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The Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015: A Decadal Review of Service Delivery (2015–2024)

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Abstract

The Maharashtra Right to Public Services (MRTPS) Act, 2015 guarantees the time-bound delivery of notified public services through the state's Aaple Sarkar portal. This paper evaluates the Act's first decade using longitudinal administrative data on applications received, disposed, approved, and rejected, disaggregated at departmental, district, and channel levels. Demand expanded substantially, from 6.71 million applications in 2015–16 to 23.58 million in 2023–24, a compound annual growth rate of roughly 17 per cent, alongside near-universal approval rates (about 99.5 per cent of disposed applications) and a strong post-2019 recovery in on-time delivery. Beneath these headline gains, however, the analysis reveals three structural weaknesses: extreme departmental concentration (a Herfindahl–Hirschman Index of 6,700–7,355, with the Revenue Department alone accounting for 82–85 per cent of applications); divergent and, in welfare-oriented departments, deficient processing capacity; and persistent spatial inequality across districts and revenue divisions. Citizens reach the state overwhelmingly through intermediaries, and direct online self-service remains below 15 per cent of applications. Interpreting these patterns through New Public Management and Public Value Theory, the paper argues that the Act has delivered efficiency and throughput gains while leaving the distributional dimensions of public value, equity, accessibility, and the capacity to process complex services, substantially unaddressed.

Keywords: Right to Public Services; Maharashtra; e-governance; service delivery; digital divide; public value; India

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1. Introduction

The Right to Service refers to a statutory guarantee that specific public services must be delivered to citizens within a fixed time frame. The idea of a legal right to service emerged from the need to make public administration more transparent and accountable. It shifts service delivery from a matter of discretion to an enforceable entitlement supported by mechanisms for appeal and penalties. The origins of the concept can be traced to the Citizens' Charters movement of the early 1990s, most notably the Charter launched in the United Kingdom in 1991. India introduced its own Citizens' Charter programme in 1997, which required ministries and departments to declare the services they provided and the timeframes within which they would deliver them (DARPG, 2006). Although these charters raised awareness, they remained largely ineffective in practice, as they carried no statutory force and lacked both remedies and penalties.

The limitations of Citizens' Charters became evident as citizens continued to face delays, uncertainty and repeated visits even for basic services such as certificates or permits. These inefficiencies reflected structural weaknesses rather than occasional lapses, eroding confidence in institutions. The experience of the Right to Information Act, 2005 demonstrated the effectiveness of enforceable rights backed by penalties in changing administrative behaviour. This success led to the recognition that service delivery too required statutory guarantees (Right to Information Act, 2005). The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005–2009) strongly recommended that services be provided within fixed timelines under legally binding frameworks, with clear responsibility assigned to designated officers. A rights-based framework for service delivery offered multiple benefits. It provided certainty by ensuring that services such as certificates, licences, and approvals were issued within defined periods. It introduced transparency by requiring acknowledgement receipts and tracking numbers, so that applicants could follow their cases without repeated visits. It mandated written reasons for rejection, thereby reducing arbitrariness and enabling appeals. The appeal mechanism itself ensured accountability, as higher authorities could not only order service delivery but also impose penalties where necessary. With the rise of digital platforms, many states began to integrate online systems that allowed citizens to apply, upload documents, make

payments, and receive certificates electronically, further simplifying the process and reducing costs.

The legislative journey began in Madhya Pradesh in 2010 with the enactment of the Lok Sewaon Ke Pradan Ki Guarantee Adhiniyam, the first state law to guarantee time-bound delivery of services (Govt of Madhya Pradesh, 2010). Bihar, Delhi, Punjab and Rajasthan followed in 2011. Over the past decade, more than twenty states and one Union Territory have enacted similar laws. Each law shares the common framework of notified services, timelines, designated officers, appeals, and penalties, while also introducing its own innovations. Karnataka's Sakala system, launched in 2012, relied heavily on information technology to provide efficiency and transparency. Haryana introduced an Auto Appeal System that escalates unresolved cases automatically. At the national level, a Bill to establish a central framework was introduced in 2011, but it was not passed, leaving the development of RTS largely in the hands of states. In this wider landscape, Maharashtra enacted the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015, which provided a legal guarantee to citizens and legal persons to obtain notified services within stipulated timelines (Govt of Maharashtra, 2015). It was first promulgated as an ordinance on 28 April 2015 and later passed into law, receiving the Governor's assent and being published in the Maharashtra Government Gazette on 21 August 2015. The Act applies to the entire state and covers all public authorities engaged in delivering services, whether created by statute, executive order, or government resolution. Under the Act, every eligible person, whether an individual or a legal entity, may apply for notified services. Public authorities are required to publish lists of such services, identifying the designated officers responsible, the appellate authorities, and the stipulated time limits. Applications must be acknowledged with a unique reference number, allowing applicants to track progress. The designated officer must either deliver the service within the stipulated time or issue a written communication explaining the reasons for refusal and informing the applicant of their right to appeal.

The Act also created an institutional structure to oversee its implementation. The Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Service consists of a Chief Commissioner for the Mumbai region and one Commissioner for each of the six revenue divisions: Konkan, Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Amravati and Nagpur. Appointed by the Governor on the

recommendation of a selection committee, these Commissioners have authority to hear appeals, impose penalties, conduct inspections, and recommend systemic reforms. The Commission also prepares annual reports on performance that are placed before the legislature, ensuring institutional accountability. For citizens, the Act represents a significant improvement in everyday interactions with public services. Services that were once uncertain are now subject to fixed timelines. Every application is acknowledged and can be tracked through the Aaple Sarkar portal, the RTS Maharashtra mobile app, or Seva Kendras. If a service is denied or delayed, citizens can appeal first within the department and then to a higher authority empowered to impose penalties on officers responsible for non-compliance. This system provides both remedies and deterrence.

The integration of digital systems is one of the distinctive strengths of Maharashtra's model. The Aaple Sarkar Service Portal provides a unified platform where citizens can create profiles, submit applications, upload documents, pay fees, and receive digitally signed certificates. Certificates are stored in digital lockers for permanent access and can be verified online by third parties. The RTS Maharashtra mobile application makes these services accessible by smartphone, while nearly 38,000 Aaple Sarkar Seva Kendras ensure access for those without personal digital resources. Together, these measures ensure inclusivity and broad reach. By combining legal entitlement, administrative accountability, and technological innovation, the Act creates a comprehensive framework for citizen-centred service delivery. It reduces costs, saves time, and provides predictability, while also encouraging departments to streamline their processes and adopt digital workflows. The Act not only benefits individual citizens but also contributes to building institutional trust and creating a culture of transparency in governance.

Having introduced the background and framework of the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, the study now turns to discuss institutional architecture and implementation mechanisms and finally evaluation of its implementation. The analysis will proceed along two dimensions. The first concerns the dates of notification of services under the Act, which indicate how departments adopted the system and the pace at which different sectors came under its scope. The second concerns the dates on which services were made available online, highlighting the role of digitalisation in improving accessibility and efficiency. The final sections of this paper will therefore evaluate the functioning of

the Act department by department. For each department, the notified services will be identified, the timelines of notification and online integration will be recorded, and the impact on citizens will be assessed. In this way, the study moves from the general legal and institutional framework to the concrete realities of service delivery, providing a systematic assessment of how the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act has shaped public administration in practice.

Against this background, the present study evaluates the implementation of the MRTPS Act over its first decade, from 2015–16 to 2023–24, using the administrative data generated by the Aaple Sarkar portal. Its contribution is threefold. First, in contrast to the predominantly aggregate or single-year assessments that characterise the existing Indian literature, it offers a longitudinal evaluation disaggregated simultaneously by department, district, and submission channel. Second, it introduces a set of formal analytical measures, compound annual growth rates, a concentration index, a coefficient of variation, and a self-service (digitisation) index, that move the assessment beyond descriptive volumes towards the structure and distribution of service delivery. Third, it foregrounds the application channel, and with it the digital divide, as a central rather than incidental determinant of whether a statutory right is realised in practice. The analysis is guided by three questions that recur throughout: why direct online self-service remains so limited; why utilisation and performance vary so widely across districts and regions; and why departments differ so markedly in their share of demand and their capacity to process it.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on public service delivery, the theoretical frameworks of New Public Management and Public Value, and the role of legal frameworks as determinants of delivery outcomes. Section 3 describes the institutional architecture of the MRTPS regime, its digital infrastructure, and the evolution of notified services. Section 4 sets out the data and methods. Section 5 presents the results, covering in turn the temporal trajectory of demand and performance, departmental structure, the delivery-channel mix, district-level patterns, and regional (revenue-division) dynamics. Section 6 discusses the findings in the light of theory, and Section 7 concludes with policy implications.

2. Literature Review

The present research is situated at the intersection of public administration theory, legal studies, and empirical service delivery assessment. The review that follows synthesises existing scholarship across four thematic domains: the conceptualisation and antecedents of public service delivery; theoretical frameworks that explain how public organisations produce and sustain value; the role of legal instruments as structural determinants of service delivery outcomes; and the specific context of rights-based service delivery legislation in India, with reference to benchmarking and stakeholder dimensions relevant to Maharashtra.

2.1 Public Service Delivery: Conceptualisation and Antecedents

2.1.1 Defining Public Service Delivery

Public service delivery refers to the processes through which government agencies provide goods, services, and regulatory outputs to citizens in accordance with mandated obligations and social expectations. Definitional clarity on this concept has evolved considerably since the late twentieth century, moving from a supply-side, bureaucratic conception toward a demand-driven, outcome-oriented understanding. Early formulations, associated with Weberian models of public administration, construed service delivery primarily as the faithful execution of administrative procedure (Weber, 1947). Subsequent scholarship emphasised responsiveness, accessibility, and the quality of the citizen-state interface as constitutive elements of delivery performance (Bovaird and Loffler, 2003).

Contemporary scholarship treats service delivery as a multidimensional construct encompassing at least five dimensions: accessibility (the ease with which citizens can initiate and complete a service transaction), timeliness (delivery within specified or reasonable time limits), reliability (consistency of outputs across applicants and geographies), transparency (the availability of information about procedures, status, and outcomes), and equity (the uniform treatment of applicants irrespective of social, economic, or geographic characteristics). These dimensions correspond broadly to the service quality framework developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) in the

private sector context, and have since been adapted extensively for public sector analysis (Van Ryzin, 2004; Kelly, 2005).

The delivery of public services is further distinguished from private service provision by the compulsory and non-excludable character of many public goods, the absence of competitive market signals, and the political accountability that governs public sector organisations. These structural features shape both the incentive architecture within which public servants operate and the expectations that citizens bring to service encounters.

2.1.2 Antecedents of Service Delivery Performance

The determinants of public service delivery performance can be grouped into three broad categories: institutional factors, organisational factors, and demand-side factors. Institutional factors refer to the legal, constitutional, and regulatory environment that defines the scope, obligations, and accountability mechanisms governing service provision. Organisational factors include administrative capacity, human resource practices, technology infrastructure, financial resources, and intra-governmental coordination. Demand-side factors encompass citizen awareness, digital literacy, socioeconomic status, and the nature of intermediary actors through which citizens access services.

Institutional factors have received sustained attention in the development administration literature, particularly in the context of low- and middle-income countries where weak rule of law, informational asymmetries, and principal-agent problems frequently undermine service delivery chains (Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004; Andrews, 2008). The enactment of formal service standards, citizen charters, and guarantee legislation represents an effort to address institutional deficits by creating enforceable entitlements that constrain administrative discretion and impose accountability on service providers.

Organisational capacity is widely regarded as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for delivery improvement. Studies across the Indian states have documented that the quality of front-line service delivery varies substantially as a function of staff training, supervisory oversight, and the availability of technology platforms, even where

formal legal obligations are identical (Heller, 2000; Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews, 2013). The interaction between institutional mandates and organisational capabilities is therefore a critical consideration in any evaluation of rights-based service delivery legislation.

Demand-side factors have gained prominence with the expansion of digital service channels. The shift from in-person to online and mobile-based service applications has altered the determinants of access and completion rates, introducing new dimensions of inequality associated with differential digital literacy and infrastructure availability. In the Indian context, the Seva Kendra and Common Service Centre networks represent deliberate policy interventions to mediate the demand-supply interface, and their performance constitutes an important variable in any disaggregated evaluation of service delivery outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

2.2.1 New Public Management

New Public Management (NPM) emerged as a dominant paradigm in public administration from the late 1970s onward, drawing primarily on the theoretical resources of public choice theory, principal-agent theory, and managerial economics (Hood, 1991). The central claim of NPM is that public sector organisations can be made more efficient and responsive through the application of market-like mechanisms, including performance measurement, competition among providers, contractual accountability, and customer orientation. In the NPM framework, the citizen is reconceptualised as a consumer whose preferences and satisfaction constitute the primary metric of organisational success.

The application of NPM principles to public service delivery has generated a substantial empirical literature with mixed findings. On one hand, performance-based contracting, time-bound service standards, and the introduction of redressal mechanisms have been associated with measurable improvements in delivery efficiency in several jurisdictions (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). On the other hand, critics have argued that the NPM framework, by privileging efficiency metrics and consumer satisfaction, tends to neglect

considerations of equity, procedural fairness, and the intrinsic obligations of democratic governance (Terry, 1998; du Gay, 2000).

The Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act 2015 reflects NPM influences in its emphasis on time-bound delivery, mandatory acknowledgement of applications, and provisions for appellate redressal. The specification of service timelines and the associated penalty mechanisms for non-compliance are consistent with the NPM logic of contractual accountability between government and citizen. At the same time, the Act operates within a constitutional framework of rights-based governance that introduces considerations of equity and obligation that go beyond what NPM frameworks typically accommodate.

2.2.2 Public Value Theory

Public Value Theory, developed principally by Moore (1995) and subsequently elaborated by Benington and Moore (2011) among others, offers an alternative to NPM that centres on the creation of value for the public as a whole rather than for individual consumers. The theory holds that public managers must navigate a strategic triangle comprising three domains: the authorising environment (constituted by political principals, legal mandates, and democratic norms), the operational capacity of the organisation, and the public value proposition that the organisation pursues. Value creation in this framework is assessed not merely in terms of service outputs but in terms of the broader social outcomes and democratic legitimacy that public action produces or sustains.

Public Value Theory has been applied productively to the analysis of service delivery reform in contexts where market mechanisms are either inappropriate or insufficient (Stoker, 2006; O'Flynn, 2007). In the Indian administrative context, the theory is particularly relevant because public service delivery is embedded in a constitutional order that imposes affirmative obligations on the state and recognises citizenship as a basis for claims on public institutions. The MRTPS Act 2015 can be read through a public value lens as an instrument that redefines the authorising environment for service provision, constraining administrative discretion and establishing new terms of democratic accountability.

The tension between NPM efficiency imperatives and public value considerations is particularly salient in the context of disaggregated service delivery evaluation. An evaluation framework that privileges throughput volumes and average processing times may systematically understate inequities in delivery performance across districts, income groups, or application channels. A public value orientation requires that evaluation attend to distributional outcomes and to the experiences of citizens who are least well-served by existing delivery arrangements.

2.3 Legal Frameworks as Determinants of Service Delivery: Mediating and Moderating Roles

The relationship between legal frameworks and public service delivery outcomes is theoretically complex and empirically contested. Legislation governing service delivery can operate in at least two analytically distinct ways: as a mediating variable, through which the effects of broader governance conditions are channelled into specific delivery outcomes; and as a moderating variable, whose presence or strength conditions the relationship between antecedent organisational or institutional factors and delivery performance.

As a mediating variable, a legal framework such as a Public Service Guarantee Act translates the general administrative obligation to serve citizens into specific, enforceable entitlements. The causal mechanism runs from governance conditions (democratic accountability, state capacity, political will) through the legal instrument to service delivery outcomes. In this reading, the Act operationalises a latent commitment to service quality, giving it procedural content through the specification of notified services, stipulated timelines, designated officers, and grievance redressal pathways. The strength of this mediation depends on the completeness of notification, the specificity of procedural requirements, and the effectiveness of enforcement.

As a moderating variable, the legal framework conditions the strength and direction of the relationship between organisational inputs and delivery outputs. In the absence of a guarantee Act, additional administrative capacity or technology investment may or may not translate into improved delivery performance depending on the internal incentive structures of the organisation. Where a guarantee Act is in force, the same inputs are

more likely to yield measurable improvements because the legal framework creates binding performance targets, clarifies accountability, and provides a mechanism for detecting and sanctioning non-performance. The moderating effect is thus likely to be stronger in organisations with higher baseline capacity and weaker in organisations constrained by chronic resource deficits.

