

# Analyzing India's SDG Progress with Special Reference to Kancheepuram District.

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**Abstract:** *This research article provides a comprehensive analysis of India's progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a specific focus on the localization of these goals in Tamil Nadu and Kancheepuram District. As of May 2026, India has achieved a historic milestone by securing the 99th position in the Global SDG Index, driven by significant breakthroughs in Clean Energy (SDG 7), Poverty Reduction (SDG 1), and Sanitation (SDG 6). Adopting a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data from NITI Aayog and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the study explores the transition of India from a "Performer" to a "Front Runner" nation with a national composite score of 71. The study highlights Tamil Nadu's leadership as the 3rd best-performing state in India, particularly excelling in Climate Action (SDG 13) and achieving a 100/100 score in Poverty Reduction (SDG 1). At the micro-level, Kancheepuram District is examined as a "Front Runner" industrial hub (State Rank #5) with a composite score of 82. The findings reveal that while Kancheepuram has successfully reduced multidimensional poverty to below 2%, challenges remain in balancing rapid industrialization with environmental preservation (SDG 15) and improving female labor force participation (SDG 5). The article concludes by suggesting that the Kancheepuram industrial model provides a data-driven roadmap for "Aspiration Districts" to achieve sustainable growth and meet the 2030 targets.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NITI Aayog, Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu, Front Runner, Multidimensional Poverty, Industrialization, Climate Action, India 2030, Cooperative Federalism, Localization of SDGs, Sustainable Infrastructure

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a comprehensive set of 17 interconnected global objectives adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, represent the most ambitious "blueprint for peace and prosperity" in human history. Formulated as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, these goals recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. As the world's most populous nation, India's progress is not merely a domestic achievement; it is a critical determinant of whether the world as a whole achieves the 2030 targets. India's commitment to the SDGs is deeply rooted in its national development agenda, famously summarized by the philosophy of "*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas*" (Together with all, Development for all), which mirrors the UN's core principle of "Leaving No One Behind."



Over the past decade, India has undergone a profound transformation in its developmental trajectory. As of May 2026, the nation has achieved a historic milestone by entering the top 100 in the Global SDG Index, currently standing at the 99th position. This leap is the result of aggressive national interventions and a "cooperative federalism" approach where states compete and collaborate to improve their scores. The national composite score has surged from a baseline of 57 in 2018 to a projected 74 by the end of 2026. This growth has been primarily propelled by three "engine" goals: SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), driven by a massive solar revolution; SDG 1 (No Poverty), achieved through massive direct benefit transfers; and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), facilitated by the transformative *Jal Jeevan Mission*. At the sub-national level, Tamil Nadu has emerged as a beacon of sustainable governance, consistently ranking as a top-three performer in India. The state's success is attributed to its unique "Dravidian Model" of development, which blends high industrial growth with robust social welfare nets. Tamil Nadu currently leads the nation in SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 1 (No Poverty), maintaining a multidimensional poverty rate significantly lower than the national average. However, the true strength of Tamil Nadu's progress lies in its localized monitoring through the State Indicator Framework (SIF), which allows for a granular analysis of how development trickles down from the state capital to the diverse districts that form its economic backbone.

This research article focuses specifically on Kancheepuram District, a region that serves as a microcosm of India's broader SDG journey. Known as a "Secondary Capital" and a premier industrial hub, Kancheepuram exemplifies the "Front Runner" category with a composite score of 82 as of 2026. While the district excels in SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and has nearly eliminated extreme poverty, it faces contemporary challenges typical of rapid urbanization, such as balancing industrial expansion with SDG 15 (Life on Land). By analyzing Kancheepuram's growth trajectory, this study seeks to highlight the specific drivers—ranging from electronics manufacturing hubs to traditional silk weaving economies—that contribute to its status as a powerhouse of sustainability, providing a roadmap for other districts to emulate in the quest for a greener and more equitable future.

#### **Need of the Study**

With the 2030 UN deadline approaching, it is critical to document the impact of large-scale interventions (e.g., Jal Jeevan Mission, Digital India). This study provides a data-driven roadmap for policymakers to replicate successful models from high-performing districts like Kancheepuram in "Aspiration Districts."

