Governance and Citizens in Urban India: Evidence from Ajmer

March 2025

Content

01 INTRODUCTION

Urban India

One of the greatest challenges that India faces in the 21st century is the governance of its cities. Cities are centers of innovation, opportunity, and growth, and are home to a steady flow of migrants. In 2011, Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata were the only three cities with more than ten million people each, and 53 cities had populations of more than one million each.[1]

As of 2022,

India stands at almost 400 cities with populations between 0.1 to 1 million.
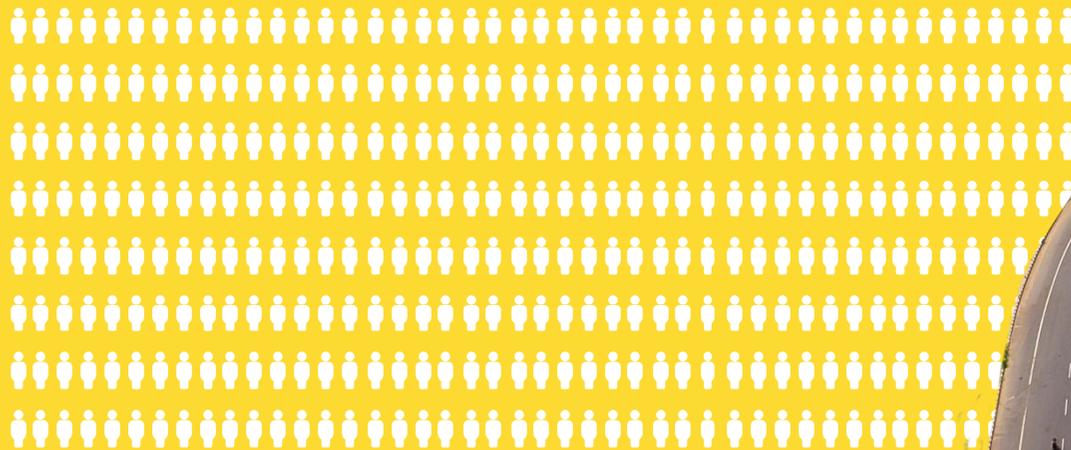
1 chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.janaagraha.org/files/publications/Citizen-Index-Book-Dec-2014.pdf
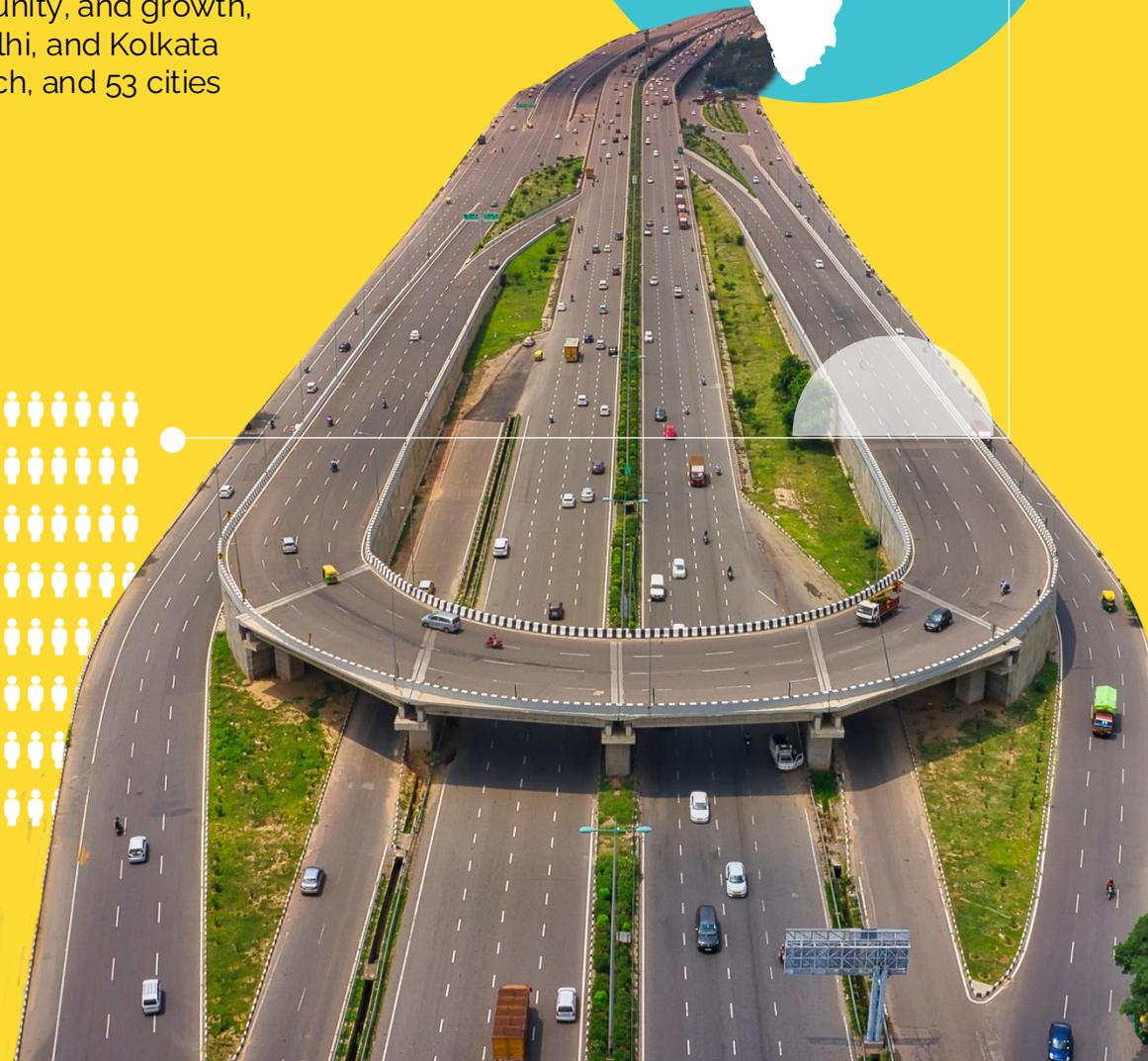
A UN report has estimated that urban population in India, will stand at

675 million people by 2035

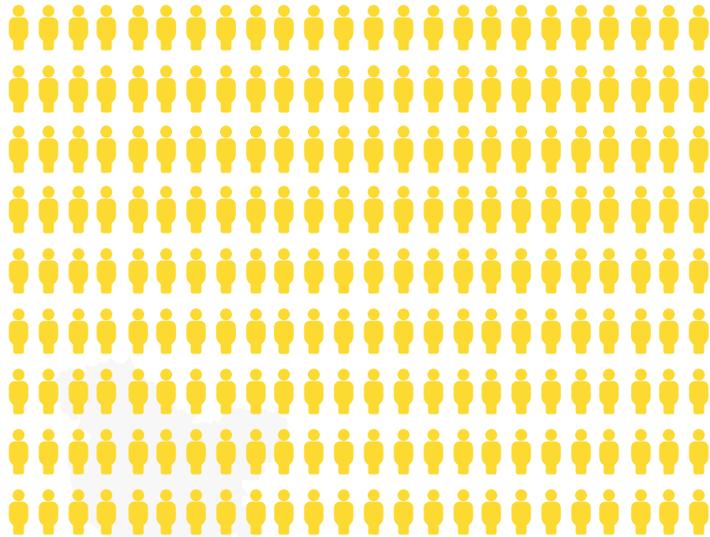and the percentage of India's urban population will be 43.2 percent.[2] However, the physical growth of cities has paced much ahead of our ability to govern them, which has put huge pressure on the existing development infrastructure, resources, and governance systems.

With recent studies suggesting a stabilization of population growth in the top-tier cities, it is believed that the future expansion of India's urban population is likely to be primarily driven by the smaller statutory towns (those with less than 0.1 million population) and Census Towns. These segments together accounted for a significant 50% of India's urban population in 2011. The narrative of India's urbanization is, therefore, becoming less top-heavy. Instead, there is a strong indication of more balanced urbanization, with small and medium cities poised to play a significant role. Understanding and addressing the specific needs and opportunities of these areas is fundamental for achieving inclusive urban development.

2   https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-urban-population-to-stand-at-675-million-in-2035-behind-chinas-1-billion-un/article65584707.ece

City-systems

Our work collects and presents data on the state of basic services and infrastructure in Indian cities to highlight the extent of these challenges. At the same time, relating the delivery of such services to mechanisms of governance. The ability of a city to deliver good quality of life (e.g., at a minimum, good quality of basic services and infrastructure) depends largely on the complex, mostly-invisible factors (such as laws, policies, institutions, institutional processes) that underpin urban governance. To conceptualize these factors, diagnose urban problems and - more importantly - solve them, we need to view them in a systems framework. The "City-Systems" framework is a framework created by Janaagraha that helps us identify the root causes of our urban challenges. This City-Systems framework comprises four components:

1. Urban Planning & Design
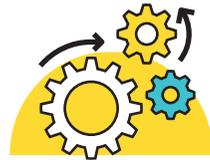
2. Urban Capacities & Resources

3. Empowered & Legitimate Political Representation

4. Transparency, Accountability & Participation

Janaagraha undertakes regular reviews of the laws, policies, institutions and institutional processes that lie within each of these four components. Entitled 'Annual Survey of India's City-Systems'[3] , this work has identified significant challenges with urban India's City-Systems.

The work in this project focuses particularly on the fourth component. With such large populations living in smaller geographical areas, it is crucial to deepen citizen participation in all governance systems, In order to improve quality of life. Citizens should not only be aware, but empowered to have a say in how their cities and neighbourhoods are planned and managed. In any democracy, the quality of governance is inextricably tied to the quality of citizenship. Our work ,therefore, also collects data on the current status quo of citizen participation and considers its relationship to service delivery in urban India.

[3] Latest report is: Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (2017): Annual Survey of India's City-Systems – Shaping India's Urban Agenda. Available: https://www.janaagraha.org/asics/report/ASICS-report-2017-fin.pdf [accessed 15-05-2023].

The Urban Governance Project

The Urban Governance project aims to gather systematic and robust data on the relationship between citizenship, basic services, and infrastructure delivery in cities across India. We argue that effective citizenship means essentially being able to use one's rights, that is to effectively participate in public life and engage in public activities across social boundaries. Second, effective citizenship means being able to claim and obtain public goods, basic services, and infrastructure from the local state.

Till date we have collected data from over

38,000 citizens

in 17 cities across India.

Figure 1: Cities covered in the project (2013 to 2022)

2013-2018   2018-2019   2021-2022

Jalandhar
Delhi
Ajmer
Lucknow
Bhopal
Ahmedabad
Bhavnagar
Vadodara
Kolkata
Bhubaneswar
Mumbai
Hyderabad
Shimoga
Bengaluru
Mysuru
Chennai
Kochi
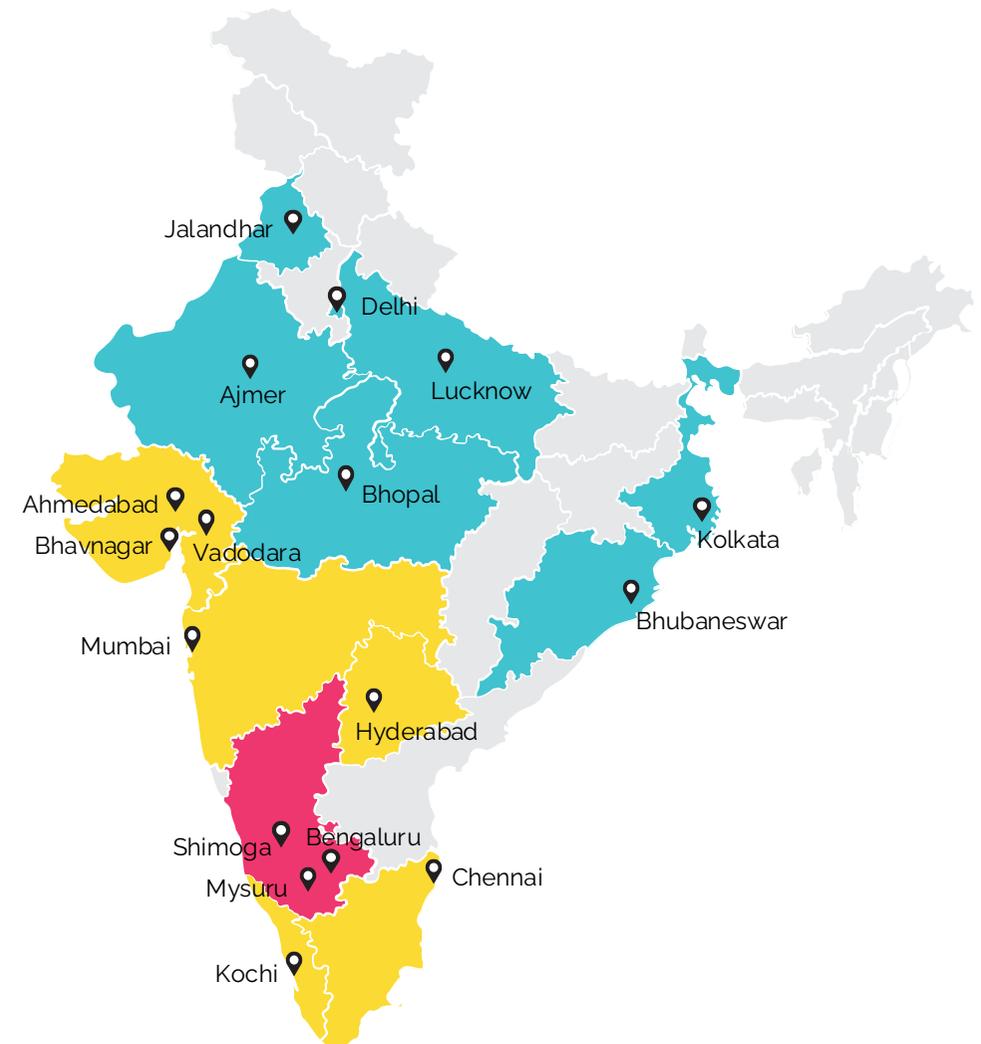
Research design

O1 Key respondent interviews

City commissioners, police commissioners, corporators, heads of departments, prominent academics in the city/ state, and civil society activists were interviewed in each city to understand local context on service provision, issues, reference terms and inform the nuance for each city's survey instrument.

