST can truly live up to its original promise — a reform that benefits all, not just a privileged few.

The authors work for CUTS International, a global public policy research and advocacy group

6.3 Government response on the Oxfam Report on GST revenues [6]

Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 4213 Answered on Monday, March 27, 2023/Chaitra 6, 1945 (Saka)

Oxfam Report on GST Revenues 4213.

Shri Balubhau Alias Suresh Narayan Dhanorkar: Shri Kumbakudi Sudhakaran: Shri K. Muraleedharan: Shri Hibi Eden:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the Oxfam Report 2023 which states that, while India's richest 10 percentage contribute 3 per cent towards Goods and Services Tax (GST), the country's poorest 50 percentage contribute constitutes two thirds of GST revenues and if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(b) whether the Government proposes to take any steps to reduce the said inequality in GST contribution and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the Government is aware that small businesses are severely affected by the current GST regime because of the additional operational cost and if so, the details thereof and the concrete steps taken by the Government to reduce these costs?

ANSWER BY THE MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PANKAJ CHAUDHARY)

(a) & (b): The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a consumption tax that consolidates various indirect taxes into a single tax structure, streamlining the taxation process. Being an indirect tax, GST is collected from suppliers of goods and services and not from the ultimate consumers of goods and services. Therefore, it is not possible to exactly calculate how much GST is actually paid by whom.

Source: Image

6 https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/1711/AU4213.pdf?source=pqals

6.4 What do GST statistics tell us: 90% of the work can be simplified

As per the Statistical Report on Completion of 7 Years of GST[7], published on the GST website, there are some notable pieces of data as per analysis done by the RGICS.

As on 30th June 2024, there were 1,46,93,051 (1.47 crore) registered GST payers of whom about 46 lakh were migrated from the earlier commercial tax system and the rest 1.03 crore were new (p. 4). So, apparently GST had widened the net. But as per the GSTR-3B returns, only 1.02 crore paid any GST and of these, nearly 70 lakh paid Rs 1 crore or less GST in the full year. Of these, nearly 51 lakh paid only Rs 40 lakh or less GST in a year. Of these, nearly 26 lakh paid only Rs 10 lakh or less GST in a year (p. 12).

In terms of the legal status, 80.33% were proprietary and 10.29% were partnerships. Yet they accounted for 13.30% and 7.31% of the GST collection (p. 23). In other words, 90.62% of the GST registered businesses accounted for payment of only 20.61% of the GST. The government could greatly simplify life for itself and 90% of the GST registered businesses by a simple proportion of sales turnover-based GST. The fear that the businesses will understate sales is misplaced because only if they pay the GST will they get input credit for GST on their purchases.

The total number of E-way bills generated from the time these were introduced, i.e. from Apr 2018 to May 2024, was 484.7 crore, almost 60 crore e-way bills a year. On 29th Feb 2024, as many as 44.5 lakh e-way bills were generated in one single day. Between Jul 2023 to Jun 2024, over 12 crore GSTR 1 returns and 11.3 crore GSTR 3B returns were e-filed (p. 51). No wonder the GST paying businesses are suffering from compliance anxiety. As we have suggested, 90% of them can have that anxiety alleviated without any revenue loss to the government.

