Topics for Today

- **The Urban Future with cities as dynamic ecosystem.**

- **Linking NATGRID with NPR**

- **Circulatory system ailments caused most deaths in 2023.**

Cities as dynamic ecosystem

The urban future with cities as dynamic ecosystems

Cities stand at the epicentre of global discourse, driving development, policymaking, science, and technology. Yet, amidst all the planning and progress, we often overlook the most fundamental element: the diverse people who inhabit these urban spaces and make them home. The disconnect between the cities we design, the cities we wish to inhabit, and the cities we live in is the critical missing link in our tale of interconnected realities.

The invisible tax of exclusion

When individuals migrate, there is an unspoken expectation of assimilation, often summarised as "do what the Romans do". Language emerges as the primary, non-negotiable standard for integration, necessary for communication and alignment with the city's linguistic identity. The failure to meet this linguistic standard often results in an invisible tax paid by "new residents" and migrants from different linguistic zones.

This marginalisation reflects a systemic tension between the vibrant, multi-lingual reality of major metropolitan hubs and the emotional, cultural and political expectations placed upon those seeking a better life within them. The core issue is about the validation of belonging within the city that a resident calls home.

This "linguistic tax" translates directly into economic disadvantage. Navigating a job search, negotiating complex housing agreements, or accessing essential government benefits or health care becomes a bureaucratic maze when official documents and primary communication channels are monolingual.

This cultural and linguistic friction serves as an

Aruna Bhattacharya is a medical anthropologist and a public health expert specialising in urban health systems, and is based in Bengaluru

Merely designing better infrastructure will not deliver the desired outcome if the human element of belonging is ignored

economic roadblock. It often channels migrants into the informal economy, where exploitation is higher and opportunities for formal social mobility are curtailed. Ironically, the city, which relies heavily on the labour, skills and taxes contributed by these new residents, structurally denies them full and equal access to the very opportunities and services they were promised. The failure to integrate them linguistically and culturally is a self-inflicted wound that undermines the long-term social and economic resilience of the city itself.

The fundamental flaw in modern urban planning is the assumption of a static, homogenous user base. Urban infrastructure – the actual blueprint of the designed city – is often conceived for the established resident, rendering the new resident invisible. We design 'smart' cities, but they are often only smart for those who already speak the right language and possess the right documents.

This invisibility is compounded by a lack of culturally diverse governance. When local bodies and planning committees fail to reflect on the cosmopolitan reality of the metropolis, homogeneous perspectives inevitably dominate plans for profoundly heterogeneous spaces. Planning for schools, transport hubs or public parks often misses the mark when planners do not recognise, or account for, the needs of recent, diverse demographic shifts.

Designing cities 'for all'

The urban future we wish to reimagine must be layered. Simply designing better infrastructure will not deliver the desired outcome if the human element of belonging is ignored. Cities are not

