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Research Article

A Comparative Inter-State Analysis of Sustainable Development Goals in India: 2015–2024

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide guidance for overall development at the global level by 2030. In a diverse and vast country like India, the achievement of SDGs is highly dependent on state-wise progress. This research paper conducts a comparative analysis of SDG progress across Indian states from 2015 to 2024. It examines the SDG India Index, state-wise scores available from NITI Aayog, socio-economic factors, policy interventions and disparities in development. The analysis shows that South and West India have consistently performed well, while East and Central India still lag behind on several SDGs. The paper concludes by analysing the factors affecting SDG progress and provides policy recommendations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the United Nations announced 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which provide a global framework to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, protect the environment and ensure equitable development by 2030. India is one of the largest countries to adopt these SDGs. India's development journey is based on the diversity, resources, governance, economic capacity and social structure of its states. To follow the SDGs, India has been publishing the SDG India Index by NITI Aayog since 2018, which shows state-wise progress and challenges. The decade from 2015 to 2024 has been very important for India for the implementation of the SDGs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

1. To conduct a comparative assessment of the states of India as per the SDG index during 2015–2024.
2. To provide future strategic recommendations for SDG achievement.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research has relied on official and reliable sources for statistical information. In which information has been collected from sources such as NITI Aayog – SDG India Index Reports

(2018, 2019–20, 2021, 2023–24), National Sample Survey organization (NSSO), National Family Health Survey (NFHS), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), State policy documents, socio-economic surveys etc.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar and Anand (2022) studied the journey of India toward the achievement of SDGs and their findings illustrate that India made a lot of progress in getting people access to energy and reducing poverty. Still, there are lags and not doing well in protecting the environment, achieving gender equality, or reducing hunger. The emphasis of their policies was placed on achieving the goal of balanced development, which necessitates increased support for states that are making slow progress through policy innovations and increased resource allocation.

Unni et al. (2025) focused on how Indian states build capacities to achieve sustainable development. Their study showed that states with diversified economies, better education systems, and stronger health infrastructure are performing better. In contrast, states heavily dependent on traditional resource-based growth struggled to convert economic progress into social well-being, this policy tends to point to the importance of integrated policy frameworks.

Top 10 countries of the world and India's position in the Sustainable Development Goals

Rank	Country	Score
1	Finland	87.02
2	Sweden	85.74
3	Denmark	85.26
4	Germany	83.67
5	France	83.14
6	Austria	83.01
7	Norway	82.72
8	Croatia	82.39
9	Poland	82.02
10	Czechia	81.94
99	India	66.95

Source: Sustainable Development Report 2025

The report published by NITI Aayog in India includes goals the following targets, and Indicators.

SDGs indicators and Targets

Sr. No.	Year	Included Goals	Targets	Indicators	Composite Score in India
1	2018	13	39	62	54 (57 – Baseline)
2	2019–20	16	54	100	60
3	2020–21	16	70	115	66
4	2023–24	16	70	113	71

NITI Aayog has given a score according to the goals in 2018, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2023-24, which is as follows.

SDGs Goal-Wise Performance in India

Sr.no.	Goals	2018	2019-20	2020-21	2023-24
1	No Poverty	54	50	60	72
2	Zero Hunger	48	35	47	52
3	Good Health and Well-Being	52	61	74	77
4	Quality Education	58	58	57	61
5	Gender Equality	36	42	48	49

6	Clean Water and Sanitation	63	88	83	89
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	51	70	92	96
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	65	64	61	68
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	44	65	55	61
10	Reduced Inequality	71	64	67	65
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	39	53	79	83
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	-	55	74	78
13	Climate Action	-	60	54	67
15	Life on Land	90	66	66	75
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institution	71	72	74	74

About SDG India Index 2023-24:

1. The index measured and monitored the national progress of all states and UTs on 113 indicators which is in alignment with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) National Indicator Framework (NIF). It computes goal-wise scores on the 16 SDGs for each state and UT based on their performance across the 16 SDGs, these score range between 0-100. (1). If a State or UT achieves a score of 100, it signifies it has achieved the 2030 targets. (2). Different criteria of SDG score: Aspirant (0-49), Performer (50-64), Front-Runner (65-), Achiever (100).

