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Societal perceptions of women's suitability for leadership could pave the way for improved gender parity in India

THE REYKJAVIK INDEX FOR LEADERSHIP

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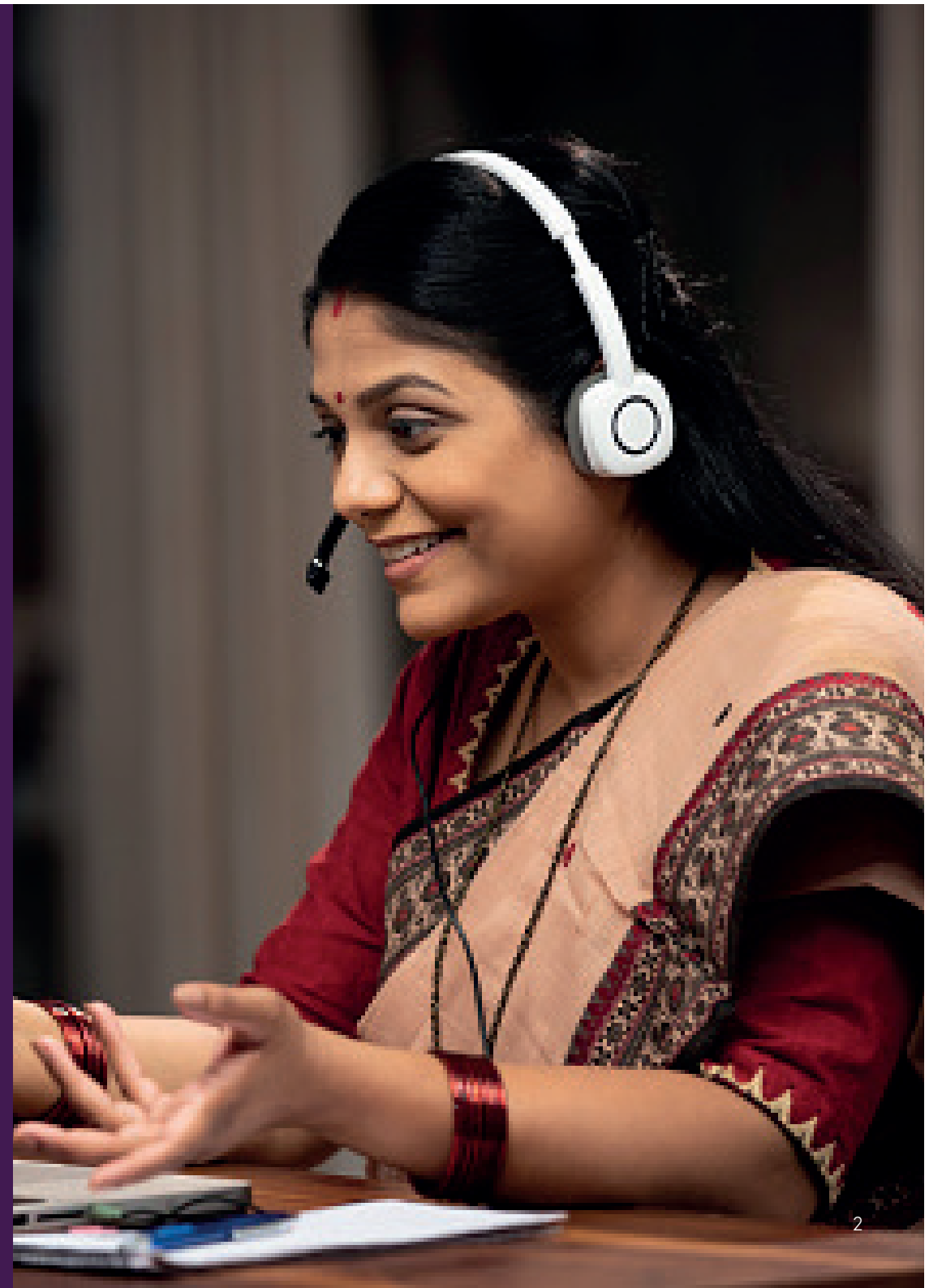
The Reykjavík Index for Leadership measures the extent to which men and women are viewed equally in terms of their suitability for positions of power. The Index runs from 0 to 100; a score of 100 means that across society, there is complete agreement that men and women are equally suited to leadership in all sectors.

