

# India

India will undertake its 2<sup>nd</sup> Voluntary National Review in July 2020. With a focus this year on development accelerators and transformative action, it is a key moment to consider activities and tools which can unlock progress, for all, across the board.

Access to information – understood as the physical possibility and right for all to seek and find information, and the skills to use it – can make just such a contribution. This access can help at all levels. It supports individuals to take better decisions about how to farm, where to look for work or how to look after their own and their families' health. It gives governments the possibility to define better policies. It allows researchers to understand the world around us, establish new insights and innovate. Libraries are a key part of the infrastructure for ensuring that this is the case.

But where does India stand today as concerns its libraries and access to information? This data sheet provides background based on data from the Development and Access to Information report produced by IFLA in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington, as well as IFLA's own Library Map of the World.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS

- *India has the highest single number of libraries in the world, with particularly dense public and academic library networks compared to regional and global averages. A lack of data on staffing leaves open the question of how well resourced libraries are to support readers, students and researchers.*
- *Indian libraries are already engaged in supporting the delivery of the SDGs, for example through ensuring access to resources and technology for students in rural areas, or boosting research performance.*
- *Across the Development and Access to Information framework, India scores well on rights, and around the average on skills, but more work needs to be done to bring more people online, and tackle inequalities.*

## LIBRARIES IN INDIA

As counted on the Library Map of the World, India has around 1.5 million libraries in total, including around 1.3 million school libraries – the biggest single number of libraries in the world. The country also has over 160 000

public and community libraries, representing over 12 for every 100 000 people, double the Asian and global average. Public and community libraries in India on average serve an area of only 20km<sup>2</sup>, less than a tenth of the global average, implying that people in general do not have far to go to get to a library. Data on staffing is incomplete, however, meaning that it is not possible to assess so easily how much investment there is in service provision to users. School and community library staff data nonetheless indicate that only a small proportion of these may be staffed.

Similarly, with over 42 000 academic libraries, India has the largest single number of such libraries in the world, representing over 3 for every 100 000 people, compared to a global average of 1.3 and an Asian average of 1.5. Once again, there is no data available on staffing, making it less easy to assess how many librarians are available to support students and researchers.

Indian libraries are well engaged in promoting development, for example through [providing access](#) to technology and learning resources for rural areas, and [boosting the research output](#) of higher education.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN INDIA**

The Development and Access to Information report draws on a range of indicators highlighting where countries stand on four key pillars of access to information: connectivity, equality, skills and rights. For meaningful access to information to be a reality for all, performance needs to be strong across all of these categories.