2. The index has not included SDG goal 14 in the calculation of the composite score for the index as it solely limited to the 9 coastal states. The index showed that out of the 16 goals, India's overall score is below 50 except on the Goal 5 (gender equality). The SDG India Index has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme

Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations (UN), and the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI).

Progress Made by India in SDGs:

India has taken significant strides in accelerating progress on the SDGs between the 2020-21 and 2023-24 editions of the Index.

1. Noteworthy advancements have been observed in Goals 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 13 (Climate Action). These are now in the '**Front Runner**' category (a score between 65–99). Among these, Goal 13 (Climate Action) has shown the most substantial improvement, with its score increasing from 54 to 67. Goal 1 (No Poverty) follows closely, with its score rising significantly from 60 to 72. Since 2018, India has witnessed substantial progress in several key SDGs. Significant progress has been made in Goals 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

SDGs Composite Score State-Wise Performance in India

Sr. no.	Name of State	Composite Score 2018	Composite Score 2019-20	Composite Score 2020-21	Composite Score 2023-24	Progress in 2018-24
1	Uttarakhand	65	64	72	79	21.54
2	Kerala	66	70	75	79	19.70
3	Tamil Nadu	76	67	74	78	2.63
4	Goa	62	65	72	77	24.19
5	Himachal Pradesh	60	69	74	77	28.33
6	Punjab	56	62	68	76	35.71
7	Sikkim	64	65	71	76	18.75
8	Karnataka	52	66	72	75	44.23
9	Gujarat	48	64	69	74	54.16
10	Andhra Pradesh	67	67	72	74	10.45
11	Telangana	52	67	69	74	42.31
12	Maharashtra	47	64	70	73	55.32
13	Mizoram	71	56	68	72	1.41
15	Haryana	50	57	67	72	44.00
16	Manipur	44	60	64	72	63.64
17	Tripura	71	58	65	71	0.00
18	West Bengal	57	60	62	70	22.81
19	Rajasthan	59	57	60	67	13.56
20	Madhya Pradesh	44	58	62	67	52.27
21	Uttar Pradesh	48	55	60	67	39.58
22	Chhattisgarh	50	56	61	67	34.00
23	Odisha	59	58	61	66	11.86
24	Assam	53	55	57	65	10.17
25	Arunachal Pradesh	52	53	60	65	25.00
26	Meghalaya	68	54	60	63	-7.40
27	Nagaland	59	57	61	63	6.78

28	Jharkhand	37	53	56	62	67.57
29	Bihar	45	50	52	57	26.67
Union Territories						
1	Chandigarh	39	70	79	77	97.44
2	Jammu & Kashmir	61	59	66	74	21.31
3	Puducherry	61	66	68	74	21.31
4	Andaman and Nicobar Island	57	61	67	70	22.81
5	Lakshadweep	43	63	68	66	53.49
6	Ladakh	-	59	66	65	10.17
7	Delhi	30	61	68	70	133.33
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu	21+58	63+61	62	66	32.00
	India	54	60	66	71	31.48
	Target	100	100	100	100	-

1. India's SDG score has increased from 54 in 2018 to 71 in 2023-24, which is 31.48%. The country has made satisfactory progress, but is still far from the target of 100.

2. Top Performing States (2023-24) are Uttarakhand (79), Kerala (79), Tamil Nadu (78), Goa (77) and Himachal Pradesh (77). Kerala, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu have consistently scored high, especially in health, education and social indicators.

3. The highest progressing states (2018–2024) are Jharkhand (67.57%), Manipur (63.64%), Madhya Pradesh (52.27%), Lakshadweep (53.49%), Maharashtra (55.32%) and Gujarat (54.16%). Jharkhand, Manipur and Madhya Pradesh have made huge strides. Poverty, education and basic services have improved.