O2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

- 2 FGDs per city.
- Male and female citizens participated who were from marginalised communities, typically from very low-income neighbourhoods, especially in shack settlements and informal slums.
- Goals:
    a. To collect qualitative data on how citizens access services, how they engage with politicians and the state, how communities are organized and how maginalised communities understand their rights
    b. To use responses to adapt and fine tune our survey instrument to actual conditions and practices in these communities.

03   Large, quantitative, representative household surveys

- Systematic random sampling that stratified polling parts to generate a representative sample of polling parts across each city taking care to ensure citizens from marginalised communities were included.

- Manual counting, listing, and classification, of all residential buildings within the sampled polling parts in each city. Classification into one of five housing type categories: HT-1 (informal shacks), HT-2 (informal slums), HT-3 (lower middle class), HT-4 (middle class) and HT-5 (upper class housing).

- Manual counting of number of households within each listed residential building.

- Systematic sampling of households across polling parts.

- Quantitative household surveys with 1,000-3,000[4] citizens per city.

- Top-up sampling to ensure sample match to listings (by housing type) and to account (and increase in the sample) for low numbers of certain housing types to allow for adequate 'within housing type' analysis.

4 Depending on city population size.

04   Weighting

Rake weighting (or iterative proportional fitting) was used to create weights that are unique to each city. For the seven cities, each response was assigned a weight according to housing type of each housing structure, which is unique for each city according to the difference between the sample margins and the population distributions of the five housing types in the city (as determined by the listing data).

For more details on the methodology, please refer to Appendix 1.

02

CITY IN FOCUS: AJMER

In this report, we provide a comprehensive overview of our quantitative findings from Ajmer. Where appropriate, we compare our findings to six other cities from the most recent phase, for which our data analysis is completed.

About the city

- Current population estimate

2023 – 6,30,000 people,[5] about

51% male **49% female**[6]
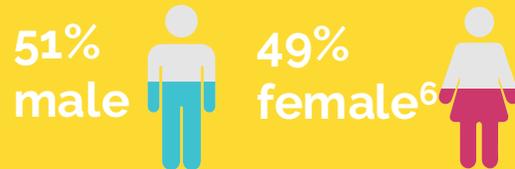
- The city of Ajmer has an area of 55 sq.km.[6]

- There are also many industries in Ajmer, including iron casting, agricultural implements, food processing, steel furniture etc.

Ajmer

- Ajmer is an important manufacturing hub for cotton textiles, shoes, leather, woolens, as well as pharmaceuticals.[7]
- The closest town to Ajmer, Kishangarh, is the largest center of marble products, with the industry employing more than 7,000 people from Ajmer district.

- Ajmer is a popular pilgrimage centre for citizens of different religions with famous shrines visited and revered by followers.

5   Population projection 2022: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2018). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, custom data acquired via website. https://population.un.org/wup/DataQuery/

6   https://urban.rajasthan.gov.in/content/raj/udh/ada-ajmer/en/ajmer--the-city/about-ajmer.html

7   https://www.ajmeronline.in/city-guide/business-and-economy-in-ajmer
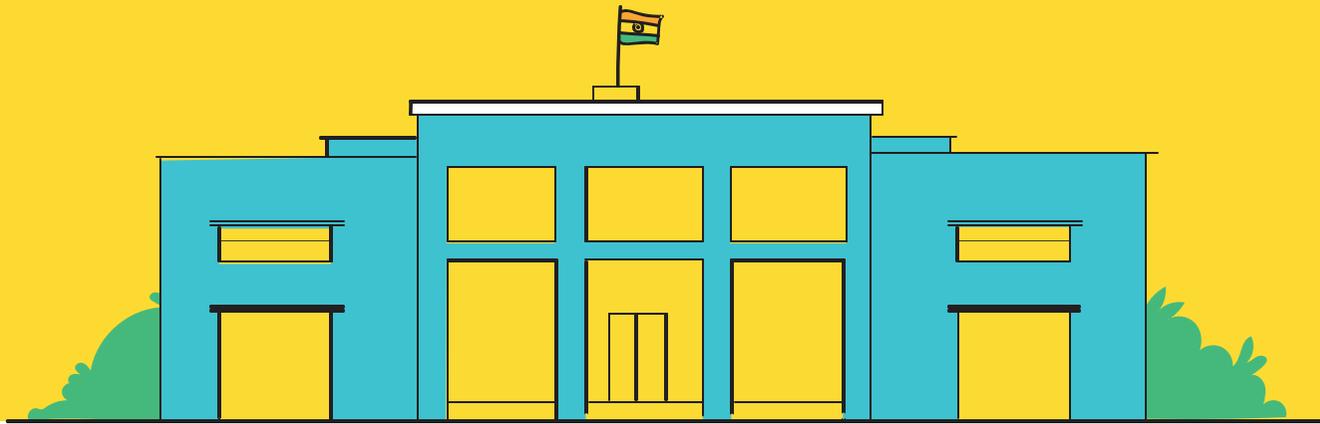
About Ajmer Municipal Corporation (AMC) and local governance

• The AMC was established in 1866 and is the oldest municipal body of Rajasthan. Being the oldest municipality, and administered by the British till 1946, the acts and by-laws of the then Bombay Municipal Corporation were also prepared in line with the AMC.

• List of agencies providing basic services to citizens:

1. Water and Sewerage:

The state government provides facilities of water through the Public Health Engineering Department.[8] The construction, and maintenance of sewage line, and sewage treatment within Ajmer city, is done by the AMC.

2. Garbage and Waste Disposal Service:

The city government i.e., the AMC provides services for garbage and waste disposal.[9]

3. Electricity:

Provided by the state government through Ajmer Vidhyut Vitaran Nigam Limited (AVVNL) also known as Ajmer Discom.[10]

4. Public transport:

This comes under the Smart Cities Mission[11]. However, the responsibility for running the buses at city level is of the AMC and Ajmer City Transport Services Limited (ACTSL)[12]

5. Road Repairs/Maintenance:

Undertaken by the state government, through the Public Works Department.[13]

8   https://phedwater.rajasthan.gov.in/content/raj/water/public-health-engineering-department/en/about-us/rwssmb.html

9   https://neptjournal.com/upload-images/NL-10-12-(12)B-1197.pdf. We also spoke to the Commissioner's office, and the Deputy Mayor of Ajmer to confirm this information
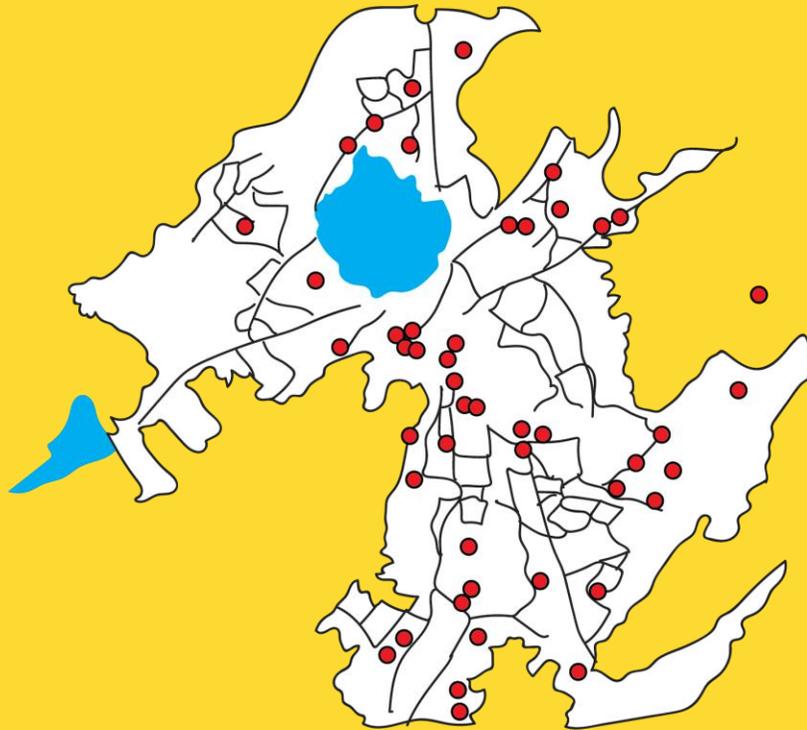
10   https://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/avvnl/#/jankalyan-category-and-entry-type/9/4/1/0

11 &12   We spoke to the Commissioner's Office, and the Deputy Mayor of Ajmer to confirm this information. And see: on ACTSL here: https://www.pdcor.com/transport.htm

13   https://roads.rajasthan.gov.in/content/raj/roads/en/pwd/about-pwd.html

Achieved sample for Ajmer survey

Figure 2: The sampled polling parts for Ajmer city survey

Dates of survey - October – December 2022

Total achieved sample for Ajmer - 1030 citizens across 39 polling parts as shown in Figure 2.

The achieved raw sample is a broad reflection of the population data for Ajmer city (see Table 1 – next slide) though is slightly over-representative of male respondents. The housing type distribution of the achieved sample broadly reflects the HT distribution of the listing data in Ajmer. However, in Ajmer, all housing types except HT3s and HT4s were low in number during the listing. Therefore, there has been over-representation of particularly HT1s, and HT5s, while slightly fewer HT3s and HT4s have been sampled. This was done deliberately through top-up sampling throughout the survey period to ensure adequate coverage of all HTs for 'within HT comparisons' (see Table 2 – next slide). To adjust for this, weighted data (using housing type listing proportions 1-5) is used throughout the report when not doing within HT type analysis. It is important to note that the listing data proportion of HT1 and HT2 (which in combination represents all slum-type housing in our work), at 9.3% is a slight under-representation of the slum proportions from Census 2011 which stands at 20.4.[14]

14 Census slum population data: https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/6190. Also refer to https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/82-ajmer.html#:~:text=Ajmer%20Slum%20Population,total%20population%20of%20Ajmer%20city.

Table 1: Census data and JBCI sample compared for Ajmer [15]

	Total population			Literacy %	Religion %			Caste %	
	Total (n)	Male%	Female%		Hindu	Muslim	others	SC	ST
Census[15]	542321	51	49	77	84	12	4	25	2
Raw Sample	1030	60	40	87	90	7	3	20	7
Weighted data	1030	59	41	95	90	7	3	19	7

Table 2: Housing type structure listing and achieved sample data for Ajmer

Data	HT1	HT2	HT3	HT4	HT5	Total no.
Housing type listing (structures) (%)	4.4	4.9	52.0	34.2	4.4	3318
Achieved (raw) sample (HHs) (%)	10.7	4.9	48.6	30.0	5.8	1030

[15] Figures for gender wise distribution, literacy and caste- https://manualzz.com/doc/en/21895424/rajasthan-district-census-handbook--ajmer, pp 25. Figures for religion (2023 projection)- https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/82-ajmer.html

GOVERNANCE

Key findings

- As per Ajmer citizens, sanitation and water are the most important services that the local government should provide.

- Ajmer citizens have a very high regard for their elected representatives and consider that the latter takes care of everyone in their constituency. This is the highest positive response towards the elected representatives in any of the sampled cities.

- Since COVID-19, more than one-third Ajmer residents indicate that their opinions of their corporator, and the MLAs is more positive than before the pandemic.

- Most of the residents of Ajmer city feel that it is their local corporator who is the most important resource in ensuring basic services to the neighbourhood.

Citizens' opinions about delivery of basic services

The awareness, involvement, and opinions of citizens on what municipal governments should be doing and how they are doing it is integral to understanding urban governance.

Table 3: Urban citizens' opinion about the most important service that the local government should provide (data in percentage)

	Water	Sanitation	Health Service	Education	Electricity	Others[16]	Don't know/ no answer
Ajmer	35	36	6	19	3	1	0
Bhopal	14	25	10	31	9	6	6
Bhubaneswar	19	8	37	32	0	2	1
Delhi	35	20	13	15	5	11	1
Jalandhar	23	9	21	27	5	11	4
Kolkata	32	3	29	21	4	11	0
Lucknow	33	16	9	29	3	9	2

- The citizens of Ajmer are divided over sanitation and water, as the top services to be provided by the local government. Together, both services garner more than two-thirds of the responses from citizens. While provision of water is a common top response across the sampled cities, sanitation is top only in Ajmer.

- Provision of education is the third priority for the citizens of Ajmer, while it features as a top priority in two sampled cities, Bhopal and Jalandhar

16 Others include- safety and personal security, clean air, public transportation, and housing.
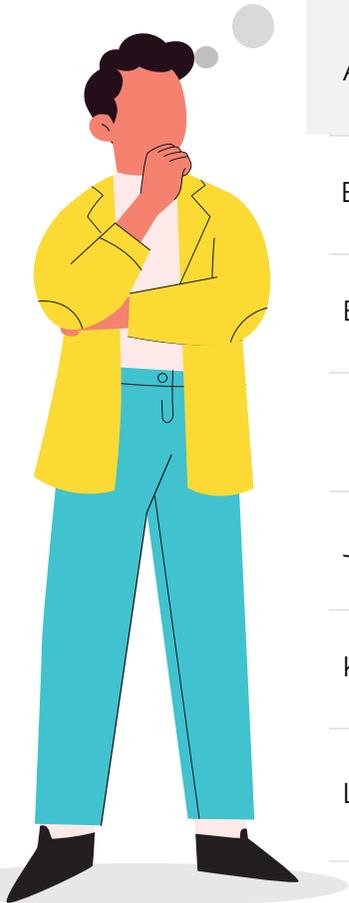
Citizens' perceptions of key stakeholders in society

- The residents of Ajmer city regard their corporators and other elected representatives very highly, and almost all of them (except those in HT1s) are of the opinion that the elected representatives care about the well-being of everyone in the constituency. The only other city to come close to these numbers is Bhubaneswar, where around 90 percent of the residents consider that their elected representatives care about everyone's well-being in the constituency.

