

5. The State of Social Justice in India, 2025 Report

Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released its flagship report titled "The State of Social Justice – A Work in Progress (2025)".

Historical Background of Social Justice and ILO Report (2025)

1995 World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen)

Global Assembly – Leaders from 186 countries convened for the largest summit on social development.

Focus on Employment – Recognized full and productive employment as central to poverty eradication and social inclusion.

People-Centred Development – Framed development policies to prioritize human needs, address rising unemployment, unmet basic needs, and social exclusion.

2025 Context – ILO Report – Ahead of the Second World Summit in Qatar (Nov 2025), the ILO released "The State of Social Justice – A Work in Progress (2025)" to assess three decades of progress.

Moral and Functional Imperative – Social justice is essential for peace, trust, institutional legitimacy, and unlocking human potential for inclusive and sustainable societies.

Four Pillars for Advancing Social Justice (ILO 2025)

1. **Fundamental Human Rights and Capabilities** – Ensure basic freedoms and essential entitlements. Create foundation for equitable growth and dignity.
2. **Equal Access to Opportunities** – Remove barriers to education, training, and employment. Enable all individuals to earn a decent living and participate fully in society.
3. **Fair Distribution** – Ensure equitable share of economic growth, with emphasis on the disadvantaged. Reduce wealth and income concentration, ensuring intergenerational fairness.
4. **Fair Transitions** – Manage environmental, technological, and demographic shifts without leaving groups behind. Adapt institutions to new societal challenges while maintaining social protection.

Key Insights from the ILO Report (2025)

Global Progress

Child Labour – Declined from 20.6% (1995) to 7.8% (2024).

Education – Secondary school completion increased by 22 percentage points since 2000.

Poverty Reduction – Extreme poverty fell from 40% of population (1995) to 10% (2023).

Labour Productivity – Increased 78% globally; 215% in upper-middle-income countries; inequality between countries fell by 40%.

Policy Coordination – Demonstrates the impact of collective global action on well-being and equality.

Persistent Challenges

Poverty – 800 million people live on less than USD 3/day; 1 in 4 lacks safe drinking water.

Inequality – Top 1% holds 20% of income and 38% of wealth globally.

Gender Gaps – Women earn only 78% of men's wages; labour participation gap narrowing slowly.

Informal Employment – 58% of workers globally in informal jobs.

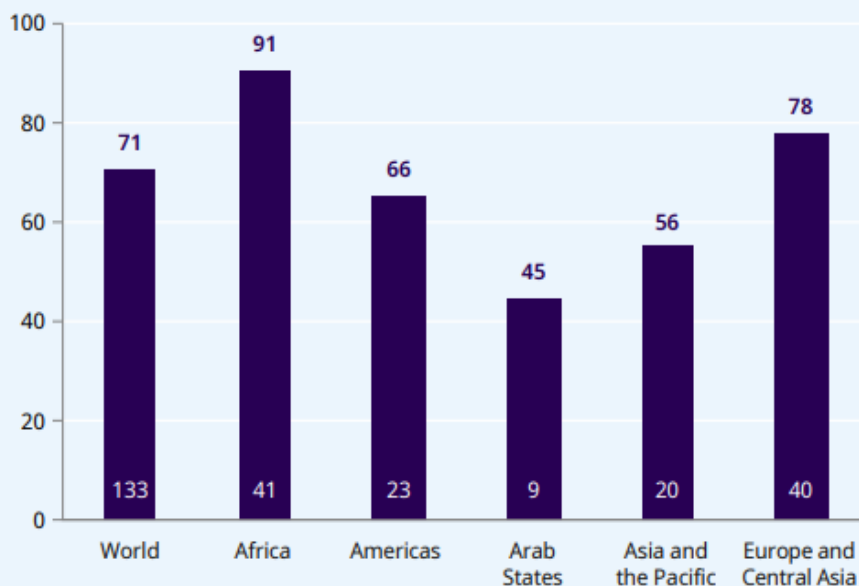
Erosion of Rights – Collective bargaining and freedom of association declining.

Social Protection Deficit – Only 50% of global population covered.

Technological and Climate Risks – 71% workforce faces climate-related disruptions; automation threatens 25% of jobs.

Trust Deficit – Perceived unfairness reduces trust in governments, businesses, and unions.

► **Figure 1.24. Share of countries where the right to work is in the constitution, 2024 (percentage)**



Recommendations for Fair Transitions

Manage Societal Shifts – Climate, technology, and demographic transitions need just impact distribution.

Institutional Strategy –

1. Apply existing labour institutions to modern challenges.
2. Adapt institutions to mitigate transition-specific risks.
3. Amplify coordination across sectors for integrated policy response.

