



Centre for  
Society and Policy

# India's AI Regional Hotspots and Institutional Geography

July 2026



## **Background**

This policy brief is part of a broader series that undertakes a detailed landscaping exercise of India's AI ecosystem. The series maps key stakeholders, ecosystem developments and technological capabilities. It aims to generate nuanced insights into AI governance by examining regulatory frameworks alongside technological advancements, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of policy approaches, institutional capacities, and strategic priorities shaping India's AI trajectory. The brief is developed under the independent academic policy research project "Understanding India's Perspective on AI Policy and Governance", conducted at the Centre for Society and Policy (CSP) from November 2024 to December 2025. The project focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of India's AI ecosystem and its position in the global AI value chain. Its core objective is to analyse both the opportunities and challenges arising from India's distinct position in the AI ecosystem.

The project has produced four policy briefs that collectively offer an evidence-based assessment of India's evolving AI landscape. These briefs examine institutional, economic, geographic, and infrastructural dimensions of AI development to inform emerging trends, national capacities, and key policy priorities. The methodology for these briefs combines secondary research, indicator-based assessment, and comparative analysis. It draws on official government documents, Union Budget materials, central and state ministry reports, and industry studies. In addition, data platforms such as Clarivate (Web of Science), Tracxn, and other public databases were used to analyse startup activity, investment patterns, research output, innovation trends, and infrastructure capacity. These findings are synthesised through a thematic analytical framework to identify key patterns, gaps, and emerging priorities.

Within this context, the present brief focuses on the spatial and institutional distribution of AI in India. It examines where AI capabilities are emerging, which states and cities are driving activity, and which institutions are shaping research, entrepreneurship, and intellectual property. By providing a spatial mapping of India's AI ecosystem, the brief seeks to address existing gaps in understanding regional concentration and institutional dynamics, while highlighting areas that require greater policy attention.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## Introduction

Each technological era alters the trajectory of economic development and redefines how knowledge is created and applied. Artificial intelligence is one such technology; it is being highly embedded in government initiatives, business models, and academic discussions while also raising questions about inclusion, capacity, and risk. As the development accelerates, it is no longer sufficient to discuss “India’s AI ecosystem” in the abstract. It becomes necessary to ask where AI capabilities are actually emerging, which states and cities are driving activity, and which institutions are shaping research, entrepreneurship, and intellectual property. This policy brief seeks to address this gap. It provides a spatial picture of India’s AI ecosystem, the regional and institutional distribution of AI, and the key gaps that remain.

The brief brings together four types of understanding:

- State- and UT-wise AI-relevant policies and programmes, including dedicated AI policies, IT and startup policies with AI components, sectoral AI initiatives, data policies, GCC policies and guidelines.
- State- and city-wise data on AI firms<sup>1</sup> and investment are based on Tracxn data of AI-related firms and disclosed funding at the state and city levels. The dataset utilises Tracxn’s prompt classification of “Native AI”.
- The distribution of R&D hubs, incubators, and accelerators is identified using the MeitY Startup Hub database to locate AI-relevant incubation and scale-up infrastructure.
- Trends in AI publications using Web of Science (WoS) data show that researchers produced output from 2015 to 2024. The analysis used AI-related keywords to identify relevant publications and examine changes in publication volume over time.

These datasets allow us to examine AI development along two dimensions: regional (which states and cities are most active) and institutional (which types of public and private institutions and firms are driving activity). The findings are intended to provide a factual basis for subsequent policy choices to drive the benefits of AI beyond the current regional hubs.

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<sup>1</sup>Here, the term “AI firms” is used to collectively refer to both startups and companies. This classification is adopted due to the limitations of the Tracxn platform, which does not distinguish between startups and established companies in its dataset.

# 1. Region-Specific AI Policy Initiative

This section maps how Indian states and union territories are approaching artificial intelligence (AI) through their policies, programmes, and institutional mechanisms. It is based on the state/UT-wise inventory of documents and initiatives compiled for this study, covering AI policies, IT and startup policies with AI components, sectoral AI policies, centres of excellence, and operational guidelines.

## 1.1 State-Wise AI and Digital Policy Landscape

State governments are approaching AI with different policy priorities rather than a single, uniform pathway. Some states prioritise enabling infrastructure and investment, while others focus on building innovation ecosystems and startup support. A smaller set emphasises governance, ethics, and safeguards for AI's use in public systems. To compare these approaches consistently, this subsection classifies state initiatives into four broad policy priorities. This classification helps identify which states are building more balanced AI readiness across infrastructure, innovation, skills, and governance and where key elements remain limited or missing.

1. **Infrastructure-led Initiatives:** Infrastructure-led policies focus on data centers, compute clusters (GPUs), "AI cities," and centers of excellence. These instruments are common in states that want to become regional technology hubs and attract GCCs and AI-intensive firms.

Key States: Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha.

2. **Startup and innovation initiatives:** Startup and innovation instruments (AI missions, accelerators, GCC policies, and sectoral CoEs) treat AI as a driver of jobs, investment, and new products.

Key States: Telangana, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

3. **Skilling and education initiatives:** Skilling instruments focus on training government officials, students, and professionals in AI and data analytics, and on introducing AI-related content into curricula and training programmes.

Key States: Assam, Goa, Haryana, Odisha, Telangana, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Kerala, and Madhya Pradesh.

4. **Governance- and ethics-oriented initiatives:** Governance instruments (SAFE-AI frameworks, judicial guidelines, police/finance rules, and data policies) see AI as a

high-impact, high-risk system that needs guardrails.

Key States: Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala (judiciary), Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Assam, Uttarakhand, and Goa.

**Table 1: Overview of State / UT Policy Initiatives for AI**

| State / UT      | Dedicated AI policy/ mission | AI embedded in IT/startup /data / GCC | Infrastructure -led | Startup & innovation | Skilling & education | Governance & ethics |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh  |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    |                      |                     |
| Assam           |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   |                      | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Goa             | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Gujarat         |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Haryana         |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Jammu & Kashmir | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Karnataka       |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    |                     |
| Kerala          | ✓<br>(Judiciary)             | ✓                                     | ✓                   |                      | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Madhya Pradesh  |                              | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    |                     |
| Maharashtra     | ✓<br>(Agriculture)           |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    |                     |
| Odisha          | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Rajasthan       | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    |                      | ✓                   |
| Tamil Nadu      | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Telangana       | ✓                            | ✓                                     | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |
| Uttarakhand     | ✓                            |                                       | ✓                   | ✓                    | ✓                    | ✓                   |

|               |                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uttar Pradesh |                   | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |   |   |
| West Bengal   | ✓<br>(Guidelines) |   |   | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

## 1.2 AI Policy Initiatives Priorities by Different State Governments

The following states/UTs have taken formal steps to define their AI priorities, either through dedicated AI instruments or by embedding AI in broader digital or sectoral policies.

### 1.2.1 Dedicated AI policies/mission:

These instruments articulate an explicit AI vision, often cross-sectoral and governance-oriented:

- **Tamil Nadu:**

Tamil Nadu released a Safe and Ethical AI Policy in 2020, one of the first state-level AI ethics frameworks in India [1]. This policy emphasises transparency, accountability, fairness, and inclusivity in AI deployments, providing guidelines (the “TAM-DEF” framework and a DEEP-MAX scorecard) to ensure that government AI solutions are ethical and inclusive. Building on this, in 2024, the state also announced the Tamil Nadu Artificial Intelligence Mission (TNAIM), a five-year initiative to develop AI solutions for social good and improve e-governance and service delivery [2].

- **Telangana:**

The Telangana government has positioned itself as an AI frontrunner by launching an AI policy framework and the Telangana AI Mission (T-AIM) in partnership with NASSCOM (part of its “2020 Year of AI” initiative) [3]. Telangana’s 2024 AI Strategy Document and Implementation Roadmap outlines a six-point agenda to deliver AI-driven services across agriculture, healthcare, education, mobility, and other sectors to over one crore (10 million) people by 2027 [4]. Rather than a standalone policy, AI is deeply embedded in Telangana’s digital initiatives. For example, the state is planning to establish a shared services hub that will support AI startups by subsidising access to AI-specific shared services, such as software licences, datasets, development platforms, and cloud compute capacity, for AI startups focusing on socially relevant solutions.

- **Maharashtra:**

Maharashtra is finalising its first comprehensive AI policy. In early 2025, it appointed a 13-member task force to draft a state AI policy [5]. Even before the policy’s launch, AI features in Maharashtra’s digital strategy, and the state has established or planned Centers of Excellence in AI, robotics, IoT,



and Industry 4.0 to skill students and professionals [6]. The policy framework under development reportedly rests on pillars like infrastructure, skills, innovation ecosystems, and financing, with an emphasis on inclusivity and equitable AI benefits. The government has also launched the MahaAgri-AI Policy 2025–29, focused on agriculture, covering AI-enabled farm advisory, incubation support for agricultural startups, and dedicated funding for AI in agriculture [7].

- **Odisha:**

In May 2025, Odisha approved a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025. It is branded under an “Odisha AI Mission”, and the aim is to build into the state’s IT strategy and focus on four pillars: AI infrastructure, skill development, energy sustainability, and regulatory mechanisms [8]. Odisha’s policy outlines plans to develop the necessary AI infrastructure (including data centres), train the workforce, and promote AI startups. It identifies priority sectors for AI (including healthcare and agriculture, as well as education and disaster management) and establishes data governance measures to ensure ethical use.

- **Rajasthan:**

The state government recently announced the Rajasthan AI Policy 2025, which aims to position Rajasthan as an AI hub, with a planned AI Centre of Excellence and a focus on responsible, inclusive AI [9]. Operational details are emerging as the policy moves from announcement to implementation.

- **Jammu & Kashmir**

J&K has released a UT-level Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework in 2023 that outlines a vision, priority sectors, and governance norms for AI use in J&K, providing a reference point for future programmes. It is based on the five key pillars: (a) Data Exchange Platform and HPAIC, (b) Skilling and Education, (c) Governance, Ethics, and Privacy, (d) Research & Innovation, and (e) Security in AI [10].

- **West Bengal:**

West Bengal adopted an early policy position on AI through the AI-ML Technology Promotion Guidelines, 2020, issued by the Department of IT & Electronics to promote AI adoption in governance, industry, and digital services. Since then, the state has moved toward operational deployment [11]. The Finance Department has initiated procurement of AI-based systems for valuation and revenue administration, signalling the use of AI in core public-finance functions [12]. Also, the Home Department has constituted a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Cell within the West

Bengal Police Directorate in 2025 to institutionalise AI use in policing, including strategy development, pilot implementation, capacity building, and governance oversight. Together, these developments indicate a progression from policy intent to the deployment of applied AI in governance, finance, and law enforcement within the state [13].