The international literature on the effects of service delivery legislation is consistent with both interpretations. Studies of public service guarantee legislation in Kenya, South Africa, and the United Kingdom suggest that legal frameworks improve delivery performance primarily in contexts where implementation machinery is adequately resourced and where enforcement is credible (Grindle, 2004; Batley and McLoughlin, 2015). In contexts marked by weak administrative capacity or political interference in the appellate process, the formal existence of guarantee legislation does not translate reliably into improved outcomes for citizens.

Within India, the Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011, and the subsequent enactment of state-level Public Service Guarantee Acts represent the most significant legislative intervention in this domain. Studies of early adopter states, including Madhya Pradesh (whose Lok Seva Guarantee Act 2010 preceded the Maharashtra Act by five years) and Bihar, suggest that measurable improvements in processing times and applicant satisfaction are achievable under such legislation, but that gains are unevenly distributed across services, districts, and applicant categories (Peisakhin and Pinto, 2010; World Bank, 2014). These findings underline the importance of disaggregated evaluation methodologies that can detect heterogeneity in outcomes rather than relying solely on state-level aggregate statistics.

The accountability and transparency effects of rights-based service delivery legislation operate through several mechanisms. First, mandatory acknowledgement and time-bound processing reduce informational asymmetries between citizens and service providers, making it easier for applicants to identify and report non-compliance. Second, first and second appellate mechanisms create institutional channels for grievance escalation that, when functional, shift the burden of justification onto the delivering officer. Third, the publication of notified services and timelines enables civil society monitoring and media

scrutiny, creating reputational incentives for performance improvement that supplement formal enforcement. Fourth, the integration of service delivery platforms with digital monitoring systems, where implemented, facilitates real-time tracking of application status and outcome data, creating an administrative record that supports both internal management and external evaluation.

2.4 Contextual Factors: Maharashtra and the MRTPS Act 2015

2.4.1 The Indian Legislative Context

Maharashtra enacted its Right to Public Services Act in 2015, joining a cohort of Indian states that have adopted rights-based service delivery legislation since the Madhya Pradesh precedent of 2010. By 2015, over twenty Indian states had enacted similar legislation, reflecting the diffusion of a policy model that combines administrative mandates with citizen entitlements and formal grievance redressal mechanisms (Singh, 2016). The MRTPS Act provides for the notification of specific services by designated government departments, the specification of delivery timelines, the appointment of designated officers responsible for each notified service, and a two-tier appellate structure culminating in a State Public Services Guarantee Commission.

The Act as implemented covers a range of services across twenty-eight departments, spanning revenue administration, social welfare, health, rural development, urban development, and industry, among others. The coverage of services has evolved since 2015, with progressive notification of additional services and the concurrent denotification of services that were subsumed within reorganised administrative arrangements. As of 2026, 1,506 services are currently active under the Act, reflecting a net reduction from the 1,576 services documented in the 2015-2024 period following the denotification of 70 services.

2.4.2 Stakeholder Analysis

Effective evaluation of the MRTPS Act requires explicit attention to the multiple stakeholder categories whose interests and behaviours shape implementation outcomes. At the primary level, the key stakeholders are applicant-citizens, who are the nominal beneficiaries of the legislation; designated officers, who bear primary responsibility for

processing applications within stipulated timelines; first appellate authorities, who adjudicate complaints of non-delivery or improper refusal; second appellate authorities, who constitute the terminal point of the formal redressal chain; and the State Public Services Guarantee Commission, which exercises oversight of the appellate process and can recommend systemic reforms.

At the secondary level, important stakeholders include the departments responsible for notifying services and for establishing internal performance monitoring systems; the Maharashtra Information Technology Corporation and analogous technology agencies that operate the Aaple Sarkar portal and associated digital delivery infrastructure; Common Service Centres and Seva Kendra operators who mediate the service application process for citizens with limited digital access; civil society organisations engaged in transparency and accountability advocacy; and academic and policy institutions conducting performance evaluation research.

Stakeholder interests are not uniformly aligned. Designated officers may face incentive structures that reward throughput volume but not applicant experience or equity of access. Departments may resist the notification of services that are difficult to standardise or that expose officers to appellate liability. Citizens in rural and low-income urban areas may face structural barriers to accessing digital application channels that persist irrespective of formal legal entitlement. Understanding these stakeholder dynamics is essential for interpreting patterns of delivery performance and for identifying the loci of reform interventions most likely to produce durable improvements.

2.4.3 Benchmarking Frameworks

Benchmarking public service delivery performance requires the selection of reference standards against which observed outcomes can be evaluated. Three benchmarking frameworks are relevant to the present study. First, internal benchmarking against the Act's own stipulated timelines provides a measure of compliance with the minimum legal standard. Second, inter-state benchmarking against the performance of comparable Public Service Guarantee Act regimes in other Indian states, particularly Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka, provides a comparative frame for assessing Maharashtra's relative performance. Third, temporal benchmarking that compares pre-Act and post-Act

delivery patterns within Maharashtra provides evidence on the causal contribution of the legislation to observed changes in service delivery outcomes.

The development of robust benchmarks is complicated by the heterogeneity of notified services, which vary substantially in their procedural complexity, documentary requirements, and the number of internal approvals required for completion. A single aggregate metric of processing time or compliance rate will systematically favour simple, high-volume services and obscure poor performance on complex, low-volume services that may be of disproportionate importance to vulnerable applicant populations. A well-designed evaluation framework must therefore develop service-level benchmarks that account for procedural complexity, and must report disaggregated performance data that permits the identification of systematic underperformance across specific service categories, departments, or geographic units.

2.5 Summary of the Review and Identification of Research Gaps

The foregoing review establishes the theoretical and empirical foundations of the present study. The literature confirms that public service delivery is a multidimensional construct whose determinants span institutional, organisational, and demand-side domains. New Public Management and Public Value Theory offer complementary lenses through which the design and evaluation of rights-based service delivery legislation can be interpreted, with NPM foregrounding efficiency and accountability and Public Value Theory emphasising distributional equity and democratic legitimacy. The emerging literature on legal frameworks as mediating and moderating variables provides a theoretical basis for situating the MRTPS Act 2015 within a broader causal model of service delivery improvement.

However, the existing literature presents several significant gaps that the present study addresses. First, while the effects of Public Service Guarantee Acts have been studied in a number of Indian states, rigorous longitudinal evaluations covering the full period of implementation and disaggregated to the level of individual services, departments, and districts are rare. Second, the interaction between application channel and delivery performance, particularly the differential outcomes associated with digital versus in-person service applications, has received limited systematic attention in the Indian

context. Third, the role of stakeholder dynamics, including the behaviour of designated officers, the effectiveness of appellate mechanisms, and the mediation of citizen access through Common Service Centres, has not been examined comprehensively in the Maharashtra context. The present study addresses the first two of these gaps directly, through a longitudinal analysis of administrative data disaggregated by department, district, and submission channel; the third, concerning stakeholder dynamics, is taken up in the discussion and identified as a priority for further research.

3. The MRTPS Act: Institutional and Technological Context

3.1 Institutional Architecture: The State Commission for Right to Service

To oversee the implementation of the Act, the Government constituted the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Service. The Commission comprises a Chief Commissioner for the Mumbai region and one Commissioner for each revenue division (Konkan, Pune, Nashik, Amravati, Nagpur, and Aurangabad) across the state. Appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of a high-level committee, these functionaries are required to have distinguished experience in public administration and must not hold any office of profit or political affiliation. The Commission is vested with extensive powers, including the authority to take Suo motu notice of service delivery failures, conduct office inspections,

recommend disciplinary actions, and propose systemic reforms. The Commission also serves as the appellate capable of reviewing decisions of the Second Appellate Authority and modifying or annulling penalties. In addition to adjudicatory functions, the Commission is tasked with preparing annual reports evaluating departmental performance in public service delivery, which are to be tabled in the State Legislature.

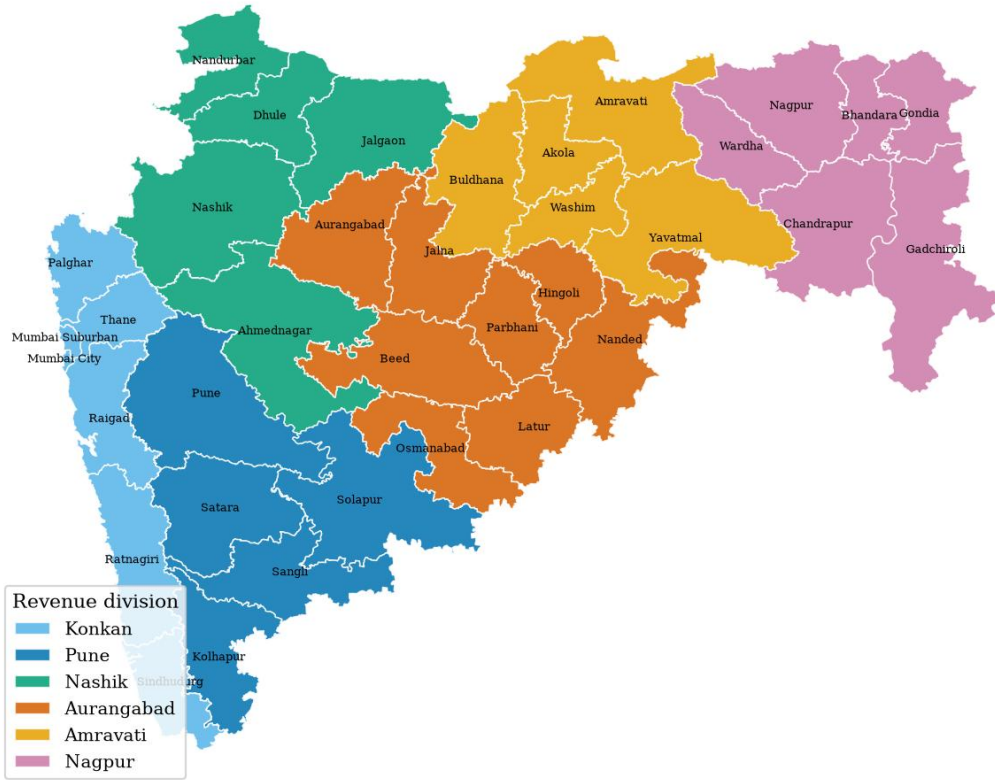


Figure 1. *Maharashtra's six revenue divisions and their constituent districts, the administrative units used in the district-level and regional analysis.*

3.2 The Aaple Sarkar Portal and Digital Infrastructure

The implementation of the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015 is strongly supported by a comprehensive digital infrastructure that facilitates efficient service delivery to citizens across the state. At the centre of this digital framework is the Aaple Sarkar Service Portal, which functions as a unified platform for the application, processing, issuance, and verification of government-to-citizen services. The Aaple Sarkar Service Portal has been designed as a self-service interface that enables citizens to access a wide range of notified public services from multiple departments through a single point of contact. It can be accessed via a computer or a mobile phone and is available in both Marathi and English, making it accessible to a diverse population. In addition to the web-based platform, the state has established a network of 37,895 Aaple Sarkar Seva Kendras across all districts to ensure inclusivity for citizens who may not have personal access to digital devices or internet connectivity. Once registered online,

users can apply for any of the notified public services using their profile. The system supports end-to-end digital transactions, including the uploading of documents and photographs, payment of prescribed fees, receipt of digital acknowledgements, and delivery of final certificates or approvals. Certificates issued through the portal are automatically stored in the applicant's registered profile and are also made available through the Digital Locker system, thereby ensuring permanent and secure storage.

The portal also allows users to track the status of their applications in real-time. The application status can be accessed simply by entering the unique reference number generated at the time of submission. This functionality is provided without the need to log in, thus improving convenience and transparency. Once submitted, applications are automatically routed through a digital workflow to the designated officers for that service. The system supports verification and validation at each stage, and upon completion, the outcome is updated in the portal for the applicant to view. An additional feature of the portal is the third-party verification facility. Any certificate issued through the portal can be verified for authenticity by entering key information such as the name of the issuing department and the barcode number of the certificate. Once submitted, the original certificate details are retrieved and displayed, thereby preventing misuse and enhancing the credibility of digital documentation.

The technical design of the Aaple Sarkar platform allows for parallel access through both the online portal and physical Seva Kendras. This dual-channel architecture ensures that digital services are inclusive and scalable. A significant feature of the portal is its integration of back-end processes through business process re-engineering (BPR). Prior to implementation, existing departmental workflows were analysed and simplified to eliminate redundant steps and facilitate digital integration. Departments collaborated with MahaIT to conduct structured discussions that led to the rationalisation of procedures. As a result, the submission, verification, approval and issuance of documents now occur entirely in digital format, without the need for physical file movement between desks or departments. For instance, an income certificate application submitted online is received by the designated officer, processed within the system, and delivered back to the citizen digitally.

The portal also hosts various information modules, including a section on the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Commission. This tab provides access to the full text of the Act and the associated rules, allowing citizens to familiarise themselves with their statutory rights. A department-wise listing of notified services is also available, along with the stipulated timelines for delivery and details of designated and appellate authorities. To further extend access and convenience, a dedicated mobile application, titled RTS Maharashtra, has been developed. This application mirrors the functions of the web portal and allows citizens to apply for services, check application status, and verify issued certificates from anywhere at any time.

The portal has witnessed a sharp increase in user registrations over recent years. While approximately 28 lakh users had registered during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, this number grew to 42 lakh by March 2021. As of 31 March 2023, a total of 71,72,917 citizens had created self-profiles on the Aaple Sarkar Service Portal. During the financial year 2022–23 alone, 15,02,767 new applicants registered on the platform. These figures reflect a growing public confidence in the system and its ease of use. The increase in online application volumes further supports the objective stated under Section 7 of the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015, which encourages all public authorities to adopt information technology for delivering services within stipulated timelines. The Commission has actively reminded departments to comply with this provision and expand their digital presence through the Aaple Sarkar infrastructure.

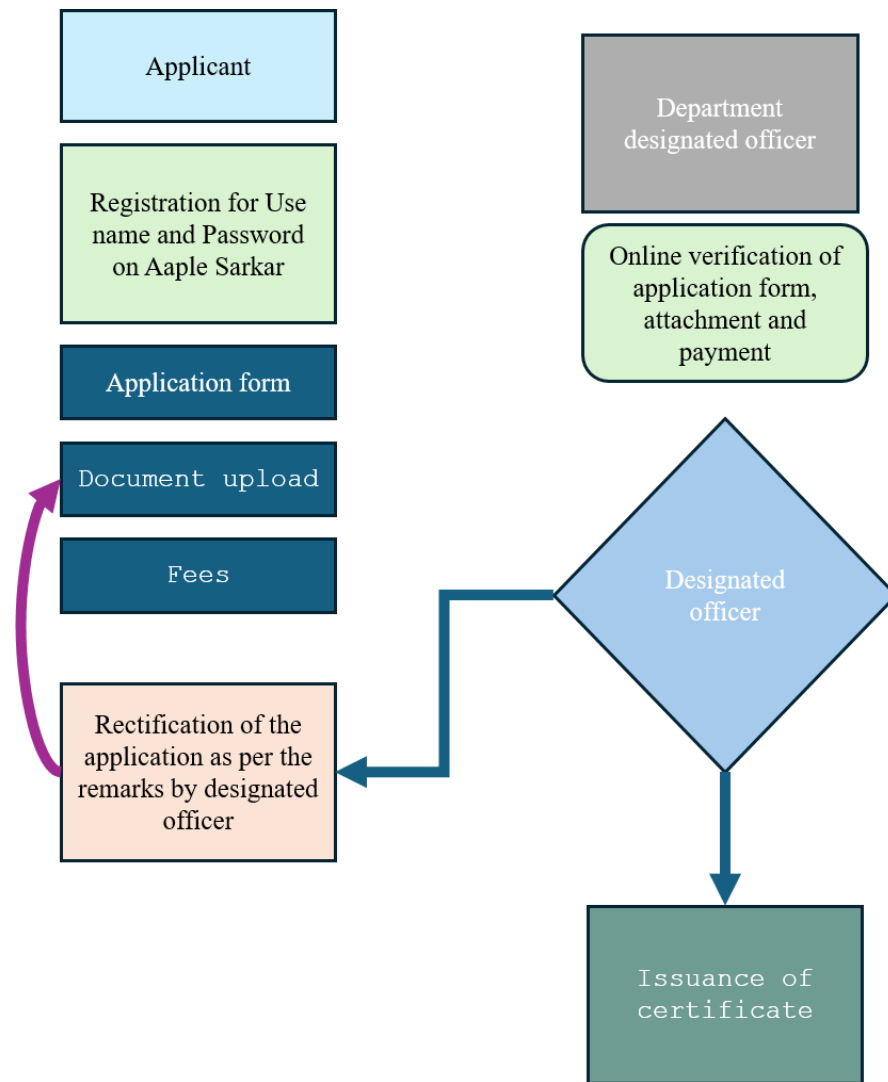


Figure 2. The Aaple Sarkar application process, from citizen registration to issuance of the certificate.