- There is a sharp increase from HT1s to HT2s, where the latter have a much more positive opinion towards their elected representatives, than the former. Moreover, HT3 and subsequent housing types have an extremely high opinion of their elected representatives with over 95 percent believing they take care of everyone in the constituency.

- More than one-third of respondents have a more positive opinion about their elected representatives, since the Covid-19 pandemic. While this response is a little lower than most of the other cities, the overall positive sentiment is already evident as noted above and over 50 percent of Ajmer citizens say that they feel the same way about the respective stakeholders, as they did before the pandemic.

- The most positive change in perspective after the pandemic, has come for the police in Ajmer which is common across cities.

Figure 3: Percentage of citizens who feel each elected representative cares about the well-being of the people of their constituency
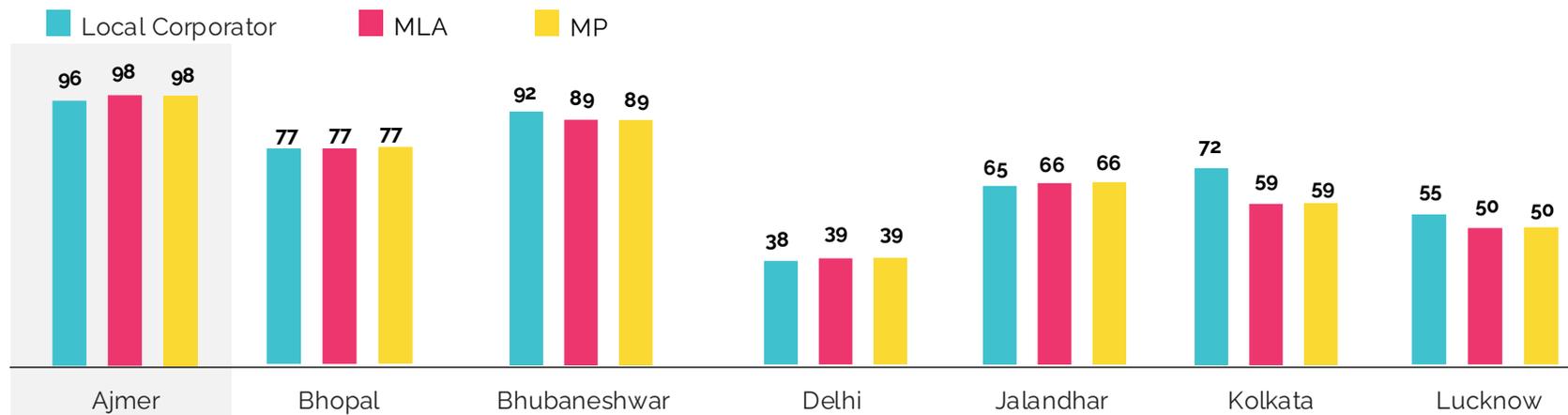
Figure 4: Percentage of Ajmer citizens who feel each elected representative cares about the well-being of all the people of their constituency

HT1   HT2   HT3   HT4   HT5

Local Corporator
34% 88% 96% 99% 98%

MLA
31% 90% 98% 99% 100%

MP
30% 88% 98% 99% 100%
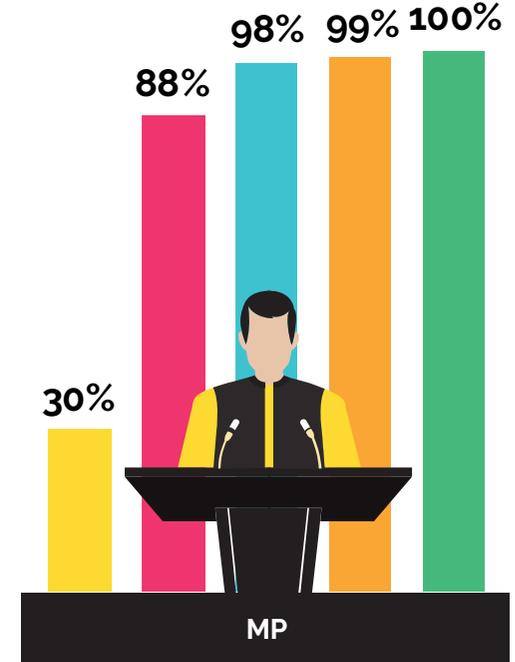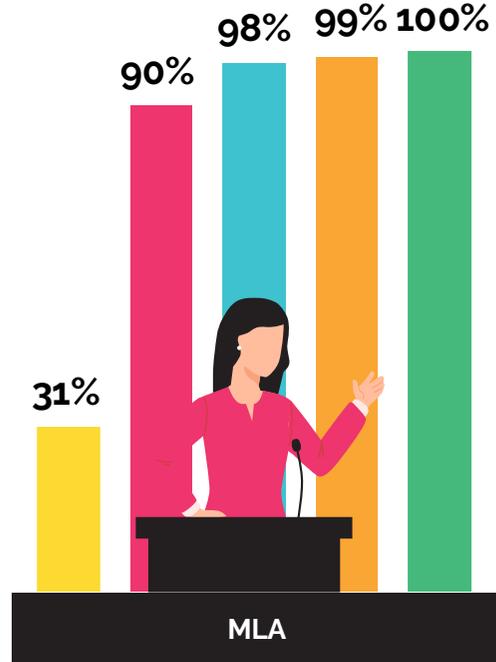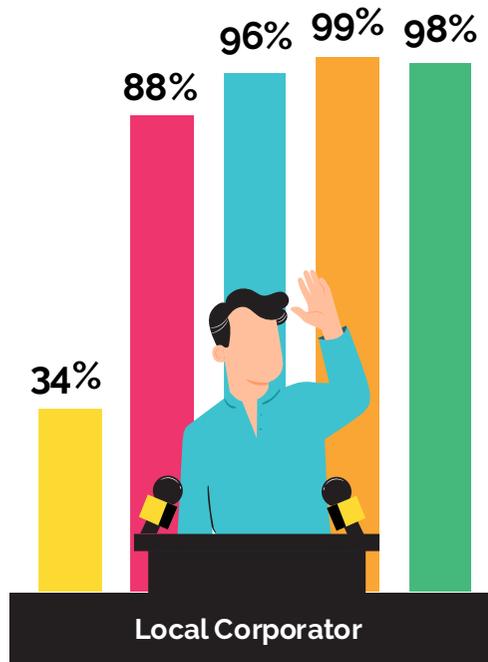
Table 4: Percentage of citizens who feel more positive about specific stakeholders since the COVID-19 pandemic (data in %)

	Police	Local Corporator	MLA	Local leader (unelected)	Government agencies	NGOs	Neighbours
Ajmer	47	38	33	35	34	35	38
Bhopal	50	43	38	39	41	45	41
Bhubaneswar	57	50	52	50	47	51	49
Delhi	61	36	33	35	43	50	55
Jalandhar	62	51	45	42	42	51	49
Kolkata	50	57	45	43	37	37	56
Lucknow	58	45	35	40	35	43	42
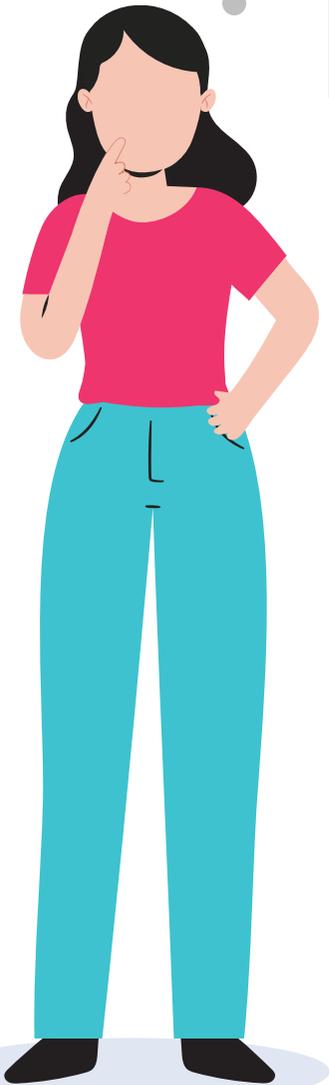
Citizens' opinions about the role of key governance stakeholders in service delivery

Ajmer citizens' opinions about local and elected representatives:

In Ajmer, almost everyone feels that the local corporator is the most important person in ensuring that the neighbourhood receives basic services. This response is the highest among all sampled cities, and 14 percentage points more than the next closest city, Bhubaneswar. The local corporator being an important resource to ensure basic services, is a common top answer in all cities except Delhi.[17]

Just one percent of Ajmer citizens feel that the government agency responsible for the services is actually the most important resource in ensuring basic services. Though this is a common picture across all cities, it is the lowest in Ajmer and Kolkata.

It is interesting to note that as we go up the housing ladder in Ajmer, from HT1s and HT2s, to HT5s, a larger proportion of people answer that the local corporator is the most important person in ensuring basic services in the neighbourhood. The biggest increase in response i.e., more than 30 percentage points, is from HT1s to HT2s. In HT1s, many citizens are unsure and in fact, out of those who know, the vast majority also feel it is the corporator. Though, other persons of influence also play a larger role here than in other HTs.

17 Though is still the most common response in Delhi among those who have an opinion.

Figure 5: Urban citizens' opinion about the most important resource in ensuring basic services are delivered to the neighbourhood (data in percentage)

Legend:
- MLA (yellow)
- MP (black)
- Corporator (pink)
- The Government office responsible for the service (teal)
- Other persons of influence[19] (orange)
- Don't Know/ No answer (green)

City	MLA	MP	Corporator	The Government office responsible for the service	Other persons of influence	Don't Know/ No answer
Ajmer	4	2	91	1	1	2
Bhopal	10	1	65	3	4	16
Bhubaneswar	5	<1	77	2	3	12
Delhi	16	1	25	3	14	41
Jalandhar	23	7	31	5	18	17
Kolkata	16	1	73	1	6	2
Lucknow[18]	5	2	57	12	10	15
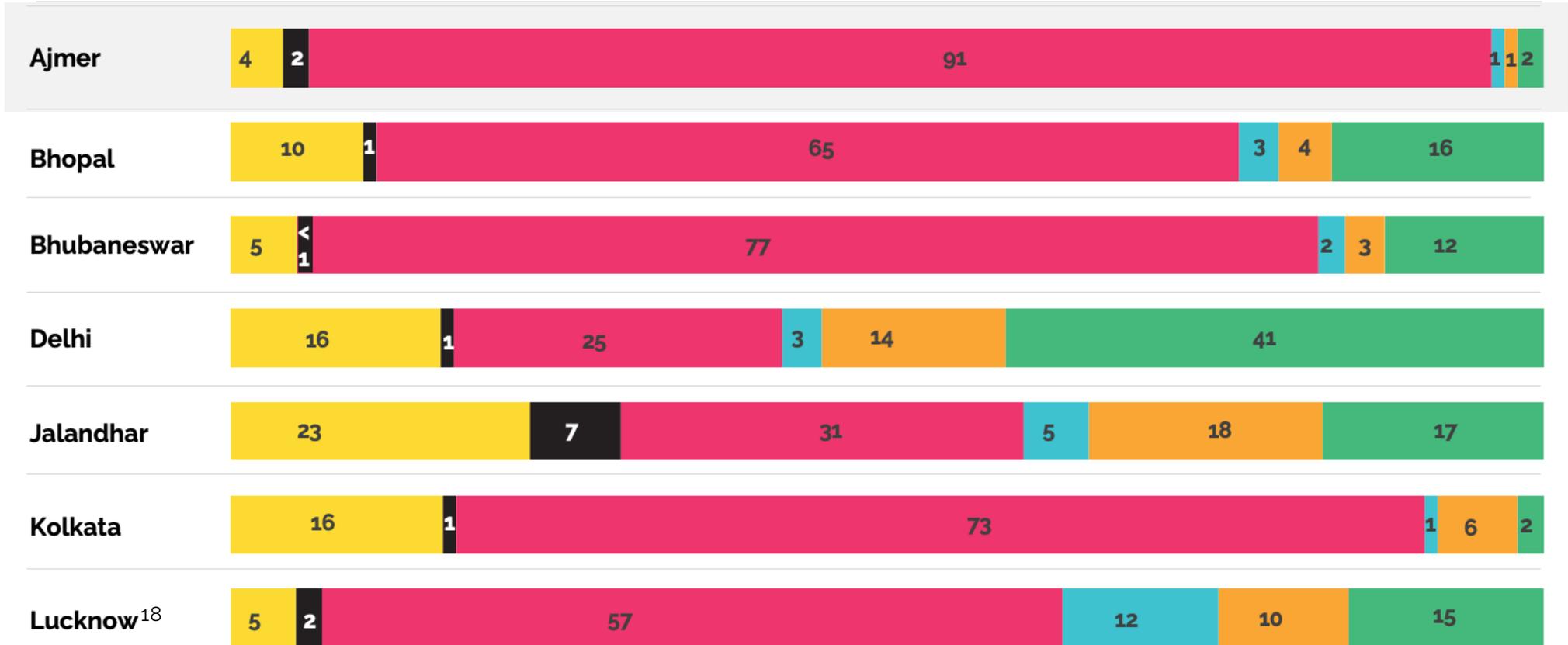
18 Total is coming to 101 because of rounding-off of numbers.