- **Kerala**

The High Court of Kerala issued a policy in July 2025 governing the use of AI tools in the district judiciary, restricting their use to assistive roles and explicitly guarding against AI-generated content influencing judicial reasoning [14].

- **Uttarakhand**

Uttarakhand also launched the Uttarakhand AI Mission (2025) on November 26, 2025, at Raj Bhavan. The mission aims to leverage satellite data, real-time digital tools, and AI-driven solutions to address the state's unique developmental and geographic challenges, especially those related to its mountainous terrain and dispersed population [15]. The policy framework emphasises inclusive, sustainable development through AI-powered interventions across sectors, such as disaster management, health, agriculture, environmental monitoring, and governance. The detailed document has not been released yet.

- **Goa**

In July 2025, the Goa state government launched “Goa AI Mission 2027,” a visionary roadmap for an inclusive, future-ready AI ecosystem. The mission rests on four pillars: skilling, startups & companies, capital, and government & infrastructure [16]. During the mission's development, the Department of Information Technology, Electronics and Communications (DITE&C), Government of Goa, has also signed an MoU with the Digital India Bhashini Division (Meity) for multilingual AI solutions [17]. A key part of this mission is also the development of a Konkani Large Language Model [18].

### **1.2.2 AI initiative embedded in other policies.**

Several states are promoting AI not through standalone AI policies, but by integrating AI into broader IT, startup, data, and investment frameworks. This approach reflects a focus on enabling conditions, such as infrastructure, innovation, and skills, rather than regulatory frameworks alone.

- **Andhra Pradesh**

Andhra Pradesh has embedded AI within its cloud infrastructure and startup ecosystem. The Artificial Intelligence Cloud Hub Policy 2018–20 positioned the state as a provider of cloud and related

services through a hyperscale data centre, established by the enterprise/applicant itself or otherwise, for projects under this policy [19]. This was followed by the Innovation & Startup Policy 4.0 (2025), which identifies AI as a priority technology under its deeptech strategy and links it to incubation, infrastructure development, and investment facilitation [20].

- **Assam:**

Assam has integrated AI through its data governance framework rather than through a separate AI policy. The Operational Guidelines under the Assam State Data Policy 2022 permit the use of AI and analytics on government data to improve public service delivery, subject to governance and data protection safeguards [21]. This establishes a regulated foundation for AI use within state departments. In November 2025, the Govt of Assam signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Google Cloud on AI in Governance to establish an AI Centre of Excellence and deploy AI tools for public administration, including improved service delivery, decision-support systems, and capacity-building for government staff [22]. The progression from data-governance policy to public-sector AI deployment demonstrates Assam's shift from enabling reforms to active institutional adoption of AI in governance.

- **Gujarat:**

Gujarat has adopted an institutional approach to AI governance. A State AI Taskforce (2024) was constituted to guide policy development and coordinate AI initiatives [23]. This initiative is supported by a Five-Year Action Plan for AI Implementation (2025–30), which focuses on capacity building, pilot projects in priority sectors, and governance mechanisms, thereby embedding AI within the state's larger digital development strategy [24].

- **Haryana:**

Haryana is embedding AI through its broader digital economy and creative industry policies, with its emerging Draft Haryana IT/ITeS Policy 2024 and Haryana AVGC-XR Policy 2024 frameworks positioning AI and immersive technologies as key growth drivers and offering incentives to attract investment [25] [26]. Building on this, the state has proposed establishing a Haryana AI Mission in the 2025–26 Budget, under which one AI hub will be set up in Gurugram and another in Panchkula to train over 50,000 youth and professionals in advanced digital skills and to use data analytics to improve governance [27]. Under the Haryana AI Development Program (HAIDP), referenced in Haryana Industrial Policy 2025, the state is establishing a Global Artificial Intelligence Centre (GAIC) in Gurugram and a Haryana Advanced Computing Facility (HACF) in Panchkula as core infrastructure for AI research, high-performance computing, skilling and startup support, backed by a World Bank–assisted outlay of about ₹474 crore [28].

- **Karnataka:**

While Karnataka has not released a single unified AI policy document yet, it has woven AI into multiple state programmes and policies. Karnataka set up a Centre of Excellence in AI in Bengaluru with a ₹28 crore investment, and through its Data Centre Policy 2022, it provides generous incentives (capital subsidies, tax exemptions, land grants) to attract big data and AI infrastructure projects [29] [30]. The state's Beyond Bengaluru initiative and the Global Capability Centres (GCC) Policy (2024-2029) aim to double the number of technology hubs and leverage AI across sectors such as smart traffic management. Karnataka's IT/digital economy policies explicitly list AI as a growth area, and public departments have undertaken several AI projects [31].

- **Kerala**

Kerala integrates AI with state IT frameworks and government training programs. Kerala IT Policy 2023 includes AI, blockchain, and data centres as focus areas, with a strong emphasis on talent development and open-source technologies. Also, the capacity-building AI and data analytics program aims to train government officials to improve their internal readiness for AI-enabled governance [32].

- **Uttar Pradesh**

Uttar Pradesh has integrated AI into its investment and GCC strategy. The Global Capability Centres (GCC) Policy 2024 introduces the concept of an "AI City" in Lucknow and includes plans for Centres of Excellence to attract AI-intensive GCCs [33]. Further, Finance Bill 2025 also approves Rs. 5 crore for the development of the AI city.

- **Madhya Pradesh**

Under the Madhya Pradesh Global Capability Centres (GCC) Policy 2024, it is proposed to provide support for research and development in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity and to establish a Centre of Excellence for AI as part of the GCC ecosystem [34].

## **Further Considerations Based on Policy Landscape Analysis:**

### **1. Risk of deepening regional disparities**

The current pattern of activity risks deepening regional disparities. States with multiple, well-developed instruments are mostly concentrated in South and West India, with a few examples in Eastern and Northern India. Many other states and union territories still show limited visible activity on AI policy or institutional development. If similar AI initiatives in infrastructure, skilling, and governance are not extended to these regions, AI could become an axis of regional inequality, maybe sharper

than earlier IT-led growth, unless there is more focus on capacity-building and shared infrastructure to ensure that states with a demographic dividend are not left behind in the emerging AI economy.

## **2. Skilling is essential but underspecified.**

Skilling emerges as essential but under-specified. Most active states include AI skilling or capacity-building in their policies, but few clearly define who will be trained, for which roles, and how success will be measured. To be effective, training programmes must be better linked to local labour markets, specific state missions (for example, agriculture, health, and disaster management), and public-sector roles, such as data stewards, model auditors, and domain specialists. Without these measures, there is a risk that skilling remains a numbers-driven activity rather than a strategic tool for inclusive AI readiness.

## **2. Region-Wise AI Firms Landscape**

In this section, we'll analyse the regional distribution of AI firms and investments across India. We have used the Traxcn dataset for AI-related firms in India until September 2024. The objective of this section is to understand the development of AI entrepreneurship and capital across Indian states and cities.

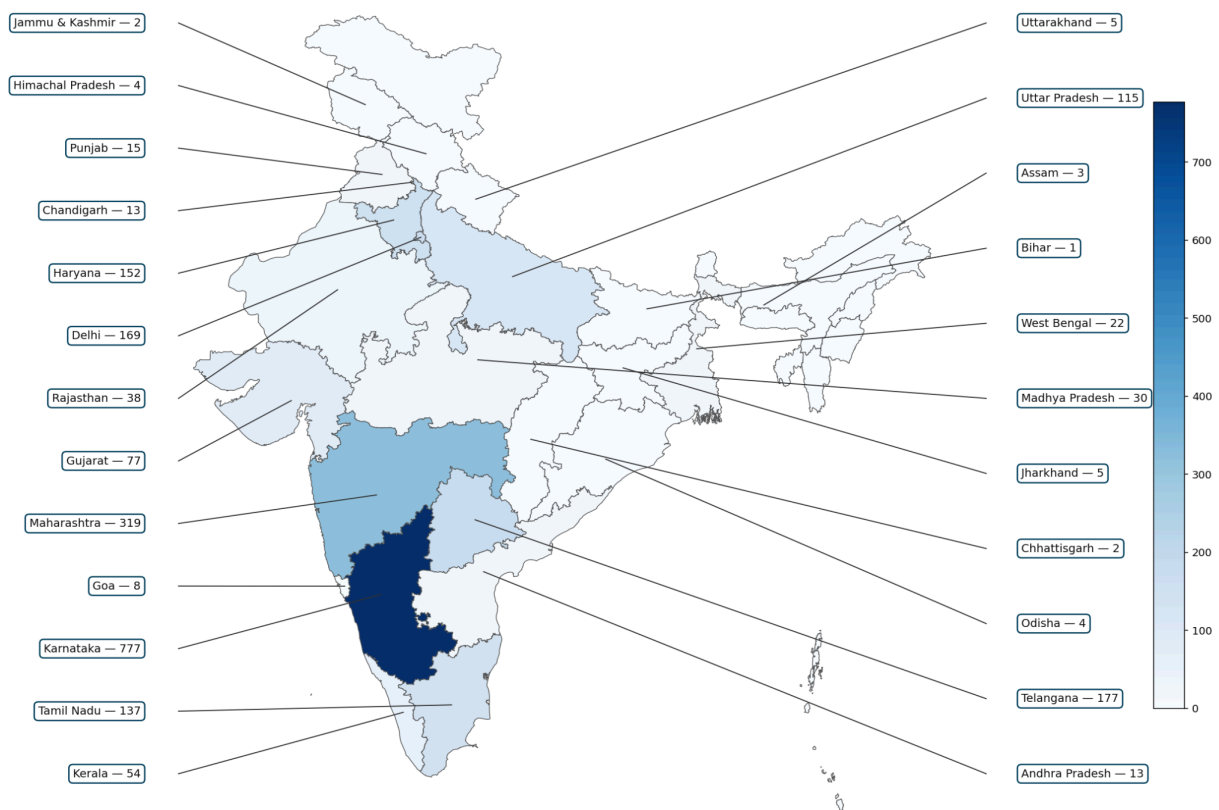
### **2.1 State-Wise Concentration of AI Firms**

The analysis for this policy brief indicates that India has more than 2,100 AI firms, geographically concentrated across 24 states and one Union Territory. State-wise, it shows a highly uneven distribution of AI entrepreneurial activity. Karnataka alone hosts more than 750 AI firms, accounting for about 36% of all AI firms in the dataset, while Maharashtra hosts 319 firms, roughly 15%. These two states represent just over half of all AI firms identified. The next list of states, such as Telangana, Delhi, Haryana, and Tamil Nadu, further reinforces this concentration. After taking these six states, they account for over 80% of all AI firms in the country.