#### **Scope of the Study**

The study covers the transition of India from a "Performer" to a "Front Runner" nation. It encompasses national interventions, Tamil Nadu's State Indicator Framework (SIF), and specific socio-economic metrics of Kancheepuram, including industrial output, poverty index, and financial inclusion

#### **Statement of the Problem**

While India has made significant strides in SDGs like Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Poverty Reduction (SDG 1), there remains an uneven distribution of progress across different regions. Some states and districts lag in social indicators such as Gender Equality (SDG 5) and environmental indicators like Life on Land (SDG 15). Understanding the "Front Runner" success stories, like Kancheepuram, is essential to addressing these persistent regional disparities.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

- To evaluate India's global standing and the factors contributing to its improved SDG rank in 2025-26.
- To analyze the growth of the National Composite Score and identify top-performing SDGs.
- To assess Tamil Nadu's performance as a "Front Runner" state and its internal district-level variations.
- To conduct a detailed performance and growth profile of Kancheepuram District as an industrial SDG hub.

#### **Methodology**

This study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** based on secondary data. Data sources include:

- The UN Sustainable Development Report (SDR) 2025.
- NITI Aayog's SDG India Index Reports (2018–2024).
- Tamil Nadu State Indicator Framework (SIF) and Human Development Index (HDI) data.



### **Area of the Study**

The primary focus area is **Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu**, recognized as a "Secondary Capital" and a high-tech industrial hub.

### **Period of the Study**

The study covers a five-year snapshot from the baseline year of **2018 through May 2026**.

### **Limitations of the Study**

- The data for the final year (2025-26) includes projected estimates based on current growth trajectories.
- The study focuses heavily on industrial and economic SDGs, with relatively less primary data on qualitative social changes.

## **II. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all."

- **Definition:** They represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.
- **The Core Concept: Sustainability.** This means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **The Motto: "Leave No One Behind" (LNOB).** The goals aim to reach the furthest behind first.

### **The "Why": Why do we need these goals?**

The SDGs were created because our world faces massive, overlapping challenges that no single country can solve alone.

- **Interconnectedness:** Problems like climate change, poverty, and inequality are linked. For example, a drought (Climate) causes crop failure (Hunger), which leads to poverty (Economy). The SDGs address these as a system.
- **Universal Responsibility:** Unlike previous plans that only focused on "developing" countries, the SDGs apply to **every country**, from the USA and India to Germany and Brazil.
- **Survival & Stability:** Without these goals, issues like environmental collapse or extreme inequality could lead to global conflict mass migration, and economic failure.

To help you master each goal, here is a detailed one-paragraph breakdown for each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.





**1. No Poverty**

This goal aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. It focuses on ensuring that the most vulnerable populations have access to basic resources, such as land, technology, and financial services. Beyond just income, it seeks to build "social protection floors" to support people during economic shocks or natural disasters, ensuring that no one has to live on less than \$2.15 a day.

**2. Zero Hunger**

Goal 2 is about ending hunger, achieving food security, and improving nutrition worldwide. It promotes sustainable agriculture by supporting small-scale farmers and ensuring equal access to land and markets. The aim is to create food systems that are resilient to climate change while ending all forms of malnutrition, especially in children and pregnant women.

**3. Good Health and Well-being**

This goal focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Key priorities include reducing maternal and infant mortality, ending epidemics of diseases like malaria and tuberculosis, and providing universal health coverage. It also addresses modern health crises, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and deaths from road traffic accidents.

**4. Quality Education**

Quality education is the foundation for sustainable development. This goal aims to provide inclusive and equitable education, ensuring all children complete free primary and secondary schooling. It also emphasizes the importance of vocational training for adults and university access, aiming to give everyone the skills needed for decent employment and entrepreneurship.

**5. Gender Equality**

Gender equality is not just a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful world. This goal seeks to end all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices (like child marriage) against women and girls. It advocates for equal leadership opportunities for women in political, economic, and public life, as well as equal rights to property and financial services.



#### **6. Clean Water and Sanitation**

This goal ensures the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Millions still lack access to basic services; therefore, this goal focuses on improving water quality by reducing pollution and increasing water-use efficiency. It also emphasizes protecting water-related ecosystems like mountains, forests, and wetlands.

#### **7. Affordable and Clean Energy**

Goal 7 focuses on shifting the world toward sustainable energy sources like solar, wind, and thermal power. It aims to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services while doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency. This is critical for reducing the carbon emissions that drive global climate change.