The Reykjavík Index for Leadership was launched in 2018, by Kantar Public and Women Political Leaders, for the G7 countries and has been repeated every year since for the G7, plus additional select groups of countries, and expanding to the full G20 in 2021/22. The Reykjavik Index for Leadership is the first international measure of how societies perceive the suitability of women for leadership. Listed as 'Best of Davos' in 2018 and presented at UNGA (UN General Assembly), the G7 and the G20, The Reykjavik Index is now a go-to reference in public debate, the media and policy development.



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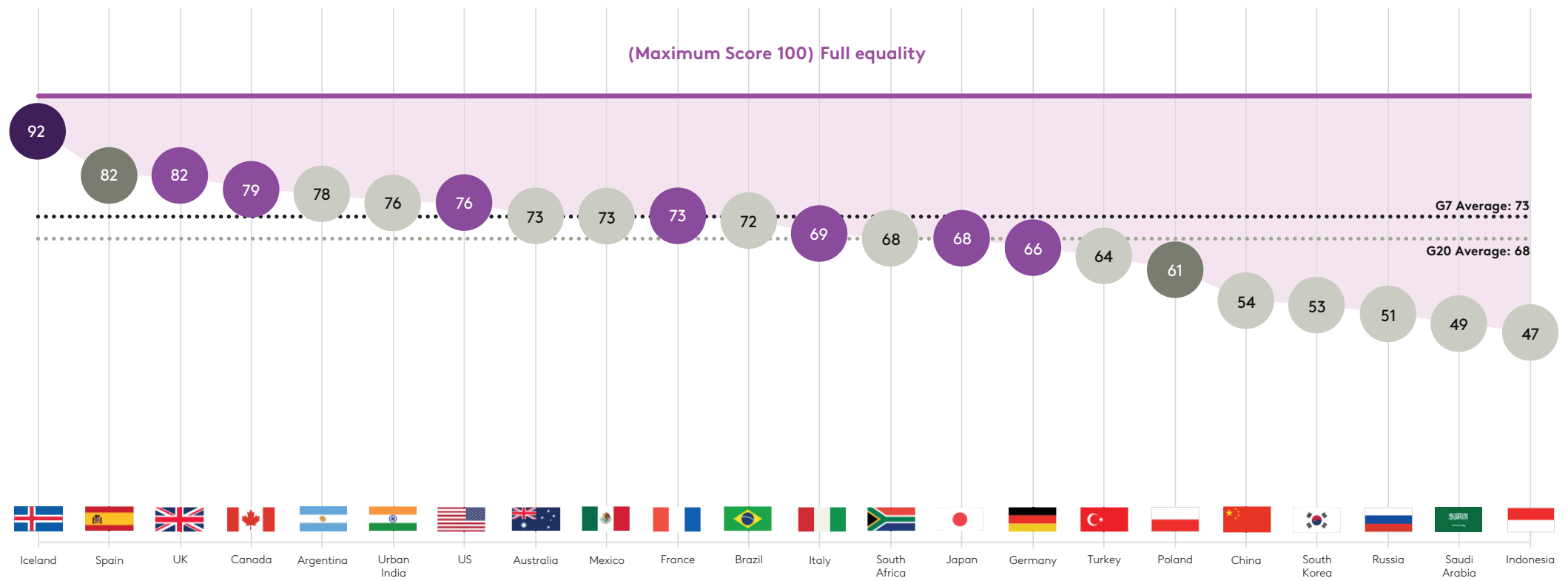


According to the 2021/2022 Reykjavik Index for Leadership, women and men in urban India are aligned in their belief, that women are similarly suited to leadership roles as men. Putting India in 6th place for perceptions of gender equality out of the G20+.

At a high level, this is good news – and we should be proud of the progress made to date in the perception of women’s suitability for leadership across urban India. However, as other data reflects, we still have a way to go before we can aim for gender parity in the workplace and in government – as well as in education, socially and at home.

The data from our Reykjavik Index for Leadership, provides us with an opportunity to better understand areas of potential strength that we can build on – such as the consistency of views across generations and the high ratings of perception of women’s suitability for leadership in industry sectors such as: Pharmaceuticals (M 87%, W 89%); High-Tech, AI (M 78%, W 79%), Engineering (M 75%, W 79%) and Banking and Finance (M 84%, W 87%).

