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# Public Policy and Governance in Modi's Era: A Decadal Analysis (2014–2024)

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolution of public policy and governance during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure from 2014 to 2024. It offers a critical evaluation of accomplishments, challenges, and implications for democratic governance, with a particular focus on economic reforms, infrastructure development, social welfare initiatives, digital governance, and the empowerment of women ([Government of India, 2023](#)).

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, drawing from government datasets, third-party assessments, and international indices to assess key performance areas. It highlights progress in macroeconomic indicators and expanded welfare outreach, while simultaneously raising concerns about institutional centralisation and inclusivity. Combining empirical evidence and policy analysis, the study presents a comprehensive overview of economic, social, and administrative reforms. Particular attention is given to domains such as digital transformation, infrastructure growth, and targeted schemes for women's empowerment and social welfare.

The analysis culminates in a set of policy recommendations to strengthen governance through equity, transparency, and sustainability.



**Keywords:** *Modi administration, public policy, governance, women empowerment, economic reforms, social welfare, digital India*



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## INTRODUCTION

The decade from 2014 to 2024 marks a significant transition in India's governance trajectory, driven by the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Modi administration, inaugurated in May 2014, came into power amid growing demands for governance reforms, economic revival, and administrative transparency. What followed was a fundamental reshaping of the Indian state's policy posture across multiple domains, ranging from macroeconomic management and digital governance to social welfare, institutional redesign, and nationalism-driven public discourse.

The Modi government's flagship slogan, "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance", encapsulated its intent to reduce bureaucratic inefficiency and increase citizen-centric policy delivery. It reflected a deliberate break from the earlier paradigms that relied heavily on slow, procedural governance. At the core of this new architecture were three major pivots: administrative efficiency through digital infrastructure, mass-scale social policy outreach via direct benefit transfers (DBTs), and a strong centralisation of executive authority ([Jaffrelot, 2021](#)). In effect, this period was not only about policy innovation but also about the creation of a new political economy of governance in India.

The early years of the Modi administration focused heavily on reviving investor confidence, curbing corruption, and expanding the formal economy. This was evident in initiatives such as the Make in India campaign, Digital

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India programme, and the launch of the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity for financial inclusion and welfare targeting ([World Bank, 2019](#)). The government's ambitious Goods and Services Tax (GST) reform, introduced in 2017, further demonstrated the state's resolve to unify the complex federal tax regime. The introduction of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in 2016 was yet another institutional reform aimed at improving the efficiency of credit markets and corporate resolution.

In terms of governance technology, Modi's administration leaned heavily on digital platforms to overcome traditional bureaucratic bottlenecks. Systems such as the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and DigiLocker transformed citizen-state interactions. These innovations not only increased administrative efficiency but also claimed to reduce corruption and leakages ([Agarwal & Narayan, 2022](#)). UPI (Unified Payments Interface), launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), became a global model for real-time digital payments, demonstrating the success of state-led fintech innovation.

The second term of the Modi administration (2019–2024) brought renewed focus on welfare distribution, with programs such as PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), Ayushman Bharat (health insurance for the poor), and PM Awas Yojana (housing). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Modi government leveraged its digital governance infrastructure to deliver essential services to over 800 million people. Although applauded for logistical capacity, the state's response also drew criticism for a lack of federal coordination and over-centralisation of authority during a public health crisis.

Politically, the era witnessed a redefinition of federal dynamics and institutional relationships. Several commentators have noted the shift toward what has been called "executive federalism," where the central government has increasingly dominated financial and legislative space, often at the cost of cooperative engagement with states ([Jaffrelot, 2021](#)). The centralisation of key decisions reinforced this tendency during the implementation of demonetization in 2016 and the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019. From a public policy perspective, this period is marked by both institutional consolidation and democratic strain. On the one hand, measurable progress has been made in financial inclusion, digital access, infrastructure growth, and welfare distribution. On the other hand, concerns have arisen about institutional autonomy, the erosion of civil liberties, the weakening of parliamentary oversight, and a decline in media freedom. India's ranking in the Democracy Index published by the Economist Intelligence Unit dropped from 27 in 2014 to 46 in 2023, with concerns cited over electoral fairness, press freedom, and judicial independence ([EIU, 2023](#)).

The ideological undercurrent of this governance model is strongly rooted in nationalism, Hindu cultural identity, and aspirational development. Modi's mass appeal stems not only from economic promises but also from a narrative of restoring India's civilizational greatness. This blending of cultural legitimacy and executive governance has produced a distinct model of public administration that merits scholarly attention. This paper critically analyses the transformation of India's public policy and governance during the Modi era by examining ten core areas: economic reforms, digital governance, infrastructure development, women's empowerment, welfare delivery, institutional design, federalism, civil liberties, social inclusion, and policy outcomes. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining government data, academic literature, and global indices to provide a comprehensive view of India's governance experience during this decade.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship on India's governance under the Modi administration (2014–2024) is both extensive and deeply polarised. While some scholars celebrate the era as a period of transformative governance and efficiency-driven reforms, others express serious concerns about institutional weakening, centralisation of power, and declining democratic quality. This chapter reviews key academic, policy-oriented, and empirical literature to offer a balanced foundation for assessing the Modi era's public policy framework.

One of the defining themes in the literature is the shift from policy paralysis to executive-led governance. Analysts such as [Mehta \(2019\)](#) highlight the government's ability to accelerate infrastructure projects, streamline bureaucratic processes, and introduce welfare schemes with clearer implementation frameworks. This is often contrasted with the administrative inefficiencies and coalition constraints experienced under the previous United

Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Modi's narrative of "minimum government, maximum governance" is seen by supporters as a new model of technocratic governance focused on performance delivery. Another major stream of research focuses on digital governance and innovation. The launch of the Digital India initiative in 2015 has been studied for its ability to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and expand service delivery. According to NITI Aayog and the [World Bank \(2019\)](#), platforms like the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile), UPI, DigiLocker, and e-NAM helped improve financial inclusion and market access, especially in rural areas. Scholars such as [Bhatia and Bhabha \(2021\)](#) argue that India's digital infrastructure became a governance backbone during the COVID-19 crisis, facilitating massive cash and food transfers.

Conversely, critical voices highlight the decline of deliberative democracy during the Modi years. [Mehta \(2019\)](#) and [Jaffrelot \(2021\)](#) argue that parliamentary debates have reduced in quality and quantity, and that legislative decisions have increasingly relied on ordinances or party majorities rather than consensus-building. The use of majoritarian narratives, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and actions like the abrogation of Article 370, are seen by some as undermining the federal compact and promoting exclusionary governance ([Chopra, 2020](#)). Another critical concern in the literature is the erosion of institutional autonomy. Reports from [Freedom House \(2023\)](#) and [V-Dem Institute \(2023\)](#) note declines in judicial independence, media freedom, and civil society space. These sources argue that even as the state has become more efficient in policy execution, it has also limited dissent and accountability, key tenets of democratic governance.

In the economic domain, studies have acknowledged the successes of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), and the Make in India initiative. However, several economists have questioned the employment generation capacity of these reforms. For example, the [Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy \(CMIE, 2022\)](#) noted that while GDP grew, labour force participation, particularly for women, declined between 2016 and 2020. Additionally, the informal sector faced severe disruption following demonetization and the implementation of GST, raising questions about inclusive growth ([Ghosh, 2018](#)).

