



# Sources of Funding for Social Science Research Funding in India: Flows, Adequacy and Priorities

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## Introduction

Inadequate funding to Social science research (SSR) and disproportionate resource allocation between pure sciences and social sciences has been a subject of major concern for long. Issues concerning SSR funding in India with reference to government funding, its adequacy are addressed in this policy brief. While there are alternative sources of funding gaining importance, overtime provided by Corporate sector, international donor agencies, NGOs etc, these have largely remained project specific and do not form a continuous research funding stream.

Addressing these issues have posed major challenges such as non-availability of systematic data in the public domain, some portion of research funding being subsumed in other programs such as Education, training and data collection, posing major challenges in clearly segregating the size and pattern of funding for SSR in India.

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of all elements of support to social science research, the present study has made an attempt to clearly delineate social science funding support in the following three categories and independent analysis of each of these segments provided:

- Exclusive funding for Social Science research and its growth, trends and composition during the last five years. This category comprises of analysis of support extended to all the Social science research councils that are promoting social science research in the country. This analysis includes a detailed analysis of ICSSR and its varied support, the lead agency supporting social science research among all the councils, and a macro analysis of all the ICSSR institutions.
- The funding support extended by Central Ministries other than the Ministry of Human Resource Development, by way of support to institutions of excellence participating in research, education, training and consultancy and also the funds devoted for data collection.
- Track funding for research by the state governments that are providing support to institutions of Higher learning, conduct of research, training and evaluation studies. This data could be obtained for a single year, i.e. 2010-11 for which the data for all

states is available in public domain. In view of the fact that this funding too combines in itself elements other than research and segregating data relating to each of the elements is next to impossibility, analysis of state support is rendered separately.

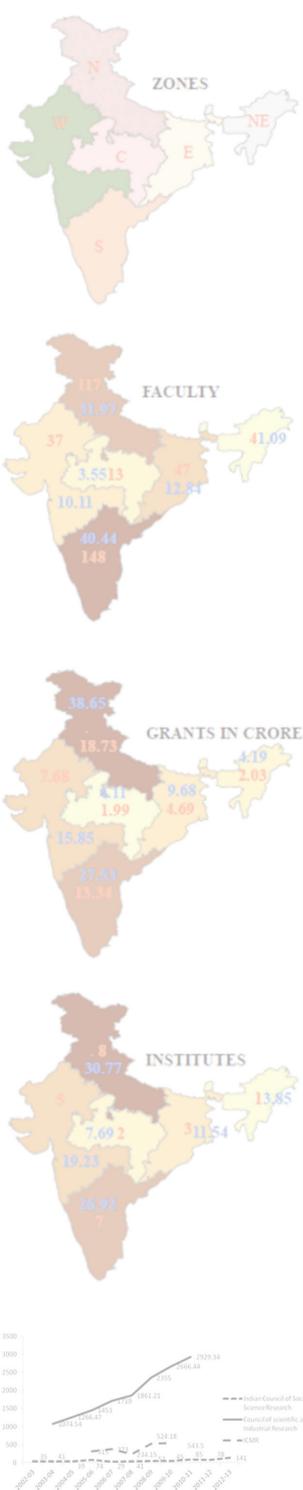
**Data sources:** The study is largely based on secondary sources of data. The Central and state budget documents, and Comptroller and Auditor General's publications were consulted to extract the required data. Time trends both in absolute terms and in real terms have been analysed.

## Major findings:

### Central government funding:

The funding support provided by MHRD falls in the category of exclusive funding for SSR. This has increased from Rs 65 crore to Rs 216 crore in current prices and in constant prices with 2014-15 as the base it has increased from Rs 65 crore to Rs 126 crore. Growth in real terms after the price adjustment is of much smaller order; in fact, three of these councils namely ICHR, ICPR and PHSPC have depicted a negative growth. It shows that among all the councils, Indian Council for Social Science Research not only accounts for the highest share of 60.64 percent in 2004-05 but also increases to 65.13 percent in 2012-13. The compound annual growth rates reveal that the growth rate of ICSSR expenditure has increased from 7.67 percent per annum for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09 to 27.63 percent in the period 2008-09 to 2012-13. The compound annual growth rates of ICHR, ICPR and NIEPA have decreased from 16.08 percent, 16.47 percent and 25.25 percent per annum for the period 2004-05 to 2008-09 to 5.22 percent, 6.01 percent and 21.45 percent for the period 2008-09 to 2012-13, respectively (Ministry of Finance, GOI (2007-08 to 20012-13); ICSSR (2010 to 2014)).