19 Other persons of influence include local political leader (unelected), middlemen/ intermediary, and other persons of influence

Figure 6: Ajmer citizens' opinion about the most important resource in ensuring basic services are delivered to the neighbourhood by housing type (data in percentage)

Legend:
- MLA (yellow)
- MP (black)
- Corporator (pink)
- The Government office responsible for the service (teal)
- Other persons of influence[20] (orange)
- Don't Know/ No answer (green)

Housing Type	MLA	MP	Corporator	The Government office responsible for the service	Other persons of influence	Don't Know/ No answer
HT-1 (Self Built Housing/ Shack)	1		54	8	9	28
HT-2 (Notified Slum)	2		86	2		10
HT-3 (Lower Middle Class)	3	1	92	1	1	2
HT-4 (Upper Middle Class)	6	3	90	1	1	1
HT-5 (Upper Class)	3		95			2

20 Others include- safety and personal security, clean air, public transportation, and housing.

CITIZENSHIP

Key findings

As in all cities, in Ajmer, citizens feel voting is the top responsibility of a citizen in a democracy. Vertical citizenship of respecting processes and institutions is considered of much higher importance in Ajmer, than horizontal citizenship (e.g., respecting fellow citizens, and the community).

There is a huge variation among housing types reporting voter registration, with the responses almost doubling from HT1s to HT5s. However, the biggest increase is between HT1s and HT2s.

VOTE

Citizens' opinions about their responsibilities in a democracy

- Overall, urban residents in our sample have more vertical citizenship than horizontal. By vertical citizenship, we mean how citizens view their rights and obligations vis-a-vis the state, and by horizontal citizenship we mean how citizens view their obligations and rights vis-a-vis fellow citizens.

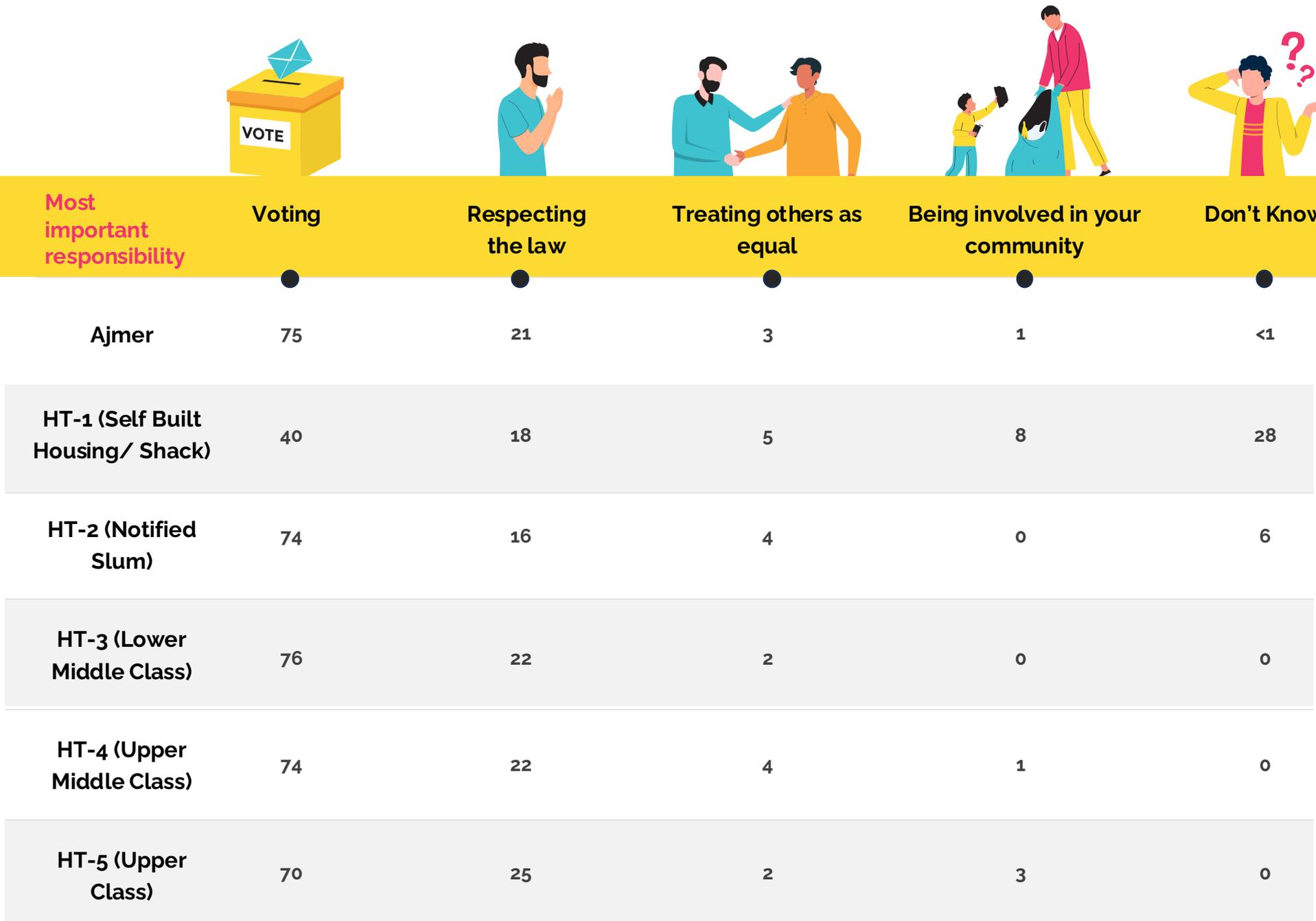- Most Ajmer citizens view their most important responsibility as voting. This response is the second highest among all other cities, second only to Lucknow with a one percentage point difference. That said, only about two-thirds of Ajmer citizens self-report their registration to vote in all elections – the second lowest percentage out of our seven cities.

- The second most important responsibility reported by Ajmer citizens is respecting the law. This is the most common second response to the question, among all the sampled cities.

- Though all housing types report that voting is the most important responsibility of a citizen in a democracy, the increase from HT1 to HT2 for this opinion is a huge 30 percentage points. Though more than one-fourth of HT1 residents report that they do not know.

Table 5: Urban citizens' opinions about the most important responsibility of citizens in a democracy (data in percentages[21])

Most important responsibility	Voting	Respecting the law	Treating others as equal	Being involved in your community	Don't Know
Ajmer	75	21	3	1	<1
Bhopal	73	12	8	5	2
Bhubaneswar	60	34	1	1	3
Delhi	46	23	16	6	9
Jalandhar	46	20	19	7	8
Kolkata	49	26	22	1	2
Lucknow	76	11	7	3	2

21 Total may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 6: Urban Ajmer citizens' opinions about the most important responsibility of citizens in a democracy by housing type (data in percentages)

Most important responsibility	Voting	Respecting the law	Treating others as equal	Being involved in your community	Don't Know
Ajmer	75	21	3	1	<1
HT-1 (Self Built Housing/ Shack)	40	18	5	8	28
HT-2 (Notified Slum)	74	16	4	0	6
HT-3 (Lower Middle Class)	76	22	2	0	0
HT-4 (Upper Middle Class)	74	22	4	1	0
HT-5 (Upper Class)	70	25	2	3	0

Citizens' self-reporting about being registered to vote

Figure 7: Urban citizens' self-reporting about being registered to vote in municipal/state/union elections (data in percentage)

Registered as a voter for union/ state elections

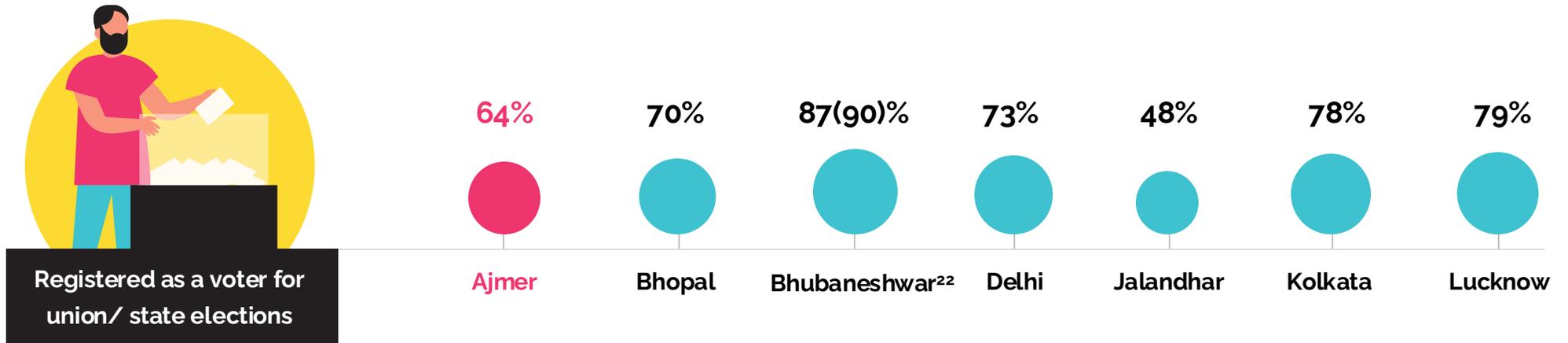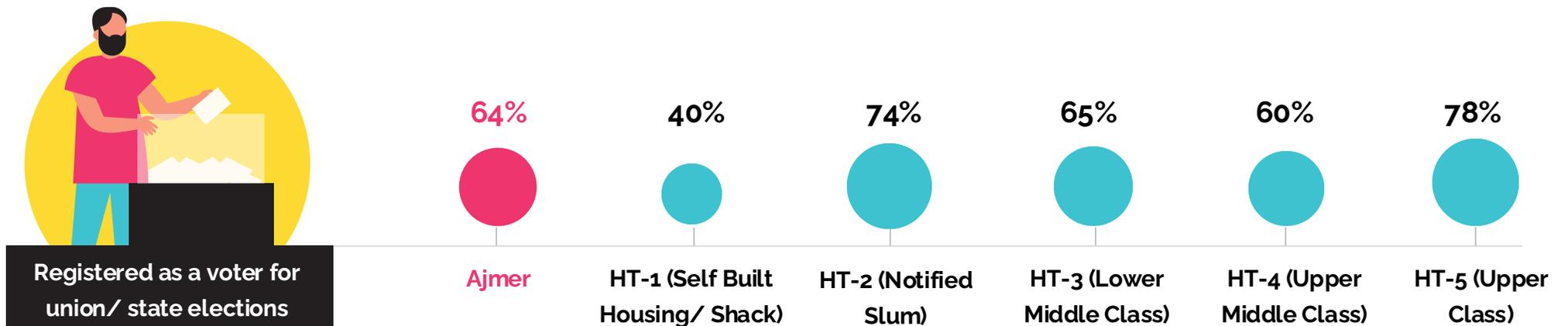| 64%	70%	87(90)%	73%	48%	78%	79%
Ajmer	Bhopal	Bhubaneshwar[22]	Delhi	Jalandhar	Kolkata	Lucknow

Figure 8: Ajmer urban citizens' self-reporting about being registered to vote in municipal/state/union elections by housing type (data in percentage)

Registered as a voter for union/ state elections

64%	40%	74%	65%	60%	78%
Ajmer	HT-1 (Self Built Housing/ Shack)	HT-2 (Notified Slum)	HT-3 (Lower Middle Class)	HT-4 (Upper Middle Class)	HT-5 (Upper Class)

- In Ajmer, over 60 percent citizens report that they are registered to vote for all layers of government. We observe a huge variation among housing types, where the increase from HT1s to HT2s is more than 30 percentage points, and this dips for HT3 and HT4. HT5s report the highest voter registration. HT5s have almost double the self-reported voter registrations than HT1s.

22 In an unstarred question (no.1516) asked in Lok Sabha on 10th February, 2021, the Minister of Law and Justice clarified that all states and union territories are sharing the voter list. Hence, the same electoral rolls are used for national, state, municipal, and panchayat elections. However, in Bhubaneswar local knowledge suggested that separate electoral lists may still be in use, so separate questions were asked about municipal elections. Self-reported voter registration for municipal elections is given in brackets.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Key findings

Ajmer fares among the lowest three cities while comparing the citizen participation scores across the sampled cities, along with Delhi and Jalandhar

As for most urban citizens, Ajmer citizens participate most by voting.

Ajmer citizens have the least awareness about ward committees in the city, among all sampled cities. This is not unsurprising since ward committees have not been actively constituted in any of the Municipal Corporations in the state.
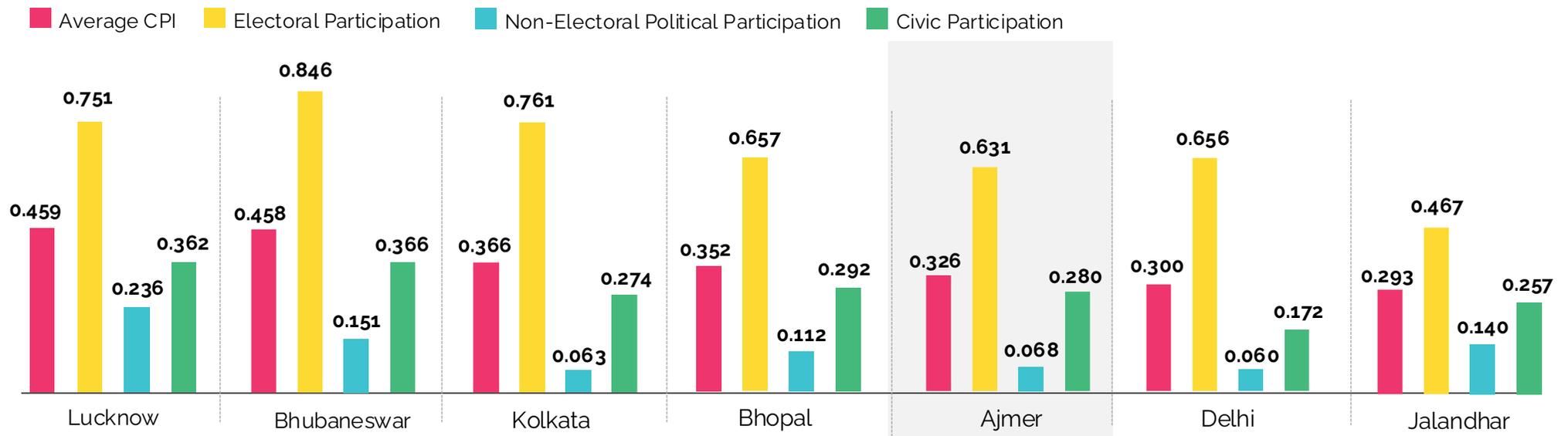
Despite overwhelmingly believing the corporator to be the most important person in ensuring basic service delivery, most residents of Ajmer do not know how to contact them.

Citizen participation

To create a holistic picture of citizen participation, we created a citizen participation index (CPI). The index comprises of three components including political participation (electoral), non-electoral political participation and civic participation. The index is created from the responses to multiple questions. The index calculates a score between 0 and 1, which means that a score closer to zero would signify low participation, and a score of one would mean that the citizen participated in all activities.[23]

Figure 9: Average citizen participation index and components' score by city

■ Average CPI ■ Electoral Participation ■ Non-Electoral Political Participation ■ Civic Participation

	Lucknow	Bhubaneswar	Kolkata	Bhopal	Ajmer	Delhi	Jalandhar
Average CPI	0.459	0.458	0.366	0.352	0.326	0.300	0.293
Electoral Participation	0.751	0.846	0.761	0.657	0.631	0.656	0.467
Non-Electoral Political Participation	0.236	0.151	0.063	0.112	0.068	0.060	0.140
Civic Participation	0.362	0.366	0.274	0.292	0.280	0.172	0.257

Key Findings

01
The city of Ajmer is average-to-low in civic participation, as compared to all other sampled cities.

02
As for most urban citizens, Ajmer citizens participate most by voting, in an average of 2 out of the last 3 elections of different tiers of government

03
Additionally, as is the case in all cities, in Ajmer, citizens participate least in non-electoral political activities such as political rallies or as members of political parties.

23 For more information on the CPI, please refer to Appendix 2.

Table 7: CPI scores by Housing Type

	HT-1 (Self Built Housing/ Shack)	HT-2 (Notified Slum)	HT-3 (Lower Middle Class)	HT-4 (Upper Middle Class)	HT-5 (Upper Class)
Ajmer	0.195	0.323	0.325	0.325	0.369
Bhopal	0.362	0.368	0.347	0.343	0.425
Bhubaneswar	0.267	0.443	0.476	0.461	0.438
Delhi	0.198	0.280	0.299	0.327	0.311
Jalandhar	0.102	0.187	0.309	0.238	0.260
Kolkata	0.353	0.387	0.363	0.343	0.326
Lucknow	0.245	0.403	0.460	0.483	0.448

Key Findings

- Among the urban Ajmer residents, participation is the least in HT1s, with the largest increase between HTs happening as we move from HT1 to HT2s. From there on, participation remains fairly similar to HT4, with a slight increase again for HT5s

- Among the tier- II cities of Jalandhar and Ajmer, the latter scores better in terms of citizen participation compared with Jalandhar

Citizens' awareness of ward committees and engagement with corporators

Table 8: Urban citizen's awareness and attendance in ward committee meetings (data in percentages)

	Aware about ward committees (yes)	If yes, attended ward committee meetings in the last year
Ajmer	4	67
Bhopal	10	68
Bhubaneswar	42	62
Delhi	6	41
Jalandhar	14	53
Kolkata	37	11
Lucknow	25	83

- Ajmer residents are least aware about ward committees,[24] as compared to all the other cities. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India report for Rajasthan (2021)[25] reveals that ward committees have not been constituted in any of the Municipal Corporations, which results in absence of community participation in local governance.

- Among those who are aware of ward committees, more than two-thirds have attended meetings in the last year.

- Among all other sampled cities, Bhubaneswar and Kolkata report much higher percentage of citizen awareness about ward committees.[26]

- More than 70 percent of Ajmer residents do not know how to contact their ward corporator. This is the highest among all the sampled cities. Moreover, close to 60 percent residents have not visited municipal corporator/ward corporator for any service-related issue in the last six months. This is surprising since more than 90 percent citizens report that the corporator is most important in ensuring basic service provision. This juxtaposition is there across cities. None the less, out of all the cities, it is in Ajmer where citizens have most often visited the corporator over the last six months.

24 During the focus group discussions, the participants revealed that they were not aware of ward committees.

25 Audit Reports | Comptroller and Auditor General of India. (n.d.). https://cag.gov.in/en/audit-report/details/115436

26 In Bhubaneswar, though the ward committees (in the strictest sense of what ward committees are) are not that active, it is the slum development associations (SDAs), that are very active, and have been constituted through government intervention. In Kolkata as well, while the area sabhas or ward committees are not very active (in each ward), there are borough committees (constituted for a few wards together) that are much more active.

Figure 10: Urban citizens who don't know how to contact ward corporator (data in percentages)

Ajmer **72**

Bhopal **51**

Bhubaneshwar **15**

Delhi **66**

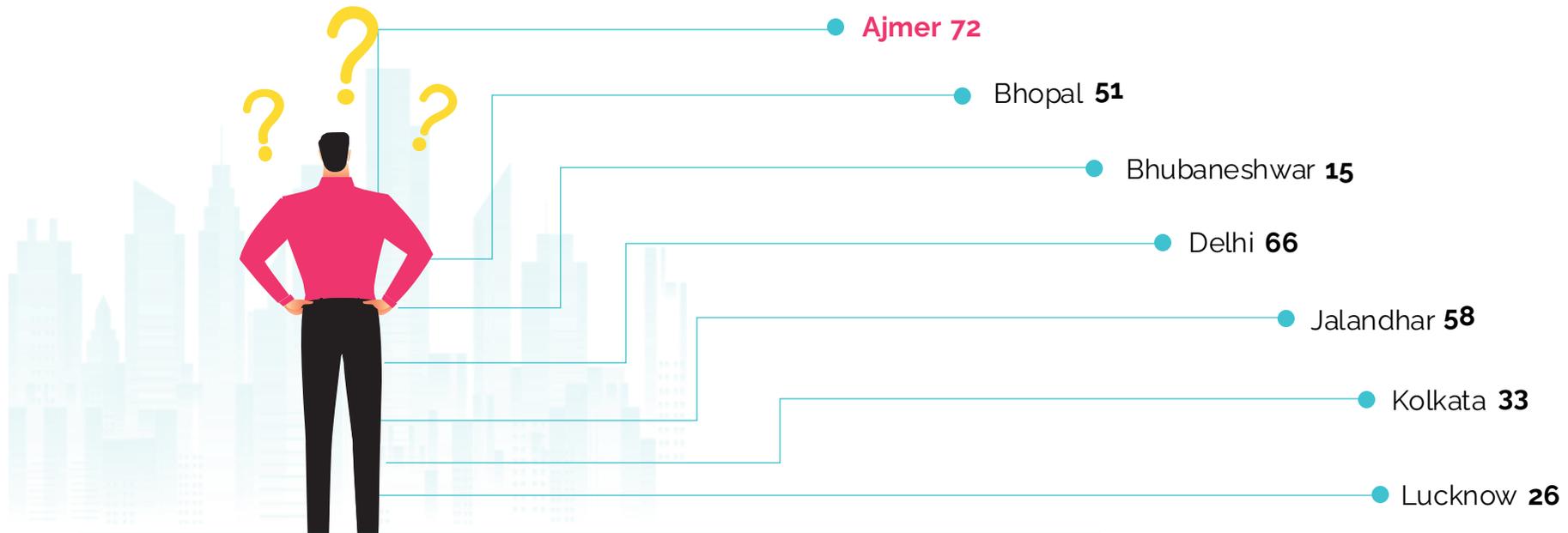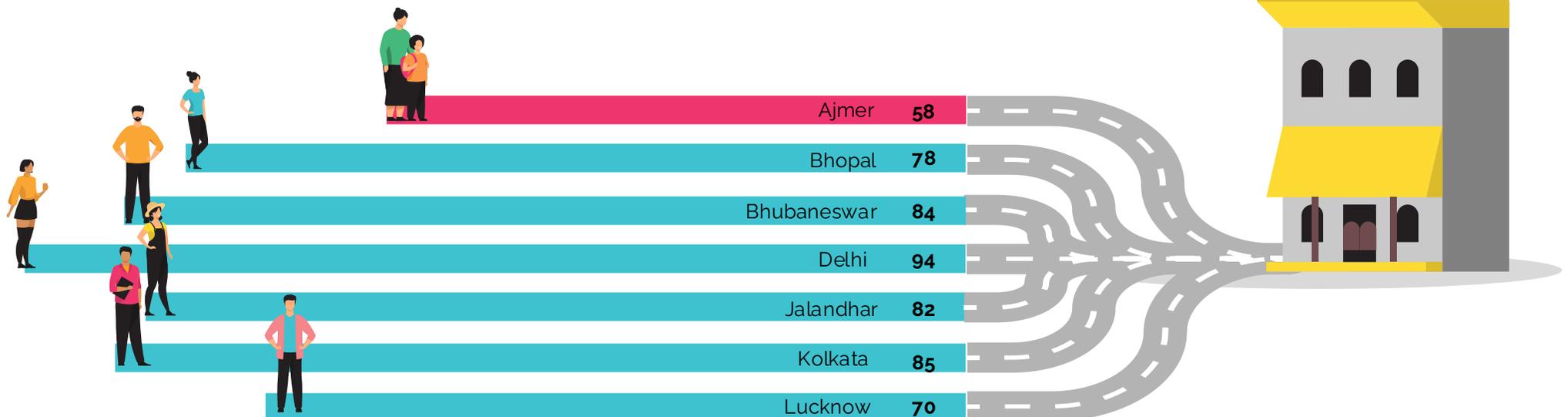Jalandhar **58**

Kolkata **33**

Lucknow **26**

Figure 11: Percentage of urban citizens who have not visited or contacted Municipal Corporator/ Ward Corporator for any service-related issue in the last six months

City	Value
Ajmer	58
Bhopal	78
Bhubaneswar	84
Delhi	94
Jalandhar	82
Kolkata	85
Lucknow	70

BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Key findings

Urban Ajmer fares the best among all cities with regard to the BSDII scores.

For HT2s to HT5s, the coverage of basic services is almost universal.

As we move from the lowest housing type HT1, to HT2, there is a drastic improvement in service delivery for Ajmer residents.

Piper water connections are available to almost all the residents of Ajmer, however, actual supply of water is a challenge.

Almost all the residents of HT1 report compromised sanitation.

Most of the HT1 residents rely on a handpump for water.

Figure 13: BSDII score by city and household types

Basic Service Delivery Index (BSDII)

To provide a composite picture of the quality of basic services, we created an index which was a comprehensive measure of access to services including drinking water, sanitation, electricity, condition of roads in front of the house, and the likelihood of the house getting flooded The index goes from 0 to 1, with :

0- meaning that a household gets no services and is often subject to flooding,

1- meaning continuous 24/7 delivery of water and electricity, a flush toilet that is connected to a sewer line (or septic tank) and does not get clogged, and good roads, and no flooding in the house or neighbourhood (see Appendix 3 for more details).