On welfare policy, independent evaluations from Brookings India and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicate that schemes like PM Ujjwala Yojana and Ayushman Bharat reached a large population. However, data on quality and continuity of service delivery remain mixed. Suggests that while access to basic services improved, local implementation bottlenecks—especially in health and sanitation—persisted across poorer states. ([Brookings India, 2020](#)).

The literature on women's empowerment under Modi is also growing. While government reports highlight the expansion of female bank account ownership and entrepreneurship through MUDRA loans, feminist scholars caution that these indicators mask underlying structural inequalities, such as low workforce participation and gendered barriers to education and mobility.

In terms of international comparisons, India's performance in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index improved from 134 in 2014 to 63 in 2020. However, India's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking remained stagnant, moving marginally from 135 to 132 during the same period, indicating uneven progress ([UNDP, 2022](#)). These trends underscore the need to distinguish between top-down structural reforms and bottom-up human development.

The literature suggests a dual narrative: one of administrative modernisation, policy innovation, and outreach, and another of democratic contraction, institutional stress, and uneven inclusion. The subsequent chapters in this paper will build upon these themes by analysing empirical data, comparing tenure performance, and offering policy recommendations grounded in evidence.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to critically evaluate public policy and governance during the Modi administration from 2014 to 2024. It integrates qualitative institutional analysis with quantitative data analysis, enabling a multidimensional understanding of both the intent and the outcomes of governance initiatives. The study is structured around seven thematic areas:

1. Economic Reforms
2. Infrastructure Development
3. Digital Governance
4. Social Welfare
5. Women's Empowerment
6. Federalism, Institutional Autonomy, and Democratic Backsliding
7. Governance and Public Service Delivery Mechanisms

Primary sources include official policy documents such as the *Economic Survey*, *Union Budget Speeches*, and *NITI Aayog Reports*, as well as parliamentary records and government portals (MoSPI, Digital India Corporation, Ministry of Finance, [Ministry of Women and Child Development](#)). Secondary sources comprise academic journals (*Economic & Political Weekly*, *Journal of Democracy*), think tank reports (ORF, Carnegie India, Brookings India, IDFC Institute), and international datasets (World Bank Ease of Doing Business, UNDP Human Development Index, Global Gender Gap Report, V-Dem Democracy Index, Freedom House, NFHS, CMIE statistics). A comparative longitudinal design distinguishes between foundational reforms (2014–2019) and welfare consolidation with institutional dynamics (2019–2024). Thematic coding of policy speeches and flagship documents (*Vision 2022*, *Gati Shakti*, *National Education Policy 2020*) is triangulated with public opinion and media discourse.

## ECONOMIC REFORMS AND PERFORMANCE

The Modi administration's economic governance from 2014 to 2024 was defined by bold structural reforms, macroeconomic stabilisation, and attempts to shift India onto a high-growth trajectory. While the government inherited sluggish GDP growth, rising inflation, and fiscal stress in 2014, it leveraged the next decade to build fiscal discipline, improve investor sentiment, and expand economic inclusion. However, these gains were not without challenges, including jobless growth, disruptions in the informal sector, and pandemic-induced slowdowns.

### Macroeconomic Indicators and Stability

At the macro level, as shown in Table 1, India's economy demonstrated resilience and recovery during most of Modi's first term (2014–2019), with GDP growth averaging 7.4% between FY2014–FY2017 ([Government of India, 2020](#); [World Bank, 2024](#)). Inflation, which had averaged 9.4% during the UPA II years, fell below 5% for much of the first term due to prudent monetary policies and falling oil prices.

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework was reinforced, and the government reduced the fiscal deficit from 4.5% of GDP in 2014 to 3.3% in 2018. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 significantly impacted these gains, with GDP contracting by -7.3% in FY2020–21, the worst in post-independence history.

**Table 1:** Key Economic Indicators (2014–2024)

Year	GDP Growth (%)	Inflation (CPI, %)	Fiscal Deficit (% of GDP)	FDI Inflows (USD bn)
2014–15	7.4	5.8	4.1	45
2016–17	8.2	3.6	3.5	60
2018–19	6.5	3.4	3.3	62
2020–21	-7.3	6.2	9.2	82
2022–23	7.2	6.7	6.4	71
2023–24*	6.8 (est.)	5.6 (proj.)	5.9 (proj.)	75 (proj.)

\*Sources: [Economic Survey 2023](#); RBI Annual Reports; DPIIT (2023)

### Flagship Economic Reforms

The government's major structural reforms include:

- **Goods and Services Tax (GST), 2017:** Unified India's fragmented indirect tax regime into a single national market. While GST improved tax compliance and digital invoicing, it faced initial implementation challenges and caused revenue stress for small businesses and MSMEs ([Ghosh, 2018](#)).
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:** Aimed to resolve non-performing assets and streamline corporate debt restructuring. By 2023, over 2,500 cases were resolved, recovering ₹3 lakh crore in distressed assets (Insolvency Board of India, 2023).
- **Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Encouraged domestic manufacturing and self-reliance in key sectors such as defence, electronics, and pharma. Though FDI surged to record highs post-2016, India's manufacturing share of GDP remained stagnant at ~17%, suggesting limited depth in industrialisation ([UNIDO, 2023](#)).
- **Direct Tax Reforms:** The corporate tax rate was slashed from 30% to 22% in 2019, improving investor sentiment. The introduction of faceless assessment under the Income Tax Act reduced discretion and increased transparency in tax administration.

### Informal Sector and Demonetization

One of the most debated interventions was the demonetisation of ₹500 and ₹1000 notes in November 2016. Intended to curb black money and counterfeit currency, and to encourage digitisation, it instead caused a significant short-term contraction in cash-based sectors. CMIE data indicated that nearly 1.5 million jobs were lost in the first few months after demonetization, particularly in construction, retail, and small-scale manufacturing ([Vyas, 2017](#)).

Similarly, GST compliance created financial stress for small traders and MSMEs, with delays in tax refunds and digital filing requirements affecting working capital cycles. Critics argue that such shocks were not sufficiently accompanied by safety nets or phased transitions ([Ghosh, 2018](#)).

### Employment and Labor Markets

A major criticism of the Modi government's economic reforms is the phenomenon of jobless growth. Between 2016 and 2020, the labour force participation rate declined, especially among women—from 27% in 2014 to around 20% in 2022 ([Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, 2022](#)). Automation trends and the lack of medium-sized enterprises in job-creating sectors exacerbated this.

The Skill India Mission, launched in 2015, aimed to train 400 million people by 2022, yet its absorption in formal employment remained limited. NSSO 2019 data indicated that fewer than 30% of trained youth found jobs aligned with their training.

### Post-COVID Economic Recovery

The government responded to the pandemic with the Atmanirbhar Bharat stimulus package worth ₹20 lakh crore (~10% of GDP), focusing on liquidity infusion, MSME credit, and welfare measures. While the stimulus was bold in scale, much of it was in the form of credit guarantees and supply-side support. Consumption demand remained fragile until FY2022–23, especially in rural India ([Subramanian & Felman, 2022](#)).

Despite global economic turbulence, India's economic growth rebounded to over 7% in 2022–23, driven by strong services-sector performance and exports.

### Evaluation and Forward Outlook

The Modi administration has performed strongly in areas such as macroeconomic stability, fiscal reforms, and digital financial inclusion. India has remained one of the fastest-growing major economies, with real GDP growth consistently above 6%, reflecting overall economic resilience. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has also increased significantly, reaching \$81.04 billion in FY 2024–25, marking a 14% rise compared to the previous year, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This growth highlights investor confidence and improved business conditions.