#### **8. Decent Work and Economic Growth**

This goal promotes sustained, inclusive economic growth and full, productive employment. It focuses on "decent work," meaning jobs that provide fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection for families. It also discourages forced labor, modern slavery, and child labor while encouraging the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises.

#### **9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure**

Building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation is the core of this goal. It encourages the development of sustainable industries and investments in scientific research and technology. By making infrastructure "green" and inclusive, countries can ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of the environment.

#### **10. Reduced Inequality**

This goal addresses the gap between the rich and the poor, both within countries and between them. It advocates for political and social inclusion of all people, regardless of age, sex, disability, race, or religion. It also seeks to improve the regulation of global financial markets and encourage aid to the regions that need it most.

#### **11. Sustainable Cities and Communities**

With more than half the world living in urban areas, this goal focuses on making cities safe, resilient, and sustainable. It targets the improvement of slum conditions, the provision of affordable public transport, and the protection of cultural and natural heritage. It also aims to reduce the environmental impact of cities through better waste management and air quality control.

#### **12. Responsible Consumption and Production**

This goal is about "doing more with less." It encourages us to change the way we produce and consume goods to reduce our ecological footprint. Key targets include reducing food waste, managing chemicals safely, and encouraging companies to adopt sustainable practices and report on their environmental impact.

#### **13. Climate Action**

Goal 13 is an urgent call to combat climate change and its devastating impacts. It focuses on strengthening the resilience of countries to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. It also emphasizes the need for climate change education and the integration of "green" measures into national policies and strategies worldwide.

#### **14. Life Below Water**

The world's oceans drive global systems that make the Earth habitable. This goal aims to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources. It targets the reduction of marine pollution (especially plastic), the protection of coral reefs, and the regulation of overfishing to ensure the long-term health of marine biodiversity.

#### **15. Life on Land**

This goal focuses on protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of land ecosystems. It seeks to halt deforestation, combat desertification, and reverse land degradation. By protecting biodiversity and natural habitats, this goal ensures that the Earth can continue to provide essential services like clean air and fertile soil.

#### **16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

Without peace and justice, sustainable development is impossible. This goal aims to reduce all forms of violence and work with governments to end corruption and bribery. It advocates for the "rule of law" and ensures that everyone has equal access to justice and a legal identity (like a birth certificate) from birth.



**17. Partnerships for the Goals**

The final goal recognizes that none of the other 16 goals can be achieved alone. It calls for global collaboration between governments, the private sector, and civil society. It focuses on sharing technology, increasing international trade, and helping developing countries collect the taxes and aid they need to fund their own sustainable development.