ICSSR's key role in supporting SSR is clearly visible from the sharp increase in the 'grants and subsidies' to the research institutes and others from Rs 35.91 crore in 2009-10 to RS 130 crore amounting to a whopping 262 percent increase in nominal terms. Grants and subsidies also constitute the largest share of 67.59 percent in the total expenditure which has further sharply increased to 86.42 percent in 2013-14. ICSSR also provides support for various additional research related activities such as research projects, fellowships, training, international collaboration, research documentation and publications. Grants to research projects have had



a significant increase from Rs 4.31 crore to Rs 12.22 crore. Among the fellowship support under various categories, Doctoral program support has increased in a significant manner from Rs 1.48 crore to Rs 9.76 crore. Among training programmes, expenditure on research methodology courses is higher than other training programmes.

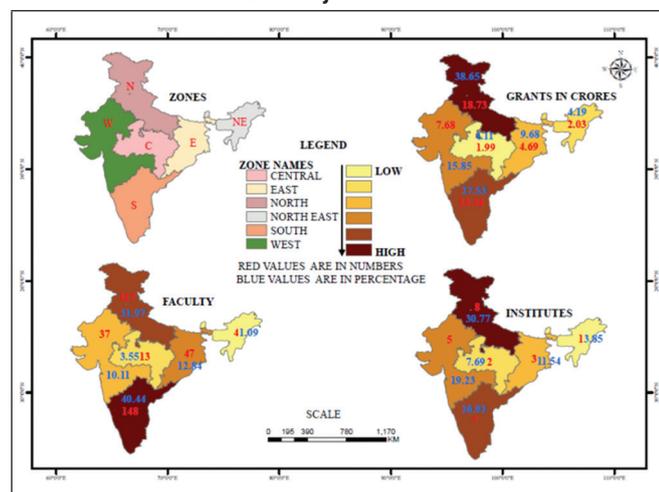
Prominent sources of funding for ICSSR research institutes also include the project funds and support from the respective state governments both of which have significantly increased. The share of salary, administrative and establishment expenses together constitute a major share to the tune of almost 68 percent of the total expenditure on social science research in 2012-13, which has also increased over time. Expenses on projects have also increased however its share has significantly dropped from 21.67 percent to 12.57 percent. Expenditure for conferences, workshops, seminars and meeting expenses show a declining trend even in absolute numbers, amounting to the fact that dissemination of research outcome is getting reduced importance.

The overall trends wherein a larger share of total research funding is deployed to salaries, administrative and establishment expenses while that of project and dissemination related expenses is on the decline is a cause for concern, especially when the social science research is languishing due to shortage of funds.

### Regional distribution of SSR funds:

Examining the regional distribution of SSR resources, by zones reveals that a major share of the grants goes to northern zone constituting 38.6 percent share in total funding from Indian council of social science research and Southern zone constitutes the second largest share of 27.50 percent in the total. The remaining share is distributed among central, eastern and north-eastern zones.

**Figure-1: Distributions of grants, Faculty and Institutions of ICSSR by zone wise**



Source: Authors' estimates base on data collected from various sources

### Funding from UGC

Funding schemes of UGC for promotion of research are available for the following categories for both the streams of sciences as well as humanities and social sciences:

1. Research fellowships (JRF / Post-doctoral fellowships / Rajiv Gandhi fellowships / Emeritus fellowships etc.)
2. Research Projects (Major and Minor)
3. Research awards (for faculty and scholars)
4. Grants for organizing seminars / participating in seminars

5. Special Assistance programmes for departments in universities
6. Other schemes (UGC networking centres, schemes unemployed women to pursue research / promoting value-based education in research and others).

Analysis of funding pattern for social science research from the University Grants Commission (UGC), reveals that the budget allocation for social science research show wide variations in the grants allocated for the various years of the study period. The analysis also indicates that funding for SSR through research projects schemes has received a major focus. It may be noted in this regard that, there is a conspicuous divergence between the sciences and the social sciences in terms of receiving grants under the 'Major research projects' scheme of the UGC. The disciplines under the science stream have received nearly two-thirds of the funding compared to the social sciences. However, the project grants made at the level of the regional offices show parity in fund allocation between the sciences and the social sciences.