FDI inflows have been particularly strong in sectors such as services, computer software and hardware, and manufacturing. Policy reforms, including liberalisation through the automatic route in most sectors, have contributed to attracting investments. States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Delhi have emerged as leading recipients of FDI equity inflows, indicating regional concentration of investment benefits.

While GDP and FDI trends show a generally positive correlation, structural challenges remain in employment generation, income distribution, and informal-sector resilience. The key future challenge is to translate economic growth into high-quality, inclusive employment and ensure that development benefits reach grassroots levels without creating social disparities.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

A central pillar of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance model has been the dual strategy of building physical infrastructure at scale and embedding digital governance mechanisms across all tiers of public administration. From highways to fibre-optic networks and from e-governance portals to payment interfaces, this period has witnessed the convergence of infrastructure development with digital transformation to improve transparency, efficiency, and inclusion (Table 2).

### *Infrastructure Development: Highways, Railways, Urban Renewal*

Infrastructure spending under the Modi government increased significantly, with capital expenditure in the Union Budget rising from ₹1.93 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹10 lakh crore in 2023–24 (Union Budget, 2023). This reflects a shift toward public investment-led growth to improve connectivity, productivity, and long-term economic capacity.

Major flagship initiatives include Bharatmala Pariyojana, which aims to construct 83,000 km of highways. By 2023, over 34,800 km had been completed ([MoRTH, 2023](#)). The expansion of the national highway network between 2014 and 2024 demonstrates this progress. The Sagarmala Programme focuses on modernising port infrastructure and inland waterways to enhance logistics efficiency and reduce transportation costs.

Launched in 2021, PM Gati Shakti – National Master Plan promotes integrated infrastructure planning across ministries through a GIS-based digital platform that incorporates over 1,500 data layers for multi-modal connectivity. In the railways sector, 50,000 km of track were electrified between 2014 and 2023 ([Ministry of Railways, 2023](#)), alongside the introduction of semi-high-speed Vande Bharat trains. The Smart Cities Mission aimed to develop 100 urban centres, with 7,978 projects worth ₹1.7 lakh crore sanctioned; approximately 75% were completed or nearing completion by 2023 (MoHUA, 2023).

**Table 2: Infrastructure Growth Metrics**

Sector	2014 Baseline	2023 Achievement
Highways (km/year)	~12 km/day	~37 km/day
Railway Electrification	21,000 km total (till 2014)	>71,000 km total by 2023
Port Cargo Capacity	970 MTPA	1,560 MTPA
Urban Metro Network	210 km operational	800+ km operational

Sources: [Government of India \(2023\)](#)

On the digital front, the Digital India initiative catalysed Aadhaar penetration, broadband connectivity, and the development of e-governance platforms such as UMANG and DigiLocker. UPI emerged as a revolutionary digital payment tool, processing over 100 billion transactions in 2023 alone ([NPCL, 2023](#)). These developments transformed citizen-state interactions, improved transparency, and laid the groundwork for a digital economy.

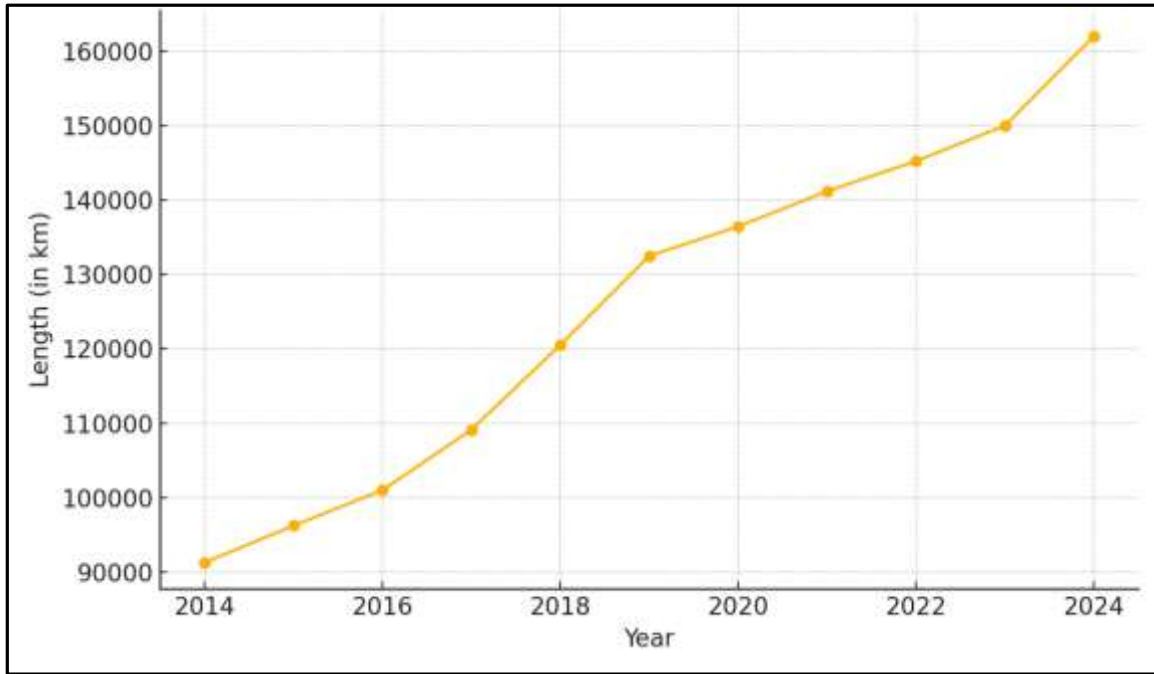


Figure 1: Expansion of National Highways in India (2014-2024)

**DIGITAL GOVERNANCE**

The Modi government’s approach to governance emphasised techno-administrative solutions, with the JAM trinity, Jan Dhan (bank accounts), Aadhaar (unique ID), and Mobile connectivity, serving as the digital spine for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and welfare delivery. By the end of 2023, over 46 crore Jan Dhan accounts had been opened, Aadhaar coverage had extended to more than 1.3 billion individuals, and DBT savings had crossed ₹2.7 lakh crore due to reduced leakages (DBT Bharat Portal, 2023). Building on this foundation, initiatives such as e-Shram (unorganised worker database), PM Kisan (farm income support), and Ayushman Bharat Digital Health ID were layered on top of the digital infrastructure to expand welfare delivery. In addition, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) consolidated its role as the national public procurement platform, with cumulative transactions surpassing ₹3 lakh crore by 2023, thereby reinforcing the government’s digital-first governance model. Table 3 shows India’s digital governance milestones from 2015 to 2023, beginning with the Digital India campaign and progressing through UMANG, BHIM, Aadhaar-based DBT, rural Wi-Fi, and Aadhaar linkages, culminating in the 5G rollout and AI for Governance, marking India’s transition to advanced digital infrastructure and service delivery.

Table 3: Expansion of National Highways in India (2014-2024)

Year	Milestone
2015	Digital India campaign launched
2016	UMANG app introduced
2017	BHIM app launched
2018	Aadhaar-based DBT mainstreamed
2019	Wi-Fi hotspots in villages
2021	Over 50 crore Aadhaar linkages
2023	5G rollout and AI for Governance initiatives

**Unified Payments Interface (UPI): India’s FinTech Revolution**

Launched in 2016, UPI revolutionised digital payments by enabling real-time, bank-to-bank transactions. Monthly transaction volumes (Figure 2) increased from 0.9 million in 2016 to over 10 billion in 2023 (NPCI, 2023). India now leads the world in digital payments by volume. The system was made interoperable with international platforms, including in the UAE, Singapore, and Bhutan.