**III. DATA ANALYSIS**

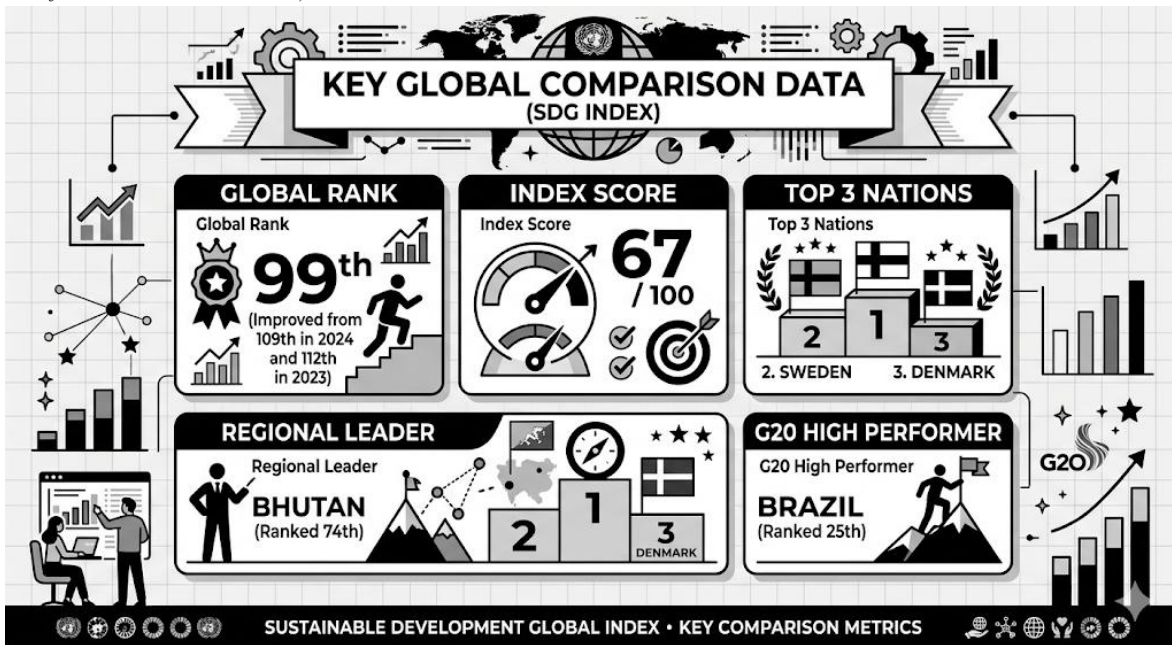
**India's Global Standing**

**SDG Index 2025-26**

For the first time in history, India has entered the **top 100** on the global stage. According to the **2025 Sustainable Development Report (SDR)**, published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network:

Current Global Rank: 99th

(Out of 193 UN Member States)



**Why has the Rank Improved?**

India's jump into the top 100 is attributed to significant progress in three core areas:

**SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy):** Massive expansion of solar capacity and 100% household electrification.

**SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Drastic reduction in multidimensional poverty through direct benefit transfers (DBT) and social safety nets.

**SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation):** Success of the *Jal Jeevan Mission* and *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*.

**IV. NATIONAL COMPOSITE SCORE**

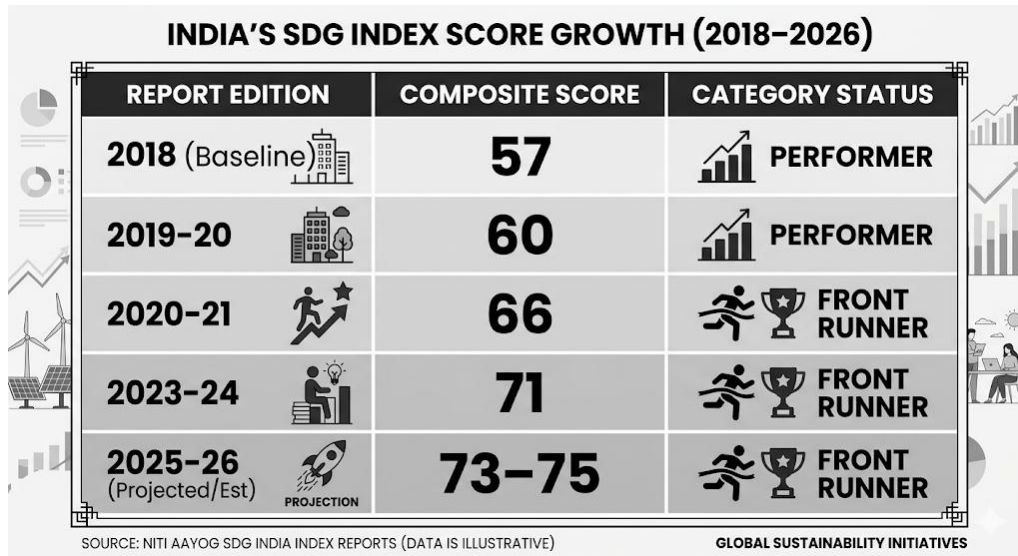
India's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has seen a steady upward trajectory over the last five years, with the national composite score improving significantly.

As of the **2023-24 SDG India Index** (the most recent comprehensive data as of May 2026), the country's overall score stands at **71**, a notable jump from its baseline years.

Composite Score Growth: 5-Year Snapshot

The following data tracks the national composite score, showing how India moved from a "Performer" to a "Front Runner" nation.





### Goal-Wise Growth Performance

Certain goals have driven this growth more than others. Here are the top-performing SDGs based on score improvement since 2020:

- **Goal 13 (Climate Action):** The fastest climber, jumping from **54** in 2020 to **67** in 2024.
- **Goal 1 (No Poverty):** Significant gains due to targeted social security schemes, rising from **60** to **72**.
- **Goal 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy):** India's highest-scoring goal, reaching a near-perfect **96** due to 100% rural electrification and LPG penetration.