Social Justice – Definition and Core Dimensions

Definition – Fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights, ensuring dignity and freedom for all.

Purpose – Eliminate systemic discrimination; go beyond formal equality.

Core Dimensions –

1. **Distributive Justice** – Equitable resource access.
2. **Procedural Justice** – Fair laws and institutional processes.
3. **Restorative Justice** – Correct historical and structural disadvantages.

Social Justice in the Indian Constitution

Preamble – Justice – social, economic, and political – as a cornerstone.

Fundamental Rights –

1. Article 14 – Equality before law.
2. Article 15 – Prohibition of discrimination.
3. Article 16 – Equality in public employment.
4. Article 17 – Abolition of untouchability.

Directive Principles –

1. Article 38 – Promote welfare via social order based on justice.
2. Article 39 – Equal pay and worker protection.
3. Article 46 – Promote SC, ST, and weaker sections' interests.

Fundamental Duties (51A) – Promote social harmony, gender equality, and renunciation of derogatory practices.

Global Initiatives for Social Justice

ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008) – Employment, social protection, dialogue, and rights at work.

UN 2030 Agenda (SDGs) – SDG 1, 5, 8, and 10 directly linked to social justice.

World Social Protection Floor Initiative – Universal social security.

Global Coalition for Social Justice (2024) – Strengthening international policy coordination.

India's Initiatives for Social Justice

Legal and Constitutional Measures – Reservations in education, employment, legislatures. Key laws – SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act (1989), Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955).

Welfare and Social Security Schemes

1. **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)** – Health insurance for vulnerable families.
2. **PM-KISAN** – Direct income support for small farmers.
3. **PMMVY** – Maternity benefits for working women.
4. **NSAP** – Pensions for elderly, widows, and disabled.
5. **E-Shram Portal** – Registers informal workers for social protection benefits.

Gender Empowerment

1. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** – Female education and gender bias reduction.
2. **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023)** – 33% seats reserved for women in legislatures.

Education and Skill Development

1. **NEP 2020** – Inclusive education and critical skills.
2. **Skill India & Digital India** – Enhance employability and digital inclusion.
3. **RTE Act (2009)** – Free, compulsory education for children 6–14.

Data and Evidence-Based Policy – Caste enumeration in upcoming Census for targeted affirmative action. Expansion of social audits and real-time dashboards for welfare transparency.

Significance of Social Justice

1. **Ethical Foundation of Democracy** – Ensures dignity, rights, and participation.
2. **Inclusive Growth** – Equitable opportunities boost productivity and economic resilience.
3. **Social Cohesion** – Reduces alienation, fosters national harmony.
4. **Demographic Dividend** – Equity in skilling and employment harnesses youth potential.
5. **Alignment with Global Goals** – Supports SDGs 1, 5, 8, and 10.
6. **Institutional Legitimacy** – Fair societies enjoy trust and stability.

Challenges in Achieving Social Justice in India

1. **Inequality** – Income and wealth gaps persist; rural-urban disparities.
2. **Informal Labour Market** – Over 80% workforce in informal, insecure jobs.
3. **Gender & Caste Discrimination** – Low female participation; structural caste barriers.
4. **Poverty & Economic Vulnerability** – Multidimensional poverty persists despite growth.
5. **Policy and Implementation Gaps** – Enforcement failures, bureaucratic inertia, corruption.
6. **Infrastructure Deficit** – Poor access to education, healthcare, and digital services in rural areas.
7. **Governance & Trust Deficit** – Mismanagement of welfare funds erodes institutional credibility.

Way Forward

Equitable Resource Redistribution – Progressive taxation, universal social security, minimum wage policies.

Inclusive Employment – Labour formalization, fair wages, social protection for informal/gig workers.

Gender & Caste Equity – Workplace equality, political representation, land reforms, education access.

Universal Access to Public Services – Quality education, primary healthcare, affordable housing.

Strengthened Legal & Institutional Mechanisms – Anti-discrimination laws, smart decarceration, enhanced legal aid.

Community & Grassroots Empowerment – Civic participation, local development, and trust-building.

Cultural & Ethical Transformation – Inclusive leadership, ethical citizenship, and representation of marginalized voices.

Conclusion

The State of Social Justice 2025 reflects progress with paradox — economic growth alongside persisting inequalities and eroding trust. For India, social justice is central to the Constitution and democracy. Key objective – Translate welfare into empowerment, growth into inclusion, and policy into actionable outcomes, building a just, equitable, and inclusive India.

Source – [https – //www.ilo.org/research-and-publications/state-social-justice-2025](https://www.ilo.org/research-and-publications/state-social-justice-2025)