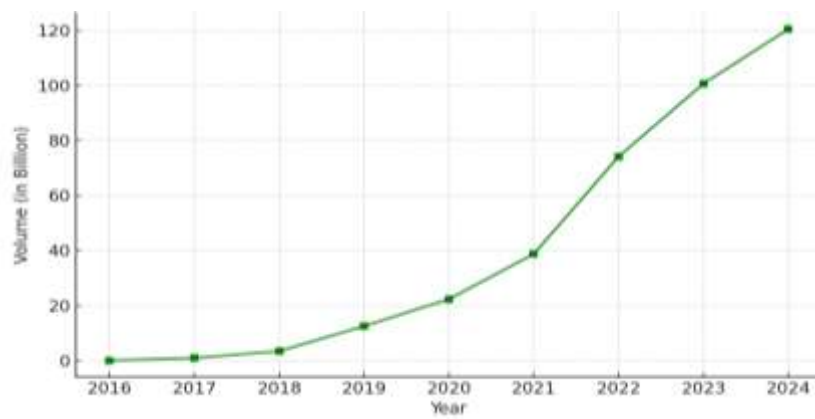


Figure 2: Growth in UPI Transaction Volume (2014-2024)

To consolidate citizen–state interactions, the government launched three major platforms, DigiLocker, UMANG, and MyGov. DigiLocker, with over 200 million users by 2023, enabled secure storage of digital versions of academic, health, and legal documents, reducing reliance on physical records. UMANG provided a unified platform offering access to more than 1,600 government services through a single mobile application, simplifying service delivery. MyGov emerged as a citizen engagement portal, attracting 25 million users who participated in surveys, consultations, and campaigns, thereby strengthening participatory governance. Collectively, these platforms reduced the need for physical interface, improved transparency, and enhanced citizen involvement in policymaking, reflecting the government’s emphasis on digital-first governance and inclusive interaction.

While India’s infrastructure growth is widely recognised, several concerns have been raised by critics. Land acquisition challenges often led to project delays, undermining the pace of development. The Smart Cities Mission displayed an urban bias, allocating fewer funds per capita to rural areas, thereby widening regional disparities. In digital governance, surveillance risks emerged, particularly around Aadhaar data security and privacy ([Kovacs & Jain, 2021](#)). Moreover, the digital divide hindered marginalised communities from fully accessing online services, limiting inclusivity. The absence of a comprehensive data protection law until late 2023 meant that digital governance operated in legal grey zones, raising questions about accountability and citizen rights. Collectively, these issues highlight the tension between rapid infrastructure expansion and the need for equitable, secure, and rights-based governance.

## SOCIAL WELFARE

The Modi administration’s social welfare strategy from 2014 to 2024 has been characterised by a shift from entitlement-based programs to targeted, technology-driven delivery mechanisms. The government has prioritised direct benefit transfers (DBT), the universalisation of basic services, and the expansion of social security for marginalised populations. The goal has been to create a welfare ecosystem that is inclusive, efficient, and digitally empowered.

### Direct Benefit Transfers and Financial Inclusion

Central to the government’s social policy was the DBT architecture, powered by the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile). By 2023, more than ₹28.5 lakh crore had been transferred directly into beneficiary accounts under schemes such as PM-KISAN, PMAY, and MGNREGS, thereby eliminating leakages and middlemen ([Department of Economic Affairs, 2023](#)). Table 3 presents DBT reach and financial impact from 2014 to 2023. The Jan Dhan Yojana, launched in 2014, created over 46 crore bank accounts and accumulated deposits exceeding ₹1.8 lakh crore by 2023. This push for financial inclusion has been particularly transformative for the poor, especially women, enabling their greater participation in the formal economy. Together, DBT and Jan Dhan have

reshaped welfare delivery by combining efficiency, transparency, and empowerment, marking a significant shift in India's governance model.

**Table 3: DBT Reach and Financial Impact (2014–2023)**

Scheme	Beneficiaries (Crores)	Funds Transferred (₹ Cr)
PM-KISAN	11.8	₹2.8 lakh crore
LPG Subsidy (PAHAL)	19.5	₹1.1 lakh crore
MGNREGS Wages (DBT)	15.6	₹2.2 lakh crore
PMAY (Rural & Urban)	3.1	₹1.9 lakh crore

Sources: [DBT Bharat Portal](#); [Ministry of Finance, 2023](#)

### Health and Sanitation Initiatives

The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), launched in 2018, aims to provide health insurance coverage of ₹5 lakh per family per year to more than 10 crore vulnerable families. By 2023, the scheme had supported over 5 crore hospital admissions, according to the [National Health Authority \(2023\)](#), significantly improving access to secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

Several other major health and sanitation programs have also contributed to improving public health outcomes in India. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched in 2014, led to the construction of over 110 million toilets, and by 2019, more than 6 lakh villages were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). However, follow-up studies, such as those by [J-PAL \(2022\)](#), indicate that sustained toilet use varies across regions, highlighting the need for continued behavioural change efforts.

The Jal Jeevan Mission, introduced in 2019, aims to provide piped drinking water to every rural household. As of 2023, around 12 crore households, or approximately 62%, had access to tap water connections, a significant increase from 3.2 crore households in 2019 ([Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2023](#)).

Additionally, the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) aims to strengthen the digital health ecosystem by introducing digital health IDs and promoting telemedicine services. While the initiative shows strong potential, large-scale integration and implementation are still in progress.

### Food Security and Pandemic Response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government introduced the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to ensure food security for vulnerable populations. Under this scheme, 5 kg of free food grains per person per month was provided to more than 80 crore beneficiaries. Between 2020 and 2023, over 1,200 lakh metric tons of food grains were distributed under PMGKAY and the National Food Security Act (NFSA), making it one of the largest food security interventions globally. The programme played a crucial role in preventing hunger and supporting livelihoods during the crisis. Figure 3 shows a rise in foodgrain distribution from about 32 million tons in 2020 to a peak of 60 million tons in 2022, followed by a slight decline to 55 million tons in 2023, indicating sustained government support for food security during and after the pandemic (Department of Food and Public Distribution, 2020)

However, despite its wide coverage, certain challenges were reported. These included exclusion errors, where eligible beneficiaries were left out, and issues with Aadhaar-linked digital verification systems, which sometimes led to ration denial at fair price shops.

In addition to food security, other major welfare schemes contributed to pandemic relief. Ayushman Bharat provided health insurance coverage to over 50 crore individuals by 2023, reducing out-of-pocket healthcare expenses. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana improved access to clean cooking fuel by providing LPG connections to millions of households, particularly benefiting women.

Furthermore, the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, linked with Aadhaar and Jan Dhan accounts, enhanced transparency and efficiency in welfare delivery. By 2022, DBT had reached over 45 crore beneficiaries, minimising leakages and ensuring timely financial assistance during the pandemic.