4. The least progressing or declining states (2023-24) are Meghalaya (-7.40%), Tripura (0.00%) and Mizoram (1.41%). Meghalaya is the only state where the score has declined —

reasons that are behind health, economic opportunities and infrastructure and slow pace of project implementation

5. The lowest scoring states – (2023-24) are Bihar (57), Jharkhand (62), Assam (65), Arunachal Pradesh (65) and Odisha (66). Bihar and Jharkhand in particular are still far behind the national average.

6. If we look at the analysis of the top Union Territories (UTs) (2023-24), Chandigarh (77), Puducherry (74), Jammu and Kashmir (74) and Delhi (70). Delhi's progress is 133% which is the highest and Chandigarh continues to perform well.

4. Summary

- India's SDG performance is improving slowly but steadily.
- Southern and western states generally at the top.
- Uneven development in eastern and north-eastern states.
- There is a large inequality among states till 2024.

Comparative study between North-South, East-West states/UTs (2023-24)

	Sr.no	State	Composite Score	Average Score
South India	1	Kerala	79	74.63
	2	Tamil Nadu	78	
	3	Karnataka	75	
	4	Andhra Pradesh	74	
	5	Telangana	74	
	6	Puducherry	74	
	7	Lakshadweep	66	
North Zone	1	Jammu & Kashmir	74	75.00
	2	Himachal Pradesh	77	
	3	Punjab	76	
	4	Haryana	72	
	5	Delhi	70	
	6	Uttarakhand	79	
	7	Chandigarh	77	
East Zone	1	West Bengal	70	63.75
	2	Odisha	66	
	3	Jharkhand	62	
	4	Bihar	57	
West Zone	1	Maharashtra	73	72.75
	2	Gujarat	74	
	3	Rajasthan	67	
	4	Goa	77	
Central Zone	1	Madhya Pradesh	67	67.00
	2	Chhattisgarh	67	
	1	Arunachal Pradesh	65	

North-East Zone	2	Assam	65	68.22
	3	Manipur	72	
	4	Meghalaya	63	
	5	Mizoram	72	
	6	Nagaland	63	
	7	Tripura	71	
	8	Sikkim	76	
	9	Uttar Pradesh	67	

South and North Zone Strength in SDGs.

1. Leading position in education and health
2. Innovation, technology and industrial development
3. Women's participation and social development
4. Sanitation, energy and environmental management
5. Agricultural production and food security
6. Road, railway and logistics infrastructure
7. Excellent social indicators of hill states

South and north Zone Weaknesses in SDGs.

1. Water scarcity and groundwater depletion
2. Urban congestion and traffic problems
3. Inequality and urban-rural gap
4. Poverty, malnutrition and poor health status
5. Air pollution and environmental problems
6. Gender inequality and women's safety
7. Weakness in management and implementation

East Zone Strengths in SDGs.

1. Extensive government participation in nutrition and health programs
2. Rich natural resources, minerals, agriculture and forests
3. Large scale welfare schemes for poverty reduction
4. Disaster management capacity (especially in Odisha)

East Zone Weaknesses in SDGs.

1. High poverty rate and malnutrition rate (Bihar, Jharkhand)
2. Large regional disparities in education and learning outcomes
3. Lack of services in tribal-rural areas
4. Annual floods, cyclones and environmental hazards
5. Lack of adequate jobs and industrial growth for youth

5. MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Southern states consistently lead across all SDGs, especially in health, education and gender equality.
2. Western states performed strongly on industrial SDGs but had mixed results in the social sector.
3. East and North-East India lag behind, especially in poverty, education and gender equality.

4. Inequality between states remains significant even by 2025, making it challenging to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Planning separate SDG implementation guidelines for each state.
2. Making clear allocation for SDGs in state budget.
3. Collecting SDG data at district level and publishing annual reports.
4. Focus on gender equality and education required.
5. Special package for backward states, policy assistance, technical support, capacity building.

7. CONCLUSION

There are significant differences in SDG progress across Indian states between 2015 and 2024. Southern and western states have made greater progress due to strong development infrastructure, strategic policies and social literacy. While states in the central, eastern and north-eastern regions have lagged behind due to poverty, social inequality and weak policy implementation. India needs to focus on backward states, focus on policy integration and data-driven governance to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

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