



US-INDIA POLICY INSTITUTE
DEVELOPMENT • DEMOCRACY • DIVERSITY

HIGHER LEVEL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Inter-generational
& Regional
Differentials

Washington, DC

usipi.org • info@usindiapolicy.org

20
22

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

AUTHORS	Attaulla Khan	Associate Fellow, US-India Policy Institute
	Shahidur R Talukdar	Research Fellow, US-India Policy Institute
	Ameerah Langer	Consultant, US-India Policy Institute
DATA & EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS	Amit Sharma	Research Fellow, US-India Policy Institute
GUIDANCE	Dr. Abusaleh Shariff	Chief Scholar, US-India Policy Institute Center for Research and Debates in Development Policy

US-India Policy Institute (USIPI) is a Washington, DC based non-profit organization undertaking policy research on diversity and inclusive development in India and the US. USIPI's vision for equal access to freedom, justice and opportunity in India rests on its three pillars:

1. Research and Documentation - to produce actionable information and evidence-based policies;
2. Capacity Building - to uplift early career researchers, youth and community-based advocates; and
3. Collaboration - with non-profit organizations based in India to create innovative and data driven interventions at the macro level.

The data analyzed in this report stems from the NSS 71st round Social Consumption: Education Data (2014), which was collected between January to June 2014. The 2014 government survey is the latest publicly available data on higher level education in India at the time of this analysis. USIPI published a similar report (Shariff and Sharma, 2013) using NSS data from 2008 and is referenced here to compare progress over time. In sections that refer to regions, the states are grouped as follows:

- **North India (IN):** Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab
- **North East India (NE):** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura
- **West India (WI):** Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra
- **North Central India (NCI):** Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal
- **Central India (CI):** Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan
- **South India (SI):** Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Telangana

Edition	USIPI Occasional Paper No: 22-02 • August, 2022.
Copyright ©	All rights reserved with USIPI. USIPI welcomes your comments. You can send your comments by emailing us at info@usindiapolicy.org or write to the following address: 1717 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 1025, Washington DC 20006
Publisher	US-India Policy Institute
Suggested citation:	Higher Level Education in India: Inter-generational & Regional Differentials, Washington DC: US-India Policy Institute, 2022. www.usipi.org • info@usindiapolicy.org

Our Supporting Partners



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes the last publicly available dataset on HLE in India, which was collected 8 years ago in the NSSO 71st round survey in 2014. Based on said data, this report finds that by 2014, 7.3% of the Indian population attained higher level education (HLE), which is a significant improvement compared to 2007-08, when the HLE attainment rate was only 4.7%.

The Union Territories (UT) typically show greater HLE attainments than most states; Delhi has the highest HLE attainment rate (21.9%) of any state/UT, Bihar has the lowest (2.9%); and the median HLE attainment is 8.1%.

Regional Differences

Regional comparison shows that North India (NI) has the highest HLE attainment (11.5%), followed by West India (9.6%), and South India (SI) (9.4%); North Central India (NCI) has an HLE attainment rate of 5.6%, Central India (CI) has 5.4% and Northeast India (NE) has 5.1%.

Urban-Rural Divide

In all states, urban residents have greater HLE attainments, compared to their rural counterparts; whereas 15.7% people from urban areas nationwide attained HLE, only 3.7% of those living in rural areas acquired HLE.

Intergenerational Context

In most states/UTs – except Tripura and Daman and Diu – greater percentages of current generation population (aged 22-35 years) attained HLE compared to the past generation (36+ years).

Gender Differences

Current generation men and women acquired higher levels of HLE (men 19.1% and women 13.8%) than the past generation (men 8.9% and women 5.7%). HLE attainment has also increased by 7.3% among men and 8.7% among women.

(Non-)Technical Subjects

Only 4% Indians attained technical HLE, whereas 8.5% attained HLE in non-technical fields. Women attained non-technical HLE in greater percentage (8.9%) than men (8.1%). Nationally, rural areas have 2.3% attainment in technical HLE compared to 8% in urban areas.

Socio-Religious Communities

Among all socio religious communities (SRCs), Hindu SC/ST communities had the lowest HLE attainment (3.3%), whereas general or upper caste Hindu communities had the highest HLE attainment (16.1%) of all communities.

Muslims have very low attainment in higher education; the community lags behind most communities with a mere 3.5% HLE attainment rate.

Figure ES1: States with highest and lowest HLE attainment

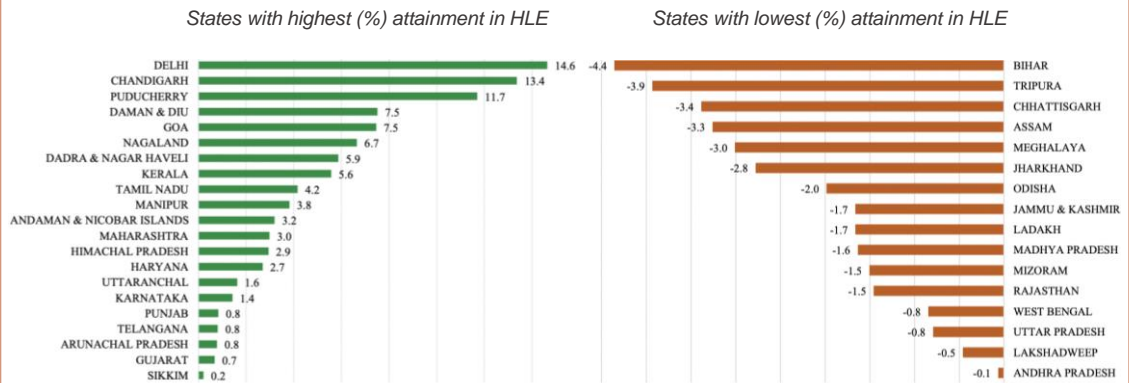
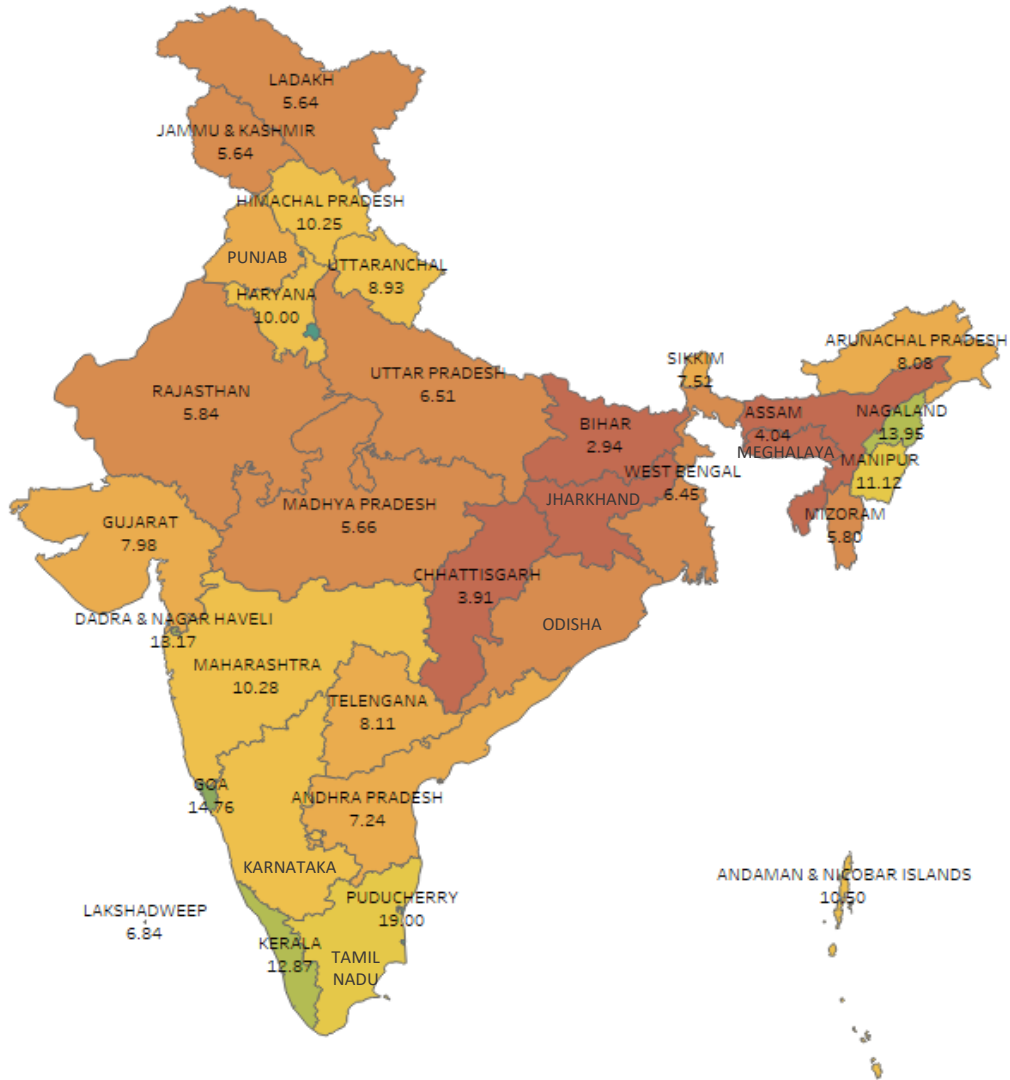


