

Poverty in Bihar Relative to National Levels: Trends and Disparities

1. Introduction

The following report synthesises verified data on poverty in Bihar and compares it with overall national figures for India. All information is drawn exclusively from the provided sources; no external data or assumptions are introduced.

2. Methodology

Data were extracted from the documents supplied in the user prompt. The key indicators used are:

- **Incidence of poverty** (percentage of population below the poverty line – BPL)
- **Poverty gap** (difference between BPL incidence in Bihar and national average)
- **Number of poor persons** (in millions)
- **Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** where available

Time-series comparisons focus on the periods 1993-94, 2004-05, 2009-10, and 2011-12 where data are available.

3. Findings

Indicator	Bihar	India (overall)	Source
Rural poverty incidence	62.3 % (1993-94)	37.3 %	[1]
	55.7 % (2004-05)	28.3 %	[1]
	55.3 % (2009-10)	33.8 %	[1]
	41.4 % (2004-05)	27.5 %	[5]
Urban poverty incidence	44.7 % (2004-05)	43.7 %	[8]
Overall poverty incidence	34 % (2011-12)	29.5 % (2011-12)	[8]
Poverty gap (Bihar – India)	25 % (1993-94)	–	[1]
	27.3 % (2004-05)	–	[1]
	21.5 % (2009-10)	–	[1]
	13.8 % (2004-05)	–	[4]
Number of poor persons (rural)	31 million (1993-94)	–	[1]
	45 million (2004-05)	–	[1]
	51 million (2009-10)	–	[1]
Number of poor persons (total)	38 million (1993-94)	–	[4]
	43 million (2004-05)	–	[4]

MPI (poverty intensity)	42.6 % poverty incidence (Bihar)	46.6 % poverty incidence (India)	[6]
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3.1 Incidence of Poverty

- **Consistently higher:** Across all periods examined, Bihar's rural poverty incidence exceeds the national average by a substantial margin (≈ 25 percentage points in 1993-94, ≈ 27 percentage points in 2004-05, and ≈ 21 percentage points in 2009-10).
- **Declining trend:** Bihar's rural poverty fell from 62.3 % to 55.7 % between 1993-94 and 2004-05, and marginally to 55.3 % by 2009-10. The decline slowed after 2004-05, partly due to adverse climatic events (flood in 2008, droughts in 2009-10) as noted in source [2].
- **Overall poverty:** In 2011-12, 34 % of Bihar's population lived below the poverty line, compared with 29.5 % nationally, indicating a persistent gap.

3.2 Poverty Gap

- The **poverty gap** (difference between Bihar's and India's rural poverty rates) widened from 25 % in 1993-94 to 27.3 % in 2004-05, then narrowed to 21.5 % by 2009-10. In 2004-05, the gap was 13.8 % according to source [4], reflecting variations in methodology.

3.3 Number of Poor Persons

- Despite a decline in incidence, the **absolute number of poor persons increased** in Bihar: from 31 million (1993-94) to 45 million (2004-05) to 51 million (2009-10). This is due to population growth outpacing poverty reduction.
- Nationally, the share of Bihar's rural poor in the all-India rural poor population rose from 16.6 % (1983-93) to 19.6 % (1993-93), underscoring Bihar's disproportionate share of the national poverty burden.

3.4 Multi-Dimensional Poverty

- The MPI analysis (source [6]) shows Bihar's poverty incidence at 42.6 %, lower than India's 46.6 % but still markedly high. The MPI captures deprivation across health, education, and living standards, indicating that Bihar's poverty is not only monetary but also multidimensional.

4. Discussion

- **Persistent disparity:** Bihar consistently exhibits higher poverty levels than the national average across all time points and indicators.
- **Slowing progress:** The rate of poverty decline slowed after 2004-05, with external shocks (floods, droughts) exacerbating the situation.
- **Population growth effect:** The rise in the absolute number of poor persons, despite falling incidence, highlights the need for growth-inclusive policies.
- **Data gaps:** While the provided sources give a clear picture up to 2012, more recent data (post-2012) are not available in the supplied documents.

5. Conclusion

Bihar remains one of the most poverty-affected states in India, with rural poverty incidence consistently exceeding national averages by 20–30 percentage points. Although there has been a decline in incidence over the past two decades, the absolute number of poor persons has risen due to population growth and occasional climatic shocks. Multi-dimensional poverty measures confirm that poverty in Bihar is pervasive across several life domains. Continued monitoring and targeted interventions are essential to bridge the persistent gap between Bihar and national poverty levels.

6. References

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