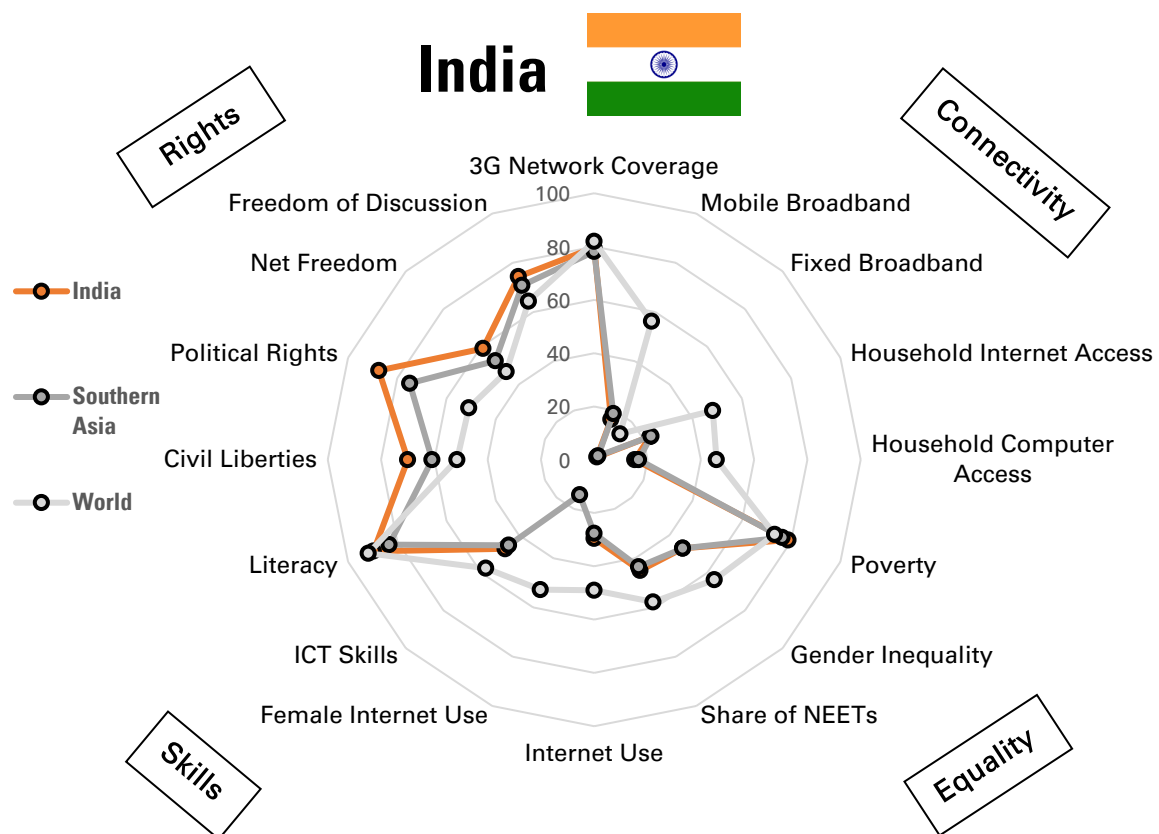
India has a mixed performance across the four pillars of the development and access to information framework. On all aspects of **connectivity**, India scores marginally above the average for Southern Asia as a whole (although given its population, clearly has an important influence on averages), but below global averages. Numbers of mobile and fixed broadband connections remain low, while barely 22% of households have internet access at home, and just 15% have a computer. Internet use, at least in 2015, stood at less than 30%. This implies a strong need for affordable options not only to connect, but also to use computer equipment to make use of information, for example through libraries.

Concerning **equality**, while India has a lower share of the population below the national poverty line than the global average, gender inequality and numbers of young adults not in employment, education or training are both higher, even if they are comparable with the region as a whole. There is no data on female

internet use. This implies that a large share of the population, in particular women, are at risk of exclusion and being unable to fulfil their potential.

On **skills**, India scores well on literacy, but below the global average on the skills pillar of the ICT Development Index, implying a need for people to have opportunities to complete education and gain valuable knowledge. India scores somewhat better on rights, however, beating both the global and regional averages on all indicators, with a particularly high score on political rights, but some progress still needed on net freedom.

Overall, this suggests that a key focus will need to be work to get more people - especially the poor and women – online, for example via libraries, in order to fulfil the potential of access to information to improve lives.



*How to read the graph: this graph displays a range of indicators used within the DA2I framework, adjusted to fit on a scale of 0-100, where 100 is the most positive outcome in terms of access to information.*

## TABLE OF DATA

See below for explanations. \* = or latest available year. Regional averages are based on available data.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	INDIA	Year	SOUTHERN ASIA	Year	WORLD	Year
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	3G Network Coverage	79.67%	2016	78.13%	2016	81.92%	2016
	Mobile Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	16.41	2016	18.71	2016	56.22	2016
	Fixed Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	1.41	2016	2.03	2016	13.71	2016
	Household Internet Access	22.64%	2016	23.13%	2016	48.16%	2016
	Household Computer Access	15.20%	2016	16.66%	2016	45.88%	2016
<b>EQUALITY</b>	Poverty (Share of pop'n below national poverty line)	21.23%	2011	23.66%	2015*	26.69%	2015*
	Gender Inequality (0 = More equal, 1 = Less equal)	0.53	2015	0.53	2015	0.36*	2015*
	Share of NEETs	27.50%	2012	28.24%	2015*	21.12%	2015*
	Internet Use	29.55%	2016	27.64%	2016*	49%	2016*
	Female Internet Use			14.26%	2016*	52.79%	2016*
<b>SKILLS</b>	ICT Skills	4.73	2017	4.54	2017	5.76	2017
	Literacy	89.66%	2015	83.31%	2015	91.75	2015
<b>RIGHTS</b>	Civil Liberties (0 = least free, 60 = most free)	42.00	2018	36.51	2018	30.9	2018
	Political Rights (0 = least free, 40 = most free)	35.00	2018	29.97	2018	20.37	2018
	Net Freedom (0 = most free, 100 = least free)	41.00	2016	47.52	2016	53.29	2016
	Freedom of Discussion	0.74	2016	0.71	2016	0.64	2016