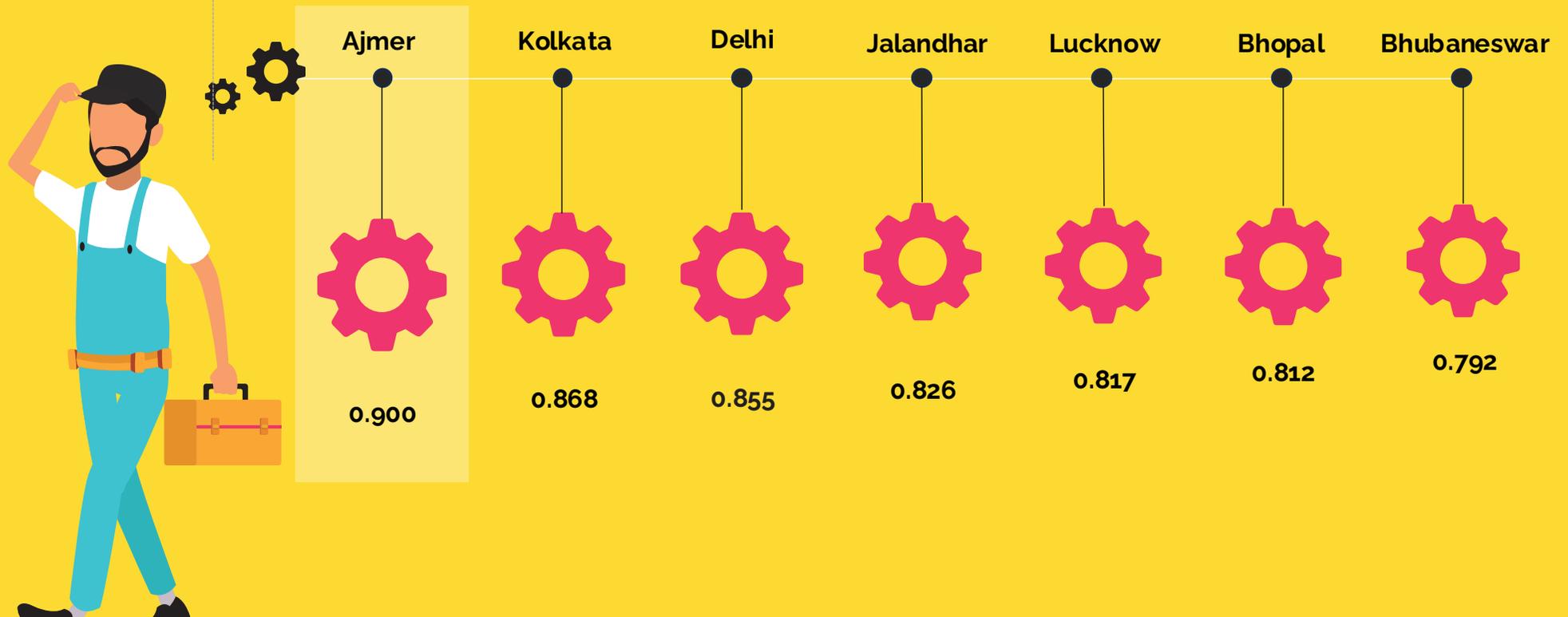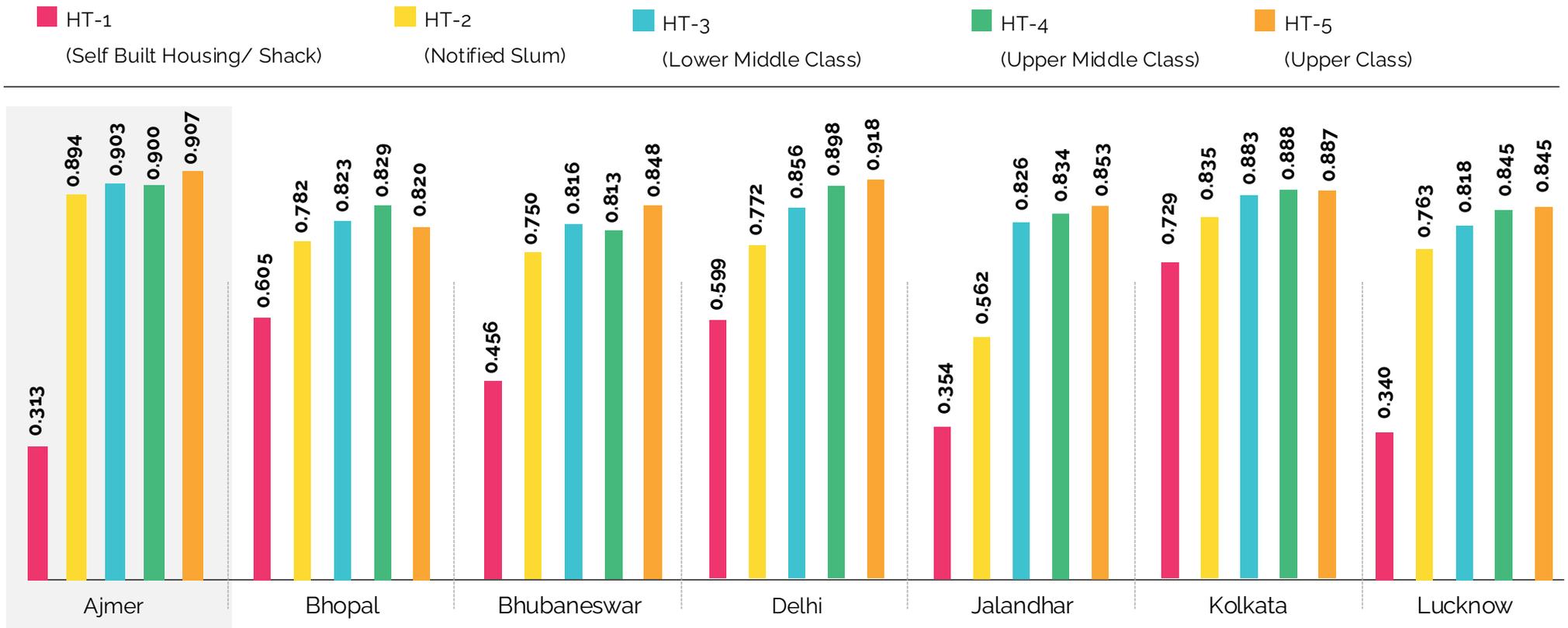**Figure 12:** Basic service delivery index scores for sampled cities

Ajmer	Kolkata	Delhi	Jalandhar	Lucknow	Bhopal	Bhubaneswar
0.900	0.868	0.855	0.826	0.817	0.812	0.792

Figure 13: BSDII score by city and household types

Legend:
- **HT-1** (Self Built Housing/ Shack)
- **HT-2** (Notified Slum)
- **HT-3** (Lower Middle Class)
- **HT-4** (Upper Middle Class)
- **HT-5** (Upper Class)

City	HT-1	HT-2	HT-3	HT-4	HT-5
Ajmer	0.313	0.894	0.903	0.900	0.907
Bhopal	0.605	0.782	0.823	0.829	0.820
Bhubaneswar	0.456	0.750	0.816	0.813	0.848
Delhi	0.599	0.772	0.856	0.898	0.918
Jalandhar	0.354	0.562	0.826	0.834	0.853
Kolkata	0.729	0.835	0.883	0.888	0.887
Lucknow	0.340	0.763	0.818	0.845	0.845

Key Findings

01 Most cities overall report a relatively high BSDII score but these scores are highly differentiated by socio-economic class.

02 Ajmer fares the best among all cities in the BSDII scores.

03 While the BSDII scores are almost uniform and high for all services across housing types, HT1s in Ajmer are a particular notable exception with the lowest services across all HTs and cities in our sample.

Breakdown of basic service provision

Table 9: Availability of basic services (data in percentage)

	Water Supply				Electricity		Sanitation	Road outside house	Flooding during monsoon
	Type of piped water supply (tap + borewell)	Location: inside household premises	Duration: some water on all 7 days of the week	Duration: 2 or more hours, daily	Presence of electricity connection	If electricity connection, % metered	Compromised[27]	Pukka	No flooding
Ajmer	98	100	96	47	96	99	1	97	94
Bhopal	98	94	94	35	97	97	8	89	64
Bhubaneswar	98	96	99	90	99	97	45	90	75
Delhi	100	98	99	87	98	100	2[28]	98	73
Jalandhar	100	99	100	97	98	99	10	95	58
Kolkata	98	82	99	98	98	98	7	99	72
Lucknow	98	96	99	95	96	99	16	93	59

[27] Compromised Sanitation: (1) No Latrine within Premises: (1) Open Defecation (2) Public Latrine (3) Pit Latrine (Open) (4) not connected to any Other System (not connected to a sewer line): Open drainage into the ground or into water body through a covered drain or uncovered drain.

[28] This figure is counter-intuitive from our understanding of the ground realities. There may have been some mis-interpretation of the question when translated into Hindi and this is being explored.
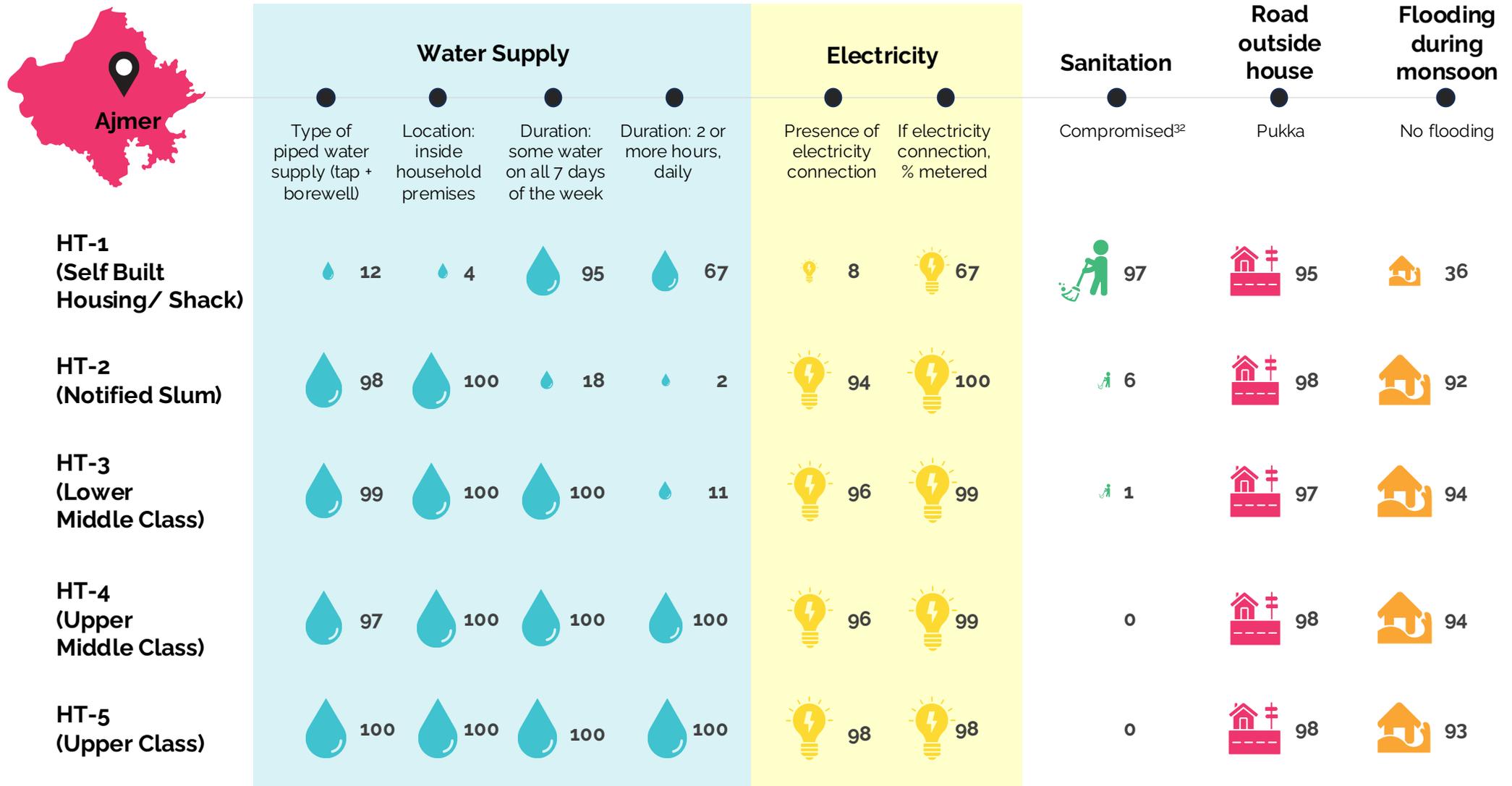
- Compared with our other sampled cities, Ajmer city is better in providing uncompromised sanitation connections across the city and for availability of a piped water connection to its citizens (not withstanding actual water supply issues).

- However, services are disproportionately distributed with HT1s facing a particular disadvantage in provision of water, sanitation, as well as electricity. Less than 10 percent of the HT1 residents say that they have electricity connections, out of which more than 30 percent are not metered.[29]

- Almost three-fourths of the HT1 residents in Ajmer rely on water through a handpump.[30]

- For Ajmer, almost all HT1s reported practicing open defecation, except a small number who report having access to piped sanitation.[31]

- We observe a huge positive shift from HT1s to HT2s in provision of services, and universal coverage. This trend continues for all subsequent housing types.
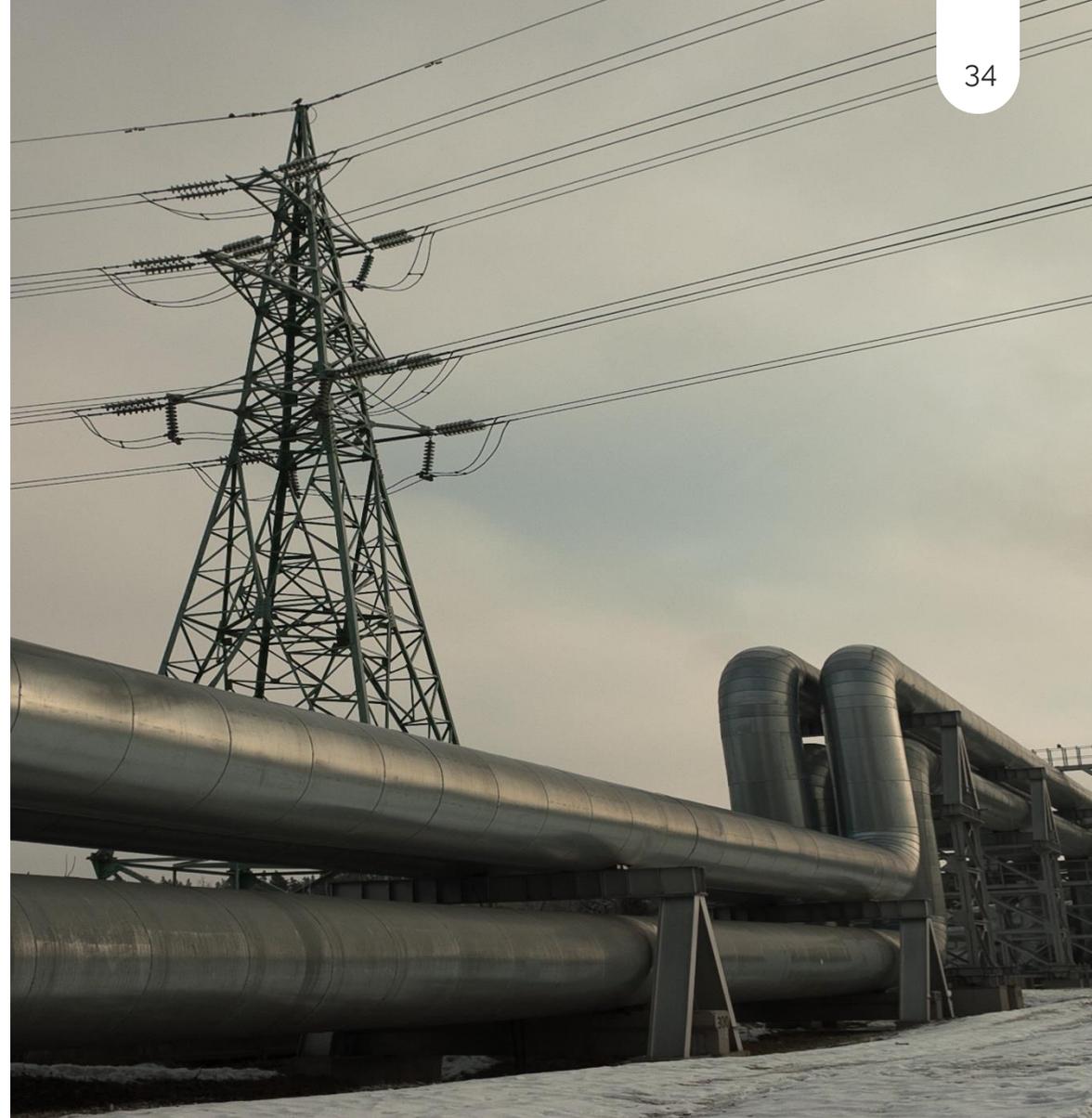
[29] During the FGDs, it was revealed that though most participants had a metered electricity connection, they did not know which agency provides electricity. While there were regular power outages in one of the neighbourhoods, and things got worse during the summer months, there were no such issues reported in the other neighbourhood.