The Reykjavik Index for Leadership Index 2021/2022 for the G20+ (22 countries)



● G7
 ● ● G20
 ● Spain and Poland are included in the study but are not part of the G20 country group
 The G20 average is made up of 19 countries + EU5 average (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland)



However, we mustn't overlook the fact that in 2021, women in India made up less than 20% of the workforce (19%) – despite rising levels of education – placing it in the bottom ten countries in the world for women's workplace participation¹.

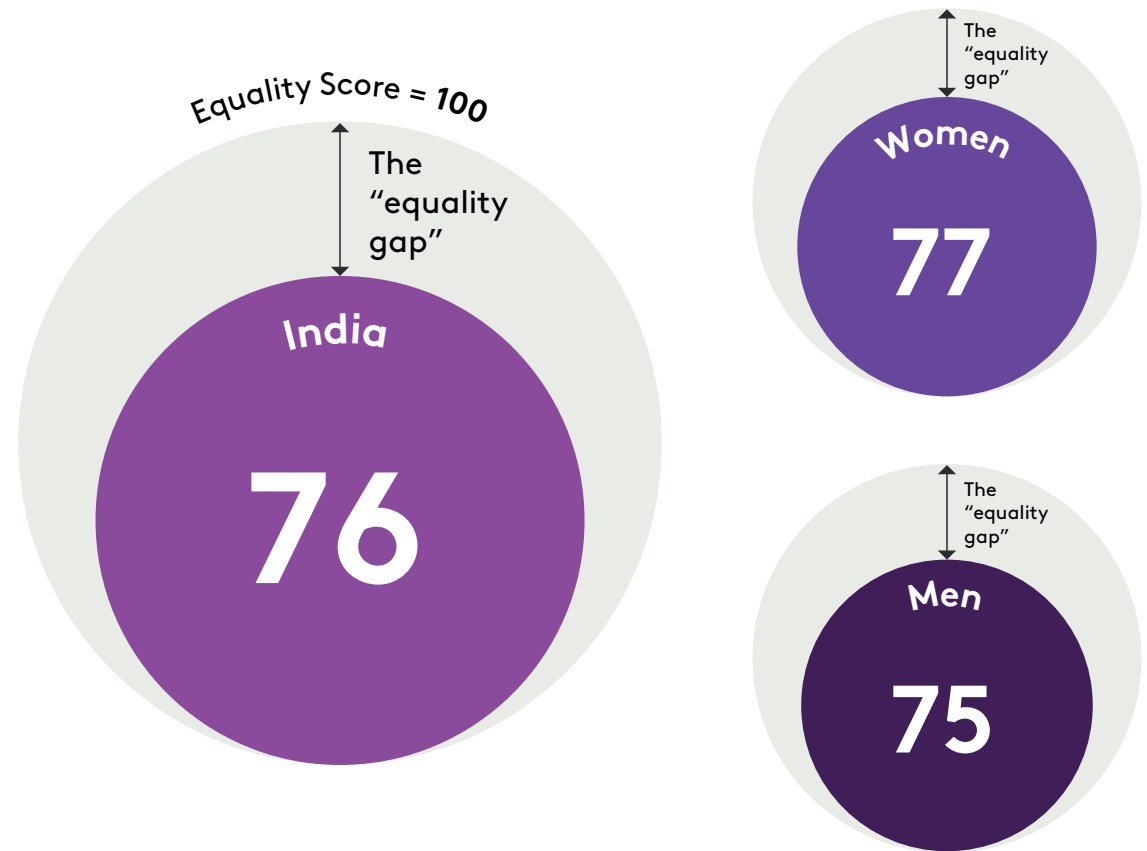
Furthermore, women in India bear the responsibility for childcare and managing the home, as well as caring for in-laws. This means that women in India spend around five hours a day on unpaid care work – compared with 30 minutes for men. This “second shift” as it has been described, together with gender bias in hiring and inflexible working, means that women are significantly disadvantaged compared with their male counterparts². It is therefore ironic that while in India perceptions around women's suitability for leadership positions are among the highest in G20+ countries, recognition of women's unpaid work and participation in organised work don't present a great picture.