Figure ES2: Level of HLE attainment by state



INTRODUCTION

Education Is The Catalyst For India's Prosperity

Higher level education (HLE) – that is, formal post-secondary education such as a bachelor's degree – is a key for the personal development of young adults. On the individual level, HLE broadens the student's knowledge and experience, which in turn acts as a catalyst for not just for better career opportunities and a higher disposable income, but also better health, higher life expectancy, increased happiness and overall improvement in quality of life.

On the country-level, HLE is essential as it equips students with essential training to become doctors, teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists, and other specialized personnel. These specialists are the ones empowering communities in India, driving local economies, boosting the country's competitive advantage on the global stage, and teaching the next generation Indian leaders as part of a virtuous prosperity cycle.

“Educationists should build the capacities of the spirit of inquiry, creativity, entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students and become their role model.”

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
First Minister of Education, India

This quote from India's first Minister of Education is a great illustration of just how crucial education is for every aspect of a student's development. The implications of HLE in light of this quote are particularly vast in the context of India, a country that is characterized by one of the highest levels of cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in the world. Diversity and inclusion are therefore an integral part of HLE, being interwoven first with an individual's mindset and capabilities and with it those of society at large.

The Purpose Of This Report

The bridge between understanding the importance of HLE and the acceleration of India on the global stage is data. Only by having a detailed, quantified understanding of reality can HLE be assessed and, where needed, adjusted.

To this end, the *USIPI Higher Level Education Report (2022)* has analyzed the latest publicly available dataset on HLE in India, which was collected in the NSSO 71st round survey in 2014. While the fact that the last dataset was collected 8 years ago creates its own challenges, it is still beneficial to analyze the most recent data in order to create actionable findings. As such, this Report is divided into six chapters, each highlighting a particular perspective:

1. Regional Differences
2. The Urban-Rural Divide
3. Intergenerational Context
4. Gender Difference
5. Socio-Religious Communities
6. Technical vs. Non-technical subjects

All in all, the *USIPI Higher Level Education Report (2022)*, with its impact research, intends to build a shared understanding of the situation faced by minority and marginalized communities living in India. Leveraging the data from this report, policymakers, NGOs, community leaders, and the general public are able to make actionable decisions to improve HLE for all of India.



REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

To start things off, this first chapter provides a macro overview of higher level education (HLE) grouped by regions. This birds eye perspective will set the tone for all further investigations as it sets the larger context.

The detailed state-by-state division into regions can be found on page i, 'About this Publication'.

Figures 1 and 2 show HLE attainment by region; first in the form of a map and then as a table with assigned percentages. The map follows a logical color code that starts off with a dark green (North India) and continues towards the darkest red (North East India).

Based on these data points, it becomes clear that the highest HLE attainment is in the North Indian (NI) region (11.5%), followed by West India (WI) (9.6%), and South India (SI) (9.4%), whereas Northeast India (NE) region has the lowest HLE attainment (5.1%). The Central India (CI) (5.4%) and North Central India (NCI) (5.6%) regions also have comparatively low HLE attainment compared to SI, WI, or NI regions. However, HLE attainment in any region is not uniform; it varies significantly by state.

Figure 1: HLE attainment map by region & state

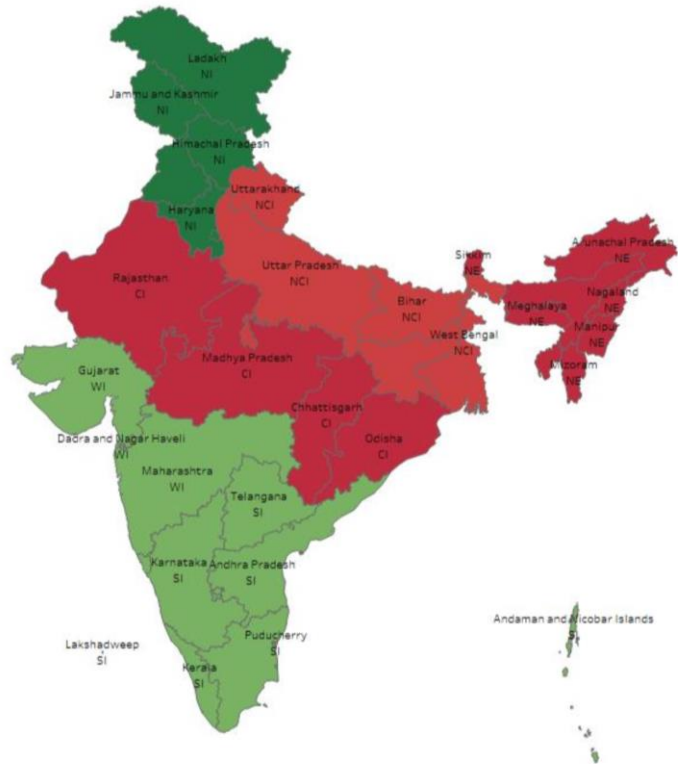
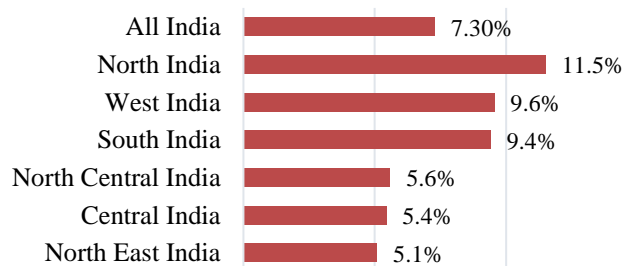


Figure 2: HLE attainment map by region



For example, in the North India (NI) region, the average HLE attainment rate is 11.5%, which is significantly higher than the national average and the highest among all regions. However, in the NI region, Jammu and Kashmir has much lower HLE attainment compared to other states/UTs such as Delhi or Chandigarh.

