

# 86% of households in India have a mobile phone

77% of the bottom quintile have a mobile phone, but only 18% of them have access to tap water



BY PRAMIT BHATTACHARYA  
pramitb@economint.com

NEW DELHI

When the results of the 2011 census were published, one stark finding stood out: more households had mobile phones than toilets in India. Fifty-three per cent of households had a mobile phone, while only 17% had a toilet within their homes in that year, the census statistics showed. Five years later, the gap between the two seems to have widened as the march of telecom connectivity has outpaced the march of water connectivity in the country.

While the proportion of households with toilets has moved up, the proportion of those with mobile phones has grown even more sharply, according to fresh data from a nationally representative household survey. Eighty-eight per cent of households in India today have a mobile phone, according to the 'Household Survey on India's Citizen Environment & Consumer Economy' (ICE 360) survey conducted in 2016. The same proportion of households has access to electricity, but far fewer households have access to toilets or tap water, the survey shows. Access to tap water is a function of class, the data suggests. So is access to toilets.

Apart from poverty, the other key factor behind the widespread prevalence of open defecation seems to be the lack of running water in many households. The data shows that 6% of households nationally (and 9% of rural India) defecate in the open despite having toilets. Many researchers have drawn attention to this phenomenon, pointing to the role of education and behavioural change in convincing people to use toilets. But the survey seems to suggest that a key reason why people with toilets may still defecate in the open is the lack of running water. Of households that defecate in the open despite having toilets, 63% reported having toilets without running water.

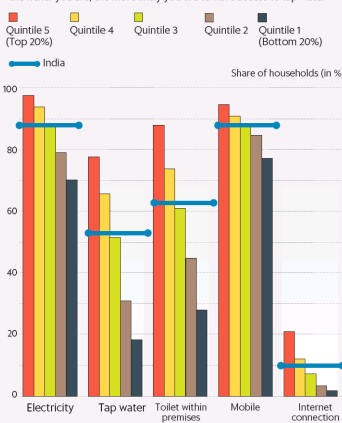
Of households without toilets, 92% defecate in the open. The proportion is lower in urban India because a significant chunk of people without toilets have access to community or public toilets.

The ICE 360 survey was conducted by the independent not-for-profit organisation, People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE), headed by two of India's best-known consumer economy experts, Rama Bijapurkar and Rajesh Shukla. The survey is among the largest consumer economy surveys in the country. The urban sample of the survey is comparable to that of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) consumer expenditure survey conducted in 2011-12. While the NSSO surveyed 101,631 households of which 41,968 (41.3%) were urban households, the ICE 360 survey covered 61,000 households of which 36,000 (59%) are urban households. The rural sample of the ICE 360 survey is less than half of the NSSO sample. Nonetheless, all the estimates of each year have been derived by adjusting for the respective population of those regions.

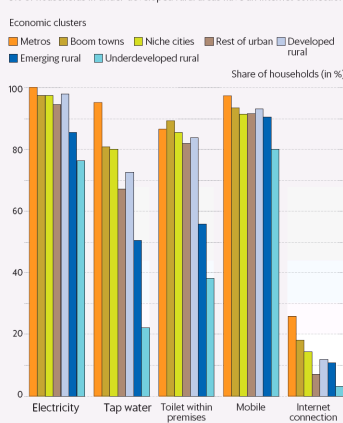
The ICE 360 survey shows a significant improvement in household amenities such as access to electricity, tap water and even toilets, compared to the 2011 census. The proportion of households with internet connection has moved up 20 percentage points to 87.6% over the past five years, the survey suggests. Over the same period, the proportion of households with tap water in their homes has increased by 26 percentage points to 52.6% in 2016 and the proportion of households with toilets has seen a 16 percentage point change, as per the survey. Even access to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections seems to have risen sharply, with 54.5% households surveyed reporting using LPG as cooking fuel as against 28.5% such households in 2011. Much of the increase seems to

## Household amenities

Access to tap water seems to be a fairly good proxy of class in India: the richer you are, the more likely you are to have access to tap water

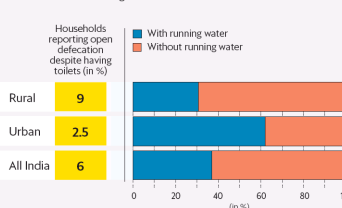


Around a quarter of households in metros have access to Internet while only 3% of households in under-developed rural areas have an Internet connection