Source: Image

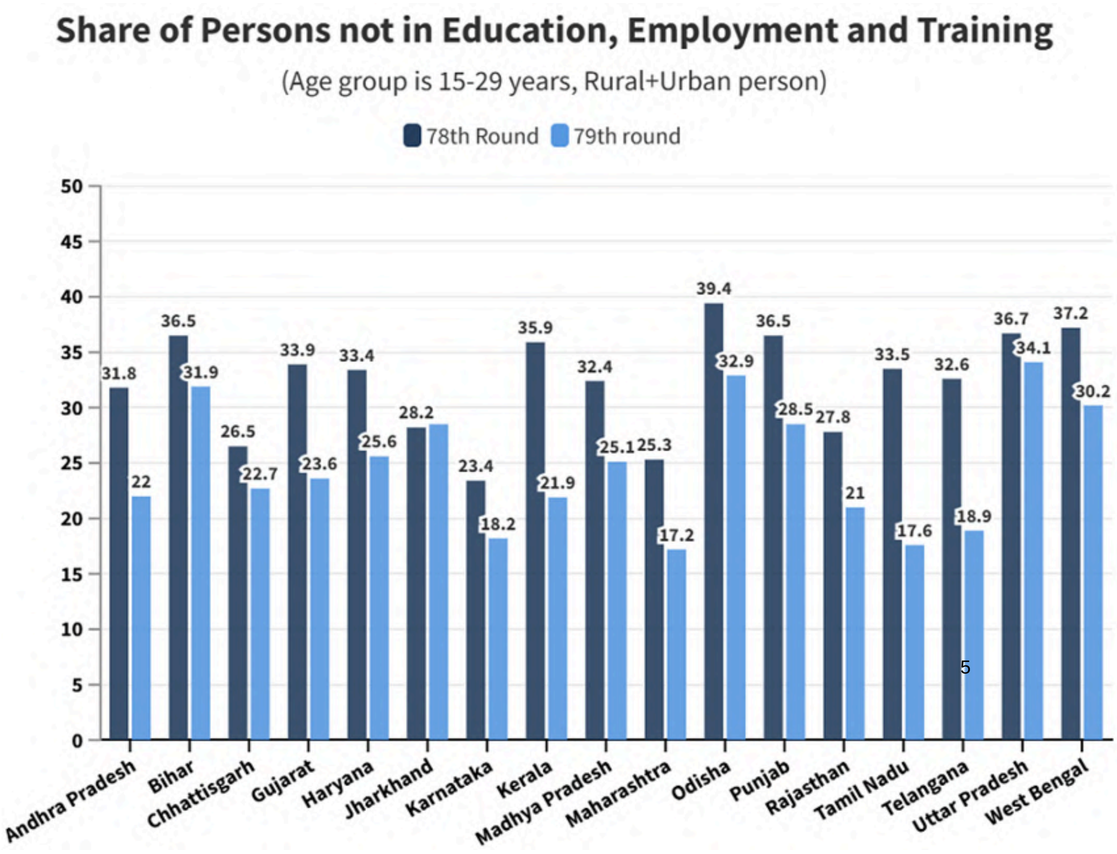
7 https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/1711/AU4213.pdf?source=pqals

7. PM Internship Scheme – The promise and the performance

An analysis by RGICS

7.1 The context

Data from the 79th Round of the NSS Survey reveals that around 25% of Indian youth aged 15-29 are neither in education, employment, nor training. This marks an improvement from the 33% recorded in the 78th Round. At a state level, Tamil Nadu stands out with the most significant improvement, reducing its youth disengaged from education and work by about 16 percentage points. It is followed by Kerala (14 percentage points) and Telangana (13.7 percentage points). Uttar Pradesh, however, saw the smallest improvement, with only a 2.6 percentage point reduction, trailing behind Chhattisgarh at 3.8 percentage points. Jharkhand, on the other hand, is the only state to witness a marginal increase in the percentage of youth disengaged from education, employment, and training, rising from 28.2% to 28.5% between the 78th and 79th rounds.



Despite government initiatives like the National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), there are challenges in the skilling and entrepreneurship landscape, including low public perception on skilling, mismatch between demand and supply, and limited mobility between skill and higher education/vocational programs. As per PLFS annual report for 2020-21, only 3.3% of all of India's workers between age 15 to 59 years received any formal vocational training and another 13.6% received informal training in various ways. Thus, there is great need to enhance opportunities for training as well as on-the-job experience through internships. It is in this context that the Government of India launched the PM Internship Scheme.

7.2 The promise

As per the Government of India website https://pminternshipscheme.com/, the PM Internship Scheme, launched by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, aims to provide young individuals aged 21-24 years from low-income households with 12-month internship opportunities in the country's top 500 companies.