## EXPLANATION OF INDICATORS

**3G Network Coverage:** this provides a measure of whether one part of the basic infrastructure for connectivity exists, although in itself is not enough to guarantee access (users need a device and a relevant subscription to be able to get online). Source: ITU

**Mobile Broadband (Mobile Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people):** this provides an idea of how many people can use mobile internet, opening up many – if not all – of the possibilities that internet access brings. One person may have more than one subscription. Source: ITU

**Fixed Broadband (Fixed Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people):** this provides an idea of how widespread home or business internet access is. Fixed access is often associated with the possibility to connect computers to make more advanced uses of the internet. Source: ITU

**Household Internet Access (Share of Households with Internet Access):** access to the internet at home allows for access to information at any time without having to go outside, but may be controlled by some members of the family. Source: ITU

**Household Computer Access (Share of Households with a Computer):** this focuses on access to computers. This is crucial for people to be able to carry out more advanced activities on the internet that might be impossible on a phone, such as writing resumes or analysing data. Source: ITU

**Poverty:** this indicator measures the number of people living below the national poverty line, which varies from country to country. It is a measure of economic inequality in a country. The indicator is inversed in the chart (i.e. the share of people not under the poverty line). Source: World Bank

**Gender Inequality:** this is calculated using the Gender Inequality Index. This index uses a basket of indicators in different areas of social development including: reproductive health, proportion of women in parliament, relative shares of men and women with at least some secondary education, and labour market participation in order to provide a broad idea of the extent of gender inequality in a country. The indicator runs from 0 (most equal) to 1 (least equal) and is inversed and adapted in the chart above. Source: UNDP

**Share of NEETS (People aged 15-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training):** this measures the share of young people cut off from education or the job market. Being 'NEET' can bring long-term scarring effects, and so reducing numbers is a key priority. The indicator is inversed and adapted in the chart (i.e. the share of young people who are not NEET). Source: ILO.

**Internet Use (Share of People Using the Internet):** looking beyond household access data (which will be affected by the structure of households in general), this gives a figure for the number of people using the internet. Source: ITU

**Female Internet Use:** this measure, in conjunction with the share of the overall population using the internet, allows us to understand to what extent there is a gender digital divide. Source: ITU

**ICT Skills:** there are relatively few global metrics of ICT skills, with those that exist only focusing on certain regions. The Skills Sub-Index of the ICT Development Index created by the ITU aims to work in this direction using levels of secondary and tertiary education enrolment, plus mean years of schooling, as proxies. Source: ITU

**Literacy:** this measures literacy among 15-24 year olds – i.e. people who have finished formal education. While there are online resources available for people with low literacy, being able to read, type, and understand information remains a fundamental skill. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

**Civil Liberties:** this provides an indication of the degree to which citizens of a country enjoy fundamental civic rights, including freedom of expression and association, as well as the strength of the rule of law, based on expert judgements. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 60 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

**Political Rights:** this provides a measure of the rights people have to participate in the political process, including fair and free elections, political pluralism, and the functioning of government in general. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 40 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

**Net Freedom:** this metric assesses the level of restrictions on rights online by both public and private actors. It draws on assessments of obstacles to access (legal, economic and practical), limits on content, and violations of rights. Scores run from 100 (least free) to 0 (most free) and so are inverted in the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

**Freedom of Discussion:** this indicator looks at whether people are able to hold private discussions without fear of repercussions either from the authorities or society in general due to cultural restrictions or norms. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 1 (most free), and so are adapted to fit into the graphic above. Source: V-Dem dataset codebook.