static blueprints; they are dynamic ecosystems. We need to stop viewing them as spaces defined by fixed, hard boundaries and start seeing them as fluid entities with an infinite capacity to expand, reconfigure and include.
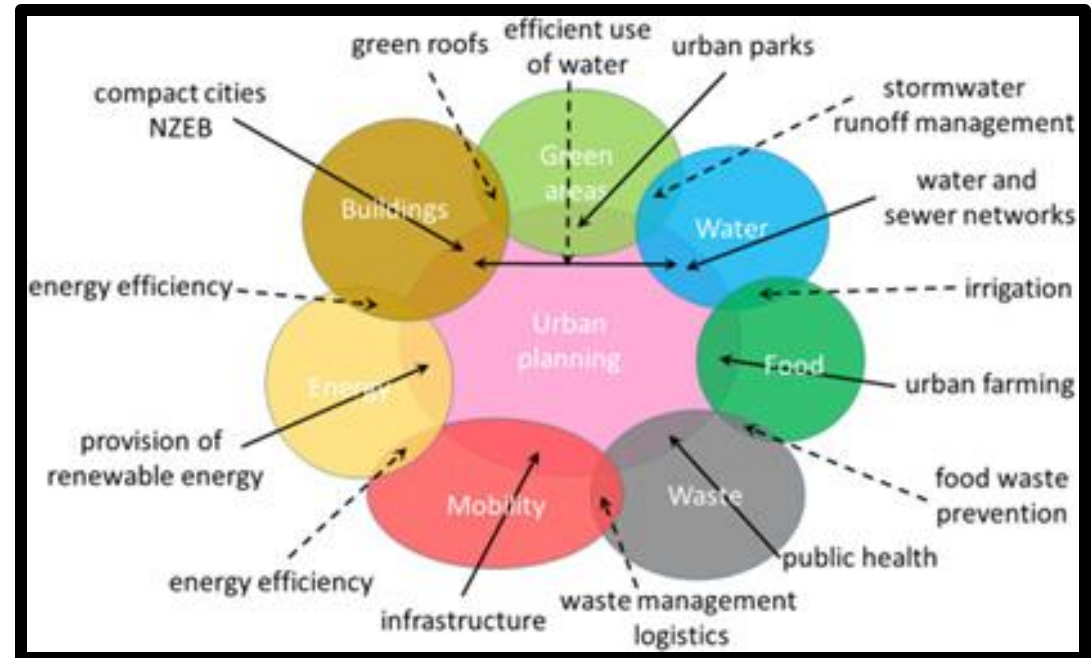
To proactively bridge the cultural divide, city planners must anticipate potential friction – the clash between the 'known' and the 'new', the 'us' and the 'them'. A small, targeted investment in cultural sensitisation training for public-facing staff could be the essential ingredient. This training is not just about politeness; it is about operational efficiency and upholding democratic rights.

For any truly transformative change to succeed, we must prepare for temporary commotion on the path to greater development and a better social outcome.

A city must be imagined, designed and governed with all the inhabitants who call it home: those who were born here, those who have lived here for decades, and those who will arrive tomorrow. We must design a city that is dynamic enough to embrace future growth, welcome diversity and encourage amalgamation and regeneration.

The missing link

For an inclusive, sustainable, urban future, let us commit to designing cities – not just for the infrastructure they contain but for the people that they are built to serve. The true missing link in the tale of our interconnected realities is empathy: the recognition that the comfort, security and validated belonging of the lived experience is the ultimate measure of successful urban design.

Diagram labels:

- green roofs
- efficient use of water
- urban parks
- compact cities NZEB
- stormwater runoff management
- water and sewer networks
- energy efficiency
- irrigation
- Buildings
- Green areas
- Water
- Urban planning
- Food
- urban farming
- Energy
- provision of renewable energy
- Mobility
- Waste
- food waste prevention
- energy efficiency
- public health
- infrastructure
- waste management logistics

- Urban development debates increasingly highlight that infrastructure-led growth alone is insufficient to create livable cities.

- Policy focus is shifting from *hardware* (roads, buildings, smart systems) to *human-centric urban planning*.

- Experts point to a growing disconnect between planned cities, aspirational cities, and lived urban realities.

- Ignoring social inclusion, community belonging, diversity weakens the effectiveness of urban policies.

- The issue has gained prominence amid discussions on sustainable, inclusive, and people-first city development.

The Invisible Tax of Exclusion

❑ Migration often carries an implicit demand for assimilation, captured in the idea of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do."

❑ Language becomes the primary, non-negotiable gateway to urban integration and social acceptance.

❑ Linguistic exclusion directly converts into economic disadvantage.

❑ Migrants are often pushed into the informal economy, where exploitation is higher and social mobility is limited.

❑ Cities depend heavily on migrant labour, skills, and tax contributions, yet deny them equal access to opportunities, public services.

❑ A core flaw in urban planning lies in assuming a static, homogeneous urban population.