In terms of overall funding from the UGC for research that comprise both the sciences and the social sciences, grants for research fellowships (JRF, research awards and other schemes of fellowships) have been found to have taken a major focus and also shows an increasing trend.

### Central ministry funding (other than MHRD)

Funding support from other Ministries through various centres of education and data collection has also revealed an increase, from Rs 103.3 crore in 2004-05 to Rs 144.16 crore in 2012-13 amounting to almost a 39.55 percent increase in current prices, however segregating these by education, research and training is next to impossibility. Distribution of funds by major ministries reveals that Ministry of Culture and Environment and Forests have had the lead share in the total spending of 33.69 and 25.65 percentages in 2004-05. Ministries of Commerce, and Women and Child development have had a sharp increase in the research expenditure during the reference period. Ministry of Planning and culture have had a declined share in the total. Unlike the small funding available for core research the funds provided for data collection under various ministries has substantially increased from Rs 324.5 crores in 2004-05 to Rs 1711.83 crores in 2012-13.

### State government funding

Funding by state governments on Research, Research and Evaluation, Support to Institutes of Higher learning, General-Research, Research and Statistics is Rs 84.23 crores in 2010-11 and largely from seven states accounting for the largest share in the total. These are Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Departments of General Education and Technical Education account for the largest share of 86.21% of the total spending.

### Social science research funding: an aggregate picture

An aggregate picture of the Social Science research spending by both central and state Governments in India could be obtained only for one year i.e., 2010-11. It can be observed from the available data that the total Social Science research spending amounted to Rs 485.82 crores in nominal terms, of which Rs 237.7 crore was spent by MHRD constituting 48.92 percent share in total; the central ministries (other than MHRD) accounted for Rs 163.89 crore accounting for 33.73 percent share and that of all state government was Rs 84.23 crores accounting for only 17.33%. In terms of the share of aggregate Social Science research spending to the total budget that is central and all state governments put together, while the share of social science research spending constituted 0.025% that of sciences constituted 0.86%. The share of Social Science budget to the GDP at market prices was 0.0062% and that of Sciences

was 0.21%. In a nutshell, the analysis reveals that Government funding is very small for both Social Science Research and Sciences while that of Social science research is abysmally low.

**Table-1: Total expenditure of Social Science Research**

Total expenditure of Social Science Research 2010-11 (in crores)			
Items	Total	% to total of Total National Budget	% to GDP
MHRD	237.7 (48.92)	0.0126	0.0031
Ministries (Other than MHRD)	163.89 (33.73)	0.0087	0.0021
All States	84.23 (17.33)	0.0045	0.0011
Total	485.82 (100)	0.0257	0.0062

Source: Demand for grants of ministries and CAG National Accounts Statistics.

Notes: a) Figures in the brackets are percentage to total. b) MHRD includes 84.61 crores UGC research component.

### Adequacy of funding for SSR in India

Defining adequacy is quite complex and in the absence of any understanding of the impending demand that can provide a base to frame certain normative level of expenditure, it may be meaningless and difficult to assess the adequacy. Adequacy of funds has been in the present study context analysed in a relative sense, using India's SSR funding status in international context, SSR versus the pure science funding and the normative levels suggested by the ICSSR review committee from time to time. In addition, analysis of adequacy of funding from the demand side has been discussed by studying the demand for as well as supply of funding of projects by the UGC and ICSSR. Adequacy of funding could have two dimensions viz. breadth and depth aspects, related to number of funding cases and intensity of funding respectively, which is analysed through the ratio of projects sanctioned to proposals received by the agency. The major observation is that, there is an increase in demand for SSR as evident from the increased number of proposals soliciting funding. There is also an increase in funding for research projects in general.

In terms of UGC grants, the ratio of proposals accepted to proposals received is found to remain constant; indicating that adequacy of breadth is just about met in case of UGC grants. On analysis of ICSSR grants, depth of funding is found to be satisfactory in the Research Projects Sponsored (RPS) scheme, while breadth of funding (institutional adequacy) is addressed in the Research Projