

# BARE NECESSITIES GAP BETWEEN STATES HAS NARROWED SINCE 2012, SURVEY SHOWS

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Poorer States have reduced the gap with rich States in providing citizens with access to the basics of daily life — housing, water, power, sanitation, cooking gas — according to a new 'Bare Necessities Index' (BNI) in the Economic Survey 2020-21.

The index, which draws its name from Baloo the Bear's song in the movie adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book, uses existing National Statistical Office survey data to show that between 2012 and 2018, serious gains were made in the area of sanitation although equity in housing access still lagged.

States such as Kerala, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat top the index, while eastern Indian States of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Tripura occupy the lowest rungs. States which showed significant improvement include Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

"Inter-State disparities in the access to 'the bare necessities' have declined in 2018 when compared to 2012 across rural and urban areas," said the survey.

"Access to 'the bare necessities' has improved disproportionately more for the poorest households when compared to the richest households across rural and urban areas. The improvement in equity is particularly noteworthy because while the rich can seek private alternatives, lobby for better services, or if need be, move to areas where public goods are better provided for, the poor rarely have such choices."

However, the survey noted there was still a gap between urban and rural India, as well as among income groups, and recommended "effective targeting of the needier population" in government schemes.

Better Centre-State coordination with local governments is needed, as they were responsible for civic amenities in urban areas, added the survey. It also suggested the BNI could be constructed at district level using large annual household survey data, to show progress.

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