❑ Infrastructure and "smart city" designs cater primarily to established residents, rendering new residents invisible.
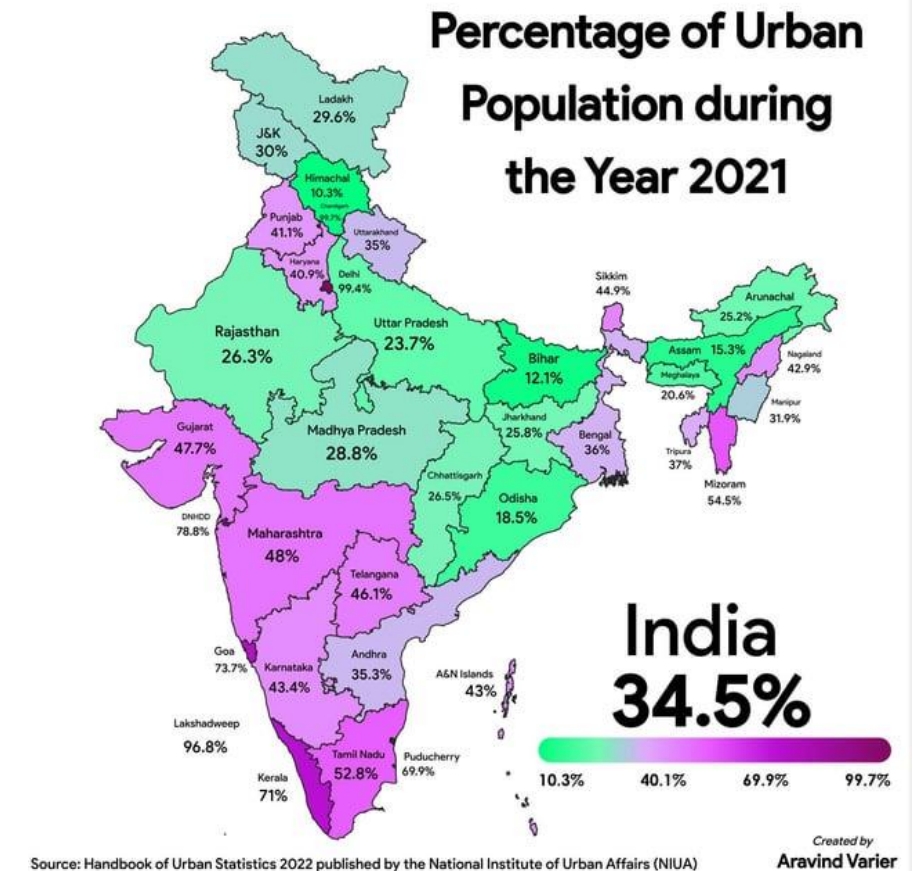
Structural Flaws in Urban Planning

A major limitation of Indian urbanisation is the assumption of a **static and homogeneous population**. Urban infrastructure is often designed for long-term residents, rendering migrants and informal settlers invisible.

- Nearly **34% of India's urban population lives in slums** (Economic Survey 2020).
- Lack of affordable rental housing forces migrants into informal settlements.
- Transport systems, public spaces and schools often fail to account for shifting demographics.

Moreover, **urban governance structures** lack adequate representation from migrant and marginalised communities. Municipal planning bodies frequently reflect elite interests, leading to policies that overlook lived realities.

Percentage of Urban Population during the Year 2021

Ladakh 29.6%
J&K 30%
Himachal 10.3%
Punjab 41.1%
Uttarakhand 35%
Haryana 40.9%
Delhi 99.4%
Rajasthan 26.3%
Uttar Pradesh 23.7%
Sikkim 44.9%
Arunachal 25.2%
Assam 15.3%
Nagaland 42.9%
Meghalaya 20.6%
Manipur 31.9%
Bihar 12.1%
Gujarat 47.7%
Madhya Pradesh 28.8%
Jharkhand 25.8%
Bengal 36%
Tripura 37%
Mizoram 54.5%
DNHDD 78.8%
Chhattisgarh 26.5%
Odisha 18.5%
Maharashtra 48%
Telangana 46.1%
Goa 73.7%
Karnataka 43.4%
Andhra 35.3%
A&N Islands 43%
Lakshadweep 96.8%
Kerala 71%
Tamil Nadu 52.8%
Puducherry 69.9%