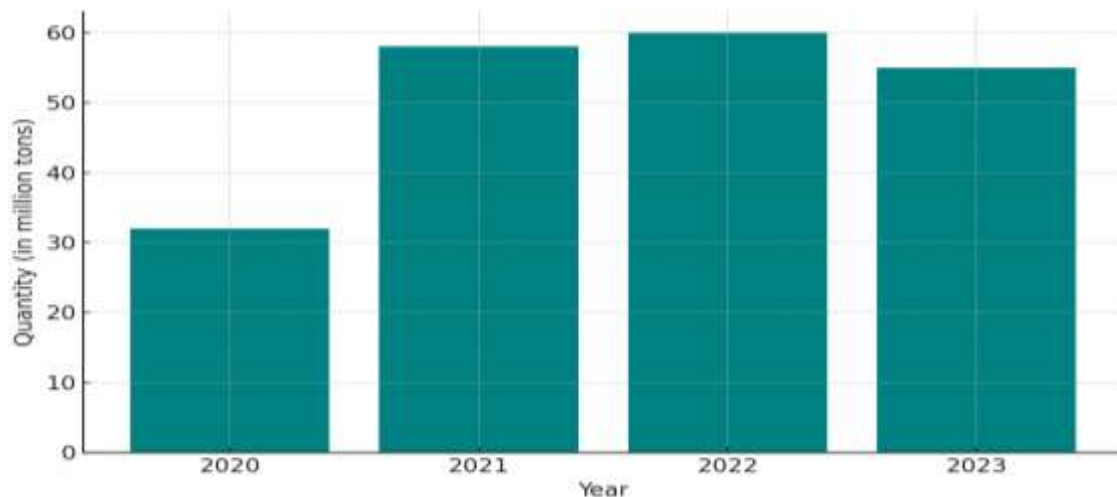


Figure 3: Foodgrain Distribution under PMGKAY (2020-2023)

### Housing, Employment, and Social Security

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) has played a significant role in improving access to affordable housing for both rural and urban poor. As of 2023, over 2.4 crore houses were sanctioned under PMAY-Gramin (Rural), while more than 1.2 crore houses were approved under PMAY-Urban, reflecting substantial progress in addressing housing shortages ([Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2023](#)).

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), although introduced earlier, witnessed a surge in demand following the COVID-19 pandemic. In the financial year 2020–21, the scheme generated over 390 crore person-days of employment, marking the highest level since its inception and providing crucial livelihood support during economic disruption.

The e-Shram Portal, launched in 2021, established a national database of around 29 crore unorganised workers. The initiative aims to extend social security benefits and insurance coverage to this vulnerable workforce. However, effective integration with welfare schemes is still a work in progress.

According to NITI Aayog’s Multidimensional Poverty Index, India reduced multidimensional poverty from 25% in 2016 to 14.9% in 2021. Rural poverty declined from 32% to 19%, while urban poverty fell from 9% to 5% ([NITI Aayog, 2022](#)).

However, several challenges remain. Exclusion errors persist, particularly affecting migrant workers, widows, and persons with disabilities. Grievance redressal systems in DBT-linked schemes are often weak. Nutritional outcomes remain a concern, with [NFHS-5 \(2021\)](#) reporting high levels of stunting and anaemia. Additionally, disparities between rural and urban areas continue in access to piped water, digital healthcare, and the affordability of LPG refills.

### WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women’s empowerment emerged as a policy priority for the Modi government, reflected in targeted schemes, financial inclusion drives, digital access, and legislative reform. While these initiatives significantly improved access to entitlements and participation in the economy, structural inequalities in labour participation, unpaid care work, and representation in decision-making persist. This chapter evaluates gender-focused policies from 2014 to 2024, assessing their scope and limitations.

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme helped improve the sex ratio at birth in key districts. The Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana promoted savings for girl children. Over 70% of Mudra Yojana beneficiaries were women, enabling access to micro-credit for entrepreneurship (Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2023). Figure 4 shows a steady increase in female enrollment in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs from 2017 to 2024. Enrollment rose from approximately 0.75 million in 2017 to nearly 1.8 million projected in 2024. This consistent upward trend highlights growing participation of women in STEM education over these years, reflecting efforts to bridge the gender gap in technical and scientific fields. The data indicate positive progress towards greater gender diversity in STEM, with enrollment more than doubling over the eight-year period. The share of female students in STEM rose from 35% in 2015 to 43% in 2023. These trends reflect an increasing focus on gender-inclusive growth and digital literacy for women.

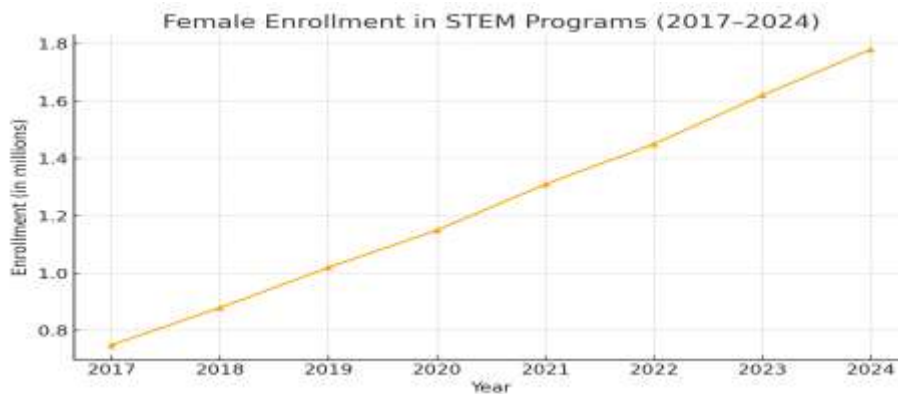


Figure 4: PM Mudra Yojana: Women Beneficiaries (2015-2024)

**Financial Inclusion and Economic Participation**

The Modi era marked a significant expansion of women’s financial access through the Jan Dhan Yojana and MUDRA loan schemes. As of 2023, over 23 crore women held Jan Dhan accounts, accounting for 55% of total account holders (Ministry of Finance, 2023), indicating improved access to formal banking services. Figure 5 shows steady growth in the number of women beneficiaries under the PM Mudra Yojana, rising from around 5.4 million in 2015 to over 32 million by 2024, reflecting expanding financial inclusion.

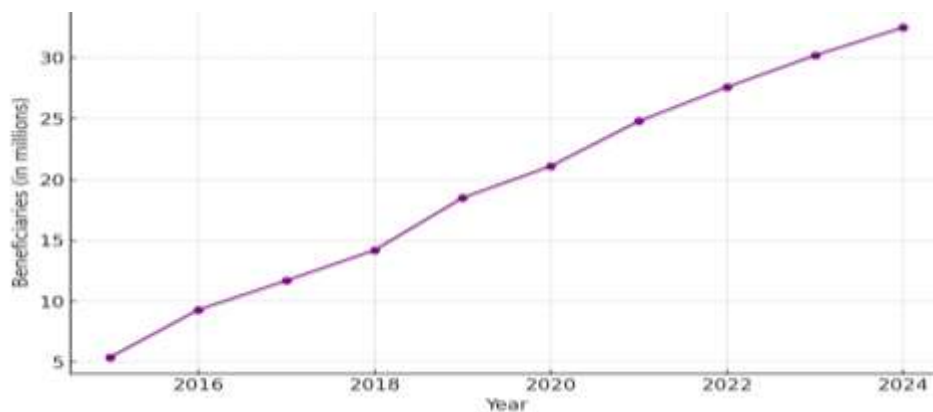


Figure 5: PM Mudra Yojana: Women Beneficiaries (2015-2024)

The Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), launched in 2015 to provide collateral-free microcredit, reported that 68% of loan recipients were women, many of whom belonged to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and OBC backgrounds. Similarly, the Stand-Up India scheme, aimed at promoting women entrepreneurs, sanctioned loans worth over ₹30,000 crore between 2016 and 2023.

