

The NCAER Land Records and Services Index 2021

N-LRSI 2021

Overview

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N-LRSI 2019-20 was formulated by the NCAER Land Policy Initiative (LPI) to gauge: i) the extent of digitisation of land records and services, and ii) the improvement in the quality of the record as a result of the digitisation process. The first edition of the Index, released on 27 February 2020, laid out the background and rationale for the subsequent rounds of the Index.

This second round of the N-LRSI 2020-21, conducted a year later, is an opportunity to measure the progress made by the various States/UTs on the parameters that formed the basis of N-LRSI 2019-20. It also facilitates assessment of the extent to which the recommendations made to various States/UTs in N-LRSI 2019-20 were considered for implementation. The results of N-LRSI 2020-21 also posit reflection on next steps for the Index.

N-LRSI 2020-21 used the same components and weights as those used in the first round for ease of comparison:

a) It allocates a 60 per cent weightage to the extent of computerisation of land records (including improvement in the delivery of frequently used services) and the registration process; and

b) A 40 per cent weightage has been accorded to the extent to which the record possesses features that are likely to reflect an improved quality of land records with timely updating of ownership, the extent of joint ownership, actual land use, area, and noting of encumbrances.





















The components comprising the Index, their weightage in the Index, and the method of evaluation are presented in Table 1.

N-LRSI Scores and Ranking of States/UTs—2020-21 and 2019-20

The mean N-LRSI score across 32 States/UTs has increased by 16.6 per cent in 2020-21 from 38.7 in 2019-20 to 45.1 (out of the maximum score of 100 points). Madhya Pradesh has emerged as the top performer for the second year in a row. Five States have scored more than 70 points in N-LRSI 2020-21, up from only one State with more than 70 points in N-LRSI 2019-20. The N-LRSI scores for 2020-21 and 2019-20 across the States/UTs of India are presented in Figure 1.

Table 1: N-LRSI 2020-21 Parameters, Weights and Mode of Evaluation

(Maximum points =100)

	 Textual Record 20	 Spatial Record 20	 Registration 20	 Quality of Land Records 40
				
PARTICULARS	POINTS			EVALUATION METHOD
				Desk research KCs Test Checks
TEXTUAL RECORD				
a. Digitisation of RoRs	15			✓ ✓ ✓
b. Availability of legally useable copies of RoRs	5			✓
SPATIAL RECORD				
a. Digitisation of CMs	15			✓ ✓ ✓
b. Availability of legally useable copies of CMs	5			✓
REGISTRATION				
a. Public Entry of Data	4			✓ ✓
b. Circle Rates	4			✓
c. Payment of Stamp Duty/Registration Fee	4			✓ ✓
d. Verification of Document by SRO	4			✓
e. Delivery of Registered Document	4			✓
QUALITY OF LAND RECORDS				
a. Updating Ownership	5			✓
b. Joint Ownership	10			✓
c. Land Use	10			✓
d. Land Area/Extent	10			✓
e. Encumbrances	5			✓

Source: N-LRSI 2020-21 and 2019-20, NCAER.

Note: KCs=Knowledge Correspondents (KCs were contacted under this exercise to seek their advice on specific questions about the status and process of the land records in the States/UTs; and they variously comprised senior officers, other retired and serving revenue officers, and/or experts with knowledge of land matters in the relevant State/UTs.)