Combined Perspectives

The pattern of HLE attainment by region becomes even clearer when assessed against the level of education achieved by each state within it. As **Figure 3** shows, regions do not exclusively form clusters based on mere geography. For instance, the below-level HLE attainment in Central India (CI) with less than 7.3% is not just a region-wide phenomenon, but manifested in each individual state where HLE levels range from 3.91% in Chhattisgarh to a maximum of 5.84% in Rajasthan.

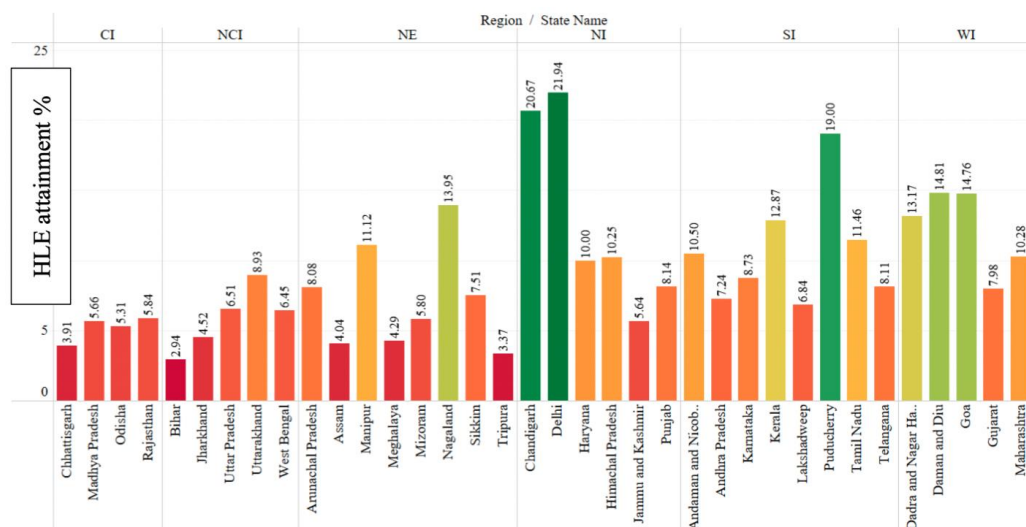
Similarly, in the North Central region (NCI), with the exception of Uttarakhand, all other states have below average HLE attainments. In the North East (NE) region, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura have HLE attainment below the national average, whereas states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Nagaland have higher than average HLE attainments.

In North India (NI), except Jammu and Kashmir, all other states have HLE attainment rates higher than that of the national average. In south (SI), except, Lakshadweep, all other states have higher than average HLE attainments. In the west (WI), all the states have HLE attainments higher than the national average.

One interesting observation is that UTs tend to have relatively high levels of attainments in HLE. For example, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Delhi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Puducherry all have HLE attainments 10% or more.

Among the states, Manipur, Nagaland, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Maharashtra have achieved relatively high levels of HLE (10% or more). One possible explanation for high rates of HLE attainments in certain states and UTs is the level of urban population in those states/UTs. States with higher percentages of urban population typically have higher HLE attainments; a connection that will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 3: HLE attainment by state and region





THE URBAN – RURAL DIVIDE

Understanding India from a regional perspective has uncovered a pattern of higher levels of HLE attainment in predominantly urban versus rural states.

Thus, this chapter sets out to examine this divide further in order to gain a better understanding of how HLE can be optimized.

It is important to note at this point – as will be reiterated later on – that diversity in HLE is a critical component not just from a distribution perspective but even within the learning experience itself.

Conversing with students from different walks of life, with different mindsets is a critical part of emotional intelligence that forms the foundation for future success. As such, tackling issues in HLE with respect to the urban-rural divide is not beneficial from an intellectual perspective but can even improve the quality on HLE overall.

As the previous chapter outlined, urban residents in all states have higher shares in HLE attainment, compared to their rural counterparts. This should not come as a surprise given the different social fabric, local commitments and constraints for individuals from rural areas compared to those from urban areas.

To further demonstrate this point, while 15.7% people from urban areas nationwide have attained HLE, only 3.7% of those living in rural areas have acquired HLE. In other words, being born into an urban area – all else being equal – makes you more than 4 times more likely to attain HLE than if you were to be born in a rural area.

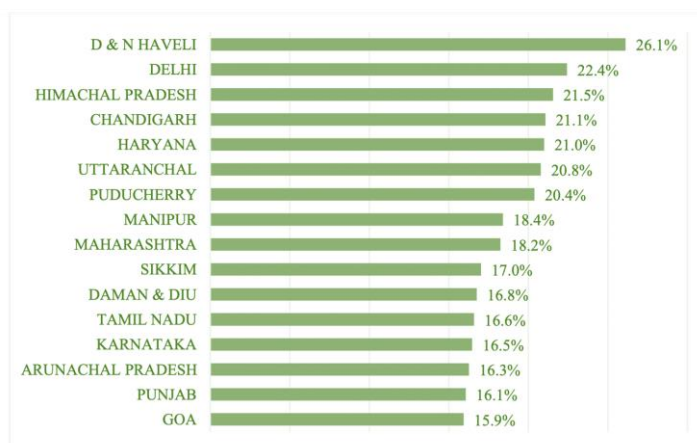
Although most states/UTs have relatively high level of urban HLE attainments, states such as Mizoram and Lakshadweep have relatively low urban HLE attainments. Figure 4 lists states with high level of HLE attainment among the urban population.

The Systemic Nature of The Urban-Rural Divide

Higher levels of HLE attainment in many states can be explained by the fact that typically urban areas have better higher education infrastructure. Data also suggests that states with higher percentages of urban population are likely to attain greater levels of HLE, which further supports the previously outlined contextual understanding of what it means to live in a rural area.

Statistical analysis supports these hypothesis with a significant positive correlation between overall HLE attainment and the percentage of urban population. While there is a correlation between urbanization and a state's HLE attainment, it does not necessarily mean that states without higher urban population will not have high HLE attainment or, on the other hand, that states with larger rural population will have lower HLE attainment.

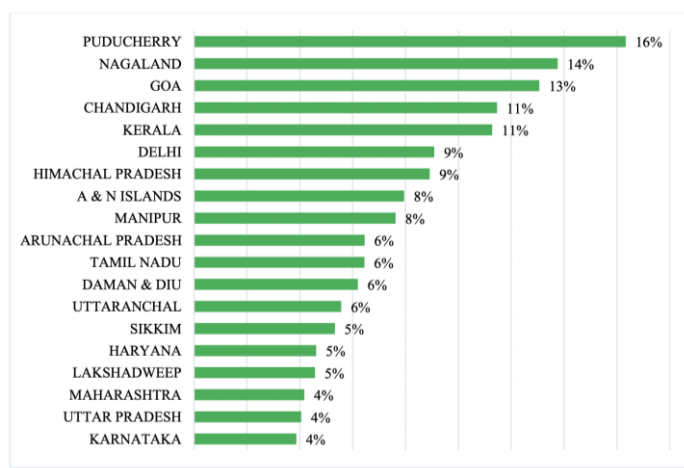
Figure 4: States with higher levels of HLE attainment among urban population



However, the overall trend is a strong indicator that there are systemic underlying causes that make students in rural areas less likely to obtain HLE than those in urban areas. As such, the urban-rural divide perspective creates a starting point to unravel state-specific causes for such a divide in order to bridge it.

Figures 4 and 5 respectively rank rural states and urban states according to their levels of HLE. While there are states such as Kerala, Nagaland, and Manipur that have higher levels of HLE attainment despite their relatively higher levels of rural population, in general, states with higher rural population lack HLE attainment.