While these measures have strengthened financial inclusion and expanded access to credit for women, concerns remain regarding loan sustainability and income generation, particularly in rural and informal sectors ([Deshpande, 2020](#)).

### **Skilling, Education, and Digital Literacy**

Several flagship programs aimed to bridge the gendered skill and digital divide. The Skill India Mission enrolled over 2 crore women in various vocational training programs between 2015 and 2022. The Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA) trained more than 60 lakh women in digital literacy, with a special focus on rural areas. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP), launched in 2015, aimed to achieve gender parity in education and improve the survival of the girl child. In districts where the scheme was implemented, the sex ratio at birth improved from 918 in 2015 to 934 in 2021 (MoWCD, 2022). Despite progress in female literacy and enrolment, dropout rates, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, remained high due to factors like early marriage, menstruation stigma, and caregiving burdens.

### **Health and Nutrition Interventions**

Key gender-sensitive health interventions included Mission Indradhanush and Poshan Abhiyan, which focused on improving maternal and child health. However, [NFHS-5 \(2021\)](#) showed that 57% of women aged 15–49 remain anaemic, and 35.5% of children suffer from stunting, indicating persistent malnutrition challenges. The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) provided maternity benefits of ₹5,000 to first-time mothers. While over 1.7 crore women benefited from the scheme, delays in fund transfers and low awareness among eligible beneficiaries were common obstacles ([NITI Aayog, 2023](#)).

### **Legal and Institutional Reforms**

The Modi government introduced several gender-sensitive legal reforms. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 increased punishments for sexual violence and strengthened fast-track courts. The Triple Talaq Bill, 2019 criminalised instant divorce under Muslim personal law, receiving both praise for reform and criticism for criminalising civil matters. The Women's Reservation Bill (2023) proposed 33% reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, representing a historic move in gender representation, though implementation depends on census and delimitation exercises. Despite these reforms, women's political representation remained below 15% in the 17th Lok Sabha, and female workforce participation declined from 27% in 2014 to about 20% in 2022 ([Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, 2022](#)).

### **Safety, Security, and Digital Harassment**

Efforts to improve women's safety and address digital harassment included the establishment of over 700 One Stop Centres, offering legal and psychological support to survivors of violence. The SHE-Box was introduced to handle workplace sexual harassment complaints, while the National Cyber Crime Portal and Helpline 1930 enabled reporting of digital abuse. Despite these measures, data from the [NCRB \(2022\)](#) revealed a rise in crimes against women, particularly in cybercrime, domestic violence, and dowry-related deaths. These trends highlight ongoing challenges in policing, judicial responsiveness, and the need for greater institutional sensitivity toward women's safety.

India's performance on global gender metrics presents a mixed picture. Table 4 shows that between 2014 and 2023, female labour force participation declined from 27% to 20%, while women's representation in Parliament increased from 11.6% to 14.3%. The sex ratio at birth improved from 918 to 934, and women's bank account ownership rose from approximately 45% to 78%. In the Global Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2023), India ranked 127 out of 146 countries, showing improvement in political empowerment but remaining low in economic participation. On the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2022), India scored 0.488, indicating moderate inequality, with persistent gaps in income, health, and social indicators.

Table 4: *Key Gender Metrics (2014–2023)*

Indicator	2014	2023
Female Labour Force Participation (%)	27	20
Women in Parliament (%)	11.6	14.3
Sex Ratio at Birth	918	934
Women Bank Account Ownership (%)	~45	78

## FEDERALISM, INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY, AND DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

While the Modi administration's decade in power has been marked by policy innovation and centralised efficiency, it has also raised serious concerns about the erosion of institutional autonomy, the decline of deliberative democracy, and the increasing centralisation of power in the executive. This chapter critically evaluates these concerns through the lens of federal dynamics, institutional independence, and global democratic indices.

### Cooperative vs Competitive Federalism

The Modi government initially championed “cooperative federalism” with the abolition of the Planning Commission and the creation of NITI Aayog in 2015, promising states greater participation in policy formulation and resource allocation. The GST Council was designed to harmonise tax policy, but post-2017, many states, especially opposition-ruled ones, raised concerns about delays in GST compensation. In centrally designed schemes such as PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and Ayushman Bharat, limited state flexibility led to tensions over implementation. Scholars describe India's federalism under Modi as increasingly coercive, particularly regarding fiscal devolution and political alignment.

### Institutional Independence: Judiciary, Media, and Civil Service

India's democratic resilience relies on the autonomy of constitutional institutions. During the Modi era, increased pressure on key institutions was observed. The Election Commission of India (ECI) faced allegations of delayed or biased responses to electoral violations, raising questions about its impartiality ([Yadav, 2022](#)). The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) were frequently used against political opposition, leading the Supreme Court to describe the CBI as “a caged parrot.” Civil service reforms such as Mission Karmayogi and lateral entry introduced modern HR practices, but concerns persisted over politicisation of transfers and declining bureaucratic neutrality ([Kapur & Vaishnavi, 2018](#)).

### Shrinking Civic Space and Media Freedom

Civil society organisations, particularly those receiving foreign funding under FCRA, were heavily scrutinised or deregistered. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, over 6,000 NGOs lost their FCRA license between 2015 and 2023. Media freedom also declined during this period: India's World Press Freedom Index ranking fell from 133 (2014) to 161 (2023) out of 180 countries ([Reporters Without Borders, 2023](#)), and government advertising patterns skewed heavily in favour of pro-establishment outlets, affecting editorial independence. Digital censorship and surveillance expanded under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2021, which increased control over online platforms and journalists. WhatsApp and Twitter challenged several provisions in court, citing violations of freedom of expression.

### Parliamentary Functioning and Ordinance Raj

The Modi government faced criticism for undermining parliamentary deliberation. The 17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024) recorded one of the lowest number of sittings per year in Indian history ([PRS Legislative Research, 2023](#)). Several key legislations, including the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) and the Farm Laws (2020), were

passed without standing committee scrutiny. Additionally, the ordinance route was increasingly used, with over 77 ordinances issued between 2014 and 2022, often bypassing detailed legislative debate ([Lobo, 2022](#)).

### Global Democratic Indices and Backsliding Claims

Several international reports have highlighted concerns about India’s democratic regression. The V-Dem Institute (2023) categorised India as an “electoral autocracy,” citing media suppression, judicial encroachments, and targeting of minorities. [Freedom House \(2023\)](#) downgraded India’s democracy rating to “partly free,” with a score of 66/100, citing restrictions on dissent and civil liberties. The Indian government, however, has rejected these findings, describing them as ideologically biased and methodologically flawed.

**Table 6: Comparative Analysis: Modi I vs Modi II**

Indicator	2014–2019 (Modi I)	2019–2024 (Modi II)
Parliamentary Bills Referred to Committees	~71%	~11%
Press Freedom Rank (RSF)	140	161
NGO FCRA Cancellations	~2,000	~6,000
V-Dem Democracy Score (0–1 scale)	0.58	0.43

Sources: PRS, RSF, V-Dem, MHA

### GOVERNANCE REFORMS AND SERVICE DELIVERY MECHANISMS

The Modi administration has pursued an ambitious agenda of governance reforms aimed at modernising the Indian state, increasing administrative efficiency, and transforming public service delivery through technology and performance-based models. This chapter outlines key reforms in civil services, bureaucratic accountability, grievance redressal, and e-governance mechanisms that shaped governance outcomes between 2014 and 2024.