Figure 1: N-LRSI Scores 2020-21 and 2019-20

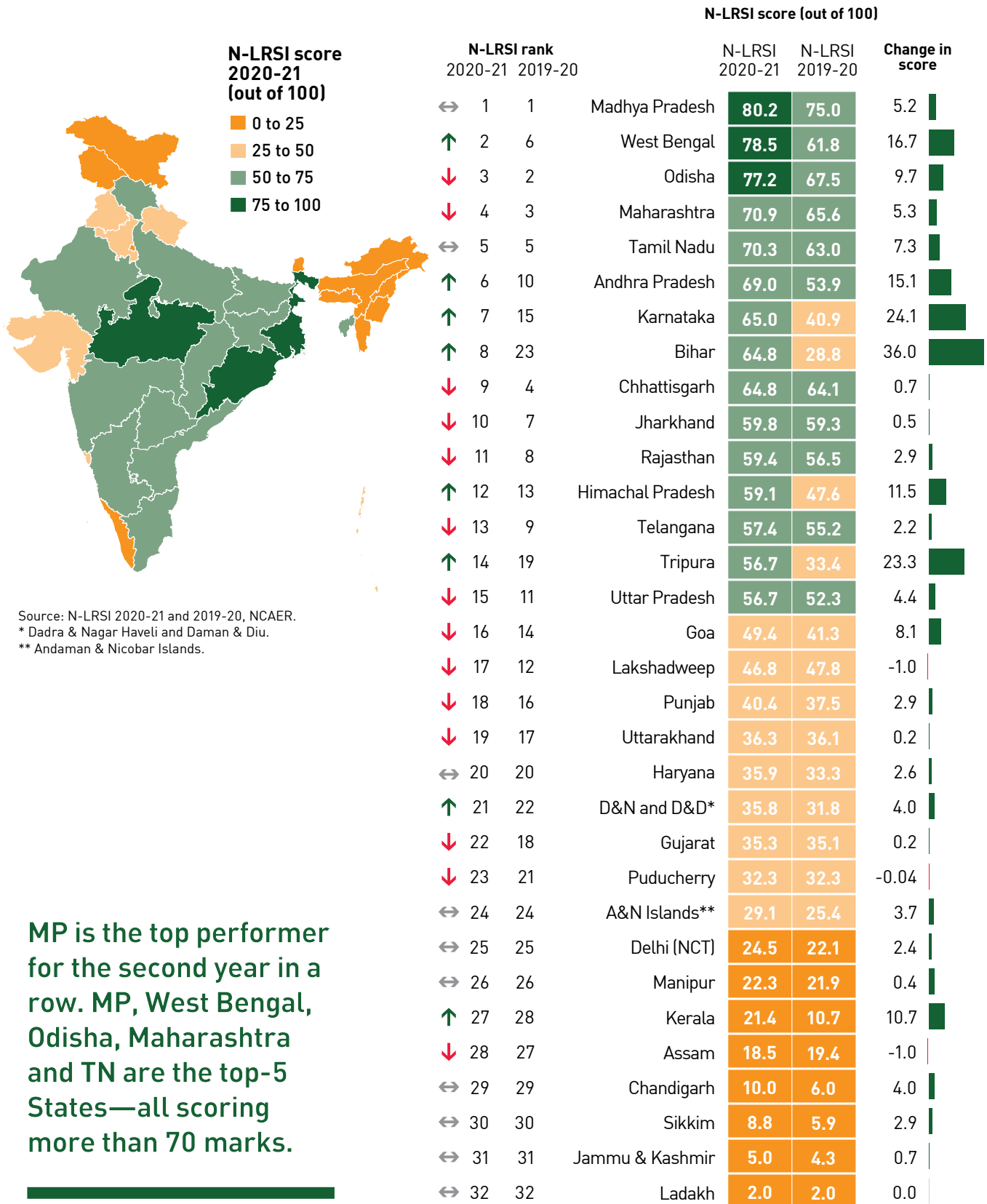


Figure 2: N-LRSI 2020-21 by its 4 Components

0 to 25 25 to 50 50 to 75 75 to 100

Note for color coding: All values in a component were rebased to 100, and colors were assigned in four scoring bands: 0-25, 26-50, 51-75 and 76-100.

	N-LRSI Rank	N-LRSI Score (out of 100)	Textual Record (out of 20)	Spatial Record (out of 20)	Registration (out of 20)	Quality of Land Records (out of 40)	Change over N-LRSI 2019-20			
Madhya Pradesh	1	80.2	19.0	17.4	15.9	27.9	↓	↑	↑	↑
West Bengal	2	78.5	19.7	18.8	18.9	21.1	↑	↑	↑	↓
Odisha	3	77.2	17.5	15.0	15.8	28.9	↑	↓	↑	↑
Maharashtra	4	70.9	19.3	8.0	15.9	27.7	↑	↑	↑	↑
Tamil Nadu	5	70.3	19.9	19.3	14.0	17.2	↑	↑	↑	↓
Andhra Pradesh	6	69.0	16.6	0.0	13.9	22.9	↑	↔	↑	↑
Karnataka	7	65.0	16.5	13.0	11.7	23.7	↑	↑	↑	↑
Bihar	8	64.8	14.6	13.5	15.6	21.1	↑	↑	↑	↑
Chhattisgarh	9	64.8	17.4	15.8	4.9	26.7	↓	↑	↑	↑
Jharkhand	10	59.8	10.9	12.2	9.3	27.4	↑	↑	↑	↓
Rajasthan	11	59.4	16.2	7.4	11.7	24.1	↓	↑	↑	↓
Himachal Pradesh	12	59.1	14.9	10.5	7.4	26.3	↓	↑	↑	↑
Telangana	13	57.4	15.0	11.1	9.4	21.9	↑	↑	↑	↑
Tripura	14	56.7	17.4	14.5	4.0	20.8	↑	↑	↔	↑
Uttar Pradesh	15	56.7	18.8	4.4	11.7	21.8	↑	↑	↑	↑
Goa	16	49.4	19.6	0.0	7.9	21.9	↑	↔	↑	↑
Lakshadweep	17	46.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	↔	↔	↔	↔
Punjab	18	40.4	15.5	0.0	12.7	12.1	↑	↔	↑	↑
Uttarakhand	19	36.3	13.9	0.0	13.8	8.7	↑	↔	↑	↓
Haryana	20	35.9	11.5	0.0	11.8	12.6	↑	↔	↓	↑
D&N and D&D*	21	35.8	17.9	0.0	5.9	12.1	↔	↔	↑	↑
Gujarat	22	35.3	16.2	0.0	5.7	13.4	↓	↔	↑	↓
Puducherry	23	32.3	15.7	0.0	5.7	10.9	↓	↔	↑	↑
A & N Islands**	24	29.1	13.1	0.0	5.7	10.4	↑	↔	↑	↓
Delhi (NCT)	25	24.5	8.5	0.0	4.0	12.0	↓	↔	↑	↑
Manipur	26	22.3	1.8	0.0	10.0	10.5	↓	↔	↔	↑
Kerala	27	21.4	0.0	10.9	6.0	4.5	↔	↑	↑	↔
Assam	28	18.5	6.6	0.0	2.0	9.9	↓	↔	↔	↑
Chandigarh	29	10.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	2.0	↔	↔	↑	↔
Sikkim	30	8.8	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.8	↔	↔	↑	↑
Jammu & Kashmir	31	5.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	2.0	↔	↔	↑	↔
Ladakh	32	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	↔	↔	↔	↔