Figure 5: States with higher levels of HLE attainment among urban population



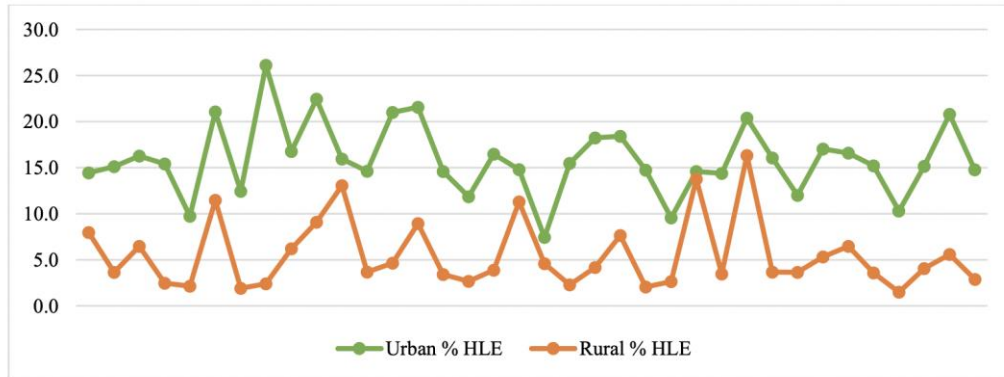
Addressing The Gap To Bridge It

As urban residents in each state have higher levels of HLE attainment than their rural counterparts, there is often a wide gap between urban and rural HLE attainments. This gap is graphically illustrated in **Figure 6**, which shows the urban-rural HLE attainment gap in all states.

Despite the overarching trend, the gap in HLE attainment between rural and urban population varies by state. Dadra and Nagar Haveli has an HLE attainment rate of 26% among urban residents and very low HLE attainment (only 2.4%) among rural residents. Consequently, Dadra and Nagar Haveli has the widest gap (23.7%) between urban and rural attainment in HLE. The northeastern state of Nagaland has the narrowest gap (0.83%) between HLE attainment of its urban and rural population.

In a number of cases, states with narrower urban-rural gaps in HLE have overall higher levels of HLE attainment. On the other hand, several states with wider urban-rural gaps tend to have overall lower levels of HLE attainment.

Figure 6: Urban-rural HLE attainment gap



For example, states such as Madhya Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya have low overall attainment in HLE and show large gaps between the urban and rural HLE attainment rates as seen in **Figure 7**. **Figure 8**, on the other hand, shows that states or UTs such as Puducherry, Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep, and Nagaland have narrower gaps between the HLE attainments of rural and urban populations and have relatively higher levels of attainment in HLE (above 10%).

As mentioned beforehand, the urban-rural divide is an important variable not only because of its high explanatory value with respect to differences in HLE, but also because of the structural nature of inequality that continues the cycle unless and until it is actively broken. As a result, this urban-rural gap can create barriers to career pursuits and hence economic progress for those living in rural areas. In addition, wide urban-rural gaps are also associated with relatively lower levels of overall HLE attainment for many states.

While it is desirable to have a narrow gap (or no gap) between urban and rural HLE attainments, a wider gap is not necessarily as detrimental to the state as it might appear. For instance, states/UTs with large urban population and small rural population may have wider urban-rural HLE attainment gaps and still do better compared to states/UTs with smaller urban population and larger rural population. This finding goes to highlight the importance not just of area-specific data but also action research that is tailored to each particular situation; the main reason for this report to exist in the first place.

Figure 7: States with the widest urban-rural gap in HLE attainment

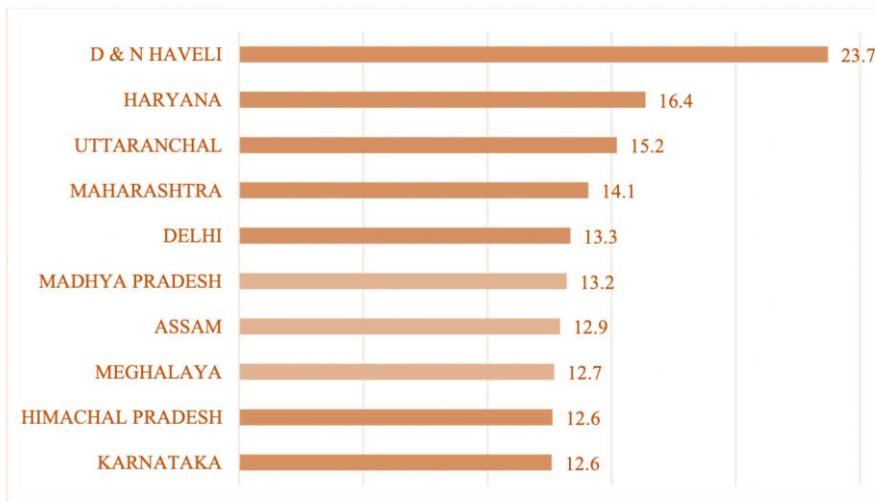
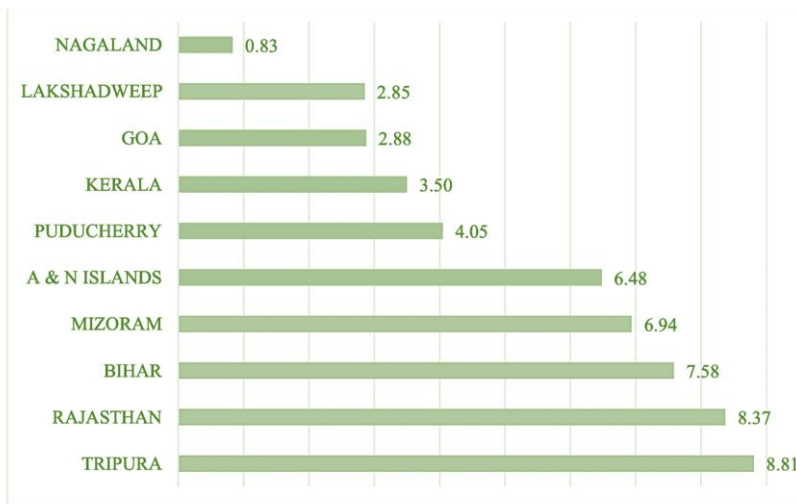


Figure 8: States with the narrowest urban-rural gap in HLE attainment





INTER-GENERATIONAL CONTEXT

Building on the previous chapter and its notion of structural inequalities and their implications, an intergenerational perspective is the logical next step to assess any such variables against a timeline.

Note that in this chapter, those who were aged between 22 and 35 years in 2014 were grouped are considered to form the current generation, while students aged 36 years and above are considered part of the past generation in the NSSO 74th Round Survey.

Analyzing HLE attainment from a regional perspective as well as by looking at the difference between students living in urban versus rural areas within each region forms a solid foundation for informed decision making. However, in order to assess the effectiveness of any intervention and to spot major pain points, it is critical to introduce the element of time.

Based on the data in each chapter, this report has brought to light a number of potential systemic issues related to HLE that may exclude certain groupings of society, thus creating a vicious cycle for some. In order to get a better sense of the degree to which the underlying systemic nature of any division is, it is pivotal to investigate how attainment of HLE has changed between generations.