### State-Level Growth Highlights

The competitive nature of the index has pushed states to improve their individual rankings:

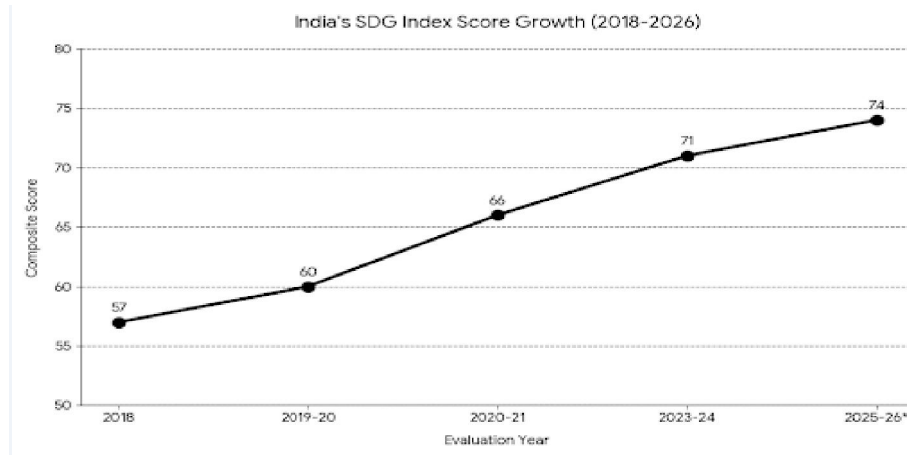
- **Top Improvers:** States like **Assam, Manipur, Punjab, and West Bengal** saw the highest point increases (8+ points) in the last evaluation cycle.
- **The "Front Runner" Surge:** In 2020-21, only 17 States/UTs were in the "Front Runner" category (score 65–99). By 2024, that number nearly doubled to **32**.

### Key Growth Drivers

The improvement in scores is largely attributed to large-scale national interventions:

- **PM Awas Yojana & Swachh Bharat:** Driving scores in Poverty (Goal 1) and Clean Water/Sanitation (Goal 6).
- **Ayushman Bharat:** Impacting Health and Well-being (Goal 3).
- **Digital India & Jan Dhan:** Contributing to Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8).





### India's SDG Index Growth Chart (2018–2026)

The chart below illustrates the steady climb of India's national composite SDG score over the last five years, showcasing the transition from a "Performer" status to a "Front Runner."

#### Key Takeaways from the Growth Trend

- **Rapid Acceleration:** The most significant jump occurred between 2019 and 2021, driven by massive improvements in **Clean Water & Sanitation (Goal 6)** and **Affordable Energy (Goal 7)**.
- **The 70+ Milestone:** Crossing the 70-point mark in the 2023-24 cycle solidified India's position in the "Front Runner" category.
- **Future Outlook:** By the end of 2026, the index is projected to reach 74, reflecting continued success in poverty reduction and climate action initiatives.

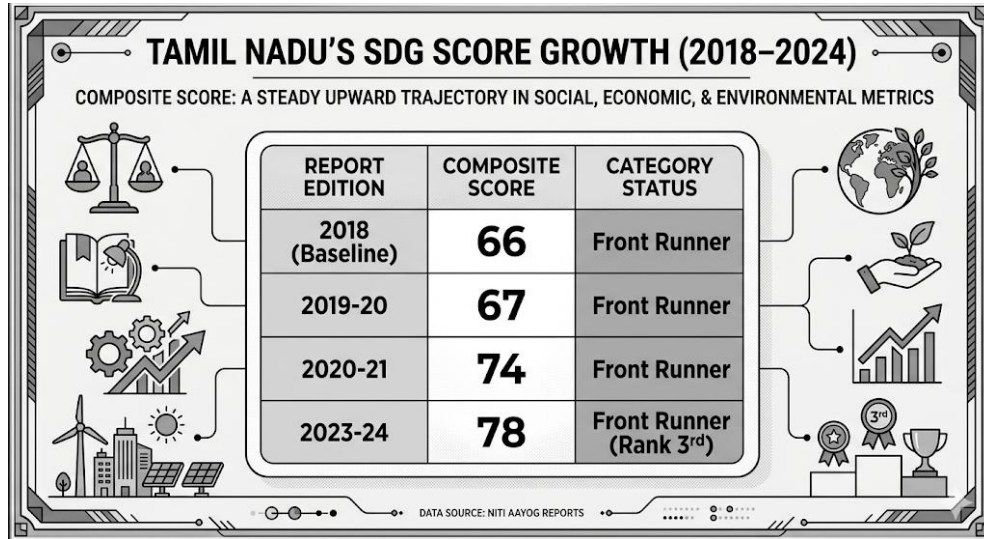
*(Note: The 2025-26 data point represents a projected estimate based on current growth trajectories.)*

Tamil Nadu has consistently been one of India's top-performing states in sustainable development. Over the last five years, the state has transitioned from being a strong "Front Runner" to ranking **3rd overall** in the country (as of the latest 2023-24 NITI Aayog report).