India 34.5%

10.3%   40.1%   69.9%   99.7%

Source: Handbook of Urban Statistics 2022 published by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)

Created by Aravind Varier

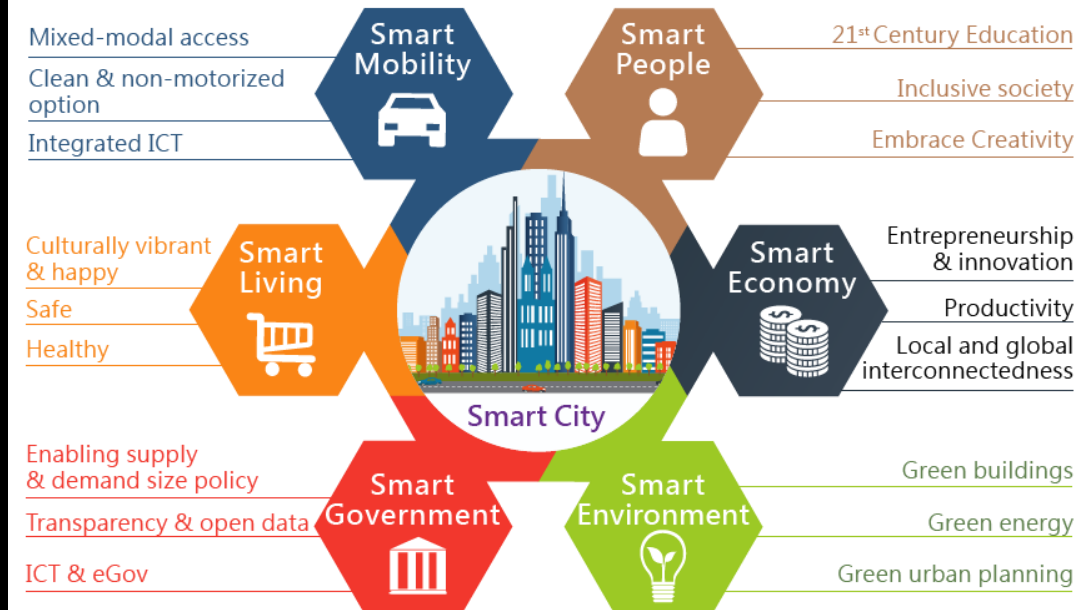**Government Initiatives: Achievements and Gaps**

India has launched ambitious urban missions such as:
- **Smart Cities Mission**
- **AMRUT**
- **PMAY-Urban**

While these programmes have improved infrastructure and housing availability, critics argue that they prioritise **technological efficiency over social inclusion**.

"Smartness" often benefits digitally literate and linguistically dominant groups.

However, reforms like the **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)** scheme have improved welfare portability for migrants, addressing exclusion to some extent.

Way Forward: Towards Inclusive and Empathetic Urbanism

For sustainable urbanisation, India must adopt a **people-centric and adaptive approach:**
1. **Multilingual public services** to ensure equitable access.
2. **Cultural sensitisation training** for frontline urban staff.
3. **Inclusive governance**, with migrant representation in local bodies.
4. Recognition of cities as **dynamic ecosystems**, not rigid master plans.

Innovative practices such as **migrant facilitation centres in Kerala** and worker hostels in **Odisha and Tamil Nadu** offer scalable models.

Intel grid linked to NPR

Intel grid linked to NPR with details of 119 crore residents

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID), a secure platform for the police and other investigating agencies to access government and private databases in real-time, has been linked to the National Population Register (NPR), which has the family-wise details of 119 crore residents in India, government officials have said.

The Union Home Ministry has been pushing for the enhanced use of NATGRID by the State police forces and Central law and security agencies for intelligence gathering and speedy investigation of criminal cases through indigenous and secure platforms.