3.3 Capacity Building and Administrative Transformation

The MRTPS Act also includes provisions aimed at transforming administrative culture. Public authorities are encouraged to minimise paperwork, reduce procedural redundancies, and adopt digital alternatives. While the Act mandates strict service delivery timelines, it explicitly states that occasional lapses will not automatically amount to misconduct. Instead, the emphasis is on building a responsive and service-oriented work ethic. To support this transition, the Act mandates periodic training for all Designated Officers and Appellate Authorities. Institutions such as the Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) and Maharashtra Information Technology Corporation (MahaIT) have been designated for administrative

and technical training, respectively. The Act further authorizes performance-based incentives, including cash rewards and commendation certificates for officers who consistently comply with service timelines. Conversely, repeat defaulters, defined as officers who default in 10 per cent or more of eligible cases may be subjected to administrative action.

3.4 The Evolution of Notified Services, 2015–2025

The trajectory of notified services under the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act (MRTPS) from 2015 to 2025 presents a clear three-stage pattern, an initial phase of steady yet cautious growth from 2015 to 2019, a period of stagnation and uneven expansion between 2020 and 2023, and finally a phase of accelerated institutional consolidation during 2024 and 2025. Over this decade, the number of notified services expanded from 285 in 2015 to 1,576 by 2025, demonstrating the gradual yet determined institutionalisation of service guarantees across departments.

The MRTPS Act was first implemented in 2015 with 285 notified services, establishing the foundation for time-bound public service delivery in the state. The largest contributors in this foundational phase were the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries Department with 30 services, the Revenue and Forest Department with 39, the Industry, Energy and Labour Department with 37, and the Tourism and Cultural Affairs Department with 20. Other active departments included Housing (20 services), Transport (17), Home (17), School Education and Sports (18), and Public Health (6), while smaller entries came from Rural Development (7), Law and Justice (3), Tribal Development (2), and Minorities Development (1). Together, these early contributors represented the administrative core of the MRTPS framework.

In 2016, the number of notified services rose to 72, supported by the addition of 26 services from the Revenue and Forest Department and 14 from the Industry, Energy and Labour Department. The School Education and Sports Department introduced 18 services, marking the beginning of educational inclusion within the system, while the Home Department expanded slightly with 7 new services. The Department of Environment also entered the framework for the first time with 7 services, signifying diversification beyond conventional administrative sectors.

In 2017 and 2018, growth slowed but continued in a measured way. The year 2017 saw 28 new services added, mostly from the Industry, Energy and Labour Department (25 services) along with small additions from the Law and Justice Department (1 service) and the Planning Department (2 services). The year 2018 recorded 12 new services, primarily from the Soil and Water Conservation Department (8 services) and the Water Supply and Sanitation Department (2 services). The Finance Department also joined with 4 services, indicating incremental but gradual departmental engagement. A significant change occurred in 2019, when the number of notified services rose to 120, driven largely by the Urban Development Department, which entered the framework with 116 services. This represented the first major surge in departmental participation since the inception of the Act and brought a strong urban dimension to the MRTPS structure. By the end of 2019, the cumulative total of notified services had reached 507, more than doubling the original count within five years.

The period between 2020 and 2023 was characterised by slow and uneven growth. In 2020, only 8 new services were notified, all from the Home Department, reflecting a temporary halt in broader departmental participation. The following year, 2021, saw a further decline with just 4 new services added, again mainly within the same department. Most other departments maintained their existing service lists without significant change, reflecting administrative inertia during this period.

The year 2022, however, saw an exceptional yet isolated increase, with 156 services notified primarily by the School Education and Sports Department, which single-handedly accounted for nearly the entire total. This sudden surge represented the inclusion of education-related services at a large scale but did not reflect a uniform expansion across departments. The following year, 2023, recorded only 17 additional services, 10 of which came from the Urban Development Department and 7 from the Transport Department. Despite these modest additions, the overall progress between 2020 and 2023 remained limited. By the end of this period, the total number of notified services stood at 874, indicating that while new areas such as education had been integrated, many key departments such as Medical Education, Higher and Technical Education, and Public Works were yet to be brought within the framework.

The year 2024 marked a major turning point in the implementation of the MRTPS Act. A total of 580 new services were notified during this year, reflecting the largest single-year expansion since the Act's inception. This period saw both the entry of new departments and the broadening of scope among existing ones. The Department of Higher and Technical Education entered with 66 services, formally integrating the state's higher education sector into the statutory service delivery system. The Department of Medical Education and Drugs added 45 services, strengthening the inclusion of healthcare institutions. The Transport Department expanded significantly with 91 services, while the Urban Development Department notified 141 new services, consolidating its position as the leading department under the Act. The Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department added 16 services, the Public Works Department introduced 8, and the Women and Child Development Department entered with 10. The Industry, Energy and Labour Department broadened its scope with 8 new services, while the Housing Department added 16 and the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries Department introduced 82 new services, representing one of the largest single departmental expansions in this phase.

The expansion continued into 2025 with the notification of 294 additional services. Among these, the Housing Department added 60, the Urban Development Department contributed 100, and the Medical Education and Drugs Department added 27 services. Smaller yet notable additions came from the Public Works Department (2 services) and other departments that had entered earlier. By mid-2025, the total number of notified services reached 1,576, representing the completion of a decade of institutional growth and reform.

This final phase reflects both vertical and horizontal consolidation. Vertically, departments such as Urban Development, Industry and Labour, and Transport deepened their service portfolios, while horizontally, new departments such as Higher and Technical Education, Medical Education and Drugs, Women and Child Development, and Social Justice joined the framework. By 2025, the MRTPS Act had transformed into a comprehensive mechanism covering more than 25 departments, spanning sectors from agriculture and education to infrastructure, health, and social welfare. The decade thus

represents the gradual institutionalisation of a citizen-centric service delivery regime in Maharashtra, supported by both administrative expansion and technological integration.

Table 1. *Notified services by department and financial year, 2015–2025.*

Departments	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries Department	30									82		112
Cooperation, and Textile Industry Department	5											5
Department of Environment		7										7
Department of Higher and Technical Education										66		66
Department of Medical Education and Drugs	45									27		72
Department of Soil and Water Conservation				8								8
Department of Water, Supply and Sanitation	16											16
Finance department					4							4
Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department										7	16	23
Home Department	17	7				8	4			134		170
Housing Department	20									16	60	96
Industry, Energy and Labor Department	37	14	25							8	90	174
Law and Justice Department	3		1									4
Minorities Development Department	1											1
Planning Department				2								2
Public Health Department	6											6
Public work Department										8	2	10
Revenue and Forest Department	39	26										65

Rural Development Department	7											7
School Education and Sports Department		18						156				174
Social Justice and Special Assistance Department	10			2							16	28
Tourism and Cultural Affairs Department	20											20
Transport	17								7	91		115
Tribal Development Department	2											2
Urban Development Department					116				10	141	100	367
Water Resources Department	10											10
Water, Supply and Sanitation Department			2									2
Women and Child Development Department											10	10
Grand Total	285	72	28	12	120	8	4	156	17	580	294	1576

4. Data and Methods

4.1 Data Sources

The empirical basis for this evaluation is a corpus of longitudinal administrative records generated by the Aaple Sarkar portal, the unified online platform through which services notified under the MRTPS Act, 2015 are delivered in Maharashtra. These records were compiled by the State and span the financial years 2015–16 to 2023–24, although certain disaggregated series are available only from 2018–19 onwards. The data are organised as workbooks at three levels of aggregation. At the departmental level, the records report applications received, disposed (processed), approved, and rejected, by financial year. At the district level, they report applications received, disposed, approved, rejected, and pending, together with a breakdown of on-time versus not-on-time delivery. At the channel level, applications received and disposed are recorded by submission channel, the four channels being the VLE/CSC Seva Kendra (Village-Level

Entrepreneur/Common Service Centre), the online self-service portal, the Gram Panchayat Seva Kendra, and Setu centres. A separate dataset records the services notified by each department by year over 2015–2025, alongside the count of services made available online. For all district-level per-capita measures, district populations from the Census of India 2011 serve as the denominator. In total, the corpus covers 36 districts and 28 departments, of which approximately 25 exhibit material activity.

4.2 Measures and Analytical Strategy

The analytical approach is descriptive and associational, combining measures of volume, performance, concentration, spatial inequality, and digitisation. Growth in application volumes is summarised through year-on-year growth rates and the compound annual growth rate (CAGR); departmental and district-level CAGRs are computed over the five annual intervals from 2018–19 to 2023–24, the period for which disaggregated data exist. Service-delivery performance is captured by two ratios: the approval rate, defined as approved applications divided by total disposed, and the processing (disposal) rate, defined as disposed applications divided by those received.

Departmental concentration is assessed using the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI), calculated as the sum of squared percentage shares on a 0–10,000 scale, complemented by the share of applications accounted for by the three largest departments. Spatial inequality is measured through the coefficient of variation (CV), defined as the population standard deviation divided by the mean of district application volumes across the 36 districts and computed separately for each year. To gauge the extent of disintermediation, a digitisation index is defined as the share of applications submitted directly through the online self-service portal, that is, without recourse to an intermediary agent; this serves as a self-service measure of citizen-facing digital uptake. The composition of submission channels and channel-wise disposal rates are examined to characterise how applications enter and move through the system.

Two further measures address specific empirical questions. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is operationalised as the percentage change in district applications between 2019–20 and 2020–21. Finally, per-capita application intensity, expressed as applications per 1,000 population, is used to compare demand across districts of differing size.

Administrative renames are merged so that units of analysis remain comparable over time (yielding 36 districts), and a small number of clearly erroneous or near-zero-volume observations are excluded to protect the stability of the ratio and growth estimates.

5. Results: Application Dynamics and Service Delivery

This section presents the empirical patterns of service delivery under the Act, organised around five dimensions: the temporal trajectory of demand and performance, departmental structure, the delivery-channel mix, district-level patterns, and regional (revenue-division) dynamics. All figures and tables are computed from the rectified administrative records described in Section 4; the disaggregated series run to 2023–24, the latest year for which the departmental, district, and channel workbooks are available.

5.1 Temporal Trajectories

The aggregate volume of applications received on the Aaple Sarkar portal between 2015–16 and 2023–24 expanded from 6.71 million to 23.58 million, a compound annual growth rate of 17.0 per cent over the eight annual intervals (Figure 3). The trajectory is not monotonic. The first full year of operation (2016–17) records an exceptional expansion of 180.4 per cent, amplified by 2015–16 being a part-year following the Act's mid-year notification; growth then moderates, with marginal contractions in 2018–19 and 2019–20. The sharpest single-year contraction, of 16.2 per cent, occurs in 2020–21 and coincides with the COVID-19 lockdowns and the temporary closure of physical Seva Kendras. Recovery is rapid thereafter (13.9, 19.6, and 13.6 per cent in the three following years), and the 2023–24 volume is the highest in the series, indicating that the pandemic disruption was fully absorbed.

The year-wise distribution of approved and rejected applications reveals a consistently high approval rate, averaging about 99.4 per cent of disposed applications across the period and never falling below 99.27 per cent (Figure 4). This near-universal approval rate is structurally significant: once an application is formally disposed, the probability of approval is overwhelming, irrespective of volume. The absolute volume of rejections nonetheless varies meaningfully, peaking in the early years (135,170 in 2017–18) before

stabilising, a pattern consistent with improving documentation quality as the system matured.

Service timeliness, the Act's defining promise, improved markedly over the period (Figure 4). The share of disposed applications delivered within the statutory time limit fell to just 47 per cent in 2018–19, when delays in the high-volume Revenue Department dominated, but rebounded to 96 per cent in 2019–20 and has remained high since. In 2023–24, 87.9 per cent of all disposed applications, some 18.97 million, were delivered on time, while 12.1 per cent, or 2.60 million, were delayed beyond the statutory limit. This headline timeliness is creditable; as Section 5.5 shows, however, it conceals a stark regional concentration of the delays that remain.

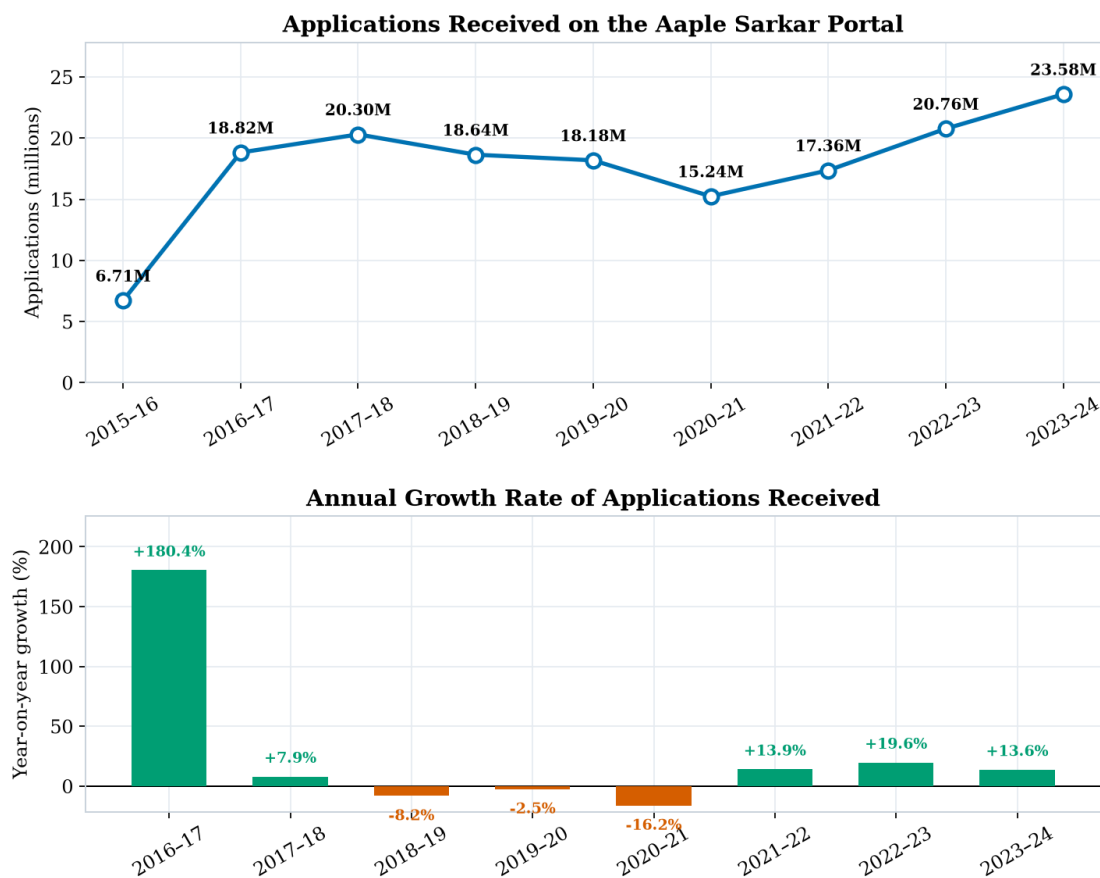


Figure 3. Year-wise applications received and annual growth rate, 2015–16 to 2023–24.