Tamil Nadu's Score Growth (2018–2024)

The composite score reflects a steady upward trajectory in social, economic, and environmental metrics.





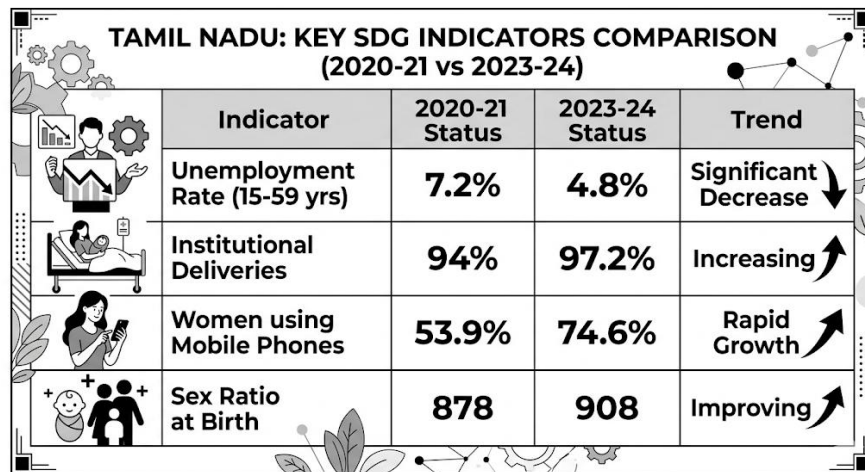
**Goal-Wise Performance Highlights**

Tamil Nadu leads the nation in several critical goals, specifically in poverty reduction and climate action.

- **SDG 1: No Poverty (Score: 100/100):** Ranked **#1 in India**. The state has achieved the lowest multidimensional poverty rates (2.2% vs. 14.96% nationally) through its robust Public Distribution System (PDS) and social welfare schemes.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** Ranked **#1 among states**. Tamil Nadu is a leader in renewable energy (Solar & Wind) and has a proactive Climate Change Mission aiming for net-zero by 2050.
- **SDG 3: Good Health:** Maintains a high institutional delivery rate of **97.18%** and has one of the lowest Maternal Mortality Ratios (MMR) at 54.
- **SDG 4: Quality Education:** Boasts a **99.9% trained teacher rate** and a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education of **47%**, nearly double the national average.

**Recent Growth Indicators (2020 vs 2024)**

Specific indicators have seen marked improvement in the most recent evaluation cycle:



**Key Strengths**

- **Industrial Leadership:** Accounts for 40% of India's EV production and 10% of total EV sales.
- **Environmental Commitment:** Nearly 25% of the state's area is under forest cover, contributing to its top rank in Goal 15 (Life on Land).
- **Social Infrastructure:** Almost 82% of rural households have access to safe, piped drinking water.

Tamil Nadu manages its SDG progress through the **State Indicator Framework (SIF)**. While the national NITI Aayog index ranks states, Tamil Nadu's internal reports and the Human Development Index (HDI) provide the best picture of which districts are leading in growth and sustainability.