The pattern remains strongly skewed as we move down the distribution. Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, and Rajasthan, among others, make up the top ten states and host approximately 94% of all AI firms in India. This leaves the remaining 14 states and the union territory of Chandigarh together accounting for only about 6% of the total. A group of states, including Goa, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar, each have fewer than ten AI firms and collectively contribute only a little over 2% of the national total. Bihar appears with just one AI company in the dataset.

If we group states by regions, the southern states (Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and

Andhra Pradesh) together account for just over 54% of all AI firms, while the western states (Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, and Rajasthan) contribute about 21%. The northern state (Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, and Jammu and Kashmir) accounts for about 22%. While eastern, north-eastern, and central states (Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar) together account for only around 3% of AI firms. More than three-quarters of India's AI firms are located in the South and West, even though many eastern and central states are demographically young and have substantial potential labour pools.



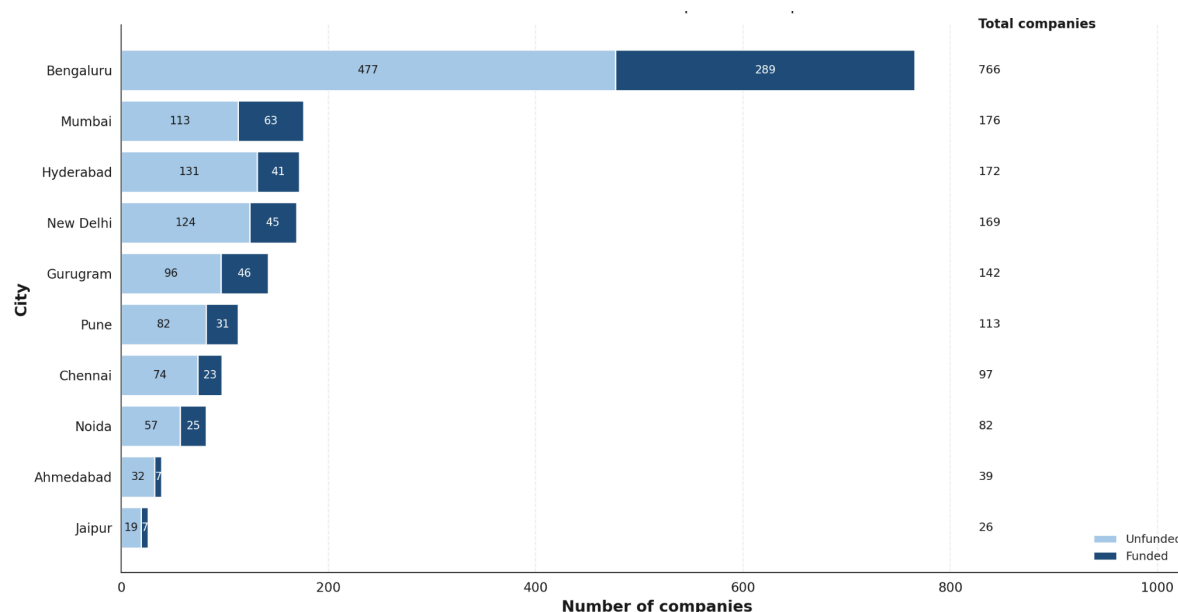
**Fig 1: No. of AI Firms state-wise/UT**  
Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

Fig. 1 points to a core–periphery structure in India's AI firms. The core consists of a small group of states, such as Karnataka and Maharashtra, joined by Delhi, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat, which combine mature IT industries, active digital and startup policies, a dense base of higher education and R&D institutions, and now a very high concentration of AI firms. Beyond this core lies a wide “periphery” of states where AI entrepreneurship is present but thinly spread and, in some cases, almost negligible. From a policy perspective, this distribution does not simply describe uneven growth; it signals a risk that AI will deepen existing regional economic disparities.

## 2.2 City-Wise Concentration of AI Firms

The distribution by city is also highly skewed. Bengaluru alone hosts 766 AI firms, which is about 36% of all AI firms in the country, and roughly 98% of Karnataka's AI firms. The next group of cities includes Mumbai, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Gurugram, Pune, Chennai, and Noida. Together with Ahmedabad and Jaipur, these cities constitute the top 10 cities for AI firms, hosting around 1,776 firms, or approximately 83% of the national total.

The top five cities (Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, New Delhi, and Gurugram) alone account for about two-thirds of all AI firms.



**Fig. 2: Top 10 Indian Cities with the highest number of AI Firms**

Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

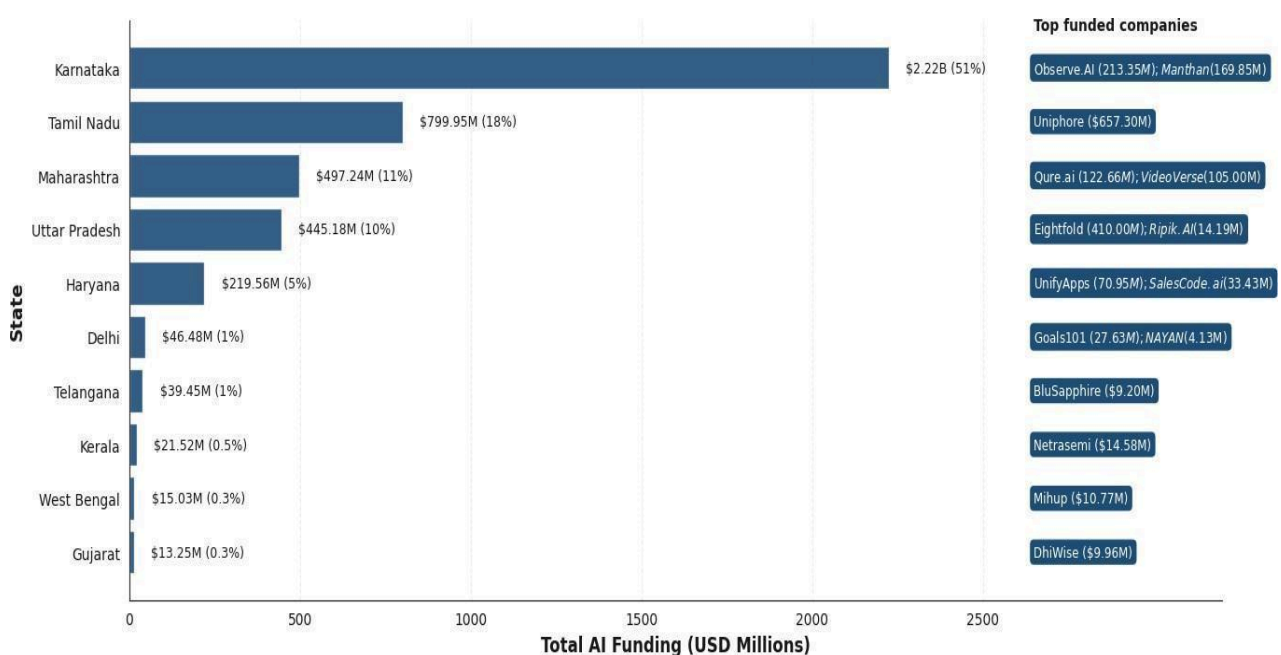
The city-wise mapping shows that within most leading states, AI activity is strongly concentrated in a single dominant city or a small cluster of cities. In Karnataka, almost all AI firms are located in Bengaluru; in Telangana, nearly the entire state's AI ecosystem is concentrated in Hyderabad; in Haryana, Gurugram accounts for more than 90% of AI firms; in Uttar Pradesh, Noida accounts for nearly three-quarters of the state's AI firms; and in Tamil Nadu, Chennai accounts for around 70% of AI firms. Even in states with two visible centres, such as Maharashtra, Mumbai and Pune together dominate the state's AI landscape, with Mumbai alone hosting more than half of Maharashtra's AI firms.

This confirms a pattern of urban primacy within states: once we move below the state level, AI entrepreneurship is not evenly spread across cities but is instead anchored in one or two metropolitan hubs.

### 3. AI Funding Landscape

#### 3.1 State-wise Distribution of AI funding

AI-focused firms in India have collectively raised around \$4.3B. Similarly, a small group of states also receives a significant portion of the funding. Karnataka alone accounts for \$2.22 B, which is about 51% of all AI in the country. Tamil Nadu receives \$799.95 M (18%), and Maharashtra receives \$497.24 M (11%). Together, these three states account for approximately \$3.52 B, or just over 81% of total AI funding. When Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are included, these five states alone account for roughly 96–97% of the total funding.



**Fig. 3: Top 10 Indian States by total funding in AI**  
Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

Below this, funding levels drop sharply. Delhi and Telangana together account for only a small additional share of national AI funding, despite being important AI company hubs. Kerala, West Bengal, and Gujarat add only modest amounts. These ten states collectively contribute approximately 99.8% of all disclosed AI funding. The remaining 14 States and the Union Territory of Chandigarh together receive only about 0.2% of total AI funding, despite some of them hosting a noticeable number of AI firms.

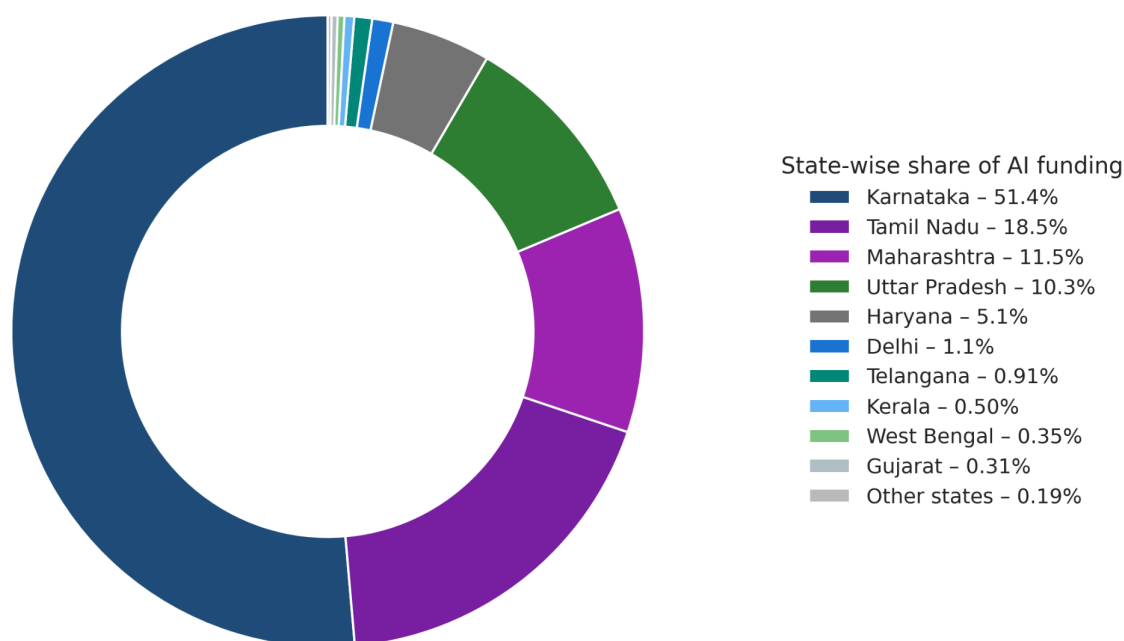
Among the states outside the top 10, only Madhya Pradesh and a few others, such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Goa, Chandigarh, Odisha, and Jharkhand, register any disclosed AI funding in the dataset, and these amounts are minimal when viewed against the national total. Several states that do appear in the firm's count register have no disclosed funding at all: Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Uttarakhand all have AI firms but zero recorded AI firm funding. While the previous subsection showed that the number of AI firms is concentrated in a core group of



states, funding analysis demonstrates that financial resources are even more tightly clustered.