Women in India have also been disproportionately hit by COVID-19. Women employed before India locked down are 23.5% less likely than men to be employed post lockdown and women continue to be at higher risk of contracting the virus due to their overrepresentation in the healthcare sector³.

Despite this, we can see that urban India has made progress since 2019, which is when Kantar Public first conducted The Reykjavik Index to measure the perception of female suitability for leadership in the country.



Indeed, the 2021/2022 Reykjavik Index shows a 9 point increase since 2019, ranking India in 6th place overall among the 22 countries evaluated, and ahead of many Western markets including France and Germany, and equal to the US on 76 points out of a possible 100. This also places India 8 points above the G20 average and 3 points above the G7 average on 2021/22.



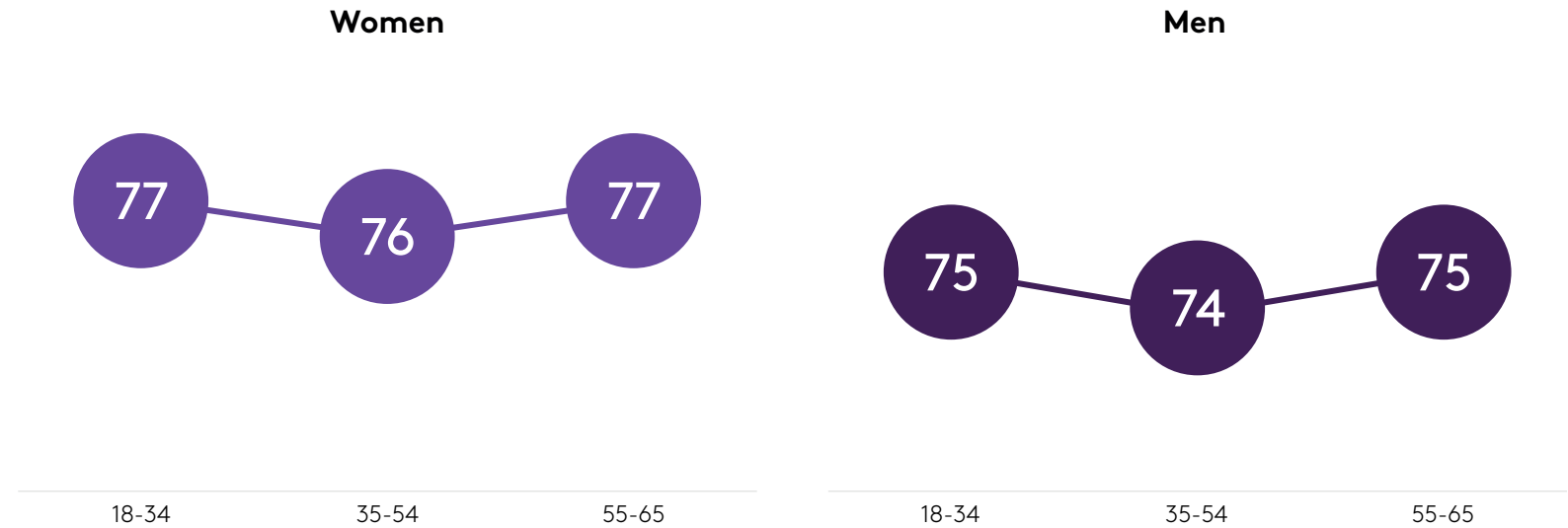
With only a two-point gap between The Reykjavik Index scores of women and men, India is also one of the few G20+ countries, alongside Brazil, Spain and South Africa, where there is no difference (or very little) between the attitudes of women and men towards gender and leadership across multiple industry sectors.

This similarity in views between men and women is also cross-generational, with only the 35-54 age group, for both women and men, showing a 1 point drop against women and men, in either the 18-34 or 55-65 age groups.

The data tells a positive story for urban India in terms of the generally progressive views of both women and men towards the suitability of women for leadership in terms of the equality and balance of views – both by gender and across generations. This also indicates that any efforts to improve how women in leadership are perceived, will need to communicate to men and women alike in India – and not concentrate on just one gender or the other.

Generational differences by gender

The same pattern across generations can be observed for both women and men, with people aged 35-54 holding slightly less progressive views than the younger and older age groups.



But the story is not quite so positive when it comes to women and men being asked, 'how comfortable are you having a woman as Head of Government' or '...as CEO of a Major Company'.