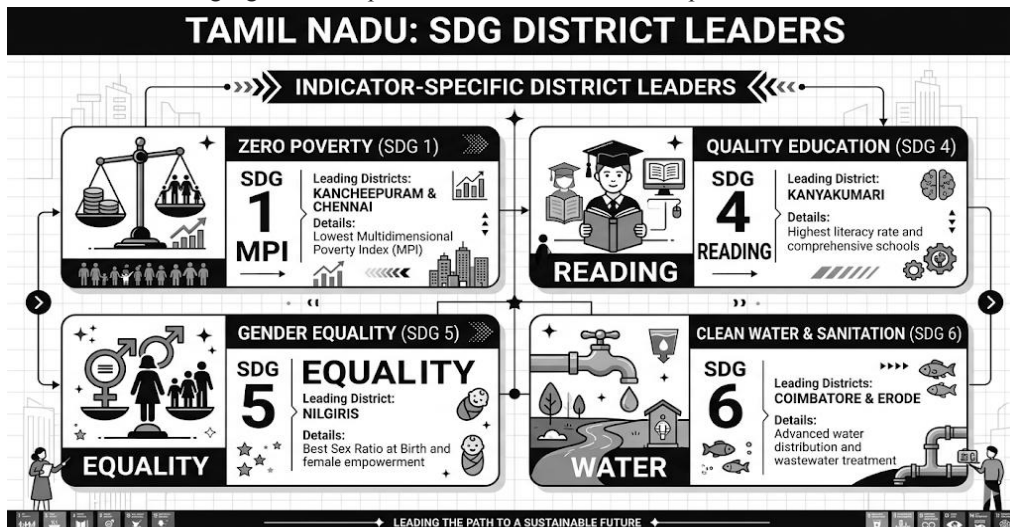
TOP 5 PERFORMING DISTRICTS IN TAMIL NADU (2025-26)		
The following districts are the current leaders across key indicators like health, education, and per capita income.		
RANK	DISTRICT	KEY STRENGTHS
1 🏆	Kanyakumari	Highest Literacy rate and best health outcomes in the state.
2.	Virudhunagar	Massive growth in small-scale industries and agricultural marketing.
3.	Thoothukudi	High life expectancy and strong industrial industrial output.
4.	Chennai	Excellence in higher education and digital connectivity.
5.	Kancheepuram	Leader in industrial growth and poverty reduction.

DATA SOURCE: STATE PERFORMANCE REPORT (2026)

**Districts with the Highest Growth Momentum**

These districts have shown the fastest "climb" in the rankings over the last 5 years:

- **Virudhunagar:** Has jumped from the middle tier to the top 2 due to industrial expansion.
- **Coimbatore:** While highly industrialized, it is currently focusing on "Life on Land" (SDG 15) and urban sustainability.
- **Tirunelveli:** Showing significant improvement in the "Child Development Index" and healthcare access.



**The "Bottom 5" (Aspiration Districts)**

These districts are receiving targeted funding to catch up with the state average:



- Ariyalur (Currently lowest in HDI)
- Perambalur
- Dharmapuri
- Villupuram
- Theni

**State Summary:** As of May 2026, Tamil Nadu ranks **2nd in India** with a composite score of **78**. The state has reduced its indicators from 314 to 244 to make monitoring more focused at the district level.

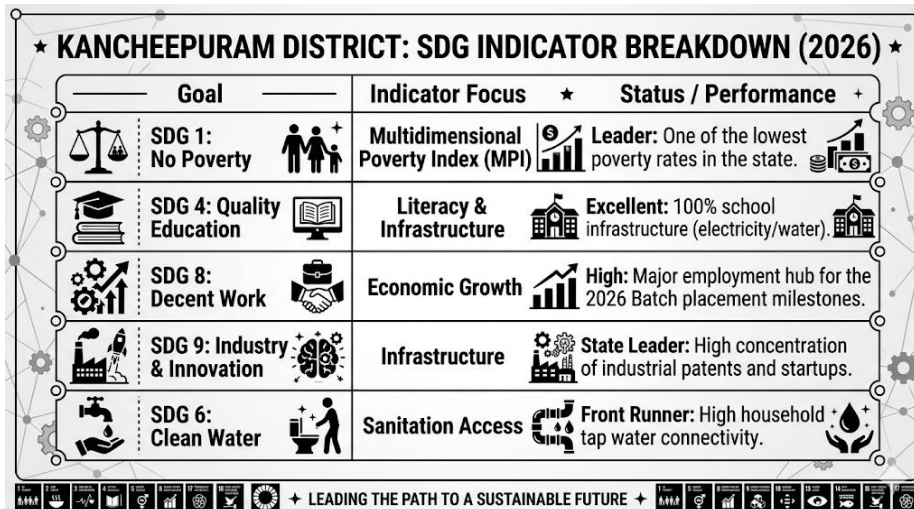
### V. KANCHEEPURAM DISTRICT

#### SDG Performance & Growth (2026)

Kancheepuram remains a powerhouse in Tamil Nadu's sustainable development journey. As of **May 2026**, it is classified as a "**Front Runner**" district, leveraging its industrial strength and high urbanization to lead in several economic and social indicators.