The pilot phase targets 1.25 lakh youth, with a five-year goal to facilitate internships for one crore young individuals. This initiative is not just about internships; it's about building a future where every youth has the chance to succeed.

As announced in the Union Budget 2024-25, the scheme began with a pilot project for the financial year 2024-25, targeting 1.25 lakh internships. These internships span 24 sectors, including oil, gas, energy, travel, hospitality, automotive, banking, and financial services.

Companies participating in this pilot were selected based on their corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending over the last three years, ensuring participants are placed with socially and ethically responsible organizations.

This groundbreaking initiative empowers India's youth by providing real-world work experience, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical work environments. Whether you're a recent graduate or still in your educational journey, this scheme offers a valuable stepping stone to kickstart your career.

The eligibility was as follows
– ITI: Matriculation + ITI in relevant trade
– Diploma: Intermediate + AICTE-recognized diploma
– Degree: Bachelor's degree from UGC/AICTE-recognized university
– Age: 18 to 24 years (relaxation for OBC/SC/ST)

The benefits offered were as follows
– ₹5,000 monthly stipend
– One-time payment of ₹6,000
– Insurance coverage under Jyoti Bima Scheme, and PM Suraksha Bima Yojana

In Round 1 (Oct–Dec 2024), 280 companies across 25 sectors posted 1.27 lakh opportunities in 745 districts, leading to 82,000+ internship offers across diverse sectors, including:

- Automobile | Banking & Finance | Healthcare | IT & Software
- Manufacturing | Retail & Consumer Durables | Telecom | Pharmaceuticals
- Travel & Hospitality | Infrastructure & Construction | Media & Education

Round II started in January 2025. The website states that:

- 327 companies have posted more than 1.18 lakh internships
- Applications remain open until March 31

The following companies offered internships in numbers shown in the second column

Jubilant Foodworks Limited	14,263
Maruti Suzuki India Limited	12,444
ONGC Limited	6,020
Reliance Industries Limited	5,000
Eicher Motors Limited	4,260

On March 17, 2025, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched a dedicated mobile application for the Prime Minister Internship Scheme and asked more companies to join the programme. Here are the key features of this newly launched PMIS App:

- Intuitive interface with a clean design and effortless navigation
- Easy registration through Aadhaar face authentication
- Effortless navigation – Eligible candidates can sift through opportunities by location etc.
- Personalized dashboard
- Access to a dedicated support team
- Real time alerts to keep candidates abreast of new updates

Source: Image

The PMIS app features a user-friendly interface, Aadhaar-based face authentication for quick registration, and instant notifications on new opportunities. Speaking at the launch, Sitharaman highlighted that the scheme aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements, thereby enhancing youth employability. She also urged industry leaders to actively participate in building a skilled workforce.

7.3 The performance

Here's the reality check:

- **1.27 lakh internship opportunities** offered by companies across 745 districts.
- **6.21 lakh applications received** from 1.8 lakh candidates.
- **82,000 internship offers made**,
- **28,000 accepted**, **but only**
- **8,700 candidates joined**

No explanation is given for this!

Stay updated with the latest developments in the **PM Internship Scheme** and make the most of this government-backed initiative! 🚀