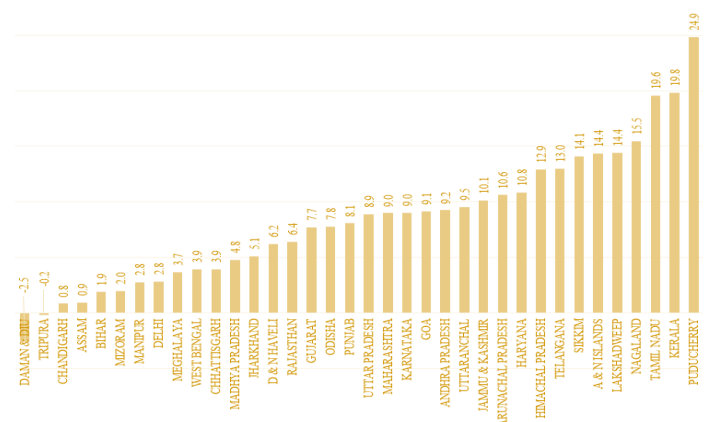
Understanding The Gap

Figure 9 seeks to show the improvement in HLE made by the current generation compared to the previous one. The numbers of the graph are calculated by subtracting the percentage of HLE from the past generation from that of the current generation for each state. Positive value (gap) indicates that a greater percentage of current generation has attained HLE than the past generation. Negative value shows that the past generation had attained HLE in greater percentage than the current generation.

With this context in mind, it becomes clear that **Figure 9** is showing a positive image with almost all states and UTs – with the exception of Tripura and Daman & Diu – reporting a higher level of HLE in the current generation compared to the past, thus showing a positive trend.

The greatest improvement is observed in the case of Puducherry, where 40.2% of the current generation population has attained HLE compared to only 15.4% of the past generation.

Figure 9: Current-Past generation gap in HLE attainment



As such, Puducherry records an improvement of almost 25% and outperforms the next two highest performing states, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, by 5.1% and 5.3%, respectively. To put that number into context, the improvement gap between Puducherry and Kerala is larger than the improvement from past to current generations in 12 states and UTs.

Another key finding **Figure 9** illustrates is the grouping of performances. Just as there is a large gap between the best performing state (Puducherry) and the number two and three states (Kerala and Tamil Nadu), the distance between the latter two and the next 'batch' of states is similarly large with a difference of 4.1%. This third 'batch' ranges from an HLE intergenerational improvement of 12.9% (Himachal Pradesh) to 15.5% (Nagaland), consisting of six states in total.

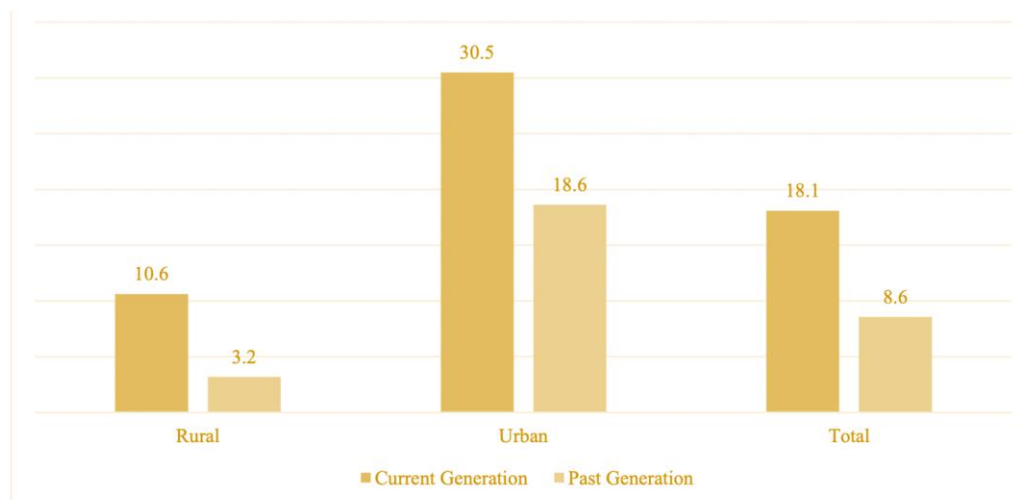
The same approach can be continued all the way to the states and UTs that showed the least improvement between generations with Bihar and Mizoram making only marginal improvements (1.9% and 2% respectively), Chandigarh and Assam being just short of stagnating (0.8% and 0.9% respectively), and Daman & Diu and Tripura even showcasing a negative trend with a worsening of HLE by 2.5% and 0.2%, respectively. In the case of Daman and Diu, 21.9% of the current generation population has acquired HLE, whereas 24.4% of the past generation had acquired HLE. Similarly, in Tripura, the HLE attainment of the current generation is slightly less than its past generation.

Applying Intergenerational Changes To The Urban-Rural Divide

While the comparison between past and current generations is a good indicator of a trend, we need to also zoom in to the previously discussed dimension of differences between urban versus rural areas. As such, **Figure 10** shows a comparison of median values of HLE attainments for each generation by area of residence. The median value shows that larger percentages of the current generation in both rural and urban areas have attained HLE than their counterparts from the past generation, which indicates an overall positive trend across areas.

That being said, a closer look does reveal an inequality of just how positive this trend is: While urban areas show an intergenerational HLE improvement of 11.9%, rural areas can only record 7.4% overall; 2.1% less than the overall average. This goes to show that while trends may be positive across the board, a detailed comparison of the different categories analyzed in this report is necessary to make informed decisions.

Figure 10: States with higher levels of HLE attainment among urban population





GENDER DIFFERENCES

Another area of comparison critical to understanding HLE in India as a whole is the comparison between HLE attainment by men compared to women. While both sexes may play different parts in society, gender inclusion in HLE is an important component for the flourishing of India in the long run.

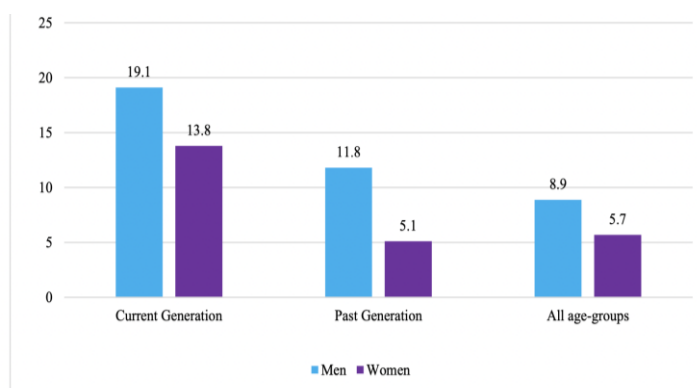
Beyond the evident benefits to attain HLE for the personal development of either sex, having gender diversity within HLE itself increases the emotional intelligence, critical thinking, collaboration, conflict resolution skills, and more for both sexes. As such, regardless of the path taken after obtaining HLE plays an important part in the making of next generation Indian leaders.

As such, gender equity in HLE is a catalyst for a myriad of possible spillover effects into all aspects of Indian society.

To further refine our understanding of who is attaining HLE in India, it is important to explore the data through a gender lens. In **Figure 11** below, we explore the change of HLE attainment by gender between past and current generations to get a sense for the overarching trend in India.

The graph shows that nationwide 8.9% men have acquired HLE, whereas only 5.7% women have done so. Current generation men and women have acquired higher levels of HLE (men 19.1% and women 13.8%) than their past generation (men 11.8% and women 5.1%), which denotes a similar trend to the one that was observed in the previous chapter on urban-rural changes in HLE between generations.