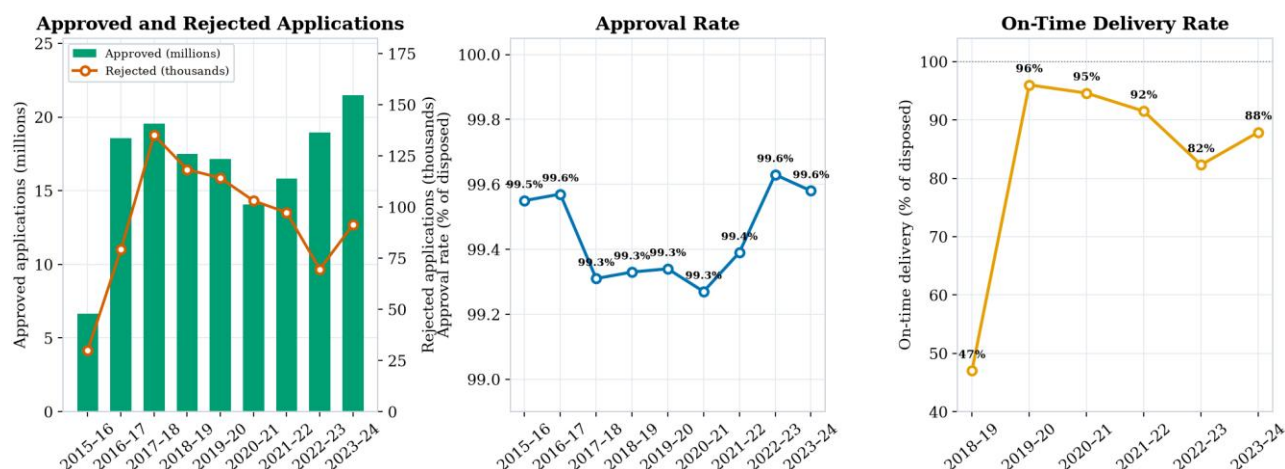


Figure 4. Approved and rejected applications, the approval rate, and the on-time delivery rate, 2015–16 to 2023–24.

Table 2. Year-wise applications received, disposed, approved, rejected, and the approval rate, 2015–16 to 2023–24 (disposed equals approved plus rejected).

Year	Received	Disposed	Approved	Rejected	Approval %
2015–16	6,711,097	6,669,451	6,639,413	30,038	99.55
2016–17	18,815,885	18,634,557	18,555,310	79,247	99.57
2017–18	20,300,005	19,680,942	19,545,772	135,170	99.31
2018–19	18,638,681	17,621,691	17,503,348	118,343	99.33
2019–20	18,179,975	17,277,819	17,163,602	114,217	99.34
2020–21	15,236,169	14,181,272	14,078,215	103,057	99.27
2021–22	17,358,011	15,910,119	15,812,760	97,359	99.39
2022–23	20,764,309	19,004,357	18,934,760	69,597	99.63
2023–24	23,581,869	21,570,021	21,478,634	91,387	99.58

5.2 Departmental Structure: Concentration and Capacity

The compound annual growth rates of applications by department between 2018–19 and 2023–24 are markedly heterogeneous (Figure 5). Among departments with a substantive base (at least 1,000 applications in 2018–19), the Industries Department records the highest CAGR at 18.4 per cent, followed by Higher and Technical Education (11.4 per cent) and the merged Home and Transport Department (10.6 per cent). The dominant Revenue Department grew at 4.2 per cent and Labour at 5.7 per cent. Several departments contracted, most severely Law and Judiciary (–77.6 per cent, from 28,241 to 16 applications) and Forest (–70.1 per cent); declines of this magnitude almost certainly represent the re-classification or migration of notified services rather than genuine

collapses in demand. Eight departments with fewer than 1,000 base-year applications are excluded, since a CAGR on a near-zero base is unstable.

The Herfindahl–Hirschman Index of departmental application share remains in the 6,708–7,355 range throughout the period, deep within the "highly concentrated" range, driven by the Revenue Department's share of roughly 82–85 per cent (Figure 6). The three largest departments together account for 93–95 per cent of all applications in every year, leaving the remaining departments with a combined share below seven per cent. Concentration has eased modestly from its pre-pandemic peak but the structural dominance of Revenue is essentially unchanged, with the consequence that system-wide indicators effectively track a single department.

The multi-year processing (disposal) rates of selected departments diverge sharply (Figure 7). The Revenue Department's rate declines steadily from 97.4 per cent in 2018–19 to 92.0 per cent in 2023–24, a deterioration that, given the department's scale, translates into roughly 1.5 million unprocessed applications in the final year as intake outpaces capacity. Labour and Industries sustain rates near 99–100 per cent, and the Energy Department holds steady in the high-90s, illustrating that high-volume growth need not produce backlogs where procedures are well codified. Social Justice and Special Assistance, despite improving from 17.1 to 55.6 per cent, continues to carry a substantial processing deficit, concerning given the marginalised populations it serves, while Higher and Technical Education shows a different but equally striking pattern, its disposal rate falling unevenly from 81 per cent in 2018–19 to 58 per cent in 2023–24. (Low-volume department-year points, those based on fewer than 100 received applications, are suppressed as unstable.)

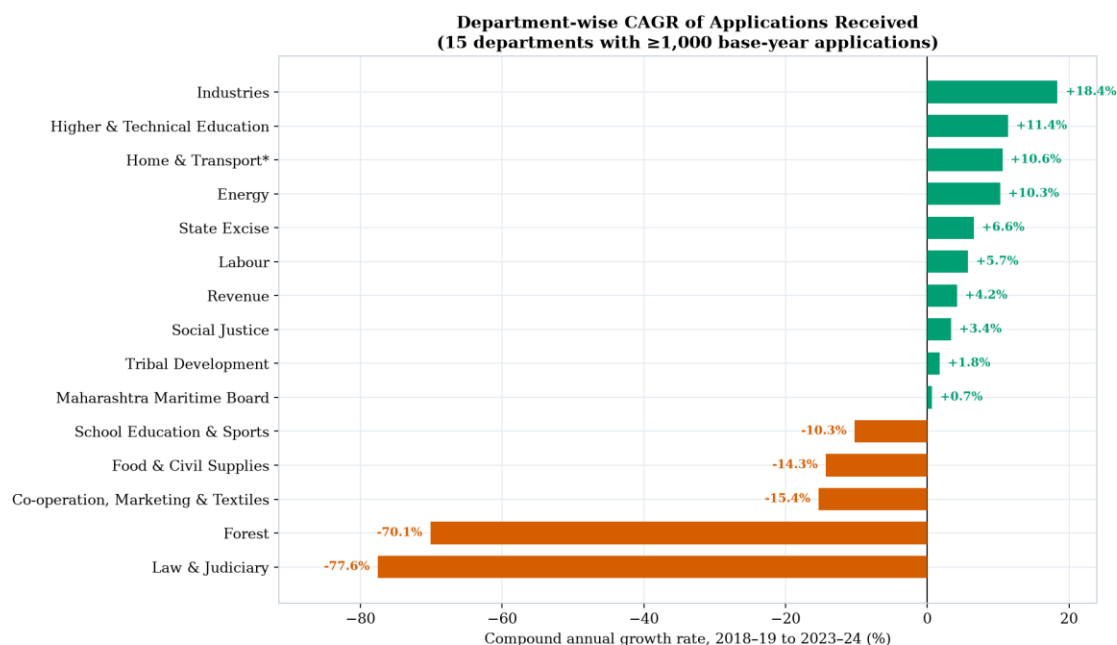


Figure 5. Department-wise compound annual growth rate of applications, 2018–19 to 2023–24
(departments with $\geq 1,000$ base-year applications).

Table 3. Department-wise applications and compound annual growth rate, 2018–19 to 2023–24 (base $\geq 1,000$).

Department	2018–19	2023–24	CAGR %
Industries	278,155	646,799	+18.4
Higher & Technical Education	12,374	21,238	+11.4
Home & Transport	683,787	1,131,917	+10.6
Energy	69,499	113,391	+10.3
State Excise	30,999	42,638	+6.6
Labour	957,535	1,265,968	+5.7
Revenue	15,930,283	19,547,730	+4.2
Social Justice	516,585	609,352	+3.4
Tribal Development	69,721	76,165	+1.8
Maharashtra Maritime Board	3,080	3,188	+0.7
School Education & Sports	7,526	4,382	-10.3
Food & Civil Supplies	20,365	9,404	-14.3
Co-operation, Marketing & Textiles	11,659	5,064	-15.4
Forest	5,472	13	-70.1
Law & Judiciary	28,241	16	-77.6

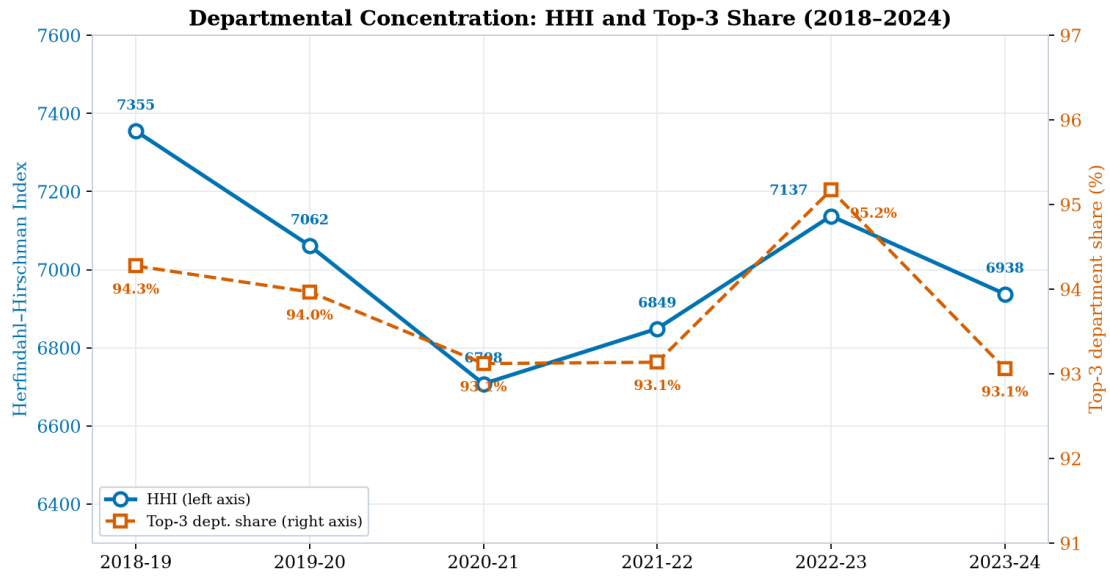


Figure 6. Departmental concentration: Herfindahl–Hirschman Index and top-three department share, 2018–2024.

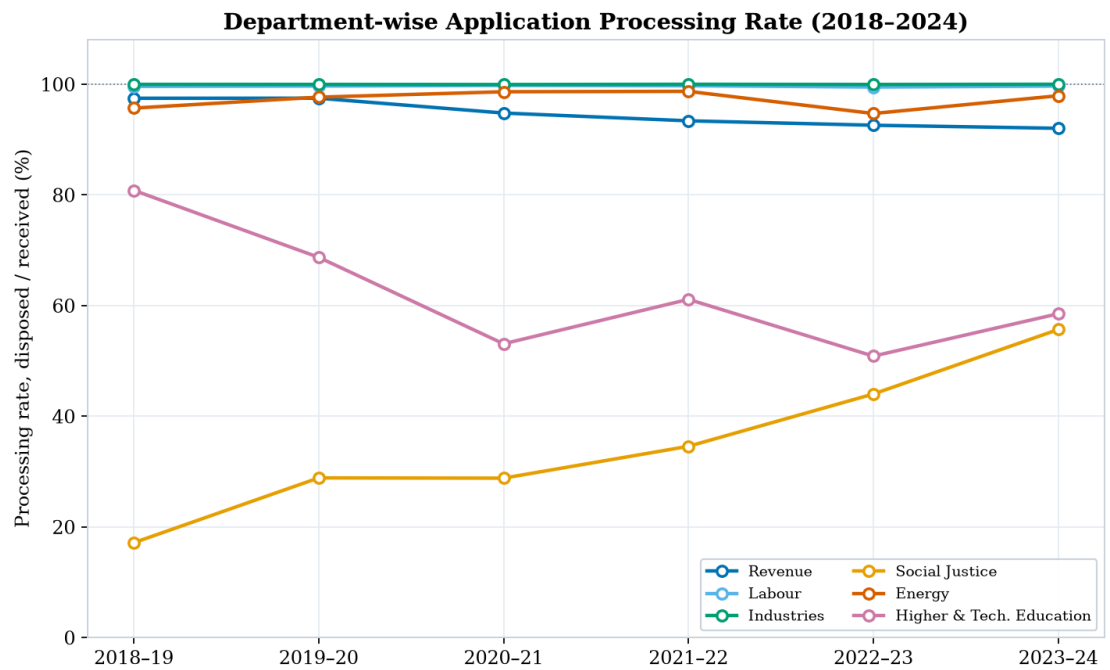


Figure 7. Department-wise application processing (disposal) rate for selected departments, 2018–2024.

5.3 Channel-wise Access and Digitisation

The distribution of applications across the four delivery channels reveals a pronounced structural realignment in how citizens reach the state (Figure 8). The VLE/CSC Seva Kendra channel remains dominant throughout, accounting for about 70.7 per cent of applications in 2018–19 and 67.3 per cent in 2023–24, even as its absolute volume rose from 13.18 to 15.87 million. The Setu channel collapsed from 3.11 to 1.30 million applications (–58.2 per cent), consistent with administrative consolidation, while the Gram Panchayat channel expanded most dramatically, from 786,838 to 2,923,872 applications (a CAGR of about 30 per cent). The direct online self-service portal also grew, from 1.56 to 3.49 million (a CAGR of 17.4 per cent).

The digitisation index, defined as the share of applications submitted directly through the online self-service portal without an intermediary, rose from 8.4 per cent in 2018–19 to 14.8 per cent in 2023–24 (Figure 9). The increase, though modest in magnitude, is consistent and, notably, continued through the COVID-19 disruption (rising from 9.5 per cent in 2019–20 to 12.9 per cent in 2020–21), suggesting that the pandemic functioned as a structural accelerant of autonomous digital adoption. Even so, more than four-fifths of applications continue to be filed through intermediaries.

Channel-wise disposal rates vary within a relatively narrow band of roughly 87–96 per cent (Figure 10). Contrary to the expectation that autonomous online submission would be most efficient, the Setu channel records the highest disposal rates in most years before falling to 88.1 per cent in 2023–24, while the online portal peaks at 96.4 per cent in 2019–20. The Gram Panchayat channel sustains disposal rates broadly comparable to the others despite its rapid volumetric expansion, suggesting that scaling panchayat-level delivery has not produced disproportionate processing delays.

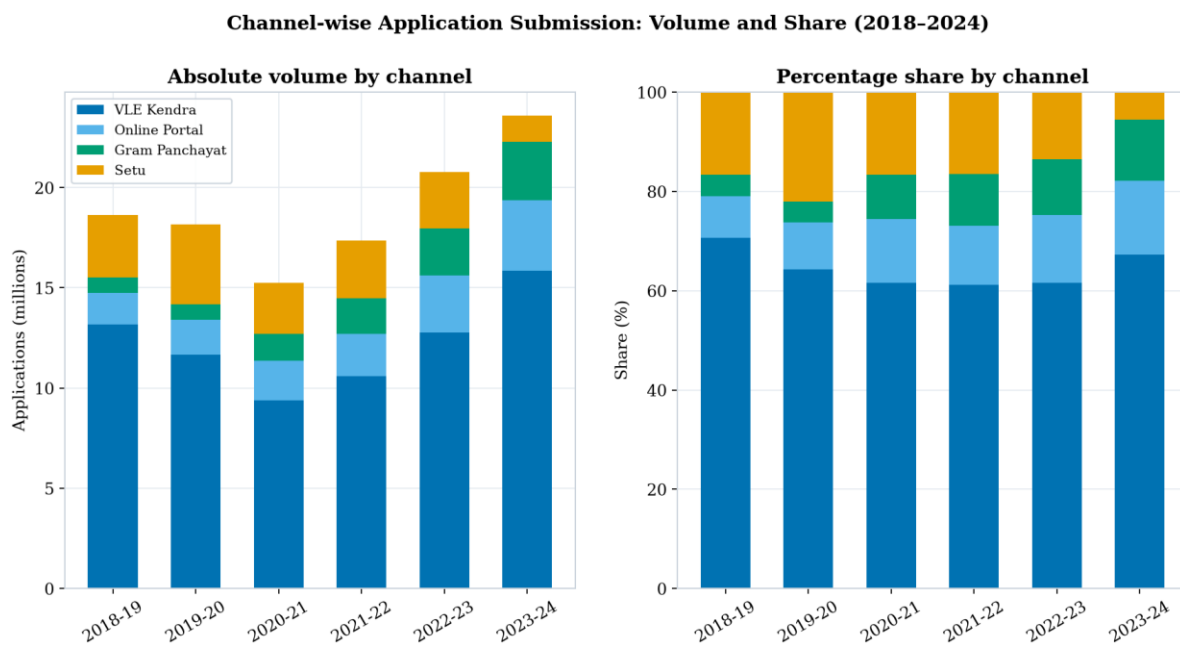


Figure 8. Channel-wise application volume and percentage share, 2018–2024.