[30] Within the two group FGD, there were similarities in water availability, and storage, where most of the participants reported receiving water through community taps, and just for half an hour per day. They used buckets and drums for water storage. However, while one group reported using strainers or filters since the water received was not potable, the other group said that the water they received was potable. Nearly all participants paid for water.

[31] During the focus group discussions, both neighbourhoods had a few people who had proper sanitation connected to a septic tank, while one group reported more open defecation than the other. A few of them reported getting washrooms on rent (paying Rs.600/ month). No one was using the Swachh Bharat scheme for toilets. Group disparities were noticed during FGD, where one group reported waste segregation and waste collection at household level, while the other group revealed no waste segregation and collection of garbage only from a few households.

Table 10: Availability of basic services in / around the houses of Ajmer citizens by housing type (data in percentage)

Ajmer

	Water Supply				Electricity		Sanitation	Road outside house	Flooding during monsoon
	Type of piped water supply (tap + borewell)	Location: inside household premises	Duration: some water on all 7 days of the week	Duration: 2 or more hours, daily	Presence of electricity connection	If electricity connection, % metered	Compromised[32]	Pukka	No flooding
HT-1 (Self Built Housing/ Shack)	12	4	95	67	8	67	97	95	36
HT-2 (Notified Slum)	98	100	18	2	94	100	6	98	92
HT-3 (Lower Middle Class)	99	100	100	11	96	99	1	97	94
HT-4 (Upper Middle Class)	97	100	100	100	96	99	0	98	94
HT-5 (Upper Class)	100	100	100	100	98	98	0	98	93

32 Compromised Sanitation: (1) No Latrine within Premises: (1) Open Defecation (2) Public Latrine (3) Pit Latrine (Open) (4) not connected to any Other System (not connected to a sewer line): Open drainage into the ground or into water body through a covered drain or uncovered drain.

Relationship between citizen participation and service delivery

For assessing the potential impact of participation on service delivery we begin by comparing the citizen participation index scores with the basic service delivery and infrastructure index scores for all cities.

Table 11: Comparison of CPI and BSDII scores by city

	Lucknow	Bhubaneswar	Kolkata	Bhopal	Ajmer	Delhi	Jalandhar
CPI	0.459	0.458	0.366	0.352	0.326	0.300	0.293
BSDII	0.817	0.792	0.868	0.812	0.900	0.855	0.826

Ajmer city stands at third from last for the CPI scores, among all cities; but has the best BSDII score. We also notice that Lucknow tops the list for CPI scores but is third from last of the BSDII score. However, when we look specifically within cities, we see a much more nuanced and clearer picture emerge. As can be seen in Figure 14, in all cities, except Kolkata, those citizens who have above average participation scores, also have higher BSDII scores.
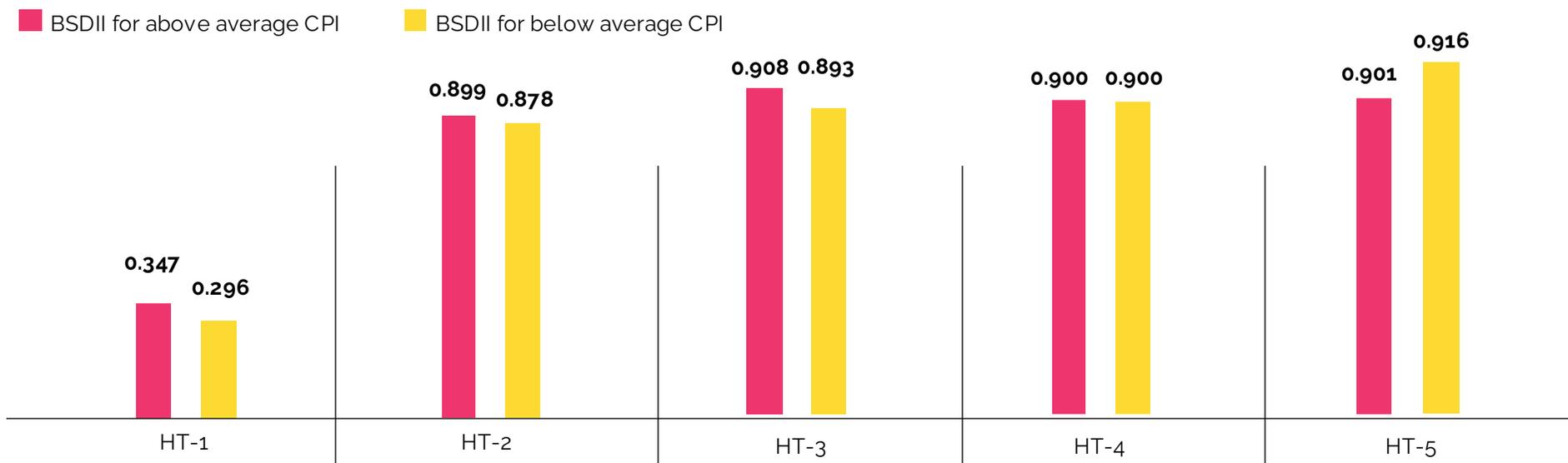
Figure 14: Above and Below average CPI scores, and corresponding BSDII scores

■ BSDII for above average CPI   ■ BSDII for below average CPI

City	BSDII for above average CPI	BSDII for below average CPI
Lucknow	0.821	0.760
Bhubaneswar	0.788	0.753
Kolkata	0.856	0.865
Bhopal	0.804	0.789
Ajmer	0.874	0.785
Delhi	0.858	0.769
Jalandhar	0.809	0.785

0

When we look at the same distinction of high/low participation within different housing types in Ajmer city, we see some particular differentiation of service and infrastructure delivery, notably by those residing in HT1s.

Generally speaking, across cities, as we have seen, the BSDII scores improve as we go up the housing ladder. In all cities, the largest jump in improved services is from HT1 to HT2. What is particularly interesting however, is that in HT1s in all cities, except Bhopal, those who participate more, have better services. This differentiation that participation makes is seen most strongly in HT1s as compared with other HTs, regardless of city. It is important to note that the findings in this section describe the overall relationships found within the data. These need further exploration and context on a city-by-city basis.

Figure 15: BSDII scores split by high/low participation and housing type in Ajmer

Legend:
- BSDII for above average CPI
- BSDII for below average CPI

| Housing Type	BSDII above average CPI	BSDII below average CPI
HT-1	0.347	0.296
HT-2	0.899	0.878
HT-3	0.908	0.893
HT-4	0.900	0.900
HT-5	0.901	0.916

WAY FORWARD

Urban Ajmer residents have the highest score in basic service delivery, as compared to all other sampled cities. Service delivery is lowest for those residing in shacks (HT1s), as is the case across cities, with a marked improvement even as you move to those residing in slums (HT2s). At the same time, citizen participation is about average in Ajmer, compared with other cities and characterized mostly by voting and civic and community activities, rather than non-electoral, political activities. Whereas participation is greatest in Ajmer among those in HT5s, there is hardly any difference in participation scores of HT2 – 4. In Ajmer, the trend suggests that as citizen participation increases, there is improvement in basic service delivery, and this is most prevalent within HT1s. However, this relationship needs further exploration.

Improve transparency, accountability and participation

While citizen participation is average in Ajmer, to enhance it further there are a series of innovations that can be brought in from the policy perspective as well as implementation of already existing regulations. These include:

- Mandating the constitution of ward committees and area sabhas and notifying the rules for the same.

- Amending the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009 to mandate:

  i. **Participatory budgeting/public consultation** as part of municipal budgeting and notify corresponding rules to institutionalize the same and ensure continuity.

  ii. The Ajmer Municipal Corporation (AMC) to conduct an **annual internal audit** of processes and internal controls and mandate the **publication of the internal audit report in public domain.**

  iii. The AMC to adopt **open data standards and publish key financial and operational data in open data format on the city government websites at regular intervals.**

  iv. **Formulate a citizen charter** providing for target **levels of services,** with time-bound service delivery and penal consequences and compensation for non-adherence along with other such relevant information.

  v. The AMC to have a **digital governance policy/roadmap,** as a tool of accountability and grievance redressal.

- Amending the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009 to provide for a Municipal Ombudsman, to redress citizen grievances related to service delivery and failure of civic agencies and empower the Ombudsman to investigate corruption suo motu and resolve inter-agency disputes.

- Enacting a state Public Disclosure Bill to be compliant with the model public disclosure law, that mandates disclosure of: audited financial statements, particulars of major public works, minutes of meetings, service level benchmarks, major works done, plan and budget details, etc.
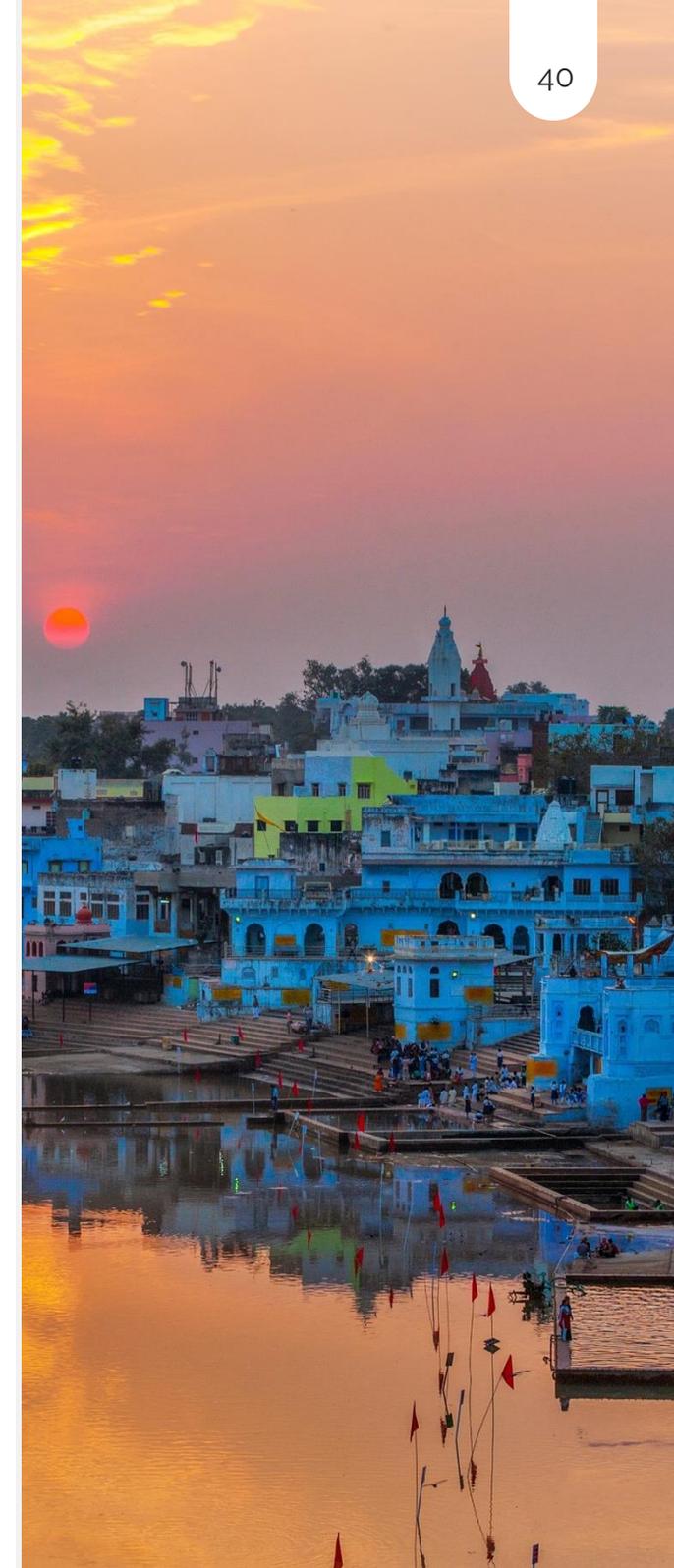
Fix other City-Systems

As described in the introduction of this report, the ability of a city to delivery good quality of life depends on the laws, policies, institutions and institutional processes that underpin urban governance. To conceptualize these factors, diagnose urban problems and - more importantly - solve them, we need to view them in a systems framework. The "City-Systems" framework is a framework created by Janaagraha that helps us identify the root causes of our urban challenges and its components are regularly reviewed through the Annual Survey of India's City Systems (ASICS).[33] 'Transparency, Accountability and Participation' is a key component of the City-Systems framework. However, there are three other key areas under which reforms and amends need to be considered which would help to strengthen the governance system to deliver good quality of life to citizens in Ajmer. These include **urban planning and design, urban capacities and resources and empowered and legitimate political representation.**

[33] Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (2017): Annual Survey of India's City-Systems – Shaping India's Urban Agenda. Available: https://www.janaagraha.org/asics/report/ASICS-report-2017-fin.pdf [accessed 15-05-2023].