Figure 11: HLE attainment by gender



Women Outperform Men In Intergenerational HLE Changes

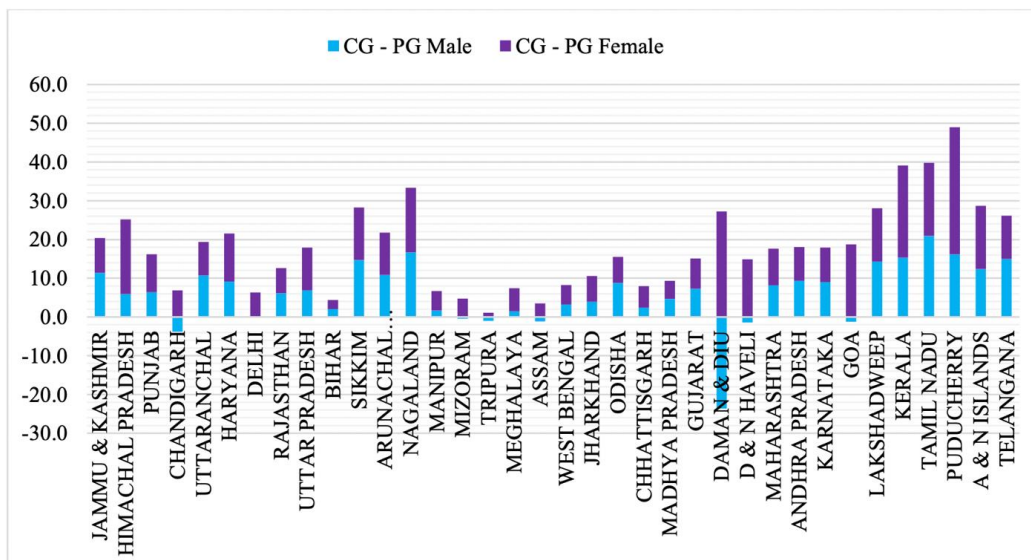
Interestingly, compared to the past generation HLE attainment has increased by 8.7% among women and only 7.3% among men. As such, this 0.6% lead is indicative of an overall trend towards closing the gender gap. However, this interpretation needs to be caveated with some context.

First, a percentage increase may seem large but it needs to be compared to the underlying base number; for example, a 10% increase from 10 people as a baseline translates into just 1 additional person while the same percentage increase starting from 1,000 would require 100 additional people. Hence, an unequal starting position may over or underestimate the magnitude of a percentage change when comparing two groups.

Second, we need to again zoom in to see how this intergenerational change differs from state to state; is this overarching trend observed across the board or is the final percentage the result of outlier cases? That is the question that **Figure 12** seeks to answer.

Overall, with respect to women the data confirms the above intergenerational trend: compared to their past generation, the current generation of women have attained higher levels of HLE in every single state as indicated by the purple bars in **Figure 12**, all of which are above the x-axis and hence positive.

Figure 12: States with higher levels of HLE attainment among urban population



Men's HLE Has Worsened Drastically In Daman & Diu

Curiously, the same cannot be said about HLE attainment for men. Looking at the state-by-state breakdown from the male perspective, in seven states and UTs the current generation of men have lower levels of HLE than the past generation men. In some states such as Mizoram, Tripura, or Assam this negative percentage is relatively small, falling far below the 2% mark. However, there are states where this negative change is substantial: In Chandigarh, the current generation men have around 4% lower levels of HLE than their past generation and in Daman & Diu this percentage shoots beyond the 23% mark. As such, the case of Daman & Diu is a clear outlier and would require more specific research to understand the context of this change.

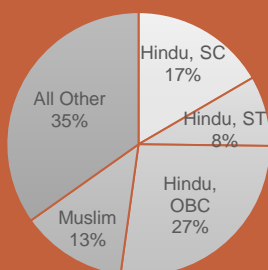


SOCIO-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Just as gender is an important form of inclusion in HLE attainment to boost the development of interpersonal skills and facilitate equity in society, so are socio-religious communities (SRC). Understanding the state of HLE attainment within each community helps to get a data-based picture of marginalization and the implications that come with it.

India is one of the most socio-religiously diverse countries in the world; however, it was only recently that a categorization reflecting India's diversity in this way emerged as follows:

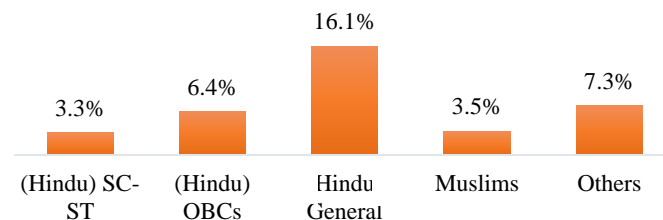
- Hindu
 - Scheduled Caste (SC)
 - Scheduled Tribe (ST)
 - Other Backward Caste (OBC)
- Muslim
- All Others



Approximate % total population

Analyzing HLE data on socio-religious communities (SRC) is pivotal to understanding the social fabric with all its implications. To grasp the big picture, **Figure 13** below shows HLE attainment by socio-religious communities. The data for HLE follows a similar pattern to the overall standing of each respective socio-religious community within society at large: The general, upper caste Hindu communities by far outperform HLE attainment of all communities with a respectable 16.1%, followed by (Hindu) OBCs with just 6.4% in comparison.

Figure 13: HLE attainment by Socio-Religious Communities (SRC)

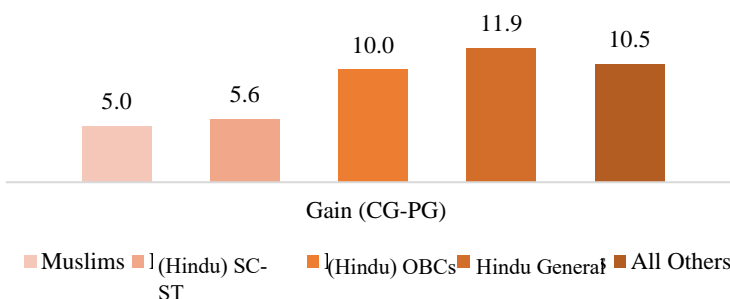


Hindu SC-ST And Muslims Have Lowest HLE Attainment Levels

Though comprising around a quarter of India's total population, (Hindu) SC-ST communities have the lowest level of HLE attainment with a mere 3.3%, followed closely by Muslims who have an HLE rate of 3.5%.

Figure 14 shows that all communities have experienced some increase in their HLE attainments from one generation to another. Whereas 'Hindu General' have experienced the highest level of increase in HLE attainment (from 12% to 16.1%), Muslims have experienced the least increase (from 2.1% to 3.5%). The (Hindu) SC-ST communities have experienced greater increase in HLE attainment than Muslims.

Figure 14: Current generation's gain in HLE over past generation by SRCs



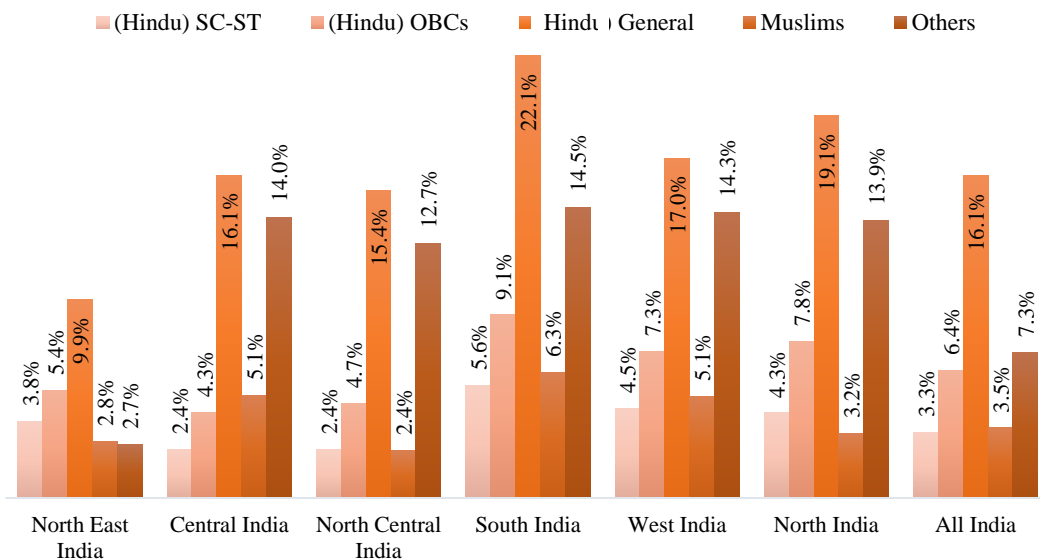
As was done before, an intergenerational perspective needs to be applied to uncover patterns. Interestingly, the group that already had the highest percentage of HLE – Hindu General – have gained the most compared to the previous generation with a 11.9% increase in HLE attainment. In comparison, (Hindu) SC-ST – which together form one the second largest socio-religious group – improved less than half of the dominating SRCs. Muslims similarly have only gained 5% compared of the previous generation.