When these funding figures are compared with the state-wise company numbers, a more nuanced pattern emerges:

- In Karnataka, which hosts about 36% of all AI firms, the state's 51% share of funding indicates that it is not only a large base for AI firms but also a centre for larger, later-stage deals. The average funding per company is significantly higher than the national average, suggesting the presence of many growth-stage and well-capitalised firms.



**Fig 4: State-wise Percentage Share of Funding in AI**  
Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

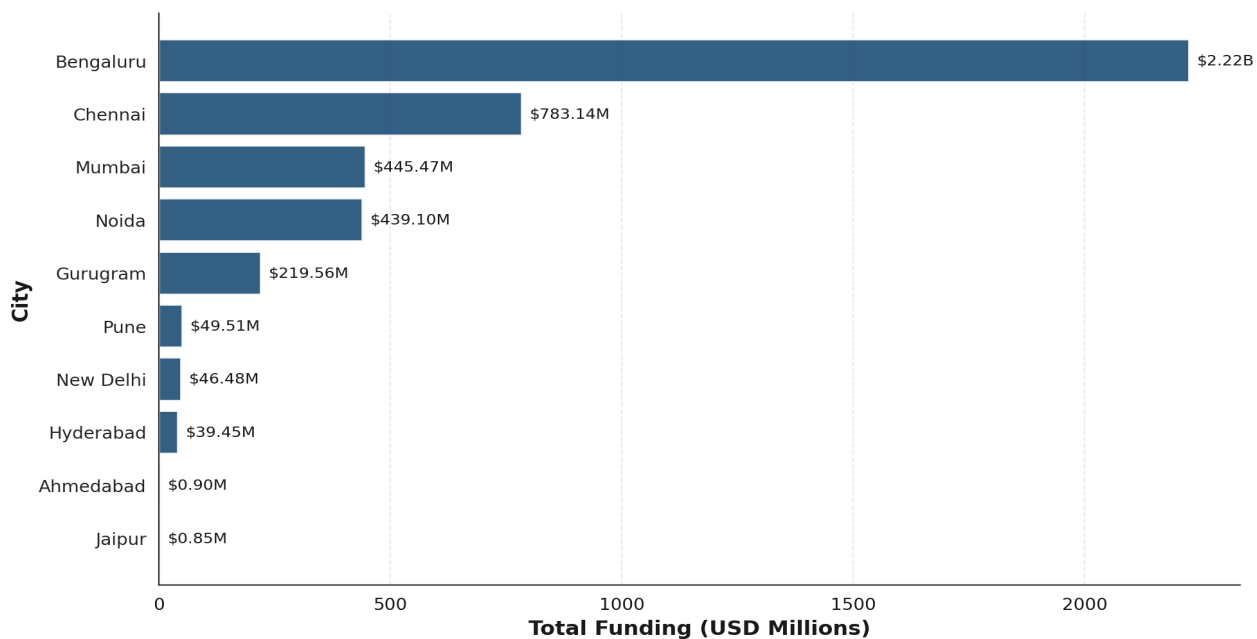
- Tamil Nadu stands out even more strongly in funding intensity. It hosts only about 6% of AI firms but receives 18% of total funding. This implies that, relative to its number of firms, Tamil Nadu's AI ecosystem is characterised by fewer but more heavily funded firms, including some large anchor firms or substantial investment rounds.
- Uttar Pradesh also shows a similar pattern: roughly 5% of firms but 10% of funding, pointing to a small number of relatively large AI ventures, particularly in and around the Noida–NCR belt.
- States such as Kerala, West Bengal, and Gujarat show modest funding shares (each below 1%), roughly in line with their modest shares of company counts, indicating ecosystems that are active but still early-stage in funding terms.

While the previous subsection showed that the number of AI firms is concentrated in a core group of states, funding analysis demonstrates that financial resources are even more tightly clustered. For an inclusive AI strategy, policy will need to address not only where AI firms are founded but also where significant AI capital is deployed and under what conditions it can be directed toward underserved regions.

### **3.2 City-Wise Distribution of AI Funding**

When we look at city-wise funding, the concentration becomes even more pronounced. The funding data show that the top 10 funded cities together account for nearly 98% of all disclosed AI startup funding, with all other cities in India sharing less than 2%. At the top of this distribution is Bengaluru, which, in line with Karnataka's 51% share of national AI funding, accounts for around half of all AI startup funding in the country. Chennai is receiving the second-largest funding, roughly one-fifth of national AI funding, despite hosting only around 4–5% of AI firms. Mumbai and Noida follow, each accounting for about a tenth of total funding. Together, these four cities, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Noida, thus absorb close to 90% of all disclosed AI startup funding, effectively constituting the financial core of India's AI city system.

Other cities, such as Gurugram, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Jaipur, also appear among the top-funded cities, but with significantly smaller individual shares of national funding. In some cases, the relationship between company presence and funding is relatively balanced: for example, Mumbai and Gurugram each have a large base of firms and a funding share that is roughly proportionate to their company share. In other cases, there is a marked divergence between the breadth of activity and the depth of capital. Hyderabad and Pune, for instance, feature prominently in the company count but capture a much smaller share of total funding. This suggests ecosystems with a broad base of firms but relatively fewer large or late-stage deals. By contrast, Chennai and Noida have a more capital-intensive profile: they host a smaller proportion of national AI firms but attract disproportionately high levels of funding, indicating the presence of fewer but more heavily capitalised firms.



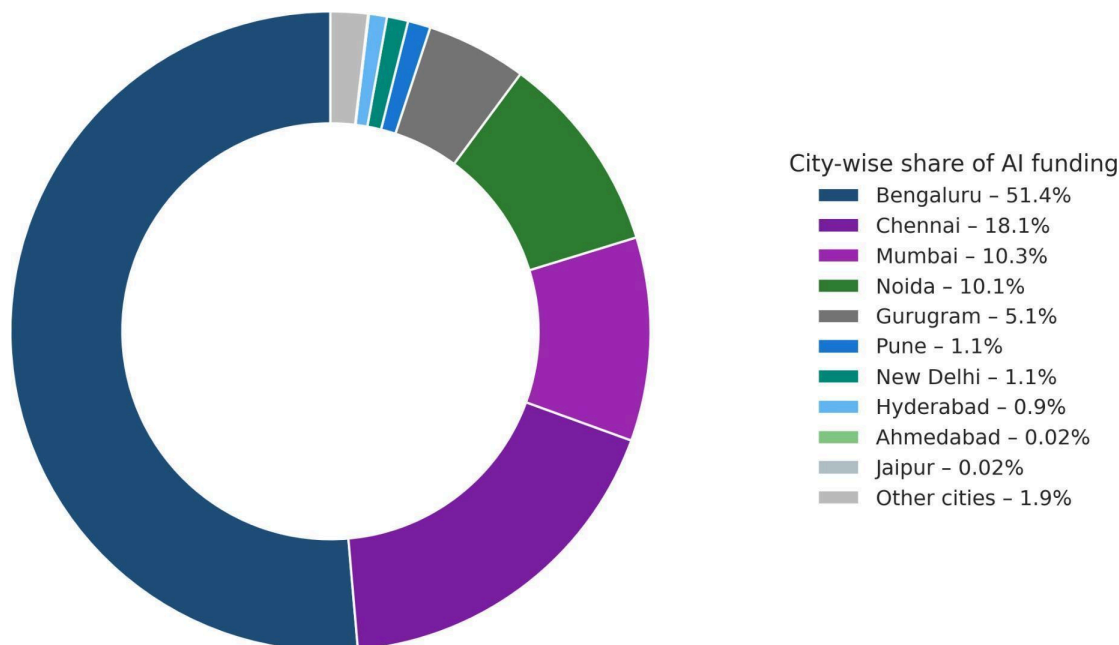
**Fig. 5: Top 10 Indian Cities by Total Funding in AI**  
Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

The city-level patterns also mirror and sharpen the state-level findings. At the state level, we saw that Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana together capture the vast majority of AI funding, with Karnataka alone accounting for 51% and Tamil Nadu for 18%. At the city level, this concentration is revealed to be driven by a handful of specific urban nodes: Bengaluru within Karnataka; Chennai within Tamil Nadu; Mumbai and to a lesser extent Pune within Maharashtra; Noida within Uttar Pradesh; and Gurugram within Haryana. In effect, the national AI map is not only a story of a few leading states but much more specifically a story of five or six metropolitan corridors: Bengaluru, the National Capital Region (New Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida), Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Chennai. These corridors collectively host the majority of firms and capture almost all available capital.

From a policy perspective, the city-wise analysis underscores three important points that cut across the regional and state-level sections.

First, the geography of AI in India is defined by multi-level concentration: a small set of states leads nationally; within them, a smaller set of cities dominates; and within those cities, a limited number of firms attract the bulk of funding.

Second, within-state disparities are as significant as interstate disparities. Many states that appear in the national core are, in practice, highly dependent on one dominant city for AI activity and investment; smaller cities and towns in those states remain weakly integrated into the AI ecosystem.



**Fig 6: City-wise Percentage Share of Funding in AI**  
Source: Traxcn (September 2025)

Third, the combination of state-level and city-level concentration creates a risk of “AI enclaves”, highly developed metropolitan hubs that are deeply plugged into global AI value chains, surrounded by a landscape of states and cities where AI entrepreneurship exists but is thinly funded and weakly connected to the national and global market.