Table 4. Channel-wise applications received (millions), 2018–19 to 2023–24.

Channel	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
VLE / CSC Kendra	13.18	11.68	9.38	10.61	12.78	15.87
Online Portal	1.56	1.73	1.97	2.09	2.83	3.49
Gram Panchayat	0.79	0.76	1.34	1.79	2.34	2.92
Setu	3.11	4.00	2.54	2.87	2.81	1.30

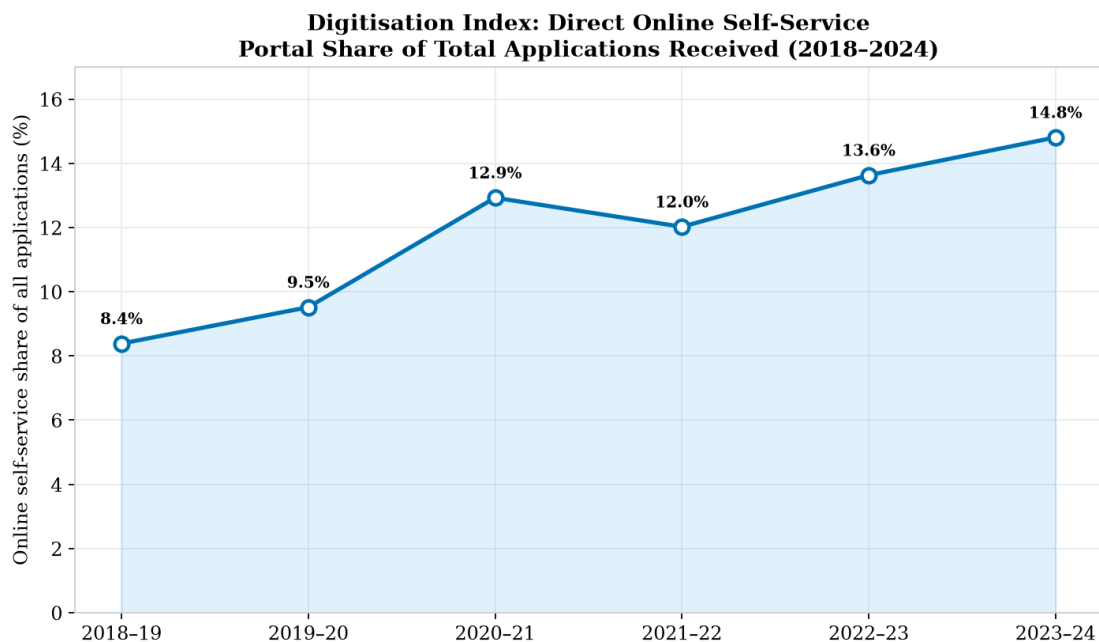


Figure 9. Digitisation index: share of applications filed directly via the online self-service portal, 2018–2024.

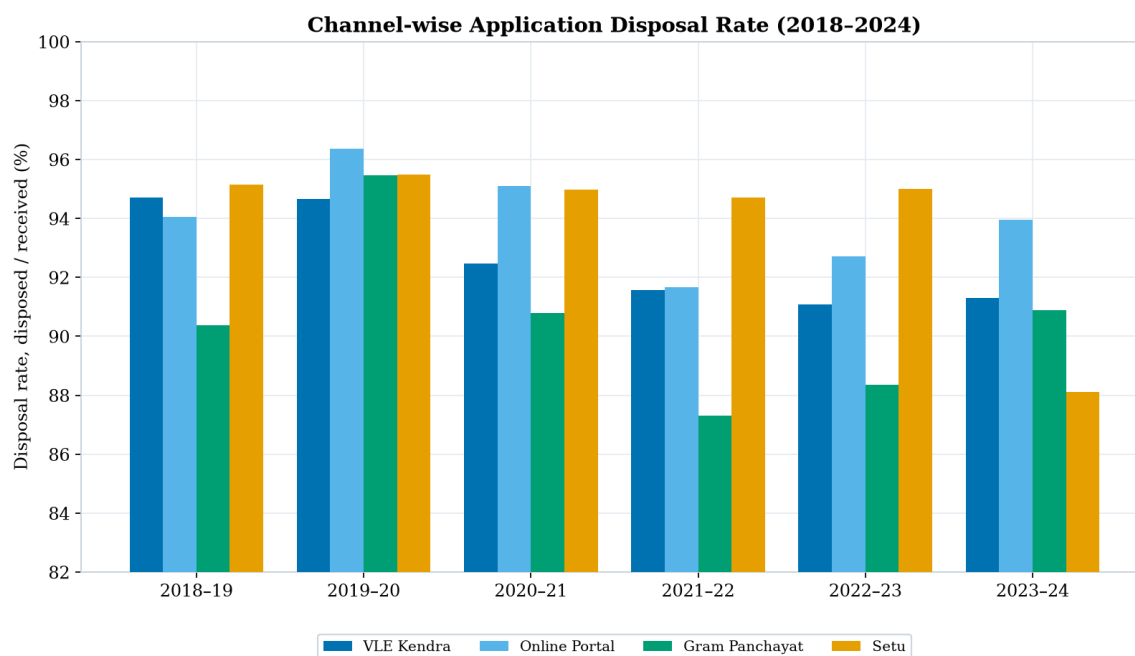


Figure 10. Channel-wise application disposal rate (%), 2018–2024.

5.4 District-Level Patterns

District-level demand, normalised by population, reveals a pronounced and counter-intuitive geography (Figure 11). In 2023–24, per-capita application intensity ranged more than nine-fold, from about 350 applications per 1,000 population in Washim and 347 in Buldhana down to 38 in Mumbai Suburban and 73 in Thane. The most intensive users are the agrarian districts of Vidarbha and Marathwada, Washim, Buldhana, Gondia, Wardha, and Amravati all exceeding 315 per 1,000, while the metropolitan districts of the Mumbai region record the lowest intensity. This inverse urban gradient is consistent with a heavier reliance on the portal's documentary services in rural districts and with substitution towards alternative or private channels in the metropolitan core.

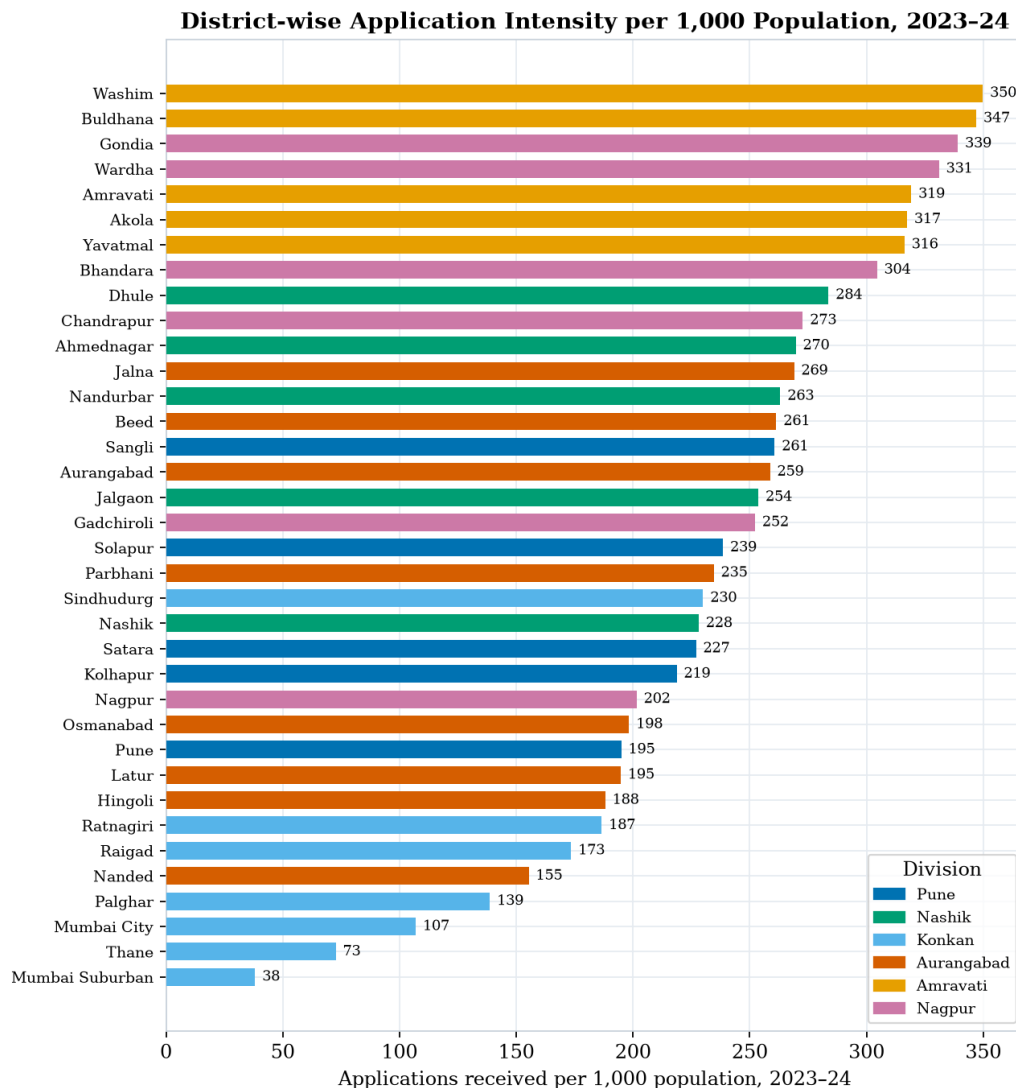


Figure 11. District-wise applications received per 1,000 population, 2023–24, coloured by revenue division.

Service quality at the district level is high on approval but uneven on timeliness (Figure 12). Approval rates among disposed applications are near-universal everywhere, between 96.3 and 99.9 per cent in 2023–24. On-time delivery, by contrast, varies sharply: most districts cleared 90 per cent or more of applications within the statutory limit (Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Bhandara reaching 98 per cent), but a cluster of Marathwada districts lagged badly, Aurangabad at 58 per cent, Jalna 59 per cent, Osmanabad 60 per cent, Hingoli 63 per cent, and Parbhani 64 per cent. The pending share is, in turn, highest in

the eastern Vidarbha districts (Gondia 15 per cent, Chandrapur 14 per cent, Wardha 13 per cent), reflecting intake outpacing disposal rather than untimely processing.

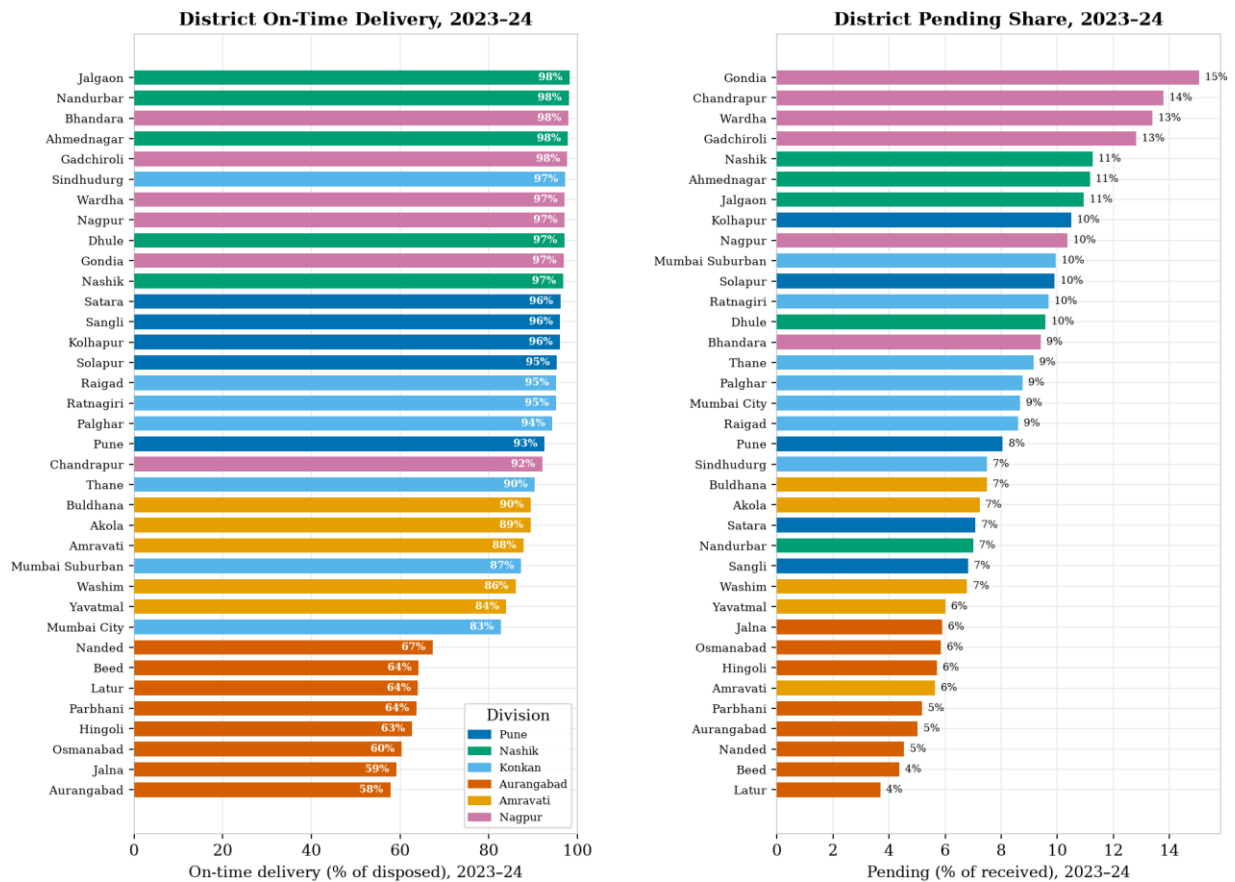


Figure 12. District-wise on-time delivery and pending share, 2023–24, coloured by revenue division.

The coefficient of variation of district-level application volumes ranges from 53.9 to 59.7 per cent across the period, indicating a moderately high and persistent degree of inter-district inequality (Figure 13). The trajectory is non-monotonic: the CV reaches its highest values near 59.7 per cent in 2019–20 and 59.6 per cent in 2022–23, before falling to 53.9 per cent in 2023–24, the lowest value in the series and a possible sign of emergent convergence. The overall pattern points to the limits of supply-side portal expansion as a route to equitable access and underscores the continued relevance of targeted outreach in low-utilisation districts.

The administrative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was near-universal across districts: every district recorded a decline in applications between 2019–20 and 2020–21,

ranging from -0.6 per cent in Buldhana to -37.3 per cent in Mumbai City, the most severely affected (Figure 14). The breadth of the contraction underscores the systemic nature of the disruption rather than a spatially selective impact. (One district, Nagpur, whose share of state applications roughly doubled around 2020–21 and then held steady, is excluded as a probable reporting-coverage artefact rather than genuine demand.)

District-level compound annual growth between 2018–19 and 2023–24 displays a four-fold pattern, from high-growth through moderate- and low-growth to contraction (Figure 15). The fastest-growing districts are Gadchiroli (13.3 per cent) and Palghar (11.3 per cent), while Jalna (-1.2 per cent), Sindhudurg (-0.7 per cent), and Nandurbar (-0.6 per cent) record marginal contractions. The dumbbell comparison of 2018–19 and 2023–24 volumes confirms that most districts expanded their absolute application volumes over the period, indicating a broad deepening of institutional reach even as the pace of growth remains geographically uneven.