Key Highlights from the PM Internship Scheme Open House

- **Guidance for Candidates:**
  - Officials provided insights on using the portal to find internships aligned with educational backgrounds.
  - Encouraged candidates to explore new locations and sectors.
- **Session Details:**
  - The third Candidate Open House was attended by 700+ participants.
  - Conducted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on Thursday.
  - Addressed queries related to technical aspects, policies, and processes of the scheme.
- **Key Participants:**
  - Ministry officials, three panelists (current interns), and industry expert Don Lewis from Mahindra & Mahindra.
  - 1,765+ questions were answered live, covering eligibility, selection criteria, and sector-specific opportunities.
- **Internship Opportunities:**
  - The second round (pilot phase) began in January with **1.18 lakh internship positions** across 735 districts.
- **Success Stories:**
  - **Ankit Kumar (Intern at Mahindra & Mahindra, Nashik):**
    - Overcame language barriers (speaks only Haryanvi) and gained valuable hands-on experience in automobile manufacturing.
  - **Shweta Joshi (Intern at Tech Mahindra):**
    - Relocated from Madhya Pradesh and is learning **SQL, AWS CloudWatch, and analytics.**
- **Common Candidate Queries:**
  - Request to increase the age limit from **24 to 25 years.**
  - Clarification on employment prospects post-internship.
  - Need for more IT sector opportunities.
  - Inquiry about the **three-application limit** (currently applicable for this round only).
  - Concerns about **low awareness** in remote regions like **Gurez and Tangdar (Jammu & Kashmir).**
- **Internship Benefits:**
  - Monthly stipend: **₹4,500 from the government** (Direct Benefit Transfer – DBT).
  - Additional **₹500 from CSR funds** of the participating company.
  - One-time grant of **₹6,000 per annum** for incidental expenses.
- **First Round Internship Data:**
  - **1.27 lakh internship opportunities** offered by companies across 745 districts.
  - **6.21 lakh applications received** from 1.8 lakh candidates.
  - **82,000 internship offers made**, 28,000 accepted, but only 8,700 candidates joined.

Perhaps the Government of India can learn from the Singapore experience:

7.4 Singapore government programs promoting corporate internships

[Source: Image]

Singapore has several government-backed initiatives to promote corporate internships, aimed at equipping students with industry-relevant skills and enhancing their employability. Below are some internship programs from Singapore:

1. Global Ready Talent (GRT) Programme[8]

- **Administered by:** Enterprise Singapore
- **Objective:** To support Singapore enterprises in training and investing in young talent through local and international internships.
- **Eligibility:** Open to full-time tertiary students from Institutes of Technical Education (ITEs), Polytechnics, and Universities.
- **Funding Support:** Provides up to 50% funding for companies offering internships.
- **Key Features:**
  - Focuses on building a pipeline of talent for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
  - Offers opportunities for students to gain exposure to both local and overseas business environments.

2. Enhanced Internships (SkillsFuture Initiative)[9]

- **Administered by:** SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG)
- **Objective:** To deepen students' skills and provide meaningful work experiences during their internships.
- **Target Group:** Second- or third-year students enrolled in diploma or Nitec/Higher Nitec courses at Polytechnics or ITEs.

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8 https://www.beglobalready.gov.sg/global-ready-talent-programme/

- **Key Features:**
  - Structured internships with clear learning outcomes and better mentorship.
  - Extended durations to allow students to take on more meaningful work activities.

3. GovTech Internship Programme [10]

- **Administered by:** Government Technology Agency (GovTech)
- **Objective:** To involve students in strategic national projects that drive Singapore's digital transformation.
- **Eligibility:** Polytechnic students, undergraduates, and recent A-Level or diploma graduates awaiting university admission.
- **Key Features:**
  - Roles span both tech (e.g., software development, cybersecurity) and non-tech areas (e.g., HR, marketing).
  - Access to mentorship from senior leaders and career workshops.

4. Enterprise Singapore Summer Internship Programme [11]

- **Administered by**: Enterprise Singapore
- **Objective**: To expose students to international business environments and enterprise growth strategies.
- **Eligibility**: Open to Year 2–3 university students across all disciplines.
- **Key Features**: Capstone projects involving research, data analysis, and enterprise development strategies.

(The RGICS is thankful to International Eminent Visiting Fellow, Prof. Wee Liang TAN from the Singapore Management University, for the inputs on internship programs in Singapore.)

Source: Image

9 https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/initiatives/mid-career/enhancedinternships

10 https://www.tech.gov.sg/careers/students-and-graduates/internships/

11 https://www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/grow-your-business/boost-capabilities/talent-attraction-and-development/global-ready-talent/internship-programme

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