The city-wise evidence confirms and deepens the earlier regional and state-level picture: AI firms and AI capital in India are overwhelmingly metropolitan, corridor-based, and core–periphery in structure. Any strategy aimed at building an inclusive and geographically broad-based AI ecosystem will therefore need to consider not only how resources are distributed between states but also how city-level ecosystems beyond the current core hubs can be systematically strengthened and connected to national AI value chains.

#### 4. Region-Wise AI R&D Hubs (Incubators and Accelerators)

In this section, we examine the regional distribution of AI-relevant incubators and accelerators as listed in the MeitY Startup Hub (MSH) database until October 2025. The list includes incubation and innovation centres hosted by universities, IITs, IIITs, NITs, and other institutions across multiple states.

Within the broader category of R&D hubs, incubators and accelerators play related but distinct roles. Incubators typically support very early-stage teams: they provide space, mentoring, basic technical support, and connections while ideas are being validated and prototypes built. Accelerators usually work with somewhat more mature startups for a fixed period, offering intensive mentoring, access to

investors and corporate partners, and structured programs to help teams refine their product and business models and scale faster.

For AI in particular, both kinds of institutions are critical. As we have seen in previous policy briefs, AI firms are often capital- and compute-intensive and depend on access to specialised talent, data, domain experts, and early customers. Incubators can help de-risk the research-to-prototype phase in university and research settings, while accelerators are important in bridging the prototype-to-market gap by curating pilots, investor exposure, and corporate partnerships for scale-up.

#### **4.1 Distribution of AI Incubators by State and Region**

The analysis in this section is based primarily on incubators listed in the MeitY Startup Hub (MSH) database and should therefore be interpreted as a mapping of the institutions captured within this dataset rather than an exhaustive census of India's incubation ecosystem. Some major state-supported and independently operated innovation hubs may not be represented in the MSH list.

The MSH list indicates an uneven distribution of AI-relevant incubators across India. A small group of states has a dense network of incubation centres, while many others have only one or two. [Annexure 1](#) provides a detailed list of incubators by state and city.

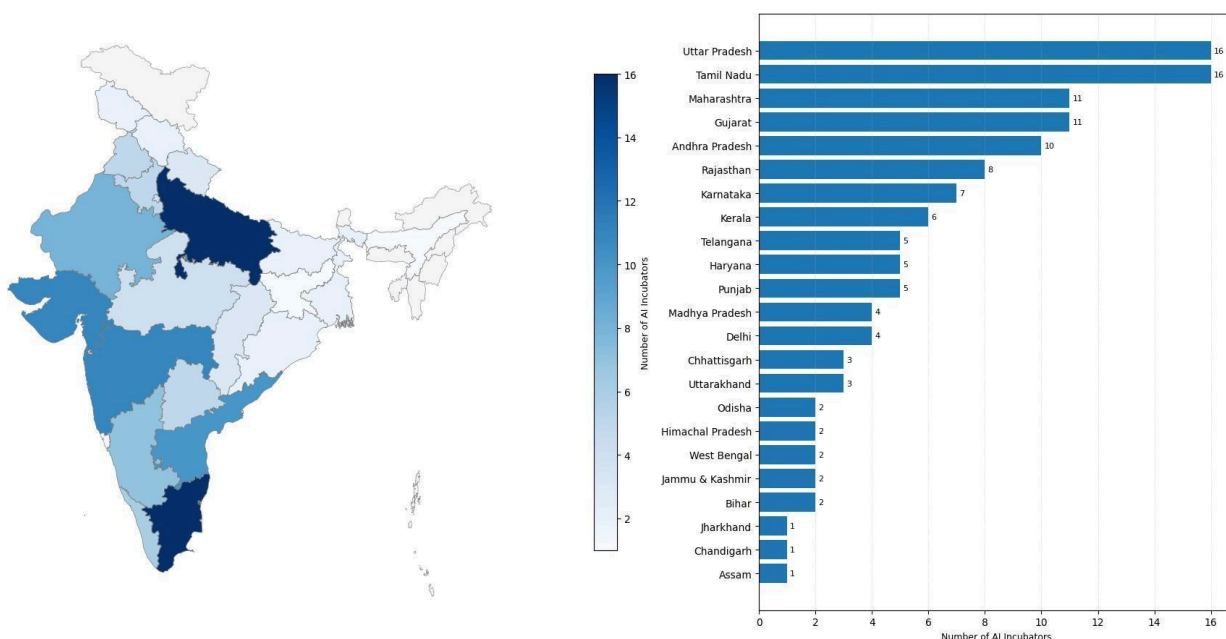
Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh appear as the most incubator-rich states, each hosting around sixteen incubators. Tamil Nadu's centres are spread across Chennai, Coimbatore, Erode, Tiruchirappalli, Namakkal, and Chengalpattu, anchored by well-known institutions such as IIT Madras, PSG-STEP, SRM, Karunya, and other engineering colleges. Uttar Pradesh's incubators span Greater Noida and Ghaziabad, Kanpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, and Meerut and include IIT Kanpur's SIIC, BHU's AIC-Mahamana, Shiv Nadar, and several private engineering institutions.

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka also have sizeable incubation networks. Maharashtra's incubators are concentrated in Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Nashik, and Amravati (for example, SINE at IIT Bombay; COEP's Bhau Institute; and AIC-Pinnacle), while Gujarat's are spread across Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot, Surat, Gandhinagar, and Vallabh Vidyanagar. Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur, and Tirupati are the focal points of Andhra Pradesh's centres, which are a combination of engineering colleges and universities. Rajasthan's network draws on IIT Jodhpur, BITS Pilani, and other institutions, while Karnataka's includes IISc's SID, IKP EDEN, and other Bengaluru- and Hubli-based centres.

States such as Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttarakhand have visible but thinner networks. In these states, incubators are mostly located in one or two urban centers (for example, Kozhikode, Palakkad, and Kottayam in Kerala; Mohali/Patiala in Punjab; Gurugram in

Haryana; Indore and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh; Hyderabad and Warangal in Telangana; and Dehradun and Roorkee in Uttarakhand).

States such as Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh are represented by one or two incubators each, often anchored in a single academic or R&D institution (for example, IIT Patna in Bihar, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad in Jharkhand, IIT Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, KIIT and CV Raman College of Engineering in Odisha, IISER Kolkata in West Bengal, and C-DAC CINE in Assam). While these centres have important footholds, they do not yet constitute dense ecosystems.



**Fig. 7: State-Wise Heatmap and Distribution of Incubators**  
Source: MeitY Startup Hub (November 2025)

This distribution shows a familiar regional pattern. The densest networks of incubators are found in southern and western states (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat), along with the northern industrial belt (Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Haryana). Eastern, north-eastern, and some central states are present but under-represented, often with just one or two nodes. This aligns with broader ecosystem estimates: recent analyses suggest India now has close to 1,250 incubators and accelerators, with over 60% concentrated in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Karnataka, and MeitY itself reports more than 480 incubators linked to its programmes<sup>1</sup>. The list used here is therefore best understood as an AI- and ICT-relevant subset of a larger national incubation infrastructure that is itself regionally skewed.

A broader view of state-supported innovation infrastructure also identifies important institutions that are not fully captured in the MSH-based mapping. Telangana, for example, hosts T-Hub, a major government-supported startup and innovation hub in Hyderabad that provides incubation, acceleration, market access, and ecosystem support across technology sectors. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh has established the Ratan Tata Innovation Hub (RTIH) as a state-wide hub-and-spoke initiative, with a central hub and regional centres supporting startups and innovation, including in AI and other emerging technologies.

## 4.2 Academic anchoring and AI relevance

An important feature of the MSH list is the strong academic anchoring of AI-relevant incubators. A large proportion are hosted by or closely affiliated with centrally funded technical institutions and leading private universities:

- **IITs** (for example, IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Kanpur, IIT Jodhpur, IIT Mandi, IIT Hyderabad, IIT Palakkad, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, IIT Patna, IIT Roorkee),
- **IIITs** (for example, IIIT Delhi, IIIT Hyderabad, IIIT Kottayam, IIIT Sri City/Tirupati),
- **NITs** and **IISERs** (for example, NIT Calicut, IISER Kolkata), and
- **Other research-focused universities and engineering colleges** (for example, IISc, KIIT, SRM, BITS Pilani).

This pattern has two important implications. First, it suggests that AI incubation capacity is developing in areas with existing technical talent and research infrastructure, particularly around engineering colleges and research universities. This reinforces the link between AI R&D and AI entrepreneurship, particularly in states with strong higher-education systems. Second, it also means that in states with fewer high-quality technical institutions, both AI research and AI incubation are likely to be thin, reinforcing regional disparities in their ability to generate and commercialise AI innovations.

## 4.3 Relationship to AI firms and funding geography

When the incubation network is read alongside the earlier firms and funding analysis, three connections stand out.

First, in several leading states, the incubator network aligns closely with firms and funding concentration. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat not only host a large share of AI firms and the bulk of AI funding but also feature multiple AI-relevant incubators across their main cities. In these states, incubators are embedded within already mature ecosystems,

Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Pune, Noida, Ahmedabad, and Vadodara, and serve to deepen an existing pipeline from research labs to startups to growth-stage capital. This co-location of talent, R&D infrastructure, incubators, and venture capital creates strong positive feedback loops for AI in these regions.

Second, there are states where incubation capacity is ahead of the local AI funding curve. Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are notable examples: each has a relatively rich network of incubators, drawing on multiple universities and technical institutions, but currently modest AI startup funding and company counts compared with the leading states. Telangana, similarly, has a strong set of AI-focused incubators, IIIT Hyderabad's CIE, IIT Hyderabad's i-TIC, GNITS AIC, and others, and a high number of AI firms. Yet, it accounts for only a small share of total funding. In these states, the incubation network may be laying the groundwork for future AI growth. Still, without corresponding capital flows and policy support, there is a risk that promising AI ventures remain stuck at early stages or migrate to more capital-rich states.

Third, there are "infrastructure–market gaps" in states with very limited AI startup and funding activity. Examples include the North-Eastern region (Assam), parts of eastern India (Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal), and hill states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir). In these states, a single IIT- or university-linked incubator may serve as the primary node for AI-related experimentation but is not yet embedded in a broader local AI ecosystem.

#### **4.4 Emerging regional picture**

Overall, the region-wise pattern of AI incubators and accelerators can be summarised as follows:

Based on the MeitY Startup Hub dataset used in this analysis,

- Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh have the largest identified networks of AI-relevant incubators.
- A second group, including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Karnataka, also has sizeable incubation networks, while Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttarakhand have visible but relatively thinner representation in the dataset.
- Several eastern, north-eastern, and other states have only one or two identified incubation nodes.