Governance under Modi emphasised digitalisation, performance evaluation, and citizen-centric services. CPGRAMS 2.0 improved grievance redressal timelines from 56 days in 2014 to 10 days in 2023. The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) streamlined procurement, saving thousands of crores. Mission Karmayogi is aimed at building bureaucratic capacity and outcome-based HR appraisal. These reforms were benchmarked against global governance indicators and marked a shift from entitlement to accountability-driven public service ([Kapur & Vaishnav, 2018](#)).

Figure 6 shows a steady decline in average grievance redressal time under CPGRAMS from 2014 to 2023. Resolution time improved significantly, dropping from around 55 days in 2014 to about 10 days in 2023. This indicates increased efficiency, likely due to digitisation and system upgrades like CPGRAMS 2.0. Faster processing reflects better administrative responsiveness, improved monitoring, and streamlined workflows, ultimately benefiting citizens by enabling quicker complaint resolution and greater trust in governance systems.

### Mission Karmayogi and Civil Services Transformation

In 2020, the government launched Mission Karmayogi, a capacity-building program aimed at transforming the Indian bureaucracy into a citizen-centric, digitally empowered, and performance-driven service. The initiative created the iGOT Karmayogi digital platform for continuous learning, with over 16 lakh civil servants registered by 2023. It also introduced Competency Frameworks to evaluate bureaucrats beyond seniority, focusing on behavioural, functional, and domain expertise. Additionally, lateral entry into senior administrative positions was permitted, enabling private-sector specialists to fill key roles. While this broke traditional hierarchies, critics expressed concerns about transparency in selection and the potential impact on long-term institutional coherence.

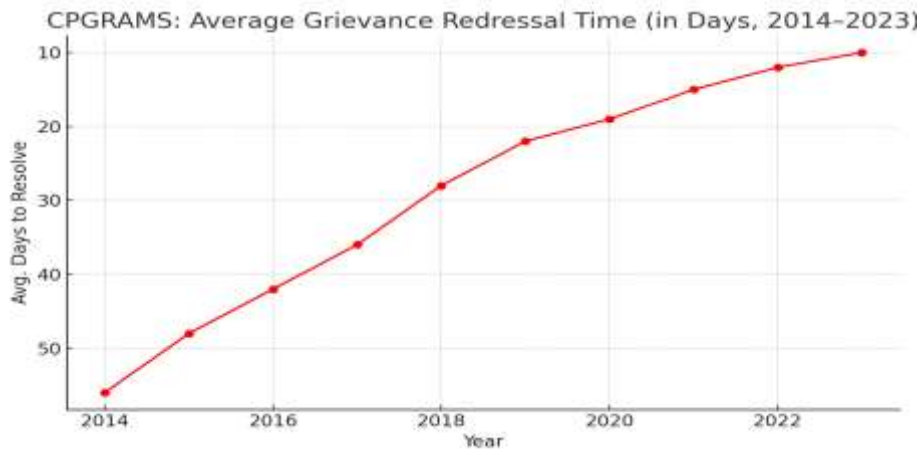


Figure 6: Trend in Average Grievance Redressal Time under CPGRAMS (2014–2023)

### Performance-Based Governance

Performance-based governance under the Modi government focused on achieving measurable outcomes rather than just allocating resources. The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), launched in 2018, targeted 112 underdeveloped districts and emphasized improvements in health, education, infrastructure, and financial inclusion through real-time data monitoring and monthly rankings, promoting competition among districts.

Performance Smartboards and KPIs enabled continuous tracking and evaluation. By 2022, significant progress had been made. Institutional deliveries increased from 62% to 82%, school dropout rates declined from 28% to 18%, and bank account penetration rose from 54% to 78% (Table 7).

These improvements reflect better administrative efficiency, accountability, and data-driven decision-making, ensuring that governance translates into tangible developmental outcomes for citizens.

**Table 7: Performance Metrics under ADP (2018–2022)**

Indicator	Baseline (2018)	Average 2022 Status
Institutional Deliveries (%)	62	82
School Dropout Rate (%)	28	18
Bank Account Penetration (%)	54	78

Source: [NITI Aayog Dashboard, 2023](#)

### Digital Tools for Service Delivery

The government strengthened service delivery through end-to-end digitalisation, improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) was expanded to cover over 400 schemes across 56 ministries, significantly reducing leakages and generating estimated savings of ₹2.7 lakh crore. This ensured that subsidies and benefits reached beneficiaries directly without intermediaries.

Platforms such as e-Samarthya and e-Office promoted paperless administration, which proved especially useful during the pandemic by enabling continuity in governance. Citizen-focused applications like UMANG, MyGov, and DigiLocker made it easier to access certificates, pay bills, and interact with government services without visiting offices physically. The use of AI-based tools in areas like crop insurance, crime detection, and telemedicine reflects a shift toward data-driven governance. These initiatives collectively enhanced service delivery, reduced delays, and improved overall administrative responsiveness.

## Public Procurement and Transparency

Public procurement and transparency improved significantly with the launch of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in 2016. The platform streamlined procurement by making it fully online, transparent, and competitive. By 2023, GeM recorded transactions worth over ₹3.25 lakh crore and enabled more than 60,000 MSMEs to participate, expanding opportunities for small businesses.

Technological tools like CPGRAMS 2.0 enhanced grievance redressal by using AI to prioritise and route complaints efficiently, reducing the average resolution time to 26 days by 2023. In addition, electronic tendering, RTI portals, and real-time dashboards became standard features, ensuring greater accountability, reduced corruption, and improved monitoring in government schemes.

### CHALLENGES IN REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

Despite major reforms, several implementation challenges remain. Digital exclusion continues to affect the elderly, rural poor, and tribal populations due to limited internet access and low digital literacy, restricting their ability to benefit from online services.

Grievance redressal systems also face overload. Although CPGRAMS handled over 20 lakh complaints in 2022, the quality of resolutions varied, with many responses deemed generic or unsatisfactory.

There are also evaluation gaps, as programmes like ADP and Mission Karmayogi lack sufficient independent assessment, which limits accountability and objective review. Additionally, a top-down, target-driven approach is often criticised for discouraging local innovation and ignoring region-specific needs, affecting the overall effectiveness of reforms.

India's governance reforms have gained international recognition for their scale and impact. The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system has been acknowledged by the United Nations Development Programme for achieving effective last-mile delivery by ensuring benefits reach citizens directly. In addition, India ranked 40th in the World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index 2022, placing it ahead of several OECD countries. These achievements highlight the success of digital governance and administrative reforms. India's model demonstrates how technology-driven systems can improve efficiency and transparency, offering useful lessons for other developing democracies, though adaptations may be needed to account for local conditions.

### CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The period from 2014 to 2024, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, has witnessed profound changes in the philosophy, design, and delivery of public policy in India. From infrastructure expansion and digital transformation to welfare inclusion and administrative reform, the decade marks a pivotal shift in how the Indian state engages with its citizens. However, the transformation has not been without costs—particularly in terms of institutional checks and balances, democratic pluralism, and federal consensus. This concluding chapter synthesises key findings from earlier chapters and offers evidence-backed policy recommendations for the road ahead.