Hindu (General) Outperform Every Other SRC In Every Region

Regional comparison (see **Figure 15**) shows that upper caste Hindus (Hindu General) have the highest HLE attainment in all regions. In contrast, Muslims have the lowest level of SRC across almost all regions; and in those regions where they do not, the difference to the lowest level is only 1% with the exception of Central India.

Breaking down inequalities into bite sized data is a powerful tool to focus our efforts on creating holistic, actionable interventions specific for every group in question. The goal is never to lessen HLE attainment by any one group – be that defined based on SRC, gender, or any other variable – but to uplift those who have not benefited from the system in the same way.

Figure 15: HLE by region and SRCs





(NON-) TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

This final chapter is dedicated to a combination of different viewpoints that were discussed previously, focusing on understanding the proportion of students obtaining technical versus non-technical degrees.

Technical HLE degrees are defined as degrees, diplomas, or certificates in fields such as

- Agriculture,
- Engineering,
- Technology, or
- Crafts.

Any other subjects – for instance, medicine, law, or teaching degrees – are considered non-technical.

It is important to note that there is no inherent value judgement on either one of these categories; rather, this dimension adds another layer of context to gain a holistic understanding of Indian HLE.

Overall, as per **Figure 16**, the number of Indians obtaining a non-technical degree is more than twice as high than those who hold a technical degree. This tendency is roughly mirrored for both men and women, though HLE attainment by women is clearly skewed towards non-technical degrees, which they obtain three times more often than a technical degree.

A big difference can be found in the distinction between rural and urban areas, which will be elaborated on further in the next section.

Figure 16: Attainment in technical/non-technical HLE

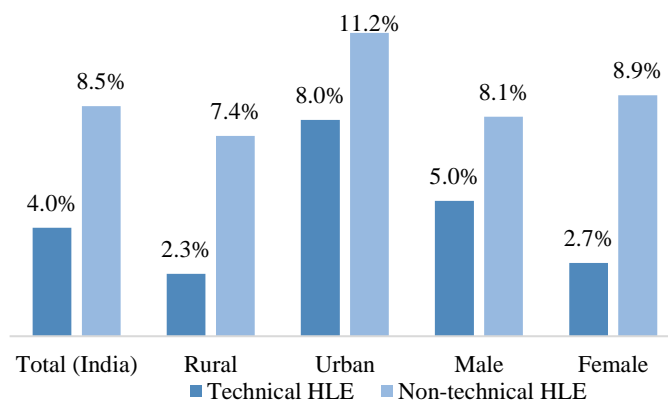
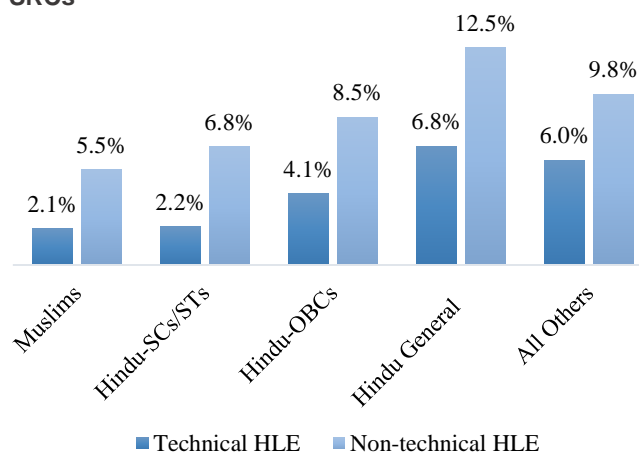


Figure 17 groups attainment in technical as well as non-technical fields by socio-religious communities. Upper caste Hindus (Hindu General) have higher than average attainments in both technical and non-technical HLE; (Hindu) OBCs, (Hindu) SC-ST, and Muslims have below average attainments. While Muslims (2.1%) and (Hindu) SC-ST (2.2%) have similar attainments in technical HLE, in non-technical fields, (Hindu) SC-ST have much higher attainments (6.8%) than Muslims (5.5%).

Figure 17: Technical/non-technical HLE attainment by SRCs



Who Drives The Global Tech Revolution In India?

Nationwide, there is a strong correlation between whether a region is urban or rural and its predominant degree type: Rural areas have an attainment rate of 2.3% whereas in urban areas, the HLE attainment in technical fields is close to 8%.

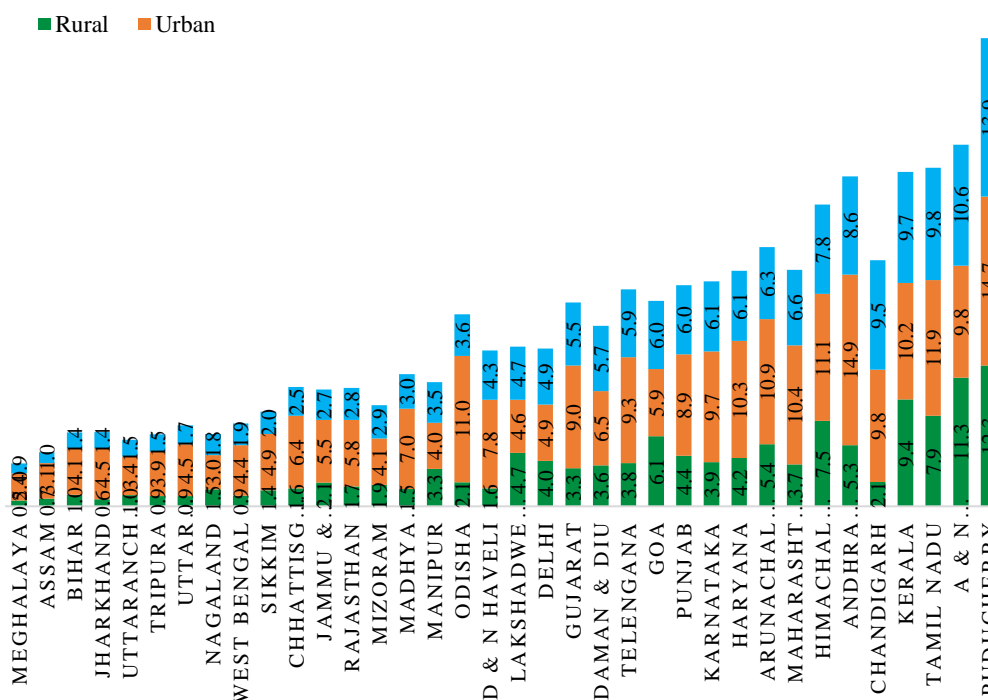
Most regions have similar levels of attainment in non-technical HLE, whereas technical HLE attainments vary significantly. Notably, South Indian states have very similar higher education attainments in both technical (8.2%) and non-technical fields (8.3%). In West India, non-technical higher education is more prevalent (by 2.8%) than technical. In North India, North Central India, and North East, non-technical HLE is much more prevalent than technical HLE. North Central India has the largest gap between technical and non-technical HLE attainment (7.1%) followed by North East (6.8%).