On December 9, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha that an Organised Crime Network Database was being developed on

Tying it up

Upgraded NATGRID tools support multi-source data collection and analysis

- One such tool is 'Gandiva' used for facial recognition and entity resolution
- Details of all family members of a suspect or a person of interest, if available in NPR, could be accessed through the platform
- **3 categories of access requests:** non-sensitive, sensitive, and highly sensitive

NATGRID's IT platform to facilitate secure data-sharing between the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the State Anti-Terror Squads (ATS). The reply said that upgraded NATGRID tools, particularly "Gandiva", are supporting multi-source data collection and analysis.

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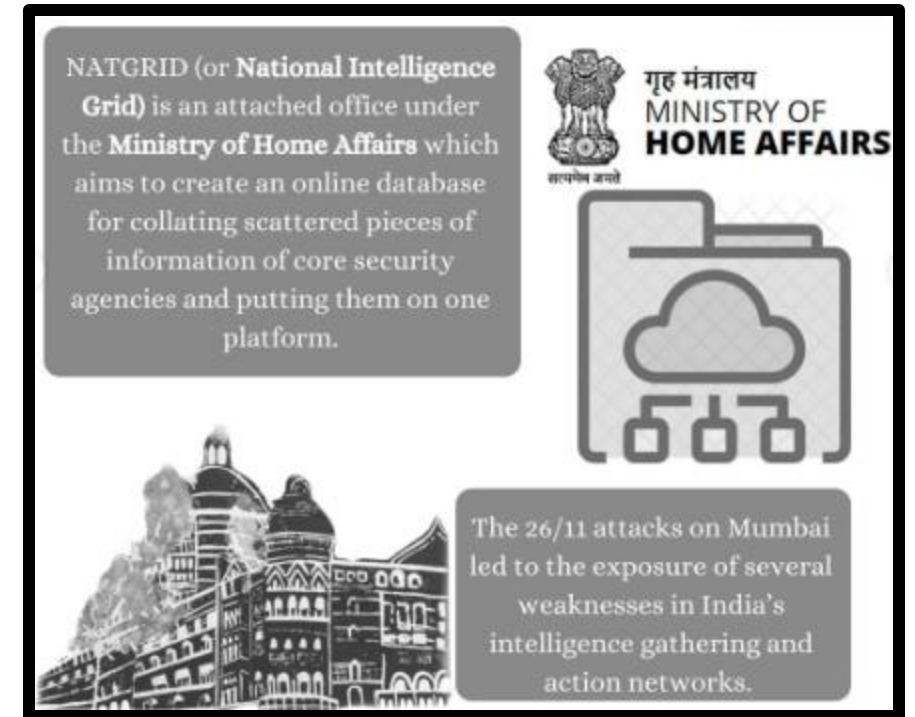**Linking NATGRID with NPR: Implications for Internal Security and Governance**

The **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** is a secure intelligence-sharing platform that enables real-time access to data from government and private databases for law enforcement and security agencies.

Recently, NATGRID has been linked to the **National Population Register (NPR)**, which contains **family-wise demographic details of nearly 119 crore residents**.

This development marks a significant shift in India's internal security architecture, enhancing data-driven policing while also raising governance and privacy concerns.

NATGRID: Objectives and Evolution

- NATGRID was conceptualised in **2009 after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks**, highlighting the need for seamless intelligence coordination.

- It became operational in **2023** and is accessible only to authorised security agencies.

-
  According to government data, NATGRID processes **around 45,000 requests per month**, reflecting its growing use by Central and State agencies.

- The Union Home Ministry has actively encouraged State police forces to integrate NATGRID into routine criminal investigations.

NATGRID (or **National Intelligence Grid)** is an attached office under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** which aims to create an online database for collating scattered pieces of information of core security agencies and putting them on one platform.

गृह मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
HOME AFFAIRS

The 26/11 attacks on Mumbai led to the exposure of several weaknesses in India's intelligence gathering and action networks.

Integration with NPR and Technological Upgrades

- The linkage with NPR allows investigators to access **family-level information** of suspects, enhancing contextual intelligence.

- The NPR data was first collected in **2010–11** and last updated in **2015** through door-to-door enumeration.

