



JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

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5th edition of Janaagraha's Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) 2017 reveals improvement in City-Systems but at a very slow pace

Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Janaagraha), a Bengaluru-based non-profit released the 5th edition of its Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) report. The study which evaluates quality of governance in cities, in its 2017 edition covered 23 major cities in India across 20 states based on 89 questions.

Chennai is ranked 19th with a score of 3.3. Significant delay in conduct of council elections since 2011 pulled down its scores because this also has a cascading effect on aspects such as formation of ward committees, gender representation in the council etc. City's average own revenue to total expenditure over three years is only 25.8% and has a 3-year average budget variance of over 15% which renders the budget unrealistic. It has not put out documents such as audited annual financial statements, internal audit reports etc. Smaller cities have outpaced Chennai in these aspects which lead to the decline of Chennai's rank. A positive development was the devolution of entertainment tax to the local body after the GST was rolled out.

The Chennai City ASICS evaluation report can be accessed here: <http://www.janaagraha.org/asics/ASICS-2017.html>

Indian cities scored between 3.0 and 5.1 on 10, with Pune topping the charts for the first time. Other cities that came in the top five include Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram, Bhubaneswar and Surat, with scores in the range of 4.6 to 4.5. Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Patna and Chennai constituted the bottom five cities with scores in the range of 3.0 to 3.3 on 10.

In comparison, the global benchmarks of Johannesburg, London and New York which scored 7.6, 8.8 and 8.8 respectively.

"ASICS does not measure quality of infrastructure and services such as roads and traffic, garbage, water, housing, sanitation and air pollution, but instead measures the preparedness of cities to deliver high quality infrastructure and services in the long-term by evaluating "city—systems" of spatial planning and design standards, municipal finance, municipal staffing, political leadership at the city level and transparency and citizen participation" said Anil Nair, Deputy Head, Advocacy and Reforms at Janaagraha. Scores in the range of 3 to 5.1, with 12 out of 23 cities below 4 on 10, strongly signals that Indian cities are grossly under-prepared to deliver a high quality of life that is sustainable in the long term. The recurring floods, garbage crises, fire accidents, building collapses, air pollution and dengue outbreaks are only symptoms of this deeper governance crisis in our cities.

"Pune wrested the number one position from Thiruvananthapuram in ASICS 2017. Surat was the biggest gainer in this year's rankings, jumping 12 positions over 2016 to the 5th spot. This was on the back of improved performance on own revenue generation, higher capital expenditure per capita by the city and implementation of AMRUT reforms including appointment of an internal auditor and credit rating" said Vivek Anandan Nair, Associate Manager and project lead on ASICS 2017. Bhubaneswar stood out for showing steady improvement and moving six positions to fourth this year from the tenth position in 2016. The performance of the two new cities that were added to the survey this year, Guwahati from Assam and Visakhapatnam from Andhra Pradesh was also disappointing with scores of 3.8 and 3.4 respectively.

Overall, India's cities have continued to score low over the last three editions of ASICS, with average score improving marginally from 3.4 to 3.9. This indicates slow progress on fixing City-Systems. This is particularly worrisome, given the pace at which India is urbanising and the already poor state of public service delivery in our cities. The report underlines the need for sharp focus on City-Systems or institutional reforms to city governance in our cities. .

ASICS identifies five systemic challenges that need to be urgently addressed for our cities to deliver a better quality of life to citizens in a sustainable manner. These are:

- 1. Lack of a modern, contemporary framework of spatial planning of cities and design standards for public utilities such as roads, footpaths, bus stops and other underground utilities such as water and sewerage networks**
- 2. Weak finances, both in terms of financial sustainability and financial accountability of cities**
- 3. Poor human resource management, in terms of number of staff, skills and competencies of staff, organisation design and performance management**
- 4. Powerless mayors and city councils and severe fragmentation of governance across municipalities, parastatal agencies and state departments**
- 5. Total absence of platforms for systematic citizen participation and lack of transparency in finances and operations of cities**

The ASICS report is designed to help city leaders pin point issues in urban governance and help them chart out a reforms roadmap to make their city better.