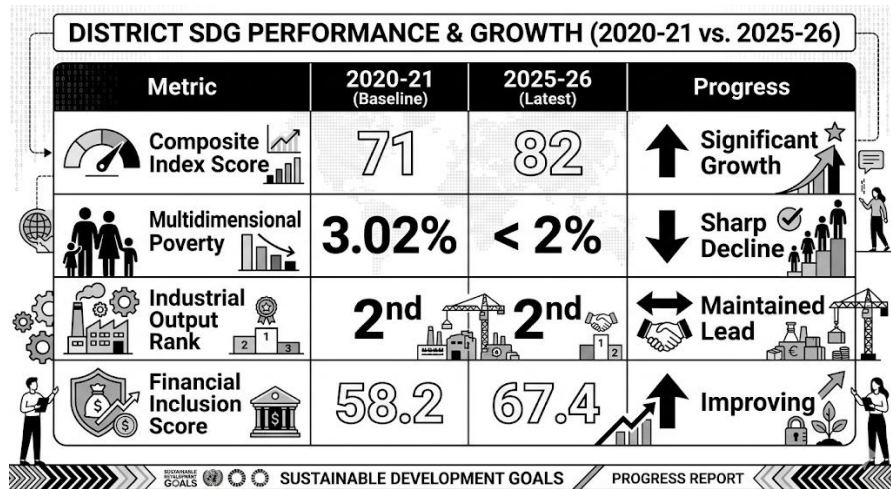
#### Ranking & Composite Profile

- **State Rank:** Consistently in the **Top 5** (currently ranked **#5** overall).
- **Category:** **Front Runner** (Score range: 75–85).
- **Key Growth Driver:** High concentration of electronics manufacturing and automotive hubs (SDG 9).



Comparison: 2021 vs. 2026 (Growth Trend)





District Challenges & 2030 Focus

While Kancheepuram excels in economic goals, the **2026-2030 implementation phase** is targeting two specific areas where the district shows room for improvement:

- **SDG 15 (Life on Land):** Balancing rapid industrial expansion with the preservation of green cover and local water bodies.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Increasing female labor force participation (LFPR) in the high-tech manufacturing sectors.

Visual Summary: Why Kancheepuram Leads

The district acts as a "Secondary Capital" for Tamil Nadu's development. Its proximity to Chennai allows it to absorb high-tech growth while maintaining its own distinct industrial identity in sectors like silk weaving (traditional economy) and electronics (modern economy).

**Findings**

- **Global Level:** India reached the **99th rank** globally in 2025 due to breakthroughs in SDG 7 (Clean Energy) and SDG 1 (No Poverty).
- **National Level:** The national composite score improved from **57 (2018)** to **71 (2024)**, and is projected to reach 74 by late 2026.
- **State Level:** Tamil Nadu ranks **3rd overall** in India (Score: 78) and is the national leader in Climate Action (SDG 13) and No Poverty (SDG 1).
- **District Level (Kancheepuram):** Ranked **#5** in the state, Kancheepuram is a "Front Runner" with a composite score of **82**. It has successfully reduced multidimensional poverty to **< 2%**.

**Suggestions**

- **Environmental Balance:** Kancheepuram must balance its rapid industrialization (SDG 9) with the preservation of green cover (SDG 15) to maintain its ranking.
- **Gender Inclusion:** Targeted policies are needed to increase Female Labor Force Participation (LFPR) in the high-tech sectors of Kancheepuram.
- **Cross-Learning:** The state should implement Kancheepuram's "Industrial Hub" model in Aspiration Districts like Ariyalur and Dharmapuri.
- **Digital Deepening:** Continue the momentum of Digital India to improve financial inclusion scores, which currently lag slightly behind industrial scores.



## VI. CONCLUSION

India's entry into the global top 100 marks a paradigm shift in its developmental narrative. The steady climb of the national score to 71 and Tamil Nadu's consistent "Front Runner" status demonstrate the efficacy of localized monitoring. Kancheepuram District serves as a prime example of how industrial growth can be harnessed to nearly eliminate multidimensional poverty. By addressing specific gaps in gender equality and environmental sustainability, Kancheepuram and India at large are well-positioned to meet the 2030 targets.

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