

Healthcare Inequality in India: A Comparative Study of Metropolitan and Small Cities

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Abstract: *Healthcare inequality remains one of the most critical challenges facing India's development agenda. Despite significant progress in medical technology and healthcare infrastructure, access to quality healthcare services continues to vary widely across metropolitan cities, small cities, and rural areas. Metropolitan regions benefit from advanced hospitals, specialist availability, and better emergency care, while small cities and rural regions often suffer from inadequate infrastructure, shortage of skilled healthcare professionals, and high out-of-pocket expenditures. This study aims to examine the extent of healthcare inequality in India through a comparative analysis of metropolitan, small city, and rural healthcare systems. The research is based on secondary data collected from government reports, national health surveys, budget documents, and existing literature. The study also highlights policy and budgetary priorities, emphasizing the gap between infrastructure development and healthcare investment. The findings reveal persistent regional disparities that negatively affect healthcare accessibility, affordability, and quality of treatment. The paper concludes that strengthening public healthcare infrastructure and ensuring balanced policy implementation are essential to achieve equitable healthcare access across all regions of India.*

Keywords: Healthcare Inequality, Indian Healthcare System, Urban–Rural Disparity, Public Health Infrastructure, Healthcare Accessibility, Health Policy, India