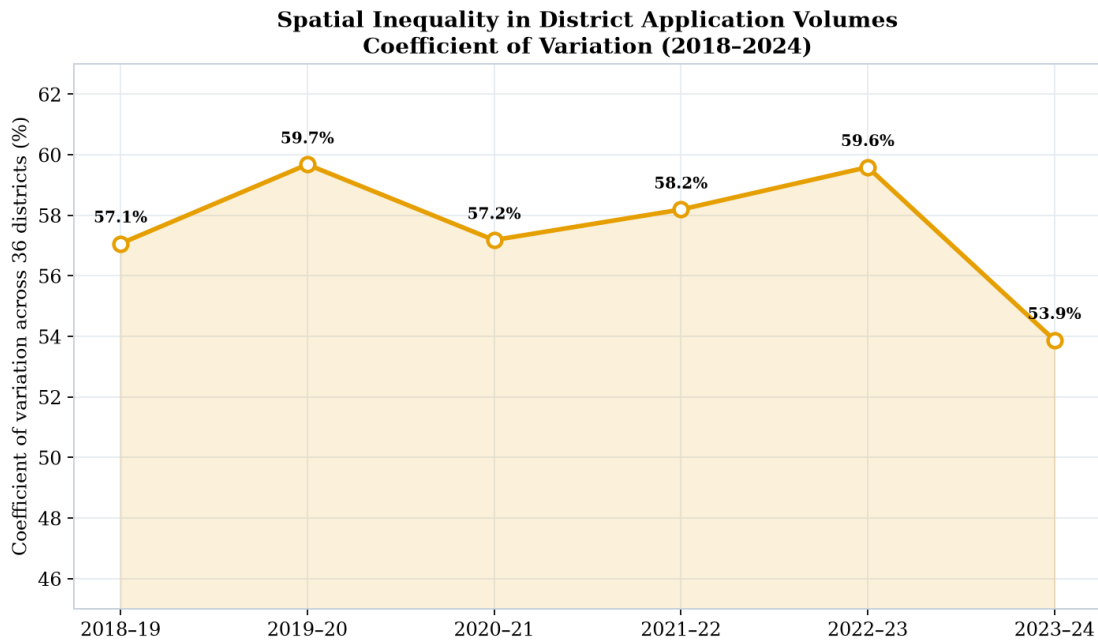


Figure 13. *Coefficient of variation of district-level application volumes, 2018–2024.*

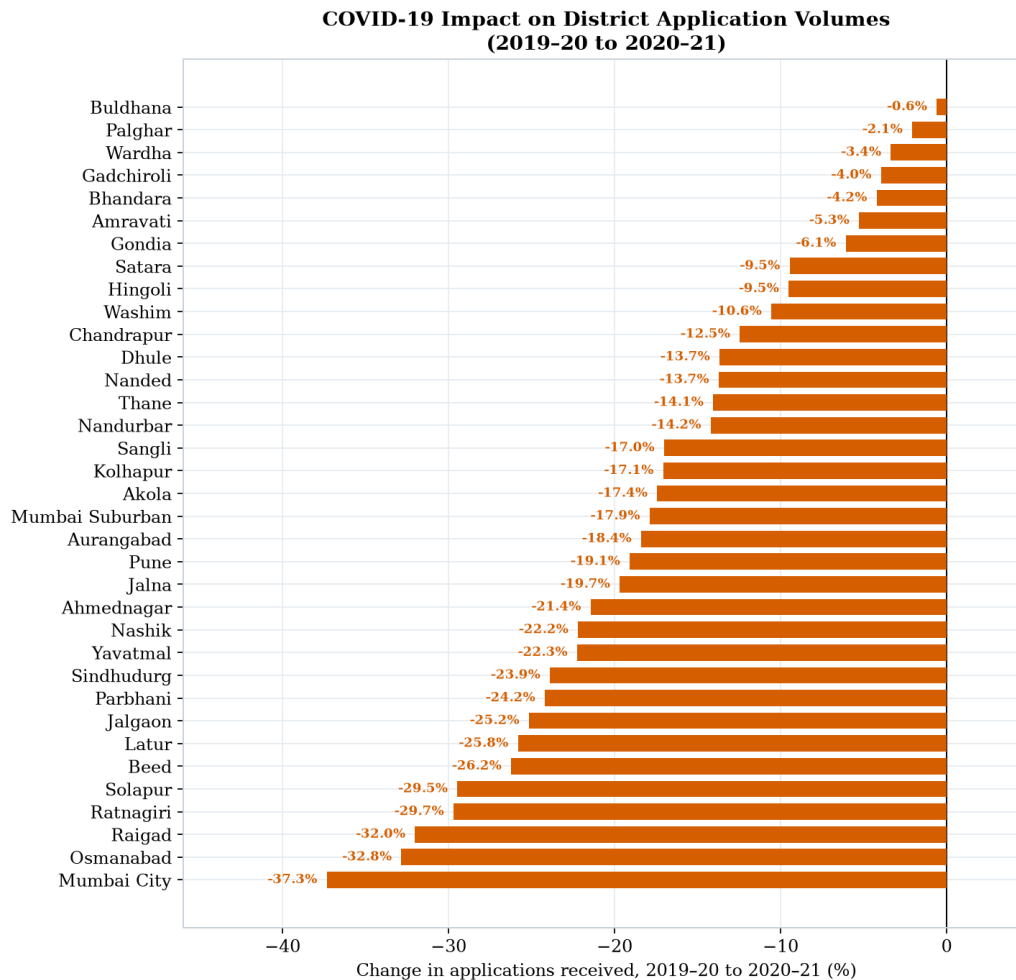


Figure 14. District-wise change in applications received, 2019–20 to 2020–21.

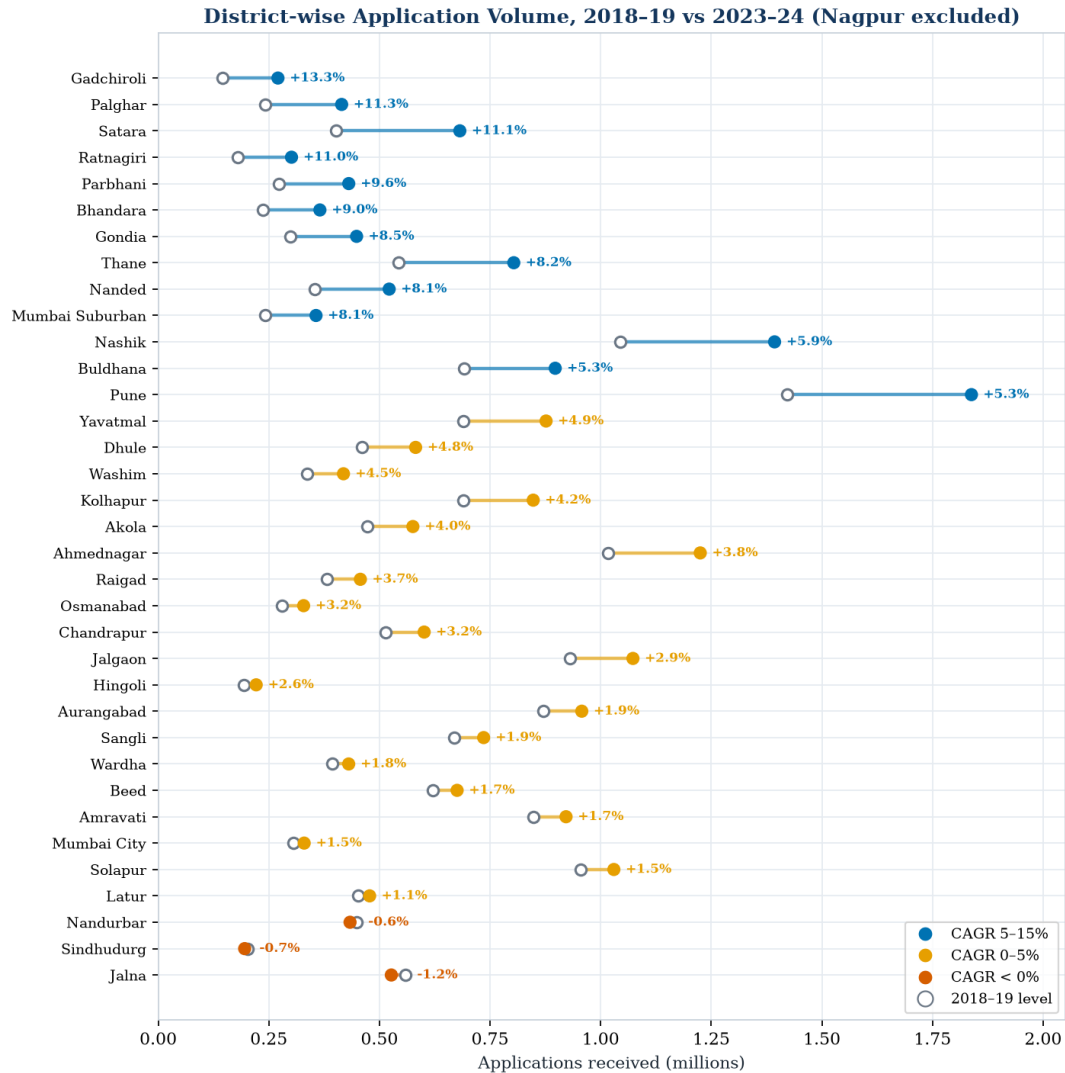


Figure 15. District-wise application volume, 2018–19 versus 2023–24, with CAGR classification (Nagpur excluded as a probable reporting artefact).

5.5 Regional Dynamics

Aggregating the thirty-six districts into Maharashtra's six revenue divisions, Konkan, Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Amravati, and Nagpur, brings the regional structure of demand into sharper relief (Figure 16). The Pune division remains the largest throughout, receiving 5.13 million applications in 2023–24, followed by Nashik (4.71 million) and Aurangabad (4.14 million), while Nagpur and Konkan remain the smallest. The divisions nonetheless grew at markedly different rates over the 2018–19 to 2023–24 window. The Nagpur division expanded fastest, at a compound annual rate of 10.4 per cent, lifting its

share of state applications from 10.0 to 13.0 per cent, followed by Konkan at 6.4 per cent, whereas the established high-volume divisions of Pune (4.4 per cent), Amravati (4.0 per cent), Nashik (3.8 per cent), and Aurangabad (2.8 per cent) grew more slowly and saw their shares decline modestly. The Nagpur surge should be read with caution, since it is driven partly by the same reporting-coverage correction that flags the Nagpur district (Section 5.4), net of that effect the regional distribution is broadly stable, with a gradual redistribution of activity towards the eastern and coastal divisions.

The more consequential regional contrast lies not in volume but in timeliness. On-time delivery in 2023–24 varied sharply across divisions, from 97.6 per cent in Nashik and 96.3 per cent in Nagpur down to just 62.0 per cent in Aurangabad, a gap of more than thirty-five percentage points (Figure 16). The Aurangabad division's deficit is not confined to a single district but pervades its Marathwada constituents, where on-time rates cluster between 58 and 67 per cent (Aurangabad 58 per cent, Jalna 59 per cent, Osmanabad 60 per cent, Hingoli 63 per cent, Beed, Latur, and Parbhani 64 per cent, and Nanded 67 per cent). That an entire administrative region should deliver barely three in five services within the statutory time limit, even as its approval rates remain near-universal, points to a localised and structural capacity constraint rather than a shortfall of demand, and identifies Marathwada as the clearest regional priority for the timeliness guarantee at the heart of the Act.

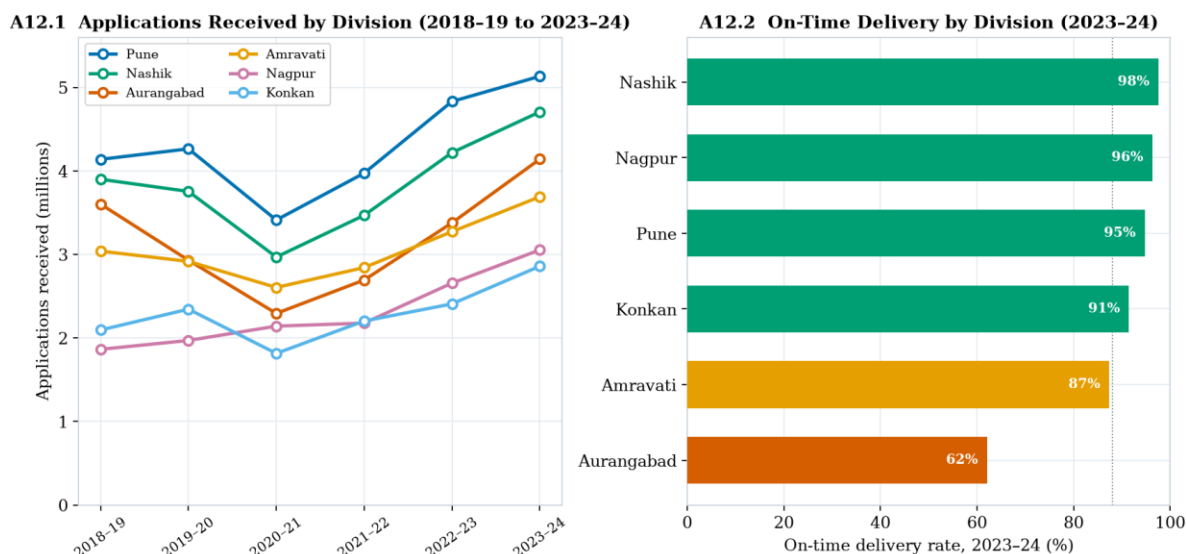


Figure 16. Regional dynamics by revenue division: (left) applications received, 2018–19 to 2023–24; (right) on-time delivery rate, 2023–24. Divisional totals are the sum of member districts.

Table 5. Revenue-division applications received, compound annual growth, share of state total, and on-time delivery, 2018–19 to 2023–24.

Division	Received 2018–19	Received 2023–24	CAGR %	Share 2023–24 %	On-time 2023–24 %
Pune	4,138,524	5,132,623	+4.4	21.8	94.7
Nashik	3,899,640	4,706,509	+3.8	20.0	97.6
Aurangabad	3,601,482	4,140,377	+2.8	17.6	62.0
Amravati	3,039,391	3,689,937	+4.0	15.6	87.4
Nagpur	1,864,199	3,053,918	+10.4	13.0	96.3
Konkan	2,095,445	2,858,505	+6.4	12.1	91.5

The geography of delay is starker still. Although the state delivered 87.9 per cent of applications on time in 2023–24, the 2.60 million that were delayed are overwhelmingly concentrated in one region: the Aurangabad (Marathwada) division alone accounts for 1.49 million, or 57 per cent, of all delayed applications statewide, clearing only 62 per cent of its disposals within the time limit against 91 to 98 per cent in every other division (Figure 17). The remaining five divisions each contribute under half a million delayed applications. This concentration confirms that the timeliness shortfall is not a diffuse, statewide capacity problem but a localised one, rooted in the Marathwada districts, and therefore amenable to targeted administrative intervention.