This configuration has two contrasting interpretations from a policy perspective. On the one hand, it shows that India has successfully built a national infrastructure of AI-relevant incubators centred around its strongest academic and technological regions, which can be leveraged to accelerate AI research commercialisation and support deeptech entrepreneurship. On the other hand, it also reveals that this infrastructure is itself regionally concentrated and that in many states where AI firms



and funding are already weak, the institutional scaffolding for AI R&D and incubation is also limited.

## 5. AI Accelerators and Scale-up Support

For accelerators, the MeitY Startup Hub data helps to identify around a dozen AI-relevant accelerators distributed across a limited set of states. These include:

- In the South, accelerators such as Sri Eshwar Ignite Startup Accelerator (Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu), Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre, The GAIN (Bengaluru, Karnataka), Anthill Scale Foundation (Hyderabad, Telangana), Maker Village (Ernakulam, Kerala), and Amrita Technology Business Incubator (Kollam, Kerala).
- The North and NCR host INDIA ACCELERATOR (Gurugram, Haryana), Padup Ventures (Delhi), and Amity Technology Incubator (Noida, Uttar Pradesh).
- In the West and East: Agri Business Incubation Foundation, IIT Kharagpur (Kharagpur, West Bengal), PIEDS (Pilani, Rajasthan), and AIC GIM Foundation (Panaji, Goa).

Many of these entities operate as hybrid models, combining incubation and acceleration functions (for example, Amity Technology Incubator or Amrita TBI), but all offer structured programmes to help startups move beyond the idea or prototype stage.

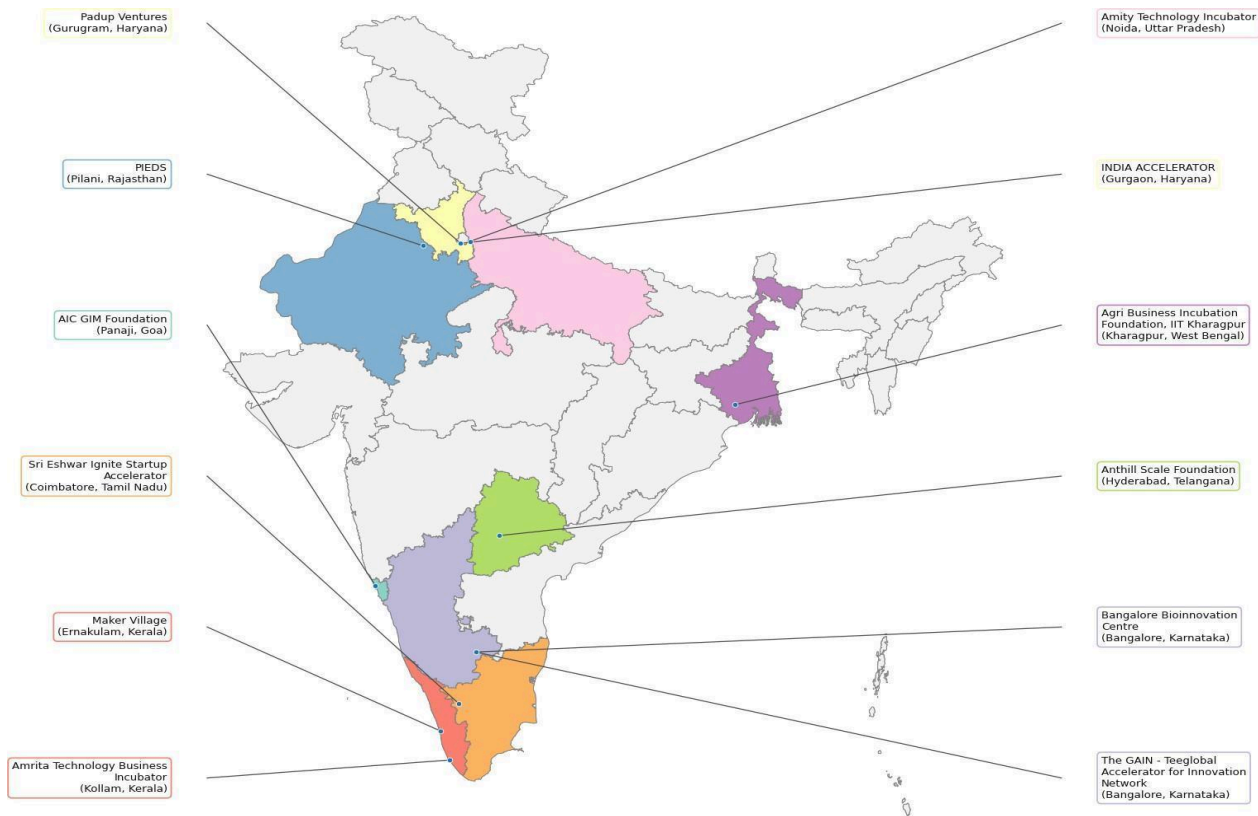
The geographic pattern of accelerators largely reinforces the core–periphery picture observed in the analysis of AI firms, funding, and incubators. Most accelerators are located in:

- States that already dominate AI funding and company counts (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana), and
- Cities that appear as key nodes in the AI cities (Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Gurugram, Noida, Delhi, and Ernakulam).

In other words, the areas with the highest concentration of AI firms and investment activity also provide the strongest support for AI scale-ups. This creates deep pipelines in a few hubs: for example, the corridor from IISc/SID and Maker Village-type hardware/IoT ecosystems to the Bangalore Bio-innovation Centre and GAIN in Bengaluru, or from IIT Madras and Coimbatore-based engineering colleges to Sri Eshwar Ignite and other Coimbatore-based programs. In the NCR, INDIA ACCELERATOR and Padup Ventures are embedded in the broader Delhi–Gurugram–Noida startup network, which already commands large volumes of investment.

At the same time, the map of accelerators also highlights a small number of “gateway” locations in otherwise under-represented regions. Examples include:

- IIT Kharagpur's Agri Business Incubation Foundation in West Bengal, which anchors AI and deep-tech applications in agriculture and rural development in eastern India.
- AIC GIM Foundation in Goa, which provides an entry point for startups in a state with a very small AI company and funding base.



**Fig. 8: AI Accelerators State-wise**  
Source: MeitY Startup Hub (November 2025)

When read together with the incubator and investment data, three critical observations emerge:

1. Scale-up infrastructure is even scarcer and more concentrated than incubation infrastructure:

While many states now have at least one academic incubator, only a smaller subset of states host dedicated or hybrid accelerators. Several states that appear in the incubator list (for example, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Assam, and Bihar) have no identified AI-relevant accelerators in this dataset. This means that firms in these regions may have local support for very early stages but must look outward, to Bengaluru, NCR, or other hubs, for structured scale-up support and investor access.

## 2. Accelerators amplify existing regional advantages:

In Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and the NCR, accelerators are layered on top of dense AI startup populations, significant AI funding flows, and strong academic incubators and R&D institutions.

## 3. This stacking of talent, incubators, accelerators, and capital in the same corridors (Bengaluru, Chennai/Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Delhi–Gurugram–Noida) helps these regions move quickly from research to market. It reinforces their position as national AI command centres.

## 4. There is a clear missing middle in many states:

In several states outside the core hubs, the policy and institutional effort has focused on seeding incubators (often in universities) and on high-level AI or digital policies, but scale-up mechanisms remain thin or absent. Without accelerators or equivalent scale-up vehicles, the risk is that promising AI prototypes and early-stage firms in these states either plateau at a local scale or migrate to the main hubs to access investors and customers.

In this paper, these patterns are visualised through three maps: (i) a state-wise map of academic AI incubators, (ii) a state-wise map of AI accelerators, and (iii) a heatmap of incubator counts by state. Taken together, they show that India has built an impressive and growing base of AI-relevant R&D hubs, but that both incubation and acceleration capacities are spatially concentrated in the same southern, western, and NCR corridors that already dominate AI firms and funding.

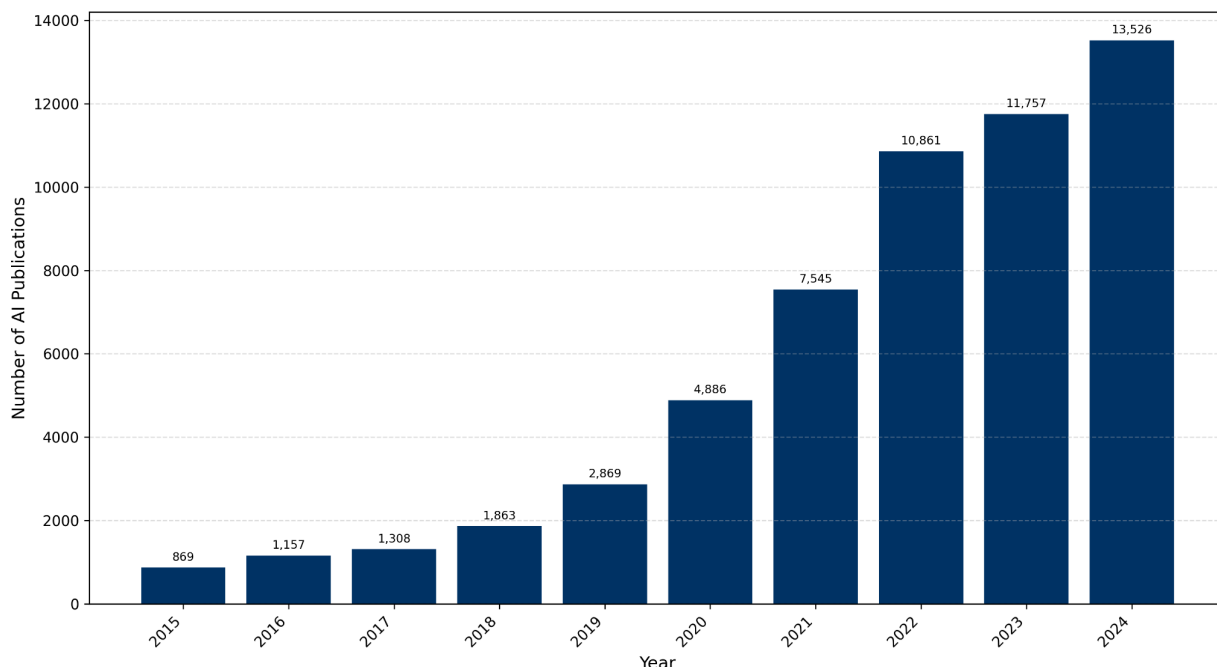
# 6. AI Publications in India: Scale, Institutions, and Regional Patterns

In this section, we utilised Web of Science (WoS) publication data to examine the research and knowledge-production aspects of India's AI ecosystem. Publications are a key proxy for AI R&D capacity: they reflect where new ideas, methods, and applications are being developed and which institutions are most active in pushing the AI research frontier. They complement the earlier sections on AI firms, investment, and R&D hubs by showing who generates the underlying knowledge that later feeds into AI products, firms, and policy applications. An AI publication, in this context, refers to an article indexed in Web of Science and tagged with AI-relevant keywords. Over time, the volume and distribution of such publications provide a structured way to track how India's AI research base is evolving and where it is geographically anchored.