Urban planning and design

As mentioned in ASICS (2017, p. 8),[34] 'well-made and well-executed Spatial Development Plans (SDP) lie at the heart of economically vibrant, equitable, environmentally sustainable and democratically engaged cities. India's cities suffer from acute lack of planning.'

Relevant to Ajmer therefore, the Rajasthan Urban Improvement Act, 1959 can be amended to mandate decentralized planning at all levels..In addition, it can be amended to include the participation of parastatals, civic agencies and the public in the planning process through formal platforms like ward committees and area sabhas. Also, to ensure plan enforcement, the act can be amended to prevent approval of plans not in conformity with the spatial plan, ensure effective monitoring systems for ongoing projects and strengthen penalization provisions for plan violations. A technical cell can be constituted to implement spatial development plans, and may also assist with sector specific and design specific planning, for sanitation, roads, footpaths, public utilities, etc. The government should also notify rules for the constitution of a Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC). Rules should be notified for Rajasthan's land titling policy through the Rajasthan Urban Land (Certification of Titles) Act, 2016, to eliminate any ambiguity about property ownership and to help in speeding up land transactions.

[34] Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (2017): Annual Survey of India's City-Systems – Shaping India's Urban Agenda. Available: https://www.janaagraha.org/asics/report/ASICS-report-2017-fin.pdf [accessed 15-05-2023].

Urban capacities and resources – finance and human resources

ASICS (2017) also highlights the need for large amounts of capital to be available for cities to invest. These investments need to be in bridging the gaps in current infrastructure as well as new developments. Additionally, it's needed for revenue expenditure such as operations and maintenance (including HR) and hiring of talent to deliver the same.

Pertinent to Ajmer, amendments can be made to the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009 to empower city governments to levy and collect profession and advertisement tax, and mandate creation of medium-term fiscal plans to ensure fiscal prudence. Furthermore, the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009 should mandate medium-term and annual workforce plans that align to the fiscal plans put forth by the State Finance Commissions; and should be underpinned by a Performance Management System (PMS) with quantitative performance metrics at the staff and department level. The city commissioner should have a minimum tenure of 2 years, and there should be proper induction and periodic training of municipal officials.

Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation

Mayors and Councillors in Indian cities don't have full decision-making authority over critical functions and services such as planning, housing, water, environment, fire and emergency services etc.'(ASICS, 2017, p. 14).[35] As per Comptroller and Auditor General's performance audit report,[36] city governments in Rajasthan are solely responsible for only two functions, have overlapping jurisdiction with other civic agencies/ state departments over 11 functions, and are mere implementing agency of four functions. The Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009 should be amended to **devolve all 18 functions as as obligatory/mandatory functions as per the 12th schedule.**

The Act can also be amended to empower city governments in the state to assess their own staff requirement and in particular empower the Mayor/Council with the authority to appoint the Municipal Commissioner. A directly elected Mayor should be mandated, for a term of 5 years. City governments should also be empowered with the final budget approving authority. Since the State Election Commission (SEC) is responsible for conducting the municipal elections, and the ward delimitation is a political exercise, it is suggested that the SEC could be empowered further on ward delimitation as well, as the exercise should be undertaken by an independent and autonomous body.

35 Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (2017): Annual Survey of India's City-Systems – Shaping India's Urban Agenda. Available: https://www.janaagraha.org/asics/report/ASICS-report-2017-fin.pdf [accessed 15-05-2023].

36 Audit Reports | Comptroller and Auditor General of India. (n.d.). https://cag.gov.in/en/audit-report/details/115436

APPENDIX 1

Methodology

Key respondent interviews

Key respondents were interviewed in each city, before the start of the formal quantitative survey, to understand the local context on service provision, municipal and urban issues faced by the city, and also to get specific information on wards and neighbourhoods for sampling purposes.

In Ajmer, the key respondent interviews were conducted in March 2021. As mentioned earlier, we spoke to Municipal Commissioners, Mayors of the city, and in some instances local and state level elected representatives as well

Focused group discussions

In Ajmer, the focused group discussions (FGDs) took place on 27th March 2021. The two discussions were held in neighbourhoods with marginalised communities. As part of the discussions, the respondents were asked questions on basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation, health and education etc. in their neighbourhood. A few points on their local corporator, as well as the access to BPL cards, Aadhaar cards etc. were also noted during the discussions. These FGDs took place after the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hence, questions related to Covid were asked. Questions related to the pandemic were also included in the quantitative survey.

Large, quantitative, representative household surveys

Sampling: We employed a multi-stage stratified systematic random sampling strategy that stratified polling parts to generate a representative sample of polling parts across each city taking care to ensure citizens from marginalised communities were included. After identifying the wards and assembly constituencies falling within the city municipal corporation area, and all polling parts within each of these political-administrative units, the polling parts were stratified.

Household listing and classification: Listing and categorization of all houses within a sampled polling part was done by a field team which literally walked through the entire area identified in the base maps and drew the buildings onto the base maps and assigned the housing type. The listed data thus provided a full inventory of all the households located in our geographically delineated sections of our randomly selected polling parts giving us a complete distribution of residential structures by housing type classification and formed the sampling frame from which we ultimately selected households.

Each sampled polling part in the city was mapped in a spatial manner, and each building was allocated a Housing Type (HT Category - HT1 are un-notified slums/ shacks, HT2 are informal settlements or slums, HT3 are the lower middle-class housing, apartments, mostly single floor, made of only concrete, HT4 include middle-class housing of independent houses or apartment buildings, and HT5 are upper class Housing, including apartment complexes/gated communities with amenities.)

Survey: The quantitative survey in Ajmer was conducted after the second phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in Hindi, and through CAPI method (computer-assisted personal interviews). Since Ajmer was a smaller tier-II city, the targeted sample was 1000 respondents. However, we achieved a total sample of 1030 respondents at the end of the survey.

Weighting and index creation:

Rake weighting (or iterative proportional fitting) was used to create weights that are unique to each city. We have chosen to reweight the sample data according to the respondents' housing type (at the structure level from our household listings). From our previous work, we know that our housing type measure is the biggest predictor among all our socio-economic variables for levels of service delivery and citizenship. As a principle, weighting necessitates that there are reliable population margins for all categories of a variable upon which one seeks to adjust one's data.[37] Since we lack reliable population counts for OBCs and General/Forward Castes (the census only reports SC/ST), we cannot adjust our data using Census data. Given the relatively poor economic conditions of many individuals belonging to SC/ST groups, we expect that weighting along the housing type will reduce bias and make our sample more representative. Note that our household listing data, collected between 2021-2022 in 7 project cities, provides a comprehensive, census-like account of the distribution of dwelling types in each city at the structure and unit/household level.

We did not weight on gender because the focus of the survey is on the household, rather than individual level, and so should not greatly affect results. Empirically, religion and gender weights were shown not to significantly affect the reported results for a representative subset of the questionnaire. We have reason to believe that reweighting along housing type mitigates the effect of higher proportions of Dalits and Adivasis. From a theoretical perspective, housing type serves as a reasonable proxy for socioeconomic status. Given the relatively poor economic condition of many individuals belonging to SC/ST groups, we expect that weighting along housing type will reduce bias introduced through larger proportions of this subpopulation.[38]

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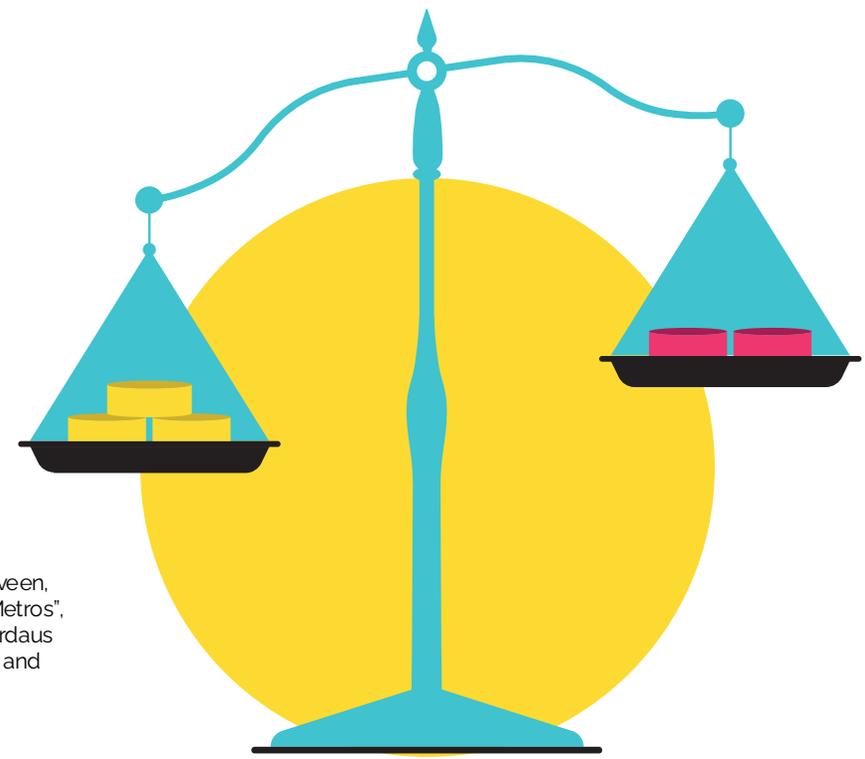
37 Solon, Gary; Steven J. Haider, and Jeffrey M. Wooldridge. 2015. "What Are We Weighting For?," Journal of Human Resources, 50(2): 301-316.

38 There is evidence emerging in the literature on segregation and housing type. For more, read Bharathi, Naveen, Deepak Malghan and Andaleeb Rahman (2019), "Neighbourhood-scale Residential Segregation in Indian Metros", Economic and Political Weekly, 54(30):64-70. Thorat, Sukhadeo, Anuradha Banerjee, Vinod K Mishra and Firdaus Rizvi (2015), "Urban Rental Housing Market", Economic and Political Weekly, 27:47-53. and Vithayathil, Trina and Gayatri Singh (2012), "Spaces of Discrimination", Economic and Political Weekly, 47(37):60-66

APPENDIX 2

Construction of the Citizen Participation Index (CPI)

The CPI has three components:
(1) Electoral participation,
(2) Non-electoral participation, and,
(3) Civic participation.

(1) Electoral participation – Voting in national, state, and municipal elections is coded 1 if a respondent voted in an election and 0 otherwise;

(2) Non-voting participation includes whether a respondent is a party member, contributes time during election campaigns, attends political rallies and meetings between elections, and discusses specific candidates among family, friends, and others within the community. Each of these elements takes the form of a dummy variable and is coded 1 for "yes" and 0 if "no".

(3) Civic participation that includes whether a respondent attends ward committee meetings, holds membership in non-political, non-government organizations and associations, and perceptions of community participation in preventing harassment of women in the neighbourhood. Each of these is coded 1 if "yes" and 0 if "no".

While the end-points of the index mark the two extremes of citizen participation - no participation to full participation, and are clear to understand, the values in-between represent different combinations of the three components of participation.

APPENDIX 3

Construction of Basic Service Delivery and Infrastructure Index (BSDII)

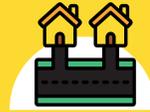**1. Water**   **2. Sanitation**   **3. Electricity**   **4. Flooding /water-logging**   **5. Type of Road**

The BSDII is based on 5 dimensions of household infrastructure:

1. Water infrastructure component of BSDII comprises of:

   i. Access to water,
   ii. Convenience in accessing water,
   iii. The usability of the water a household receives,
   iv. The ability (and methods) of households to store water, and
   v. The frequency of water supply for a household.

2. The electricity infrastructure dimension is based on three elements of electricity supply.

   i. Does a household have power?,
   ii. How often are there power outages in a week?, and
   iii. How many hours does a household go without power during such outages?

3. In order to measure sanitation infrastructure in a household we consider the following elements,

   i. The type of toilet a household has and (among those with a modern sanitation system connected to a main sewer line),
   ii. Whether, and how often, the line connecting the household to the main sewer gets blocked.

4. In order to measure the vulnerability of households to flooding and water logging during monsoon we asked:

   i. Does the ground floor of the building you live in get flooded during monsoon?

5. We measure the type of road by classifying it into: paved (pucca) or unpaved (kuccha).

BSDII assigns equal weights to the three components that are directly connected to household infrastructure - water, power, and sanitation, and half-weights to flooding and roads. Implicit is the notion that the first three components "count" more for a household than the latter two. Our index equation is therefore:

BSDII = [(Water) + (Power) + (Sanitation) + 0.5*(Flooding) + 0.5*(Road)]/4

About Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy

Janaagraha is a non-profit trust working towards the mission of transforming the quality of life in India's cities and towns. It works with citizens to catalyze active citizenship in city neighbourhoods and with governments to institute reforms to city governance (what we call "City-Systems"). Civic Participation, City Finance, and Urban Policy & Research are Janaagraha's three major strands of work to accomplish its mission.

The interpretation of the survey and results as presented are entirely those of Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy.

Ajmer