

Patna, the capital of the state of Bihar, is one of the fastest growing cities in India. Its population increased by an annual average of 5% between 1991 and 2001, has reached 1.68 million (Census of India, 2001). The state of Bihar too is growing every fast. It is currently at 104 million, which is an increase of over 25% from the 80 million recorded in the 2001 Census. This makes Bihar one of the fastest growing states in India, demographically-speaking, significantly above the national average of 15%.

Bihar is one of the poorest states in India, having historically displayed the lowest per capita income levels in India and Patna city has long ranked amongst the poorest Tier II urban settlements (i.e. between 1-5 million inhabitants) in India (Economic Survey of Bihar, 2013). Bihar's urban poverty ratio is 31.2 per cent in 2011-12, a reduction from the 2004-05 levels when it was 43.7 per cent (Bihar Economic Survey 2013-14). Bihar also displays one of the lowest urbanisation rates at about 11 per cent as compared to national figure of 27.8 per cent according to the State government figures.

The state also has a long history of rural and caste based violence. Caste has been the dominant organising principle of social relations as well as politics. Patna experienced a spike in crime rates during the 1990s and early 2000. Although these did reduce during 2000-2011, they have risen again as per the National Crimes Record Bureau.

Patna is essentially an unplanned city. There is no evident planning from any governing body for last 30 years and the city is still waiting for a new Master Plan since the 1960s. There is strong segregation in terms of planning treatment. There is a huge influx in migrant population from neighbouring rural areas and the city does not have sufficient infrastructure to support the incoming populations. A city development plan for Patna was prepared as required by the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). However, there is no physical implementation of JNNURM or other urban policies yet and city is still growing haphazardly which raises serious questions regarding its future sustainability.