## 6.1 Growth in AI publications (2015–2024)

Over the last decade, India has seen very rapid growth in AI-related publications. Between 2015 and

2024, the number of AI publications per year increased from 869 to 13,526, for a total of 56,641 publications<sup>2</sup> over the ten-year period. This implies roughly a 15- to 16-fold increase in annual output and an average annual growth rate on the order of 35–36% per year.



**Fig. 9: Y-o-Y Publication in AI in India**  
Source: Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics (Dec 2025)

The growth has not been linear. The period from 2015 to 2018 shows a steady but moderate rise. From 2019 onwards, the curve steepens sharply: 2,869 publications in 2019; 4,886 in 2020; 7,545 in 2021; 10,861 in 2022; 11,757 in 2023; and 13,526 in 2024. The strongest acceleration is clearly visible from 2020 on, coinciding with the broader global surge in AI research, increased availability of compute and data, and a rapid expansion of AI-related research programs across Indian universities and institutes.

This trajectory has two important implications. First, it confirms that AI has become a major research stream across engineering, computer science, and even some application domains (health, agriculture, energy, etc.). Second, the sharp upward trend suggests that India's AI research capacity is still in a phase of active expansion, rather than having plateaued. This is consistent with the rapid build-out of AI Centres of Excellence, dedicated AI labs, and AI-focused incubators described in the R&D hubs section.

## 6.2 Top public institutions by publication volume

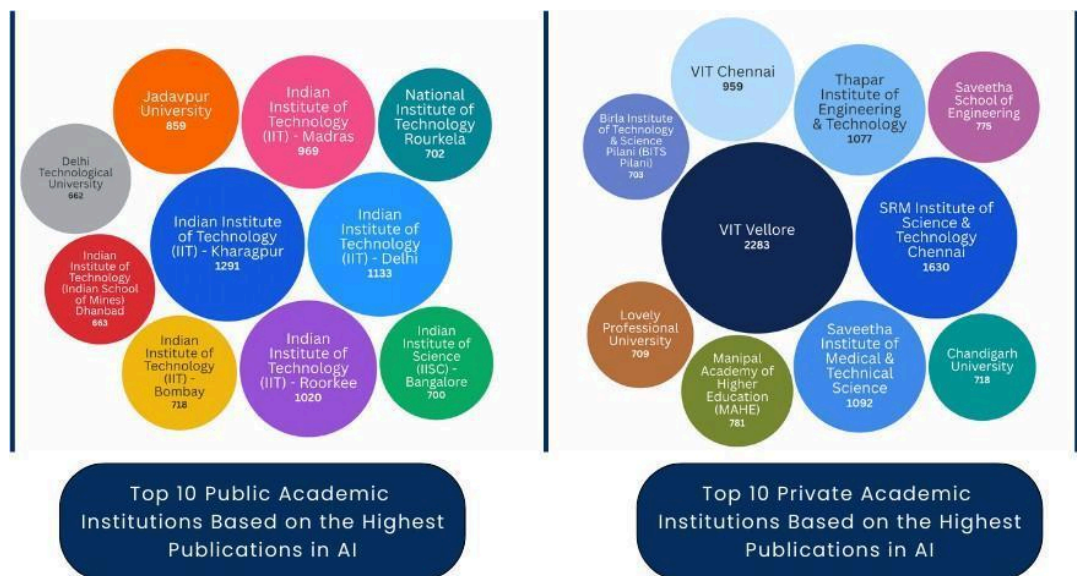
The data on the top 10 public academic institutions by number of AI publications shows a familiar

<sup>2</sup> India recorded 56,641 unique AI-related publications. However, organisation-wise publication counts are not additive because a single publication may be attributed to multiple institutions in cases of collaboration. Therefore, the sum of institutional counts will be higher than the national total.

pattern: a small group of elite technical institutions account for a very large share of India's AI research output.

These ten public institutions account for 8,717 AI publications, a substantial portion of India's public academic institutions' AI research output in WoS. Several features are noteworthy:

- The list is dominated by IITs, with six IIT campuses (Kharagpur, Delhi, Roorkee, Madras, Bombay, and ISM Dhanbad are in the top ten, with IISc Bangalore recognised as the premier research institution).



**Fig 10: Top Public and Private Academic Institutions by Number of Publications**

Source: *Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics (Dec 2025)*

- There is significant representation from eastern India through IIT Kharagpur, Jadavpur University, and NIT Rourkela and from the eastern region, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad.
- The Delhi cluster (IIT Delhi and DTU) is prominent, reflecting the NCR's role not only as a startup and funding centre but also as a major research hub. Regions such as Karnataka (IISc), Maharashtra (IIT Bombay), Tamil Nadu (IIT Madras), and West Bengal (IIT Kharagpur, Jadavpur) collectively show that AI research capacity tracks many of the same states that are strong in firms and incubators, but with somewhat better coverage of the East than we saw in startup and funding data.

This institutional map is more geographically spread than the AI firms and funding map, but still shows a concentration in a limited set of states and metropolitan regions.

### 6.3 Top private institutions by publication volume

The private academic institutions have also emerged as significant contributors to AI publications. The top 10 private institutions, by AI publication count, are:

Collectively, these ten private institutions account for 10,727 AI publications, more than the combined output of the top 10 public institutions in this dataset. Two patterns stand out:

- There is an exceptionally strong Tamil Nadu: VIT Vellore, VIT Chennai, SRM, Saveetha Institute, and Saveetha School of Engineering together contribute a very large share of private-sector AI publications. This reflects Tamil Nadu's dense network of private engineering colleges and universities and aligns closely with its strong incubation infrastructure and growing AI startup activity.
- A northern private cluster is visible in Punjab/Chandigarh (Thapar, Chandigarh University, and LPU) and BITS Pilani in Rajasthan, with MAHE in Karnataka providing a southern counterpart. These institutions are often located in states that, while not always at the top of the AI funding table, play an important role in producing AI-skilled graduates and research outputs. The volume of AI publications from private institutions indicates that AI research is not confined to central institutes. Instead, a significant share of teaching-oriented universities and private engineering colleges are actively publishing in AI, often in applied domains. This helps explain the broad availability of AI-skilled graduates, which feeds into startup hiring and corporate AI teams, especially in states such as Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Karnataka.

### 6.4 Highly cited AI publications (Top 10% documents)

Publication volume alone does not capture research impact. To understand quality and influence, the dataset also tracks how many AI publications from each institution fall in the top 10% of most cited documents. For public and private institutions, the top 10 institutions by documents in the top 10% are:



**Fig 11: Top Public and Private Academic Institutions by Highly Cited AI Publications**  
Source: Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics (Dec 2025)

Several insights emerge from these lists:

### 1. Overlap but also diversification of high-impact institutions

IIT Delhi, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Roorkee, IIT Madras, IIT Bombay, Jadavpur, VIT Vellore, SRM, Saveetha, and Thapar also appear as leaders in the top 10% of documents, indicating that they combine high volume with high impact. At the same time, some institutions that do not appear at the very top of the volume list (for example, IIT Indore, NIT Patna, NIT Kurukshetra, UPES and Symbiosis) rank strongly in citation impact, suggesting that high-quality AI research is emerging in a more diverse set of locations, including central and eastern India (Indore, Patna, Kurukshetra, and Dehradun).

### 2. Regional broadening of impactful research

The presence of institutions such as NIT Patna (Bihar), IIT Indore (Madhya Pradesh), NIT Kurukshetra (Haryana), UPES (Uttarakhand), and Symbiosis (Maharashtra) among top-decile contributors suggests that high-impact AI research is more geographically spread than startup funding or incubators. While absolute numbers remain smaller than in the metros, these institutions show that strong research clusters can emerge outside the traditional tech hubs, particularly when anchored in focused programmes and institutional support.

## 6.5 Connection to the broader regional AI ecosystem

When viewed alongside the earlier sections, the AI publication landscape offers three important,

system-level insights.

First, the geography of AI research is broader than the geography of AI firms and funding, but it is still concentrated in a relatively small set of states and cities. Many of the institutions listed above are located in the same corridors that dominate AI firms and investment. This alignment helps explain why these regions have become AI hubs, with strong pipelines from research to incubation, acceleration, and venture funding.

Second, the publication data also highlight several regions that are research-active but under-represented in startup and funding maps. Eastern India (Kharagpur, Kolkata, Rourkela, and Dhanbad), parts of central India (Indore), and some northern and hill states (Patna, Kurukshetra, and Dehradun) appear as meaningful contributors to high-quality AI research. Therefore, these regions possess latent AI R&D capacity that AI firms' numbers or investment flows do not yet fully reflect. Strengthening incubators, accelerators, and state-level AI missions in these locations could help convert research strength into entrepreneurial and economic outcomes.

Third, the combination of rapid growth in publication output and a high concentration in a small set of institutions indicates that India's AI research base is both expanding and stratified. A relatively small number of universities and institutes, public and private, are driving a large share of AI knowledge production and impact. This is a strength in terms of global competitiveness, but it also raises concerns about access and inclusion: students and researchers in many states still have limited exposure to cutting-edge AI research environments, which may, in turn, limit the diversity of problems and contexts that Indian AI research addresses.

## **7. Way forward**

The analysis in this brief indicates that India's AI ecosystem is growing quickly but unevenly. Across all dimensions we analysed, the ecosystem is concentrated in a small group of states and metropolitan corridors. Many other states are only weakly connected to the AI economy. States are using different entry points into AI, sometimes as per their priorities.

Two broad insights emerge from this policy brief. First, India has a strong and increasingly sophisticated AI base, but its geographic spread is narrow, centred on a few powerful corridors. Second, there is significant untapped potential in regions that have few elements of the AI ecosystem, such as research capacity or incubation infrastructure, but lack the capital, scale-up support, or targeted state missions needed to turn these assets into full AI hubs.