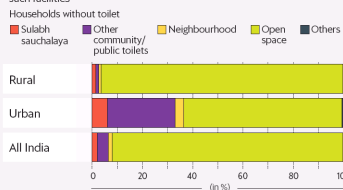


## Toilet troubles

Of households reporting open defecation despite having toilets, 63% did not have running water in their toilets

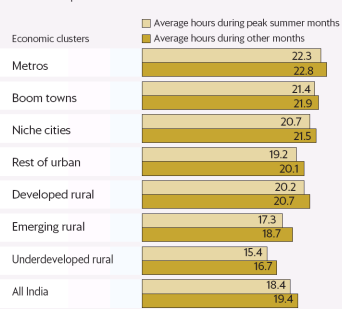


Most households without toilets defecate in the open but the proportion is lower in urban India because of the presence of community/public toilets. Nearly a third of households without toilets in urban India use such facilities



## Power cuts

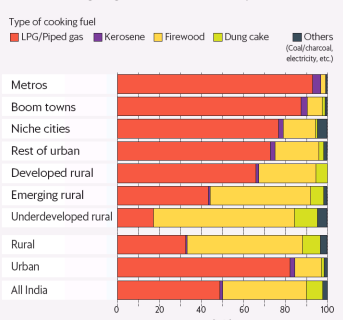
Metros get seven hours more power on average than under-developed rural areas



Graphic: Ahmed Raza Khan/Mint

## Growing LPG adoption

LPG seems to be gaining as a fuel of choice at the expense of kerosene



Source: ICE 360 Survey, 2016

## mint ICE 360<sup>o</sup> Part 4

be driven by gains in rural India. It needs to be kept in mind that while the 2011 figures were based on a complete census, the 2016 figures are estimates based on a survey and hence need to be interpreted with greater caution. Nonetheless, estimates such as these based on a nationally representative survey usually provide a fair sense of the direction of change even if they understate or overstate the pace of change because of sampling errors. And the trends seem to suggest a significant improvement in access to household amenities across the country over the past half-decade. It is also worth keeping in mind that much of this change may have preceded the election of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in May 2014. Data from the

baseline ICE 360 survey conducted in 2011 (which had a smaller sample size of 20,195 households, and hence is not strictly comparable) suggests that much of the improvement in access to household amenities may have occurred between 2011 and 2014, rather than post 2014. For instance, 87.3% households reported access to electricity, 60.1% reported access to toilets and 36.5% reported access to tap water in the 2011 survey. Thus, most of the improvements in the 2011-16 period seems to have occurred by 2014. Given that rural India leads most of the gains in access to amenities, this may not be so surprising since the period 2011-14 saw a significant boost to rural fortunes. While ownership of mobile phones has spiked, access to the Internet has lagged, the latest survey shows. Only 10% of households reported having access to Internet, the ICE 360 survey 2016 shows. Like almost everything else, Internet access too is a

function of the income class you belong to and the place you stay in. Barely 1% of households in the bottom quintile have access to Internet but 21% in the top quintile do. A notable feature of this survey is that it is representative at the level of economic clusters. Urban India has been divided into four clusters: metros (population more than 5 million), boom towns (2.5 to 5 million), niche cities (1 to 2.5 million) and other urban towns (less than 1 million). Based on a district development index, rural India has been subdivided into three different clusters: 'developed rural', 'emerging rural', and 'underdeveloped rural'. The first category includes districts such as Bhatinda (Punjab) and Kangra (Himachal Pradesh). The second category includes districts such as Latur (Maharashtra) and Kamrup (Assam), while the last category includes districts such as Kalahandi (Odisha) and Bastar (Chhattisgarh).

The survey shows that around a quarter of households living in metros have access to Internet but only 3% in under-developed rural areas have such access. Access to tap water is also deeply uneven. Ninety-five per cent of those living in metros have access to tap water, but only 22% of those in under-developed rural areas have access to tap water. There is a similar divide when it comes to access to electricity as well, the data suggests. Long power cuts remain a routine feature of life in rural India; people in the metros have fewer and shorter power cuts. Tadi Kanda in Mumbai contributed to this story. This is the fourth of a 16-part data journalism series on how India lives, thinks, earns and spends, based on the results from the ICE 360 survey conducted by the People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE) in 2016 (www.ice360.in). The next part will look at how India curbs.