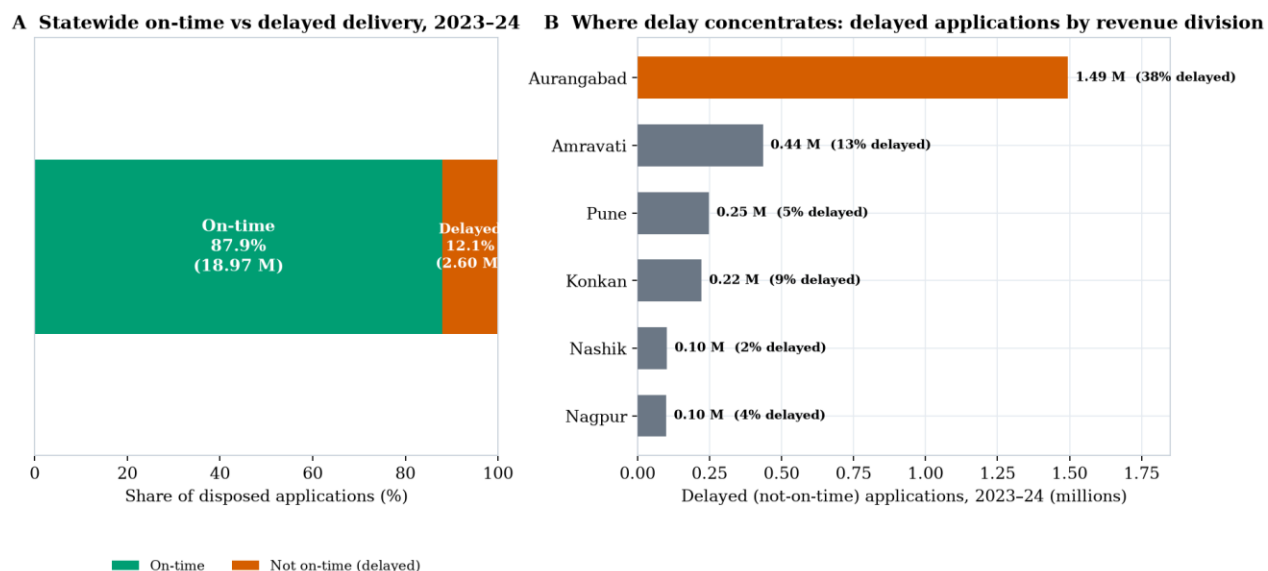


Figure 17. *On-time versus not-on-time (delayed) delivery, 2023–24: (A) the statewide split; (B) delayed applications by revenue division, showing the concentration of delay in the Aurangabad (Marathwada) division.*

6. Discussion

6.1 The headline success and its hidden structure

The longitudinal record of the Aaple Sarkar portal tells, on its surface, a story of conspicuous administrative success. Annual application volumes climbed from 6.71 million in 2015–16 to 23.58 million in 2023–24, a compound annual growth rate of roughly 17 per cent, interrupted only by a pandemic-induced contraction of 16.2 per cent in 2020–21 from which the system recovered fully and rapidly. Throughout this expansion, approval rates among disposed applications remained near-universal, hovering around 99.5 per cent in every year, and on-time delivery, having deteriorated through to 2018–19, rebounded sharply and has predominated since 2019–20. Read against the explicit logic of the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015, with its time-bound guarantees and accountability machinery, these figures suggest that the statute achieved precisely what it set out to do: to convert a diffuse service obligation into an enforceable, efficiently met entitlement. They are, in the vocabulary of New Public Management, impressive throughput gains (Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Yet beneath this aggregate achievement sit three structural problems that the headline metrics not only conceal but actively obscure. The first is an extreme concentration of demand across departments. With a Herfindahl–Hirschman Index between roughly 6,700 and 7,355, deep within the conventionally "highly concentrated" range, the system is dominated by a single actor: the Revenue Department alone accounts for some 82 to 85 per cent of all applications, and the top three departments together for 93 to 95 per cent. The practical consequence is that every system-wide indicator essentially tracks the performance of one department, while the smaller departments become statistically invisible. The second problem is divergent processing capacity. Even Revenue's disposal rate slid from 97.4 per cent in 2018–19 to 92.0 per cent in 2023–24, leaving approximately 1.5 million applications unprocessed in the latter year as intake outpaced capacity, while Labour and Industries sustained rates near 99 to 100 per cent. More troublingly, the Department of Social Justice and Special Assistance (improving only from 17 to 56 per cent) and Higher and Technical Education (whose disposal rate slid from 81 to 58 per cent) carry substantial processing deficits, a pattern especially disquieting in the case of Social Justice given the marginalised populations it serves. The third problem is persistent spatial inequality: the coefficient of variation of district-level volumes remained high throughout, between roughly 54 and 60 per cent, while per-capita intensity ranged from about 350 applications per 1,000 population in Washim to as few as 38 in Mumbai Suburban, with on-time delivery and pending shares likewise varying widely across districts and the six revenue divisions.

A fourth strand, the channel through which citizens reach the state, cuts across all three. Citizens overwhelmingly transact not directly but through intermediaries: the Village-Level Entrepreneur and Common Service Centre (VLE/CSC) Seva Kendra channel constituted some 67 to 71 per cent of volume throughout the period. The older Setu channel collapsed from 3.11 to 1.30 million applications, a fall of 58 per cent; Gram Panchayat kiosks surged at around 30 per cent annually; and the direct online self-service portal, although growing, remained a small minority, with the self-service or digitisation share rising only from 8.4 to 14.8 per cent. The picture, then, is one of genuine efficiency gains layered over unresolved problems of concentration, capacity, and equity.

6.2 Why self-service adoption remains low

Why, after nearly a decade of portal maturation, does direct online self-service account for barely 15 per cent of transactions, and why does dependence on intermediaries persist? The most immediate explanation is the digital divide in its several dimensions, uneven connectivity, limited device ownership, constrained digital literacy, and language barriers, which together place unmediated transaction beyond the reach of much of the citizenry. But the divide is not solely material. Citizens approach the state for consequential documents under conditions of uncertainty, and the assistance, reassurance, and error-correction supplied by a known local operator answer a genuine need for trust and navigational support that a self-service interface does not. Layered onto this is an entrenched VLE/CSC ecosystem whose operators have a direct commercial incentive to retain footfall, and whose ubiquity makes intermediation the path of least resistance. The result is a collision between the NPM premise of the citizen-as-consumer, transacting autonomously in a quasi-market of services, and an empirical reality in which the consumer is reached almost entirely through agents (O'Flynn, 2007). Tellingly, the online share rose precisely through the COVID period, from 9.5 to 12.9 per cent, which suggests that exogenous shocks can accelerate adoption where incremental design improvements alone have not, an observation with clear implications for the deliberate cultivation of demand.

6.3 Why regional and district disparities persist

A second question concerns the striking spatial pattern: why should the coefficient of variation remain so high, and why, counter-intuitively, do the less urbanised Vidarbha districts such as Washim, Wardha, Akola, and Amravati record the highest per-capita intensity while Mumbai Suburban records the lowest? Several mechanisms plausibly converge here. Differences in organisational capacity, in the density of Seva Kendras, and in local administrative drive shape how readily demand is converted into applications; variation in awareness and outreach determines whether entitlements are known at all; and demographic and digital-readiness differences condition the form that demand takes. The inverse urban gradient is consistent with the possibility that, in metropolitan settings, citizens substitute towards alternative or private channels and have

less recourse to the documentary services the portal mediates, whereas in agrarian districts these certificates are essential and the Seva Kendra network is the principal access point. The deeper point is one of equity: aggregate success masks a highly uneven distribution of access, and it is precisely this distributional dimension that Public Value Theory foregrounds and that the NPM preoccupation with throughput leaves unexamined (Moore, 1995; Benington & Moore, 2011; Stoker, 2006). Judged by service-quality dimensions, the system performs well on reliability but poorly on accessibility and equity (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Van Ryzin, 2004).

6.4 Why departments perform so differently

The third question, why departments differ so markedly in both their share of demand and their processing capacity, turns on the nature of the services themselves. Revenue and Labour administer simple, codified, high-volume services in which eligibility is easily verified and the procedure readily standardised; departments such as Social Justice and Rural Development administer complex, document-heavy, lower-volume services in which each application demands discretionary scrutiny. Concentration and divergent disposal rates are, in part, artefacts of this asymmetry. They are compounded by the incompleteness of notification, since services not yet brought within the Act's schedule generate no recorded demand, and by incentive structures that reward aggregate throughput volume over equitable coverage, so that managerial attention flows to where numbers are largest. This produces a benchmarking problem of real consequence: a single aggregate metric systematically flatters simple, high-volume services and penalises the complex, low-volume services that often serve the most vulnerable, rendering the latter's deficits invisible in headline reporting.

6.5 Theoretical integration

Interpreted together, these findings describe a statute that has succeeded on one theoretical register and underperformed on another. Through the lens of New Public Management, the Act's time-bound deadlines, accountability provisions, and customer orientation delivered demonstrable efficiency and throughput gains (Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Through the lens of Public Value Theory and the service-quality literature, however, the equity, accessibility, and distributional dimensions of value

remain weak: the system is reliable and fast for those who already reach it, but it neither equalises access across regions and groups nor guarantees comparable processing for the complex services on which marginalised citizens depend (Moore, 1995; O'Flynn, 2007; Parasuraman et al., 1988). The reconciliation lies in treating the legal framework as a mediating, indeed moderating, variable rather than a direct cause. The Act translates a service obligation into an enforceable entitlement, but the magnitude of its effect is moderated by pre-existing organisational capacity, so that gains accumulate where capacity already exists and deficits persist where it does not. This is precisely the implementation-gap dynamic that the capability literature anticipates: legal entitlement is a necessary but insufficient condition, and formal adoption can outrun real administrative capability (Andrews, 2008; Pritchett & Woolcock, 2004; Pritchett, Woolcock, & Andrews, 2013). Whether a legal guarantee delivers in practice depends on the administrative and political conditions into which it is introduced, a contingency that the broader literature on legal frameworks in developing contexts has consistently emphasised (Batley & McLoughlin, 2015; Grindle, 2004).

6.6 Addressing gaps in the literature

In doing so, this study speaks to two lacunae. Where existing Indian scholarship on rights-based service legislation has tended to assess such regimes at an aggregate or single-point level (Peisakhin & Pinto, 2010; Singh, 2016; World Bank, 2014), the present analysis offers a disaggregated longitudinal evaluation across department, district, and channel, demonstrating how each axis of disaggregation reveals inequalities that aggregate success conceals. It also foregrounds the application-channel and digital-divide dimension that prior Indian studies have largely neglected, showing that the mode of access is not incidental to a right-to-services regime but central to whether the right is realised in practice.

At the same time, the analysis exposes the limits of what administrative aggregates can reveal, and with them the most pressing direction for future work. The records analysed here are counts: they establish, with precision, what is happening and where, that delay concentrates in the Marathwada districts of the Aurangabad division, that direct self-service stalls below fifteen per cent, that welfare-oriented departments under-process, but

they cannot establish why at the level of the individual citizen. Diagnosing the actual mechanisms behind these patterns, and designing optimum, targeted remedies rather than blunt statewide ones, demands micro-level, applicant-level data: linked individual records that track each application from submission, through the chosen channel, to final disposition, ideally complemented by applicant surveys and field observation. Only such granular evidence can distinguish whether Marathwada's delays arise from staffing shortfalls, document-verification bottlenecks, or particular service types; whether low self-service reflects connectivity, device access, digital literacy, language, or trust; and which specific intervention would actually move each indicator. Building the administrative capacity to generate, link, and analyse applicant-level data should therefore be treated not as a research refinement but as a core instrument of evidence-based reform, the surest route from knowing that a problem exists to knowing how to solve it.

Taken together, these findings imply that the next phase of reform cannot be measured by volume alone. If the Act's promise is to extend beyond the departments, districts, and citizens already well served, attention must shift from aggregate throughput towards the structural levers, departmental notification and capacity, spatial outreach, and the architecture of digital access, that govern its distributional reach.

7. Conclusion

This study has evaluated the first decade of the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015 using longitudinal administrative data disaggregated by department, district, and submission channel. The evidence supports a qualified verdict. By the metrics that the Act itself foregrounds, the volume of applications processed, approval rates, and time-bound delivery, the regime has performed strongly: demand has grown more than threefold, approval is near-universal, and on-time delivery has recovered and stabilised at high levels. Yet a disaggregated reading shows that this aggregate success is unevenly distributed. Demand and administrative attention are concentrated overwhelmingly in a single department; processing capacity diverges sharply, with welfare-oriented departments serving vulnerable populations carrying the largest deficits; utilisation and

performance vary widely across districts and divisions; and citizens continue to reach the state almost entirely through intermediaries rather than through direct digital access.

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Appendix A. Supplementary Tables

These tables report cumulative activity over the full study period (2015–16 to 2023–24), normalised by population.

Table A1. District-wise applications received per 1,000 population, cumulative 2015–16 to 2023–24.

Rank	District	Applications received	Population	Per 1,000 population
1	Aurangabad	12,982,578	3,701,282	3507.6
2	Amravati	9,889,167	2,888,445	3423.7
3	Wardha	3,289,817	1,300,774	2529.1
4	Akola	4,167,384	1,813,906	2297.5
5	Washim	2,683,663	1,197,160	2241.7
6	Buldhana	5,694,622	2,586,258	2201.9
7	Yavatmal	6,012,858	2,772,348	2168.9
8	Gondia	2,772,882	1,322,507	2096.7
9	Bhandara	2,404,459	1,200,334	2003.2
10	Nandurbar	3,150,147	1,648,295	1911.2
11	Dhule	3,882,693	2,050,862	1893.2
12	Jalna	3,605,224	1,959,046	1840.3
13	Ahmednagar	8,259,561	4,543,159	1818.0
14	Sindhudurg	1,508,541	849,651	1775.5
15	Sangli	4,770,376	2,822,143	1690.3
16	Jalgaon	7,130,167	4,229,917	1685.7
17	Chandrapur	3,650,674	2,204,307	1656.2
18	Beed	4,003,163	2,585,049	1548.6
19	Kolhapur	5,635,942	3,876,001	1454.1
20	Solapur	6,065,952	4,317,756	1404.9
21	Nashik	8,496,074	6,107,187	1391.2
22	Latur	3,314,997	2,454,196	1350.7
23	Hingoli	1,518,103	1,177,345	1289.4
24	Parbhani	2,358,561	1,836,086	1284.6
25	Pune	11,717,057	9,429,408	1242.6
26	Satara	3,646,066	3,003,741	1213.8
27	Osmanabad	1,937,643	1,657,576	1169.0
28	Ratnagiri	1,816,967	1,615,069	1125.0
29	Gadchiroli	1,200,987	1,072,942	1119.3
30	Nanded	3,533,930	3,361,292	1051.4
31	Raigad	2,730,840	2,634,200	1036.7
32	Nagpur	4,586,946	4,653,570	985.7
33	Mumbai City	2,270,293	3,085,411	735.8
34	Palghar	2,085,367	2,990,116	697.4
35	Thane	4,970,353	11,060,148	449.4
36	Mumbai Suburban	1,841,947	9,356,962	196.9

Table A2. District-wise applications approved per 1,000 population, cumulative 2015–16 to 2023–24.

Rank	District	Applications approved	Population	Per 1,000 population
1	Aurangabad	12,566,864	3,701,282	3395.3
2	Amravati	9,602,884	2,888,445	3324.6
3	Wardha	3,103,383	1,300,774	2385.8
4	Akola	3,969,283	1,813,906	2188.3
5	Washim	2,539,043	1,197,160	2120.9
6	Yavatmal	5,767,595	2,772,348	2080.4
7	Buldhana	5,359,055	2,586,258	2072.1
8	Bhandara	2,261,551	1,200,334	1884.1
9	Nandurbar	3,019,161	1,648,295	1831.7
10	Gondia	2,412,165	1,322,507	1823.9
11	Dhule	3,605,830	2,050,862	1758.2
12	Ahmednagar	7,811,349	4,543,159	1719.4
13	Sindhudurg	1,444,232	849,651	1699.8

14	Jalna	3,290,733	1,959,046	1679.8
15	Sangli	4,575,132	2,822,143	1621.2
16	Jalgaon	6,687,226	4,229,917	1580.9
17	Chandrapur	3,376,008	2,204,307	1531.6
18	Beed	3,628,879	2,585,049	1403.8
19	Kolhapur	5,284,575	3,876,001	1363.4
20	Nashik	7,934,149	6,107,187	1299.1
21	Solapur	5,596,626	4,317,756	1296.2
22	Latur	3,083,742	2,454,196	1256.5
23	Parbhani	2,192,827	1,836,086	1194.3
24	Hingoli	1,392,138	1,177,345	1182.4
25	Satara	3,480,509	3,003,741	1158.7
26	Pune	10,781,366	9,429,408	1143.4
27	Osmanabad	1,755,171	1,657,576	1058.9
28	Ratnagiri	1,706,233	1,615,069	1056.4
29	Gadchiroli	1,095,472	1,072,942	1021.0
30	Raigad	2,560,162	2,634,200	971.9
31	Nanded	3,240,799	3,361,292	964.2
32	Nagpur	4,224,199	4,653,570	907.7
33	Palghar	1,905,171	2,990,116	637.2
34	Mumbai City	1,957,652	3,085,411	634.5
35	Thane	4,627,507	11,060,148	418.4
36	Mumbai Suburban	1,673,143	9,356,962	178.8

Appendix B. Supplementary Spatial Figures

These choropleth maps show cumulative activity over the full study period (2015–16 to 2023–24), not a single year.