- Although the **Census 2027** has been approved with an outlay of **₹11,718 crore**, no separate allocation has been made for updating the NPR, and no decision has been taken on its updation.

A major technological upgrade is **"Gandiva"**, an advanced NATGRID tool that supports:
- **Multi-source data collection**
- **Facial recognition**
- **Entity resolution**

For instance, if a suspect's image is available, Gandiva can match it with telecom KYC, driving licence or vehicle registration databases, significantly reducing investigation time.

Strengthening Counter-Terrorism and Organised Crime Control

- The Ministry has informed Parliament that an **Organised Crime Network Database** is being developed on NATGRID's platform to enable secure data-sharing between the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** and **State Anti-Terror Squads (ATS)**.

- This enhances inter-agency coordination in tackling terrorism, organised crime and money laundering.

Concerns and Governance Challenges

The NPR is the first step towards the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**, making the linkage politically and socially sensitive. Concerns relate to:
- **Data privacy and misuse**
- Lack of a comprehensive **data protection framework**
- Potential exclusion and profiling risks

Balancing national security with **constitutional safeguards under Articles 14 and 21** remains crucial.

Circulatory system ailment caused most deaths in 2023

Circulatory system ailments caused most deaths in 2023: report

Such diseases accounted for 36.4% of all medically certified deaths in the country, says report released by Office of the Registrar-General of India

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Diseases of the circulatory system remained the leading cause of medically certified deaths across India in 2023, a report released this week by the Office of the Registrar-General of India said. Such diseases accounted for 36.4% of all medically certified deaths in the country, says the "Annual report on medical certification of cause of death, 2023" of the RGI.

The figure was four percentage points lower than that of 2022, when over 40% of certified deaths were caused by these diseases.

The report looked at causes of deaths that were medically certified out of the total registered deaths across the country. For 2023, the report noted that 22% of all deaths registered in the Civil Registration System had been medically certified, which was 0.3 percentage points below that of the previous year (2022).

According to the report, diseases of the circulatory system were the leading cause of death in medically certified cases, with diseases of pulmonary circulation or other heart diseases causing more than half of these deaths. A breakdown by age showed that deaths due to circulatory system diseases were highest for people aged above 70. People aged between 55 and 64 had the second highest incidence of such deaths.

However, the report noted that in age cohorts starting from 15 years of age, diseases of the circulatory system were the leading cause of death reported.

The release of the data comes amid academic journals reporting an increase in heart attacks among younger people in India, with a study quoting Indian Heart Association data that half of all heart attacks in Indian men occur under the age of 50.

The report further noted that the medical certification of cause of deaths occurs in different States and Union Territories with different levels of efficiency, noting that only Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Delhi, Goa, Lakshadweep were medically certifying more than half of registered deaths.

According to the report, deaths due to circulatory system diseases were highest for people aged above 70. FILE PHOTO

Rising Burden of Circulatory System Diseases in India: Insights from RGI Report 2023

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have emerged as the leading public health challenge in India.

According to the **"Annual Report on Medical Certification of Cause of Death, 2023"** released by the **Office of the Registrar-General of India (RGI)**, **diseases of the circulatory system** remained the **leading cause of medically certified deaths** in India.

This highlights a significant epidemiological transition from communicable to lifestyle-related diseases.
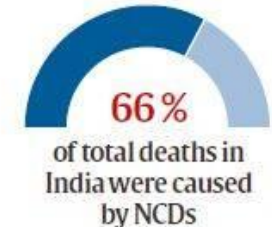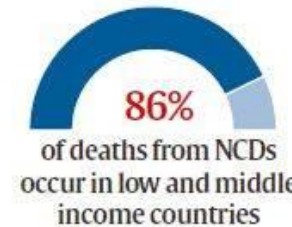
Key Findings of the RGI Report

- The report reveals that **36.4% of all medically certified deaths in 2023** were due to diseases of the circulatory system.

- Although this figure is **four percentage points lower than in 2022**, when it exceeded **40%**, cardiovascular diseases continue to dominate India's mortality profile.