City Wise ASICS Scores across the 4 City-Systems components

City	ASICS 2017 SCORE	ASICS 2017 RANK	UPD	UCR	ELPR	TAP
Pune	5.1	1	2.8	7.3	4.9	5.5
Kolkata	4.6	2	3.7	4.5	6.3	4.0
Thiruvananthapuram	4.6	3	2.8	3.5	6.5	5.5
Bhubaneswar	4.6	4	4.2	4.6	4.7	4.8
Surat	4.5	5	3.6	5.2	5.5	3.8
Delhi	4.4	6	5.1	4.2	5.3	3.0
Ahmedabad	4.4	7	3.5	5.0	5.6	3.5
Hyderabad	4.3	8	3.0	5.2	3.3	5.5
Mumbai	4.2	9	2.9	5.9	4.9	3.2
Ranchi	4.1	10	2.0	3.7	6.0	4.7
Raipur	4.0	11	2.5	3.7	5.5	4.4
Kanpur	3.9	12	2.7	4.3	4.3	4.2
Lucknow	3.8	13	2.4	4.1	4.3	4.5
Guwahati	3.8	14	2.5	3.5	4.8	4.4
Bhopal	3.7	15	2.3	3.6	4.5	4.2
Ludhiana	3.5	16	3.0	3.0	4.1	3.9
Visakhapatnam	3.4	17	2.6	3.8	2.8	4.6
Jaipur	3.4	18	3.4	3.3	4.7	2.1
Chennai	3.3	19	2.9	4.0	4.1	2.0
Patna	3.3	20	2.6	3.3	4.8	2.4
Dehradun	3.1	21	2.4	3.3	4.8	1.8
Chandigarh	3.1	22	1.8	4.4	3.6	2.5
Bengaluru	3.0	23	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0
London	8.8	-	7.9	9.7	9.4	8.2
New York	8.8	-	8.0	9.8	8.8	8.5
Johannesburg	7.6	-	5.3	8.8	8.8	7.6

#UPD: Urban Planning & Design, UCR: Urban Capacities & Resources, ELPR: Empowered & Legitimate Political Representation and TAP: Transparency, Accountability & Participation are the four components of the 'City-Systems' framework used for ASICS evaluation

About the Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS)

ASICS is an objective evaluation of the quality of governance in our cities. Like a thorough health check-up, it highlights the deep systemic flaws that exist in urban governance. ASICS 2017 evaluates 23 major cities from 20 states across the country. Using Janaagraha's City-Systems framework as its basis, the survey evaluates cities across 89 detailed parameters. The better a city scores in the ASICS survey, the more likely that it will be able to deliver better quality of life to citizens over the medium and long-term.

Every year, we see several of our cities' challenges making headlines in newspapers and occupying prime time on news television. The same events recur, just like the monsoons that greet us every year and bring with them the familiar sights of waterlogging, potholes and endless traffic jams. Incidents like the air pollution in Mumbai due to burning garbage, alarming air pollution levels in Delhi and the devastating floods in Chennai all remind us of events from the past, perhaps from the same city. This strongly suggests that the traditional Indian band-aid approach, also known as 'jugaad', to solving these challenges simply do not work. Our cities' challenges are too deep for us to take just tactical stabs at them. The root causes, that lie deep within urban governance systems need to be identified and addressed; we need to move from fixing symptoms to fixing systems.

The systems that underlie urban governance are what we collectively refer to as "City-Systems". "City-systems" refer to laws, policies, quality of institutions and accountability mechanisms that drive or give rise to the quality of life that we experience in our daily lives. 'City-Systems' are interconnected and interdependent and emphasise the systemic nature of our cities, their challenges and solutions. The City-Systems framework, comprises four distinct but inter-related components namely:

- Urban Planning and Design (Spatial Planning, Urban design standards)
 - Urban Capacities and Resources (Municipal Finance, Municipal Staffing, IT)
 - Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation (powers and functions of city council, their legitimacy) and
 - Transparency, Accountability and Participation (public disclosure, accountability for service levels)
- The ASICS 2017 report and the data book can be accessed here: <http://www.janaagraha.org/asics/ASICS-2017.html>
 - The data tables in downloadable format can be accessed here: <http://www.janaagraha.org/asics/ASICS-2017.html>
 - City ASICS evaluation reports can be accessed here: <http://www.janaagraha.org/asics/ASICS-2017.html>

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About Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Janaagraha)

Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Janaagraha) is a Bengaluru based not-for-profit institution that is a part of the Jana group. Janaagraha's mission is to transform quality of life in India's cities and towns. It defines quality of life as comprising quality of infrastructure and services and quality of citizenship. To achieve its mission, Janaagraha works with citizens to catalyse active citizenship in city neighbourhoods and with governments to institute reforms to City-Systems. You can read more about Janaagraha at www.janaagraha.org.

About Jana Urban Space Foundation (Jana USP)

Jana Urban Space is a Professional Services Social Enterprise (PSSE), delivering transformational, world-class work on the spatial dimension of India's cities. Jana USP has four inter-disciplinary Studios - Urban Planning Studio; Urban Design Studio; Spatial Mapping and Analytics Studio; and Architecture and Design Studio. The multiple studios reflect Jana USP's systems-driven approach to addressing urban Spatial challenges. Jana Urban Space is a not-for-profit entity. You can read more about Jana USP at www.jusp.org