## Payments of more than Rs5,000 to be made electronically: Govt

New Delhi: All payments by the government over Rs5,000 to suppliers and contractors will now be made electronically, the finance ministry said in a circular dated 5 December. Earlier, the limit was Rs10,000. The move is in line with its efforts to promote digital payments in the country. As a first step, it is encouraging government departments to urge government officials to use digital means for their payments.

REMYA NAIR

## Congress rules out alliance with SP for Uttar Pradesh assembly polls

Lucknow: Amidst indications that Samajwadi Party (SP) leader and chief minister Akhilesh Yadav is warming up to the idea of an alliance with the Congress, Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (UPCC) president Raj Babbar on Monday said his party will contest alone in the state and described such talks as "hypothetical". "Alliance talks in some way demoralizes workers. I have no such information. The party leadership has not asked me to look for an up and it's not under consideration. This is hypothetical," he said. Asked about the issue, Babbar stressed that Congress will "contest UP polls alone" and the first list of the party candidates is likely to be released by the end of this month. "The exercise of candidate selection is on... We have again asked for the prospective candidates list from district presidents," he said.

## Two killed, 15 injured as INS Betwa tips over during undocking

Mumbai/New Delhi: Two personnel were on Monday killed and 15 others injured when INS Betwa, a guided missile frigate, tipped over during undocking at Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. "There has been an incident in the cruiser grounding dock at Naval Dockyard in Mumbai involving INS Betwa. The incident occurred during undocking evolution wherein it is suspected that dock blocks mechanism failed," navy spokesperson Capt. D. K. Sharma said. Explaining the situation, he said the 3,850 tonne ship, having a length of 126 metres, tipped over while it was being undocked. The mast of the ship hit the dockyard ground, he said. It was docked for repairs and while being returned to the water — a process that involves tipping the ship — the system tripped and the entire ship fell sideways. The main mast of the frigate broke. While two naval personnel died, 15 others were injured with one of them in a serious condition, the spokesman said.

## Government asks employees to maximize use of digital payments

New Delhi: Government has asked its employees to maximize the use of debit cards for personal transactions and become 'ambassadors' for promoting digital payments. The finance ministry has asked all ministries and departments to encourage their employees to make use of debit cards for personal transactions instead of cash, an official statement said. It said that given the progress made in banking technology, it is assumed that each employee would be in possession of a debit/ATM card linked to his/her bank account. "Ensuring and encouraging government employees to maximize the usage of debit cards for personal related transactions instead of cash would go a long way, with the employees serving as 'ambassadors' for the digital push, and also motivate, encourage the general public in taking up the cause," the ministry added.

## Old Rs500 notes to be accepted at toll plazas till 15 December

New Delhi: All toll plazas in national highways will receive payments through credit or debit cards from now on and e-wallet besides accepting old currency notes of Rs500 till 15 December, in a new update to the rules regarding high value currency notes that were banned last month. The home ministry has also asked the states to deploy adequate police so that no potential law and order problem arises across the toll plazas. In a communication to chief secretaries of all states, the home ministry said to facilitate smooth passage of national highways users, several measures have been undertaken including fee collection through credit/debit cards through point-of-sale (PoS) system installed by the banks. Besides, the toll plazas will install fee paid instruments, e-wallet, electronic toll collection and accept old currency notes of Rs500 till December 15 as a special case, joint secretary in the home ministry Dilip Kumar said.

## Government weighing hike in EPOF wage ceiling to Rs25,000

New Delhi: Government is considering a proposal to hike wage ceiling for coverage under social security schemes run by the retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to Rs25,000 per month from the existing Rs15,000. Parliament was informed on Monday. The increase in wage ceiling for coverage under EPFO schemes to Rs25,000 could add 50 lakh additional formal sector workers to around 40 million contributing subscribers. Despite being pressed by trade unions on different fora, the government has not taken a decision in this regard, especially when it has already increased threshold for coverage under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI) to Rs21,000 per month in October last year. The EPFO had increased the threshold to Rs15,000 per month from Rs5,500 on 1 September 2014 in view of price rise and pay revisions in the formal sector.

## 'India's oil demand to more than double to 10 million bpd by 2040'

New Delhi: India's oil demand will more than double to 10 million barrels per day (bpd) by 2040, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) secretary general Mohamed Barkindo said on Monday as he saw the world's third largest energy consumer playing an important role in oil market stability. "Its vibrant economy currently enjoys the fastest growth in the world with a rate of 7.5% in 2016. At one level, India represents an important source of rapidly growing oil demand that appears to now be the highest, at nearly 300,000 bpd — a rate that surpasses China," he said.