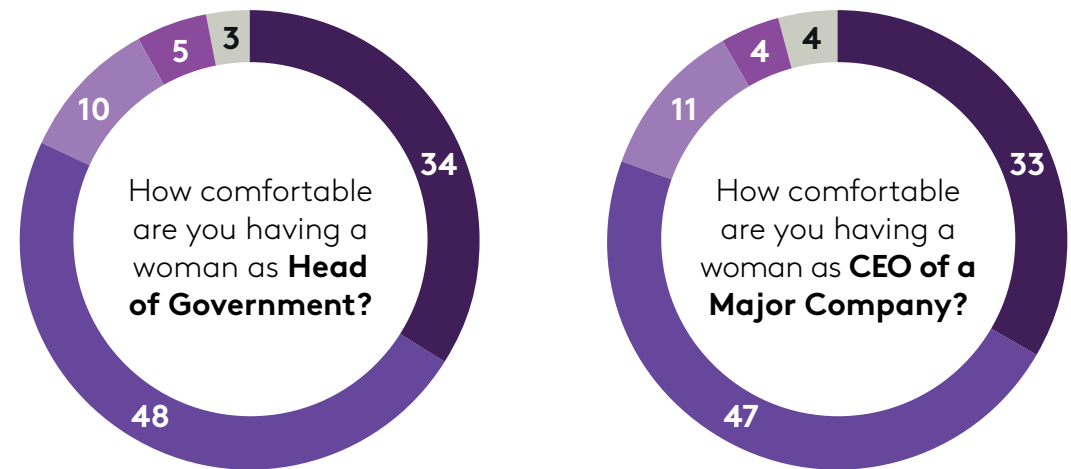
Interestingly, the number of people (both female and male respondents) who would be comfortable with a woman as Head of Government has dropped since 2019, when 50% of women were 'very comfortable' with a woman as Head of Government and 40% of men held the same view. The 2021/22 figures show that now only 36% of women would feel 'very comfortable' with a female Head of Government and even lower at 32% for men.

This perception may be reflected in the fact that women make up only 14% of India's parliament – in what is the world's biggest democracy⁴. Indeed, a Bill legislating for 33% representation for women in India's legislatures has been pending in Parliament since 1996 and is still waiting to be passed. At the current point in time, the presence of women in all elected bodies in India is less than 9%.⁵

This provides a clear call to action for society, government, education and employers, as across India we are missing out on significant talent from the female proportion of our population and their active contribution to economy. Understanding the dynamics between perceived and real barriers to achieving gender equality is holding us back economically when it comes to growth, innovation and cohesive and equal societies. Considering the Reykjavik Index for Leadership scores for 2021/22, India has a stronger starting point than many countries from which to progress, but we need strong economic, education and gender equality policies in place to continue to close the gap between societal perceptions of women's suitability for leadership and today's reality.

Views on women's suitability for leadership in government and business

In Urban India, only about 3 out of 10 respondents say they would feel very comfortable having a woman as a Head of Government (36% for women, and 32% for men) or CEO of a major company (35% for women and 31% for men) – which is more than 10 points below the G20 average.



- <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?Locations=IN>
- Strategy Business – As India advances, women's workforce participation plummets – May 2020
- Economic Times - The virus has made India's devastating gender gap even worse – June 2020
- The Diplomat – Where are India's women politicians? – October 2018
- <https://www.onmanorama.com/news/india/2022/05/26/women-lawmakers-to-pass-resolution-demanding-reservation.html>

Kantar Public in India has more than 30 years of experience in conducting research assignments across social and development sectors in the country. Its social research team is credited with managing large-scale and complex studies for prestigious clients, including Central and State Government departments, PSUs, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and NGOs. Kantar Public in India has also worked with many Indian firms to both assess and develop their Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, to help ensure they deliver positive impact and outcomes.

Kantar Public's social research team in India, provides end-to-end research services using Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Mode methods. Kantar Public's market leading services are built on established expertise in:

- Creating evidence, carrying out assessments and delivering insights using powerful data science techniques
- Program evaluation, public policy and strategy development
- Behaviour changes strategies and communications evaluation

Kantar Public in India specialises in a number of sectors, including: Public Health, Education, Training and Skills, WASH, Gender, Child Development and Social Justice.

For more information and to explore how Kantar Public's team can help, please contact:



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