This brief has not attempted to prescribe specific interventions. Instead, it has outlined the regional and institutional landscape against which policymakers can evaluate future choices. Evidence suggests that the next phase of India's AI strategy will need to address two tasks simultaneously:



consolidating existing hubs as globally competitive AI centres and broadening the geographical scope of opportunity so that more states, cities, and institutions can meaningfully participate in AI-led growth. To ensure that India's AI trajectory is both globally competitive and regionally inclusive, it will be central to design instruments that link infrastructure with skills and research with entrepreneurship while deliberately focusing on under-represented regions.

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## **Annexure**

| State          | City           | Incubator Name                                                                                          |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | Visakhapatnam  | 1. Vignans Institute of Information Technology                                                          |
|                |                | 2. Venture Development Centre                                                                           |
|                |                | 3. IIM Visakhapatnam Incubation Center (IIMV FIELD)                                                     |
|                | Tadepalligudem | 1. SASI Incubation Center                                                                               |
|                | Tirupati       | 1. Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development at IIITS (CIEDI)                              |
|                |                | 2. Spmvv society for innovation incubation entrepreneurship – Technology Business Incubator (SSIIE-TBI) |
|                | Vijayawada     | 1. VR Siddhartha TBI Foundation                                                                         |
|                |                | 2. VITAP TBI Foundation                                                                                 |
|                | Guntur         | 1. Hatchlab Research Centre                                                                             |
|                |                | 2. KL Technology Incubators Foundation                                                                  |
| Assam          | Guwahati       | 1. C-DAC CINE                                                                                           |
| Bihar          | Patna          | 1. Incubation Centre IIT Patna                                                                          |
|                |                | 2. Bihar Entrepreneurs Association Enterprising Zone                                                    |
| Chandigarh     | Chandigarh     | 1. CHITKARA INNOVATION INCUBATOR FOUNDATION (CIIF)                                                      |
| Chhattisgarh   | Bilaspur       | 1. CVRU iTBI                                                                                            |
|                | Durg           | 1. Rungta College Technology Business Incubator                                                         |
|                | Raipur         | 1. 36 INC, Raipur, Chhattisgarh                                                                         |
| Delhi          | Delhi          | 1. IIITD Innovation and Incubation Center                                                               |
|                |                | 2. SSCBS Innovation and Incubation Foundation                                                           |
|                |                | 3. IHFC – Technology Innovation Hub of IIT Delhi                                                        |
|                |                | 4. Amity Innovation Incubator, Gurugram                                                                 |
| Gujarat        | Vadodara       | 1. Krishna Educational Foundation                                                                       |
|                |                | 2. GU Incubation Innovation Technology and Applied Research Council                                     |
|                |                | 3. Navrachana Innovation Foundation                                                                     |
|                |                | 4. Parul Innovation and Entrepreneurship Research Centre (PIERC)                                        |
|                | Ahmedabad      | 1. Antrapreneur – The Business Incubator                                                                |

|                  |                          |                                                                              |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  |                          | 2. Gujarat University Startup and Entrepreneurship Council                   |
|                  |                          | 3. CIIE Initiatives                                                          |
|                  | Gandhinagar              | 1. Karnavati Innovation and Incubation Foundation                            |
|                  | Surat                    | 1. Dholakia Incub8 Foundation (INCUB8)                                       |
|                  | Vallabh Vidyanagar       | 1. CVM University Innovation and Startup Center (CVMUISC)                    |
|                  | Rajkot                   | 1. K S Patel Centre for Entrepreneurship                                     |
| Haryana          | Gurugram                 | 1. The Circle Founders Club                                                  |
|                  |                          | 2. Startup Stairs Private Limited                                            |
|                  | Sidhrawali               | 1. ACIC-BMU Foundation                                                       |
|                  | Panipat                  | 1. I-Canvas (PIET Incubation Centre)                                         |
|                  | Yamunanagar              | 1. Entrepreneurship Promotion and Incubation Council                         |
| Himachal Pradesh | Mandi                    | 1. IIT Mandi iHub and HCl Foundation                                         |
|                  |                          | 2. IIT Mandi iHub and HCl Foundation                                         |
| Jammu & Kashmir  | Jammu                    | 1. Institute Incubation and Innovation Council                               |
|                  | Samba                    | 1. CUJSITEC                                                                  |
| Jharkhand        | Dhanbad                  | 1. CIIE IIT ISM Dhanbad Foundation                                           |
| Karnataka        | Bengaluru                | 1. REVA Aspiring Youth Foundation                                            |
|                  |                          | 2. IKP EDEN (IKP Knowledge Park Engineering Design Entrepreneurship Network) |
|                  |                          | 3. Catalyst for Women Entrepreneurship                                       |
|                  |                          | 4. CMRIT Incubation Center                                                   |
|                  |                          | 5. Society for Innovation and Development – IISc                             |
|                  | Belagavi                 | 1. Visvesvaraya Research and Innovation Foundation                           |
|                  | Hubli                    | 1. KLE CTIE – Centre for Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship          |
| Kerala           | Kalpetta                 | 1. IEDC WMOC                                                                 |
|                  | Ernakulam                | 1. Federal Labz                                                              |
|                  | Kottayam (Valavoor P.O.) | 1. AIC IIIT Kottayam Foundation                                              |
|                  | Kottayam                 | 1. TBI RIT                                                                   |
|                  | Palakkad                 | 1. IIT Palakkad Technology IHub Foundation                                   |
|                  | Kozhikode                | 1. Technology Business Incubator NIT Calicut (TBI NITC)                      |
| Madhya Pradesh   | Indore                   | 1. DAVV Incubation Centre                                                    |
|                  |                          | 2. IITI Advanced Centre for Entrepreneurship (ACE)                           |

|             |             |                                                                          |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |             | Foundation                                                               |
|             | Gwalior     | 1. Technology Innovation and Incubation Centre                           |
|             | Bhopal      | 1. Anupam Innovation and Incubation Center                               |
| Maharashtra | Mumbai      | 1. Research Innovation Incubation Design Laboratory Foundation           |
|             |             | 2. MU IDEAS Foundation                                                   |
|             |             | 3. Incubein Foundation                                                   |
|             |             | 4. Marathwada Accelerator for Growth and Incubation Council              |
|             |             | 5. Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay        |
|             | Pune        | 1. PCCOE CIIL – Centre for Innovation Incubation and Linkages Forum      |
|             |             | 2. COEP's Bhau Institute of Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Leadership |
|             |             | 3. AIC-Pinnacle Entrepreneurship Forum                                   |
|             | Nagpur      | 1. YCCE TBI Foundation                                                   |
|             | Amravati    | 1. SGBAU Research and Incubation Foundation                              |
|             | Nashik      | 1. SANDIP Technology Business Incubator                                  |
| Odisha      | Bhubaneswar | 1. AIC-CV Raman College of Engineering Foundation                        |
|             |             | 2. KIIT Technology Business Incubator (KIIT TBI)                         |
| Punjab      | Mohali      | 1. NEURON                                                                |
|             |             | 2. Plaksha Incubation Centre                                             |
|             | Patiala     | 1. Venture Lab TIET (STEP-TIET)                                          |
|             | Bathinda    | 1. Baba Farid School of Entrepreneurship                                 |
|             | S.A.S Nagar | 1. i-RISE Technology Business Incubator                                  |
| Rajasthan   | Jaipur      | 1. Arya College of Engineering                                           |
|             |             | 2. LNMIIT Centre for Entrepreneurship                                    |
|             | Jodhpur     | 1. IITJ Technology Innovation and Start-up Center                        |
|             |             | 2. Technology Innovation & Start-up Center (TISC), IIT Jodhpur           |
|             | Tonk        | 1. AIC Banasthali Vidyapith Foundation                                   |
|             | Jhunjhunu   | 1. BITS BioCyTiH Foundation                                              |
|             | Udaipur     | 1. IIM Udaipur Incubation Center                                         |
| Tamil Nadu  | Coimbatore  | 1. Pilani Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Society            |
|             |             | 1. CODISSIA Defence Innovation and Atal Incubation Centre                |

|               |               |                                                              |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
|               |               | 2. Karunya Technology Business Incubation Park               |
|               |               | 3. Forge Innovation and Ventures                             |
|               |               | 4. SREC Spark Incubation Foundation                          |
|               |               | 5. PSG-STEP                                                  |
|               | Chennai       | 1. AI Venture Factory                                        |
|               |               | 2. Sri Sairam Techno Incubator Foundation                    |
|               |               | 3. IITM Incubation Cell                                      |
|               |               | 4. Chennai Institute of Technology Business Incubation Forum |
|               |               | 5. Vel Tech Technology Business Incubator                    |
| Telangana     | Hyderabad     | 1. AIC-GNITS Foundation                                      |
|               |               | 2. DLabs Incubator Association                               |
|               |               | 3. CIE IIIT Hyderabad                                        |
| Uttar Pradesh | Greater Noida | 1. Shiv Nadar AIC Research Foundation                        |
|               |               | 2. SSN Incubation Foundation                                 |
| Uttarakhand   | Dehradun      | 1. Runway Incubator (UCIE)                                   |
|               |               | 2. TBI – Graphic Era University                              |
| West Bengal   | Kolkata       | 1. RISE Foundation IISER                                     |

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## List of Abbreviations:

**AI** – Artificial Intelligence

**AI-ML** – Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

**AIC** – Atal Incubation Centre

**AVGC-XR** – Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality

**CoE / CoEs** – Centre / Centres of Excellence

**DTU** – Delhi Technological University

**DITE&C** – Department of Information Technology, Electronics and Communications  
(Government of Goa)

**GCC** – Global Capability Centre

**GAIC** – Global Artificial Intelligence Centre (Haryana)

**HACF** – Haryana Advanced Computing Facility

**HAIDP** – Haryana AI Development Program

**ICT** – Information and Communication Technology

**IISc** – Indian Institute of Science

**IISER** – Indian Institute of Science Education and Research

**IIT** – Indian Institute of Technology

**IIIT** – Indian Institute of Information Technology

**IP** – Intellectual Property

**IT/ITeS** – Information Technology / Information Technology-enabled Services

**J&K** – Jammu and Kashmir

**MeitY** – Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

**MSH** – MeitY Startup Hub



**NCR** – National Capital Region

**NIT** – National Institute of Technology

**R&D** – Research and Development

**SID** – Society for Innovation and Development (IISc Bengaluru)

**T-AIM** – Telangana AI Mission

**TBI** – Technology Business Incubator

**TN SAFE-AI** – Tamil Nadu Policy for Safe and Ethical Artificial Intelligence

**TNAIM** – Tamil Nadu Artificial Intelligence Mission

**UT** – Union Territory

**UPES** – University of Petroleum & Energy Studies

**WoS** – Web of Science



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