Source: N-LRSI 2020-21 and N-LRSI 2019-20, NCAER.

* Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. ** Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Bihar, Tripura, Karnataka, West Bengal, and AP are among the States/UTs reporting maximum improvement in N-LRSI 2020-21.

Digitisation of Textual and Spatial Records

The extent of digitisation of land records was measured for both the textual records (RoRs or Record of Rights) and spatial records (Cadastral Maps or CMs). The Department of Land Resources (DoLR) portal figures do not provide details of the actual area for which land records are in existence, nor do they offer information on whether the records that are being reported as digitised, and are available on the web or not. Therefore, understanding the position in this regard was the first step before computing the actual scores.

The DoLR website showed that 33 States and UTs have digitised their textual records to varying degrees. However, like last year, test checks were possible for only 27 States/UTs. In the remaining six States/UTs, that is, Kerala, Sikkim, Ladakh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Chandigarh, the textual records reported to have been digitised are not available on online portals.

Availability of Legally Usable Copies

A basic service that a digitised land record facilitates is the citizen's ability to obtain copies of the record for various purposes. The information obtained through Knowledge Correspondents (KCs) about the extent to which legally usable copies of the RoRs and CMs can be accessed with ease, yielded the following information -

- i) The number of States/UTs where digitally signed copies of RoRs are available from the website has gone up to 10 in the current round as compared to 9 in 2019-20, with the

addition of West Bengal. Odisha has joined the list of States/UTs where digitally signed copies of RoRs are available from the CSCs in 2020-21.

- ii) In the case of CMs also, the three States/UTs where digitally signed copies are available from the website has seen the addition of West Bengal this time.

Computerisation of Registration

The N-LRSI measures the computerisation of the registration process with respect to digital availability of the following five stages:

- i) Facility for online entry of data with regard to the proposed registration;
- ii) Online updated circle rates;
- iii) Facility for online payment of stamp duty/registration fee/e-stamp;
- iv) Online verification of payment/scrutiny of requisite details and completion of the registration process with digital signature; and
- v) Immediate delivery of the digitally signed.

For registration, circle rates were test checked for 26 States/UTs with an addition of the following three UTs in the present round: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Six States/UTs reported no provision for digitisation of any stage of the registration process.

Quality of Land Records

As in N-LRSI 2019-20, the following five elements were analysed for assessing the quality of land records in the current round: updating ownership, extent of joint ownership, land use, land area or extent, and recording encumbrances. These elements bear a relationship with the incidence of disputes and the ease with which transactions in land are effected.

Accessibility Index 2020-21

While N-LRSI 2019-20 had presented a preliminary analysis of accessibility issues with State portals, in N-LRSI 2020-21, an Accessibility Index has been constructed based on the Guidelines for Indian Government Websites 2.0 (GIGW 2.0), prepared by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The Index has been constructed for 31 States /UTs (out of 36) that have designed and hosted websites for land records. The Accessibility Index highlights the fact that despite the progress made by some of the States/UTs in overall digitisation, they offer a relatively less commendable user experience of this digitisation. It highlights that mere digitisation cannot assure better services and that States/UTs also need to enhance ease of access and navigation for users of websites.

