

News release: Tamil Nadu

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Internet use at 53% of 15+ population in Tamil Nadu: COVID-19 pandemic boosted internet uptake among the marginalised, but a significant digital divide remains

A survey of Tamil Nadu shows that 23% of internet users that came online in 2020 did so due to a need brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey shows that 5.7 million people (aged 15 or above) came online in 2020, and a further 4 million in 2021, bringing the total number of internet users in Tamil Nadu up to 32 million people, or 53% of the 15+ population.

The 2021 survey, conducted by policy think tanks LIRNEasia and ICRIER, in 500 households in 25 wards of Tamil Nadu, defined 'internet use' broadly, to include websites and applications such as Google, Facebook, Whatsapp, etc.

According to the data, those that came online since 2019 are among the already-marginalised groups: the poor, the rural, women, the less educated and the unemployed

Furthermore, the data shows that a significant digital divide remains between the connected versus the unconnected, preventing them from benefiting from remote education, telemedicine and other digitally enabled services going forward. Those that remain unconnected are also largely from already-marginalised groups such as women, the less educated, those from lower socioeconomic group households, as well as those over 45 years of age.

The survey findings were released at a virtual launch event conducted on 12 November 2021, which included a panel discussion with leading government, private sector and civil society representatives. Panelists included Dr. Jaijit Bhattacharya (President, Centre for Digital Economy Policy Research), Abhishek Singh (President & CEO, National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), Nishanth Baghel (Director of Technology Innovations, Pratham) and Helani Galpaya (CEO, LIRNEasia). The discussion was moderated by Dr. Rajat Kathuria (Senior Visiting Professor, ICRIER).

About the research: The research was conducted by LIRNEasia and ICRIER, and funded by IDRC through a joint grant given to three regional think tanks: LIRNEasia, Research ICT Africa and Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. The nationally representative sample for the survey consisted of 7,000 households across India including 350 villages and wards. The sampling methodology has been designed to ensure representation of the target group (population aged 15+) at a national level with a confidence level of 95-percent and a +/-1.7% margin of error. The data also allows for disaggregation by urban/rural divide, gender and socio-economic classification at the national level and at the state level for 4 focal states, Delhi, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. The findings for these states are representative at a state level with a confidence level of 95-percent and a +/-6.2% margin of error.

About LIRNEasia: LIRNEasia is an Asia Pacific ICT policy and regulation think tank. Its mission is to catalyze policy change through research to improve people's lives in the emerging Asia Pacific by facilitating their use of hard and soft infrastructures through the use of knowledge, information and technology.

For more information see <https://lirneasia.net/>

About ICRIER: ICRIER is an autonomous economic policy think tank. ICRIER's main focus is to enhance the knowledge content of policy making by undertaking analytical research that is targeted at informing India's policy makers. The Digital Economy, Startup and Innovation (DESI) team at ICRIER is deeply invested in areas of digital access, internet governance and market competition.

For more information see <http://icrier.org/>