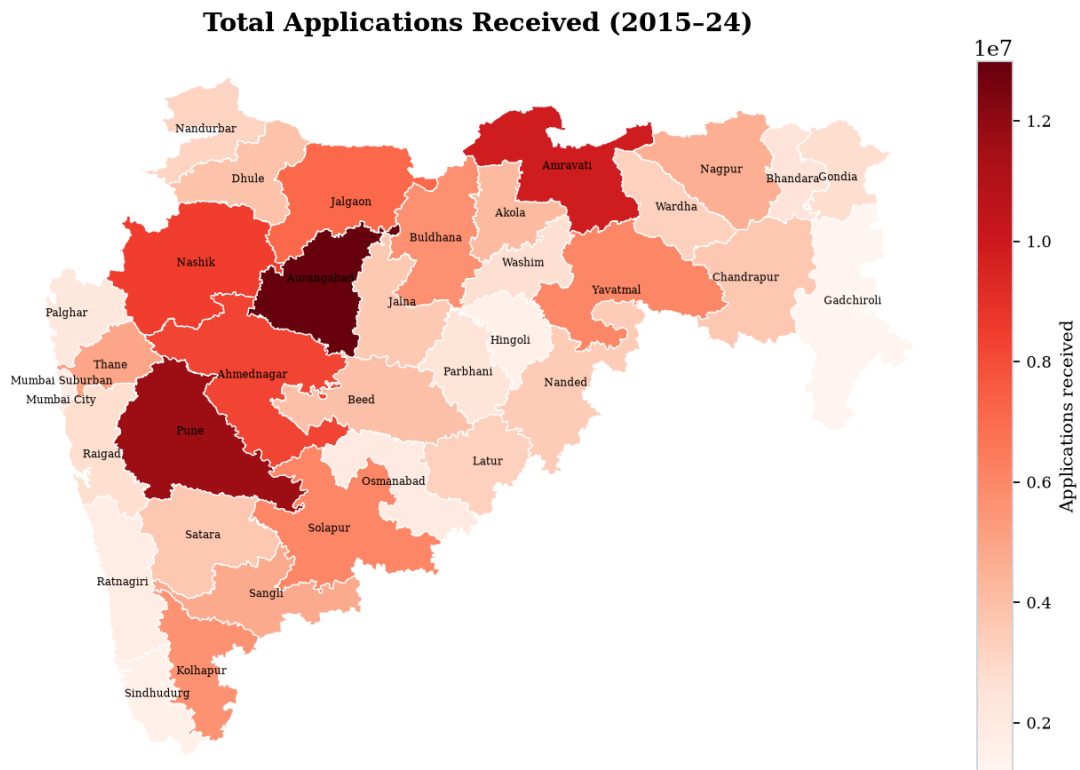


Figure B1. *Total applications received by district, cumulative 2015–16 to 2023–24.*

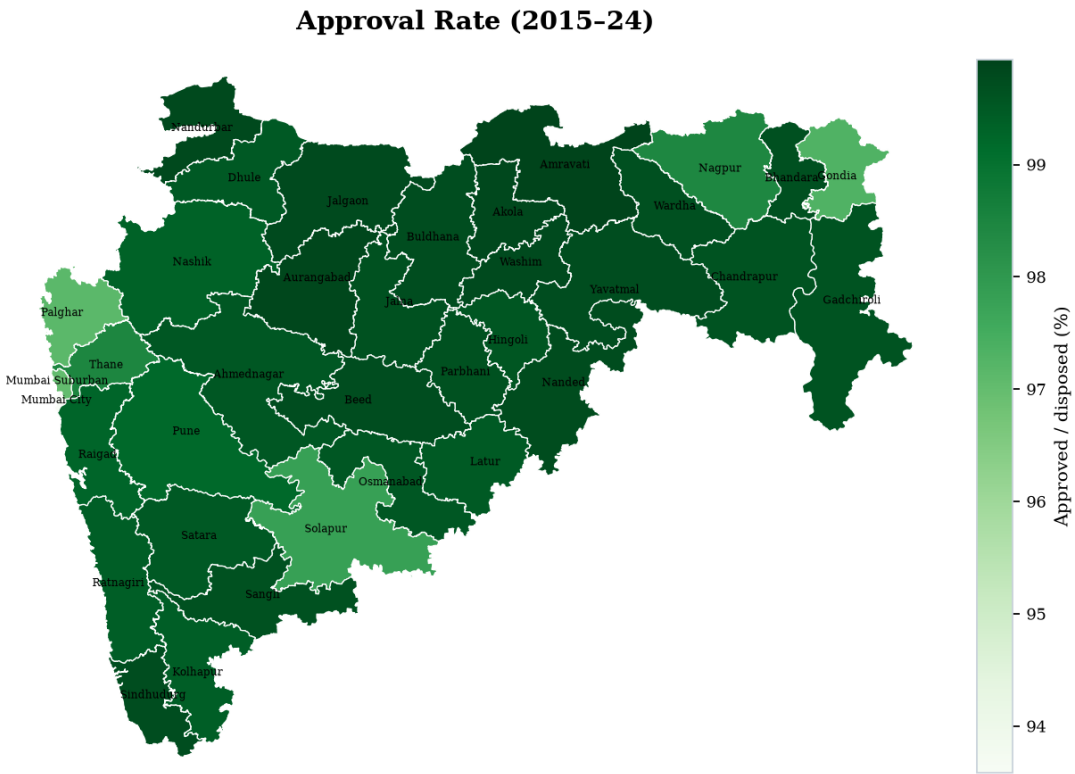


Figure B2. *Approval rate (approved as a share of disposed) by district, 2015–16 to 2023–24.*

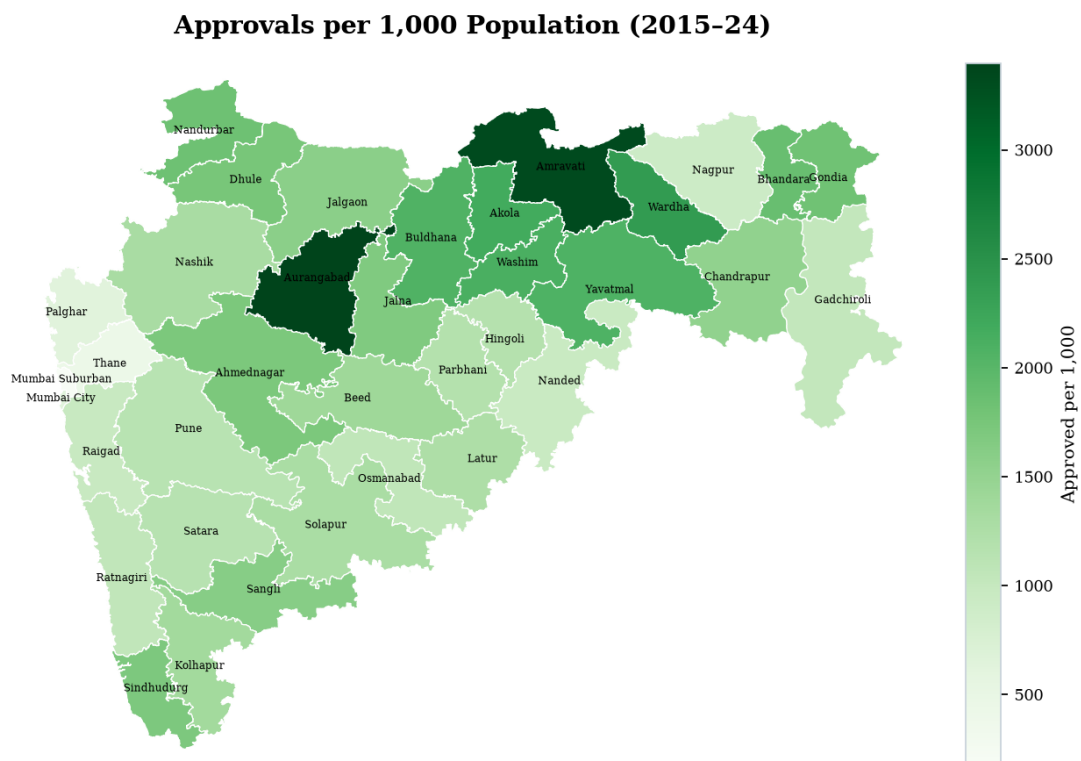


Figure B3. *Applications approved per 1,000 population by district, 2015–16 to 2023–24.*

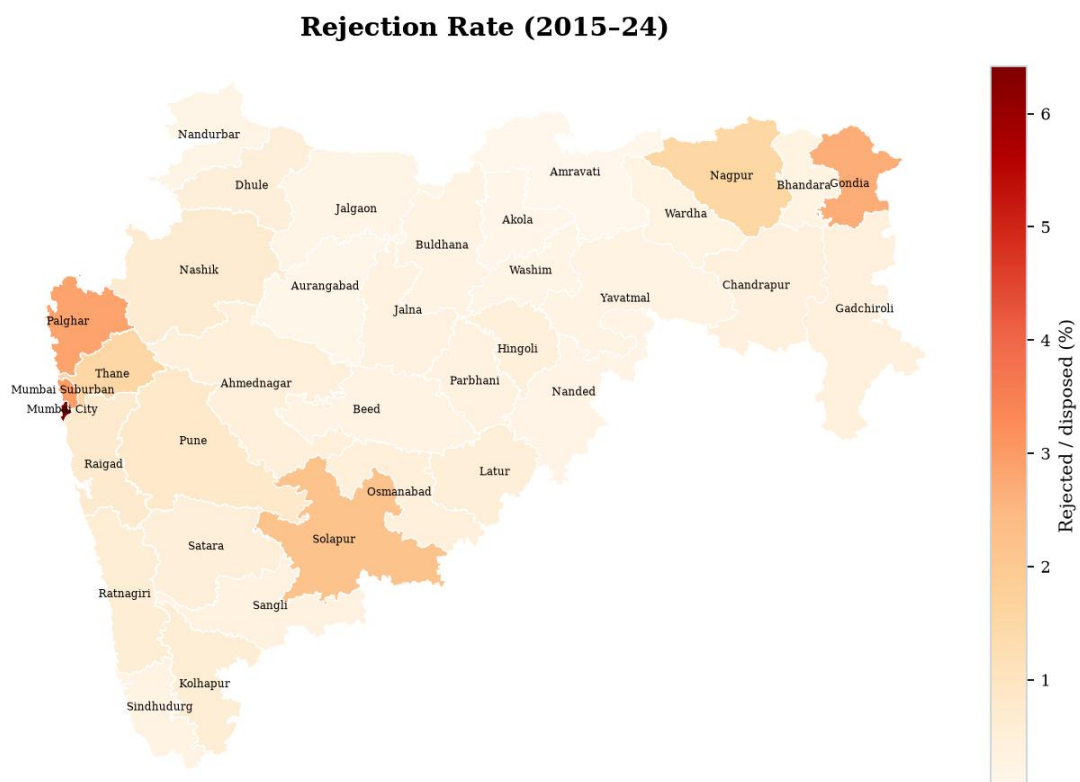


Figure B4. *Rejection rate (rejected as a share of disposed) by district, 2015–16 to 2023–24.*

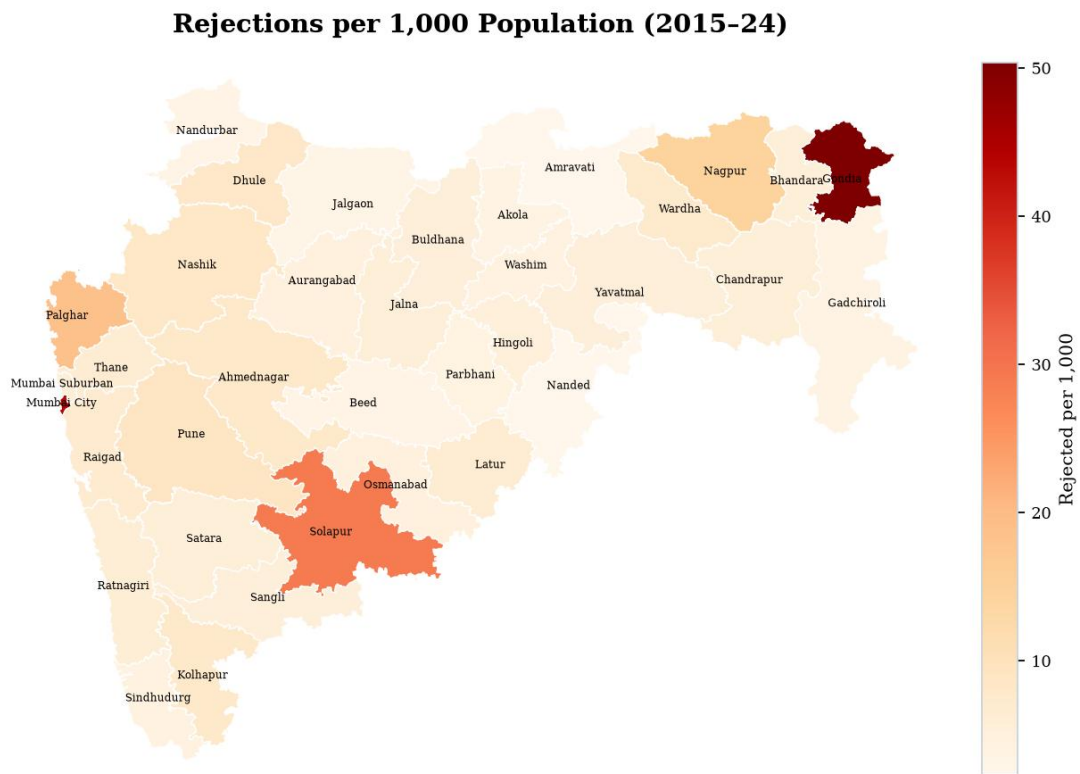


Figure B5. *Applications rejected per 1,000 population by district, 2015–16 to 2023–24.*

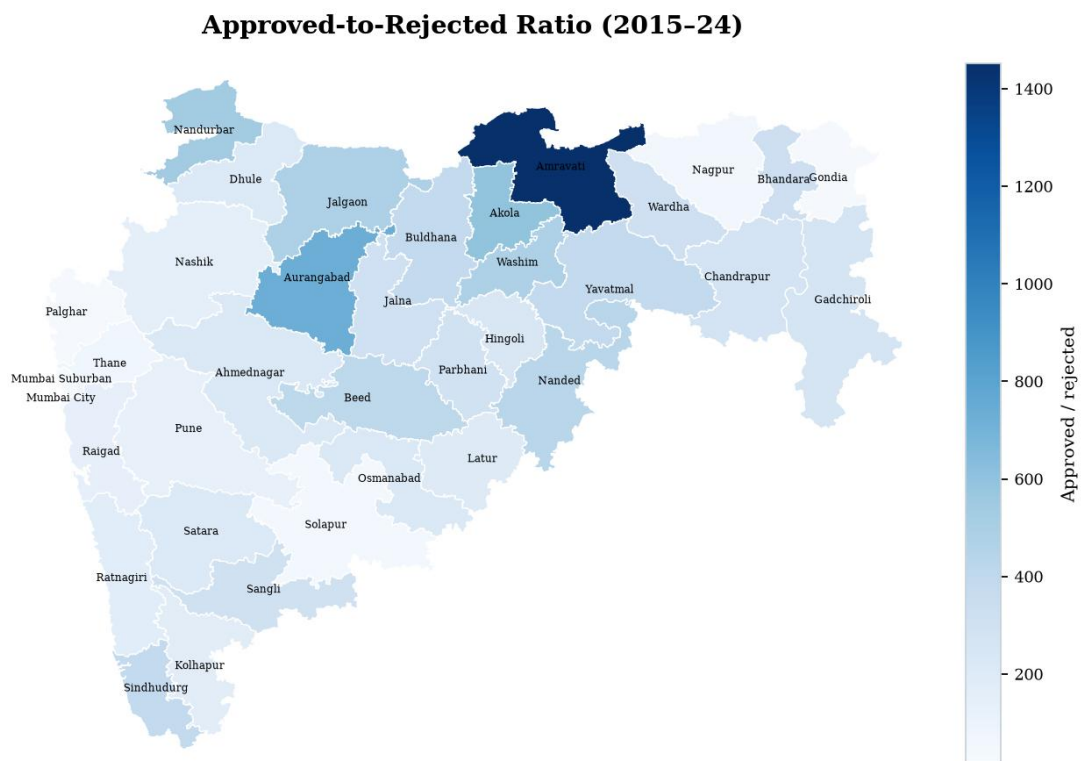


Figure B6. *Approved-to-rejected ratio by district, 2015–16 to 2023–24.*