#### Summary of Achievements

1. **Economic and Infrastructure Growth:** The Modi government's simultaneous expansion of hard and soft infrastructure has been transformative in scale and ambition. Digital governance innovations have set global benchmarks, while physical infrastructure has improved connectivity and logistics. However, sustainability, digital rights, and regional equity remain areas requiring further attention.
  - Capital expenditure rose fivefold during the decade.
  - India added over 35,000 km of national highways and expanded railway electrification significantly.
  - India emerged as a global leader in digital transactions, with UPI clocking over 10 billion transactions monthly (NPCI, 2023).

2. **Welfare Delivery and Financial Inclusion:** The Modi government's welfare delivery model has redefined India's social safety net by emphasising scale, speed, and digital targeting. While the delivery infrastructure has improved and poverty indicators have declined, inclusion gaps, data reliability, and the quality of outcomes remain areas of concern.
  - Over ₹28 lakh crore distributed via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
  - Jan Dhan accounts, PM-KISAN, and Ayushman Bharat expanded coverage to millions.
3. **Women's Empowerment:** The Modi era witnessed notable advances in women's access to finance, education, and welfare services, supported by technology and political messaging. However, persistent socio-economic inequalities, low workforce participation, and rising violence highlight the structural nature of gender inequality. Future reforms must prioritise qualitative outcomes, behavioural change, and institutional accountability over symbolic inclusion.
  - Increased women's access to credit (68% of MUDRA loans), health care, and financial services.
  - Gender-focused schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao improved survival and education metrics.
4. **Governance Innovations:** The Modi decade has expanded executive authority while challenging the balance of power between constitutional institutions. While state capacity, efficiency, and coordination have improved, checks and balances, transparency, and spaces for dissent have shrunk. These developments warrant careful reflection on the quality of India's democracy, beyond electoral victories.
  - Mission Karmayogi and the iGOT platform restructured civil service capacity building.
  - Government e-Marketplace and CPGRAMS improved procurement transparency and grievance redress.

### Persisting Challenges

Despite major steps, India's governance ecosystem faces several systemic concerns:

- **Democratic Decline:** India's ratings on global indices such as V-Dem and Freedom House fell due to constraints on civil liberties, media freedom, and NGO functioning.
- **Institutional Centralisation: Limited power-sharing with states, increased use of ordinances, and marginalisation** of parliamentary committees have diluted institutional integrity.
- **Unequal Growth:** Economic growth has not translated proportionately into employment, especially for women and youth. Regional disparities persist.
- **Digital Divide:** Despite digitisation gains, inclusion gaps for the elderly, rural poor, and marginalised remain unaddressed.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Infrastructure-led growth often disregards environmental safeguards.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this decadal review, the following policy imperatives are recommended for sustainable and democratic governance:

#### a. Democratic Deepening

- Restore deliberative functioning of Parliament by mandating committee scrutiny for all major legislation.
- Strengthen institutions like the Election Commission, CAG, and National Statistical Office with statutory autonomy.
- Ensure independent appointments to key watchdog bodies via bipartisan mechanisms.

#### b. Fiscal Federalism

- Revise GST compensation mechanisms to ensure timely fund transfers to states.
- Allow greater design flexibility in centrally sponsored schemes for local adaptation.

- Institutionalise intergovernmental councils for cooperative federalism.

### c. Employment and Social Equity

- Incentivise job creation in green energy, AI, and MSME sectors with skill-aligned programs.
- Introduce incentives for women's workforce participation, including tax breaks, workplace crèches, and flexible working hours.
- Universalise social security for informal sector workers via e-Shram integration.

### d. Environmental Governance

- Mandate environmental impact audits for all infrastructure projects.
- Establish an independent National Environment Regulatory Authority.
- Promote urban-rural sustainability transitions through localised climate adaptation programs.

### e. Data Ethics and Privacy

- Operationalise the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) with transparent enforcement mechanisms.
- Ensure algorithmic accountability for all AI and biometric decision systems used in public services.

### f. Civic Engagement and Accountability

- Expand participatory budgeting and citizen audit frameworks at the district level.
- Institutionalise public hearings and right-to-service charters.
- Safeguard academic and civil liberties to foster critical public discourse.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this decadal review, the following policy imperatives are proposed for sustainable and democratic governance.

- **Democratic Deepening:** Parliamentary deliberation should be strengthened by mandating committee scrutiny for all major legislation. Key institutions such as the Election Commission, CAG, and National Statistical Office require greater statutory autonomy. Independent and bipartisan mechanisms should ensure transparent appointments to watchdog bodies.
- **Fiscal Federalism:** GST compensation mechanisms should be revised to guarantee timely transfers to states. Centrally sponsored schemes should allow greater flexibility for local adaptation. Intergovernmental councils must be institutionalised to reinforce cooperative federalism.
- **Employment and Social Equity:** Job creation should be promoted in green energy, AI, and MSME sectors through skill-based programs. Incentives such as tax benefits, workplace crèches, and flexible hours can improve women's workforce participation. Social security coverage for informal workers should be universalised through e-Shram integration.
- **Environmental Governance:** Environmental impact audits should be mandatory for infrastructure projects. An independent National Environment Regulatory Authority may enhance oversight. Localised climate adaptation initiatives can support sustainable urban-rural transitions.
- **Data Ethics and Privacy:** The Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) should be operationalised with transparent enforcement. Strong algorithmic accountability must apply to AI and biometric systems in public services.
- **Civic Engagement and Accountability:** Participatory budgeting, citizen audits, public hearings, and right-to-service charters should be expanded. Academic freedom and civil liberties must be safeguarded to encourage open and critical democratic discourse.

## LIMITATIONS

While the mixed-method approach strengthens analysis through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, several limitations remain. Access to disaggregated administrative data at state and district levels is often restricted, limiting deeper comparative assessment. There is also temporal bias, as many programmes are ongoing and their long-term impacts may extend beyond 2024, making current evaluations incomplete. Also, policy implementation varies across states due to India's federal structure, leading to differences in outcomes and effectiveness. Concerns also exist regarding potential institutional bias in official data and possible under-reporting of adverse outcomes, particularly during crises such as COVID-19. Despite these constraints, the integrated methodology offers a comprehensive and structured framework for assessing governance reforms and public policy performance.

### CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The Modi government's governance reforms created a new public administration model focused on performance metrics, digital service delivery, and institutional reengineering. While substantial gains in transparency and access were realised, inclusion, local autonomy, and systemic evaluation remain key areas for strengthening. Governance, to be truly transformative, must balance speed with sensitivity, data with discretion, and innovation with accountability. The "Modi Model" of governance has delivered administrative scale through digital infrastructure and centralised coordination. It improved service delivery, reduced leakages, and expanded formal inclusion. However, these gains must be assessed alongside concerns regarding institutional autonomy, consultative processes, and social inclusion. India now stands at a crucial stage in its governance journey. The future direction will determine whether it continues with executive centralisation or evolves toward a more plural, participatory, and resilient democratic system. A forward-looking governance model must prioritise efficiency along with legitimacy, inclusiveness, constitutional values, and citizen participation.

### AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

#### CRedit Author Statement / Author contributions

**Nagalaxmi M Raman:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Software; Validation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Resources; Data Curation; Writing – Original Draft; Writing – Review & Editing; Visualization.

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