India: Data governance profile

1. Vision and policy intent

Digital India is a flagship programme of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog's Strategy for New India includes the vision of "data led governance and policy making" with all policy interventions and decision-making based on evidence and real-time data. This requires:

- Collecting data for new measurable parameters using latest technologies;
- Improving efficiencies in processes related to existing data collection by government departments and agencies;
- Expanding warehousing facilities for storing and integrating data;
- Making data available for industry practitioners, academicians, researchers, etc., wherever feasible; and
- Integrating data analysis and interactive data visualization into all policy formulation.

Aspirational Districts and Blocks programme, a flagship initiative of NITI Aayog, relies on real-time data collection for ranking indicators to foster competition, accountability and providing targeted support.

2. Data Management: policies, rules & institutions

The National Statistical Commission was constituted with effect from 12th July 2006 with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.

National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)

The National Policy is expected to increase the accessibility and easier sharing of non-sensitive data amongst the registered users and their availability for scientific, economic and social developmental purposes. Department of Science & Technology (DST) would be the Nodal Department for all matters connected with overall co-ordination, formulation, implementation and monitoring of the policy.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, (MEITY) is working towards the promotion of e-Governance. MEITY has published a draft National Data Governance Policy which proposes the establishment of an "India Data Management Office" responsible for developing rules, standards, and guidelines for non-personal data to catalyse the data and AI based innovation ecosystem under this Policy.

3. Data custodians and data stewardship

The Collection of Statistics Act 2008 is the principal legislation for the collection of economic, social, demographic, scientific and environmental data.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) is the statistical arm of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). Its functions include:

- Acting as the nodal agency for planned development of the statistical system.
- Coordinating the statistical work in respect of the Ministries/Departments of the Government of India and State Statistical Bureaus (SSBs),
- Advising the Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India on statistical methodology and on statistical analysis of data.
- Compiling and releasing official statistics.
- Organizing and conducting periodic all-India Economic Censuses and large scale all-India sample surveys.
- Evaluation of sampling design in respect of surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisations and other Central Ministries and Departments.
- Liaison with international statistical organizations.

4. Data sharing, accessibility and integration

The National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP) streamlines data dissemination and provides access to standardized published government data sets from across India's extensive administrative landscape in a user-centric manner. NDAP allows users to easily search, merge, visualize, and download datasets.

To implement the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), an Open Government Data (OGD) Platform has been developed by the National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics & Informational Technology. The Open Government Data platform provides open access by proactive release of the data available with various ministries/ departments/ organizations of Government of India. All datasets/resources including metadata published on the Open Government Data portal (data.gov.in) are licensed under the Government Open Data License - India which can be accessed here.

5. Data sharing, risks & mitigation

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 received presidential assent in August 2023. Once effective, it will be the governing law on personal data protection in the country.

The Collection of Statistics Act 2008 is the principal legislation for the collection of economic, social, demographic, scientific and environmental data. Chapter III (Sections 9 to 14) of the Act deal with disclosure of information: "*No person shall be permitted to see any information or records… who is not engaged in the collection of statistics under this Act.*"

The Act also includes provisions for the release of information for bona fide research or statistical purposes.

Draft National Data Governance Policy

Under this policy, the India Data Management Office will set and publish data anonymization standards and rules to ensure information privacy.