Future Direction

The N-LRSI study is expected to credibly capture both the supply-side and demand-side dimensions of land record-related services in each State/UT, and thereby spur individual States/UTs to improve their respective goals of effective land record management and provision of

services. The N-LRSI 2019-20 study was focused on the supply-side indicators. The N-LRSI 2020-21, on the other hand, intends to integrate the supply-side dimension with a demand-side survey, envisioned to be carried out in the middle of 2020-21 (which was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic). This report presents the progress made by States/UTs in the supply-side dimension since the launch of N-LRSI 2020, that is, over the one-year period between December 2020 and December 2021. After the completion of the demand-side survey, the findings therefrom will be integrated with those of this study.

The two rounds of constructing the N-LRSI have highlighted the promise of this exercise and also brought out some limitations that will need to be addressed, if the Index is to be of value in the long run.

The States/UTs have exhibited significant interest in making improvements from one round to the next. At the very least, reporting by States on the DoLR website is a far more accurate reflection of the actual status of the digitisation effort. On the Index, the improvement has been most visible in the measurement of the extent of digitisation of the records and registration process, that is, areas which can be achieved relatively swiftly but have finite limits.

Another issue emerging from the current year's exercise pertains to shortcomings in ease of access and navigability on websites, for users. These gaps can also be addressed relatively quickly and enable improved user experience.

The pandemic has delayed the addition of a third dimension in the Index: client surveys to understand the value and utility

There is a strong correlation between the N-LRSI 2020-21 scores and the Accessibility Index 2020-21 scores but AP, MP, Maharashtra and Rajasthan score low on accessibility despite their impressive N-LRSI 2020-21 scores.

The NLRMP programme has been re-designated as the 'Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP)' in 2016

of digitised records and processes for the public. It is likely that when this survey is done, it will underscore the importance of progress on the most difficult area of improvement in relation to the Index: increasing the real-time accuracy and comprehensiveness of land records.

A comparison of the results of two rounds of the N-LRSI, on parameters related to the quality of the records, shows both the extent of the territory still to be covered in this regard and the examples that are worth emulating for the States/UTs lagging behind, as follows:

- i) Real-time attestation of mutations for property-related transactions is still to be achieved by any State/UT.
- ii) Linking databases like birth and death registers and genealogical tables (attached to RoRs in some States/UTs) in order to bring the requirement for inheritance-related mutations into real-time notice, is still in the realm of ideas only.
- iii) The issue of recording tenant possession of rented built-up properties is still pending discussion.
- iv) Building plan approvals need to be linked to land records so that the latter reflect changes in land use as well as the extent of the proposed built-up properties.
- v) Databases such as the Official Gazettes that record the start of land acquisition proceedings or the introduction of town planning-related land use, need to be linked

to the land records database so that these restrictions can be recorded in real time.

- vi) Recording all ownership in built-up vertical spaces, like apartment blocks, as is being attempted in Maharashtra, is still awaiting action in most States/UTs. Linking records of cooperative societies or drawing on municipal property tax records can make this task easier.
- vii) The excellent initiative to create a record for inhabited rural areas under the Pradhan Mantri Swamitva Yojana needs to be properly planned and monitored.
- viii) The States/UTs need to consider ways to accord legal legitimacy to the area actually recorded in the digitised CMs, where it shows greater congruence with the on-ground situation as compared to the area noted in the RoR.
- ix) Some States and UTs appear to have made progress in linking the institution of court cases with the textual records. These actions are worth emulating by other States/UTs at the earliest.
- x) For the Government of India, the N-LRSI offers a great opportunity in many aspects. At the minimum, it can help the Government seek better quality while attempting to update information from the States/UTs on the DoLR websites. The States/UTs can be requested to make updating a real-time exercise by standardising

the links to the relevant databases. The States/UTs can also be requested to carry out more quality checks of their records. Most important, the Government of India can explore approaches for rewarding and recognising States/UTs that perform better on this Index so that the others are incentivised to improve and race beyond the front-runners.

Going forward, it is evident that there is reason to continue bringing out the N-LRSI even while considering ways to amend its composition in order to obtain even more meaningful results in the future.

The areas of change in the N-LRSI have been discussed in detail here.

According weightage to accessibility parameters will increase attention towards improving the digital experience for the user. The client survey will act as a reality check on the value of the digitisation efforts for the public and further highlight matters requiring greater attention. A progressive reduction in the weight attached to the extent of digitisation (as States and UTs reach close to a 100 per cent achievement on this parameter) while maintaining the emphasis on quality parameters, may also merit consideration.