As **Figure 18** indicates, attainment in technical HLE varies significantly by state. For instance, all South Indian states have higher than national average (4%) attainment in technical HLE. Southern states such as Puducherry (13.9%), Tamil Nadu (9.8%), Kerala (9.7%), and Andhra Pradesh (8.6%) are among the states with the highest level of HLE attainment in technical fields. Western states also have above average technical HLE attainment. Northeastern states have technical HLE attainment below the national average. In particular, Meghalaya, Assam, and Tripura are among the states with lowest attainment in technical higher education.

Several populous states such as Bihar (1.4%), Uttar Pradesh (1.7%), Madhya Pradesh (3%), Rajasthan (2.8%), and West Bengal (1.9%) have below average attainments in technical HLE. **Figure 18** also shows that in most states, urban areas have relatively higher attainment in technical HLE than rural areas.

While neither technical nor non-technical degrees are superior above the other, given the global tech revolution decision makers need to be aware of differences in gender, SRC, and geography when it comes to technical degrees. The question is, who really is and will be driving the global tech revolution forward on behalf of India?

Figure 18: Technical/non-technical HLE attainment by SRCs



CONCLUSION

The power and importance of HLE attainment must not be underestimated. Obtaining a degree is not just a step towards financial independence, career success, or prestige; it is intimately tied to a mindset the student acquires during their studies. It is intrinsically linked to one's health and wellbeing. It is one of the strongest predictors for the country's ability to become increasingly competitive on a global stage, securing much-needed funds for re-investment into the growth of society.

The *USIPI Higher Level Education Report (2022)* intends to build a shared understanding of the experiences of different minority groupings and marginalized communities living in India face. Using a data-driven action research approach, USIPI presents its findings to key decision makers on the ground in order to inform holistic adjustments where needed.

In this light, the report has analyzed the 2014 NSSO Survey results from six different angles. Overall, India has seen tremendous improvement in various aspects of HLE; especially compared to 7 years ago.

That being said, there are a number of potential future research projects in order to explore different overlays of variables further.

Urban-Rural x Gender

Future work can include an analysis of urban-rural differentials in HLE and technical HLE attainments by gender. This would allow the reader to understand how equitable higher educational attainments are by gender, based on the area of residence.

Gender x Socio-Religious Communities

Another possible topic to explore is gender-wise analysis of HLE attainments by different SRCs.

It would be interesting to learn the kind of progress each community has made in terms of gender parity and empowerment.

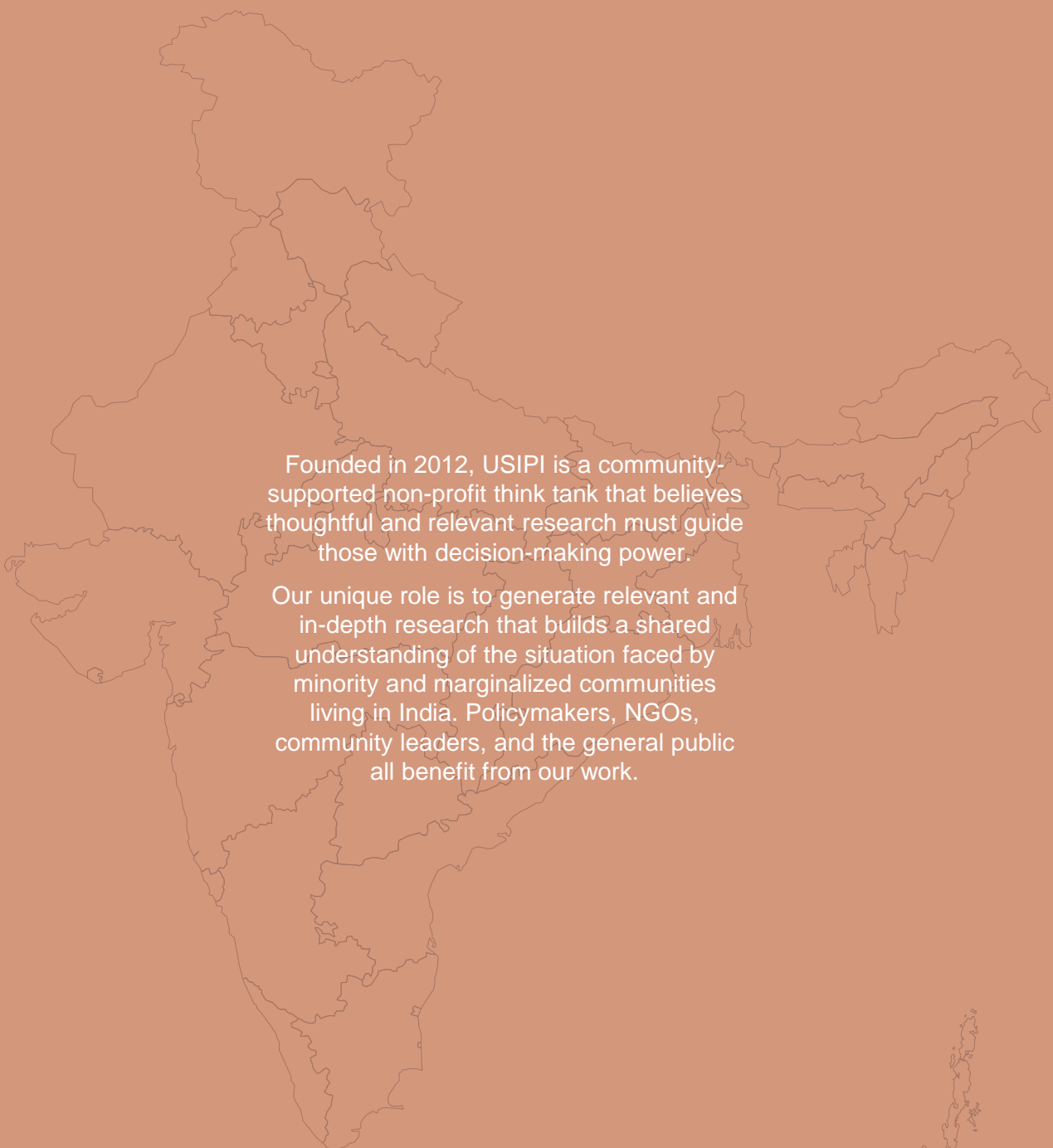
(Non-)Technical x Time

Subject to the availability of data, one can analyze technical and non-technical HLE attainments by past and current generations. This would allow the reader to see if there is any area of concern — that is, if any particular group or community is lagging behind and how far behind compared to other groups.

India is at the verge of getting recognized as a leading global economic powerhouse, however its teeming millions

of youth and children will be at the risk of missing the benefits of growth and development unless there is continued focus on inclusive policies at the national level. To actually bring about change on the ground, research like the present *USIPI Higher Level Education Report (2022)* plays an indispensable role in informing precisely where policy interventions are needed for India's holistic growth. One should never forget, in the words of India's first Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:

**“You have to dream
before your dreams
can come true.”**



Founded in 2012, USIPI is a community-supported non-profit think tank that believes thoughtful and relevant research must guide those with decision-making power.

Our unique role is to generate relevant and in-depth research that builds a shared understanding of the situation faced by minority and marginalized communities living in India. Policymakers, NGOs, community leaders, and the general public all benefit from our work.



Development | Democracy | Diversity

1717 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1025, Washington, DC, 20006, United States

www.usipi.org • info@usindiapolicy.org



US-INDIA POLICY INSTITUTE

DEVELOPMENT • DEMOCRACY • DIVERSITY



1717 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1025, Washington, DC, 20006, United States

usipi.org • info@usindiapolicy.org