- However, medical certification remains limited.

- Only **22% of all registered deaths** in the Civil Registration System (CRS) were medically certified in 2023, a slight decline of **0.3 percentage points** from 2022, raising concerns about data completeness and reliability.
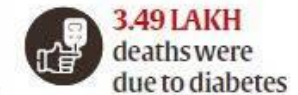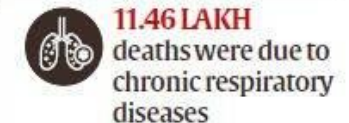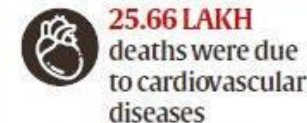

THE NCD DEATH TOLL

Every yr, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) claim 17 mn lives under the age of 70. Many of these deaths are in low and middle income countries, including India. Some numbers:

WHO report; Figures from 2019

60.46 lakh people killed by NCDs in India

86% of deaths from NCDs occur in low and middle income countries

66% of total deaths in India were caused by NCDs

DEATHS CAUSED BY NCDs IN INDIA

25.66 LAKH deaths were due to cardiovascular diseases

11.46 LAKH deaths were due to chronic respiratory diseases

9.20 LAKH deaths were due to cancer

3.49 LAKH deaths were due to diabetes

Age-wise Trends and Emerging Concerns

The burden of circulatory diseases is highest among individuals aged **above 70 years**, followed by the **55–64 age group**.

Alarmingly, the report notes that from **15 years of age onwards**, diseases of the circulatory system are the **leading cause of medically certified deaths**, indicating early onset of cardiovascular risk.

This aligns with findings from academic studies citing **Indian Heart Association data**, which suggest that **nearly 50% of heart attacks in Indian men occur below the age of 50**.
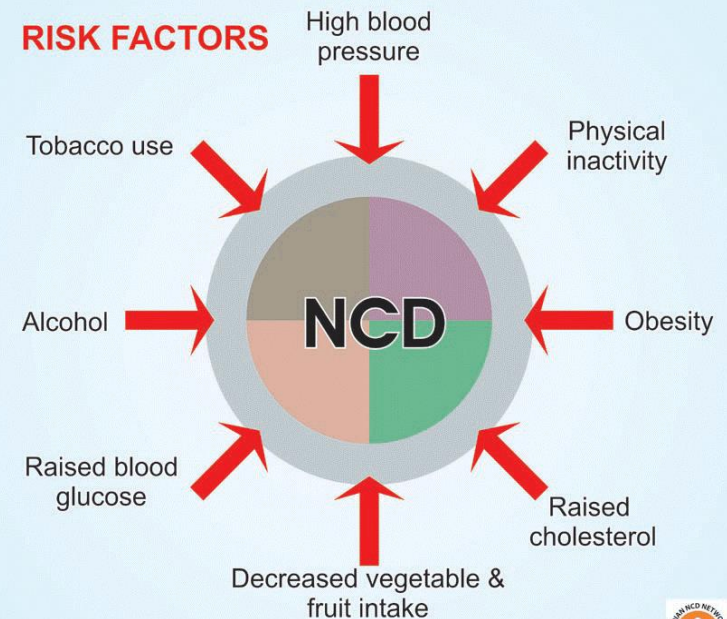
Factors such as sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy diets, stress, tobacco use and rising obesity contribute significantly to this trend.

NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)

NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES INCLUDE

→ **Cardiovascular disease** (CVD)
→ **Diabetes Mellitus (DM)**
→ **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease** (COPD)
→ **Cancer**

RISK FACTORS

High blood pressure
Physical inactivity
Tobacco use
Obesity
Alcohol
NCD
Raised blood glucose
Raised cholesterol
Decreased vegetable & fruit intake

Developed by MDRF and WHO India under the GOI-WHO Collaborative Programme 04-05

Thank you

B-47, Main Road Shivalik Enclave, Block-
B, Shivalik Colony, Malviya Nagar, New
Delhi-110017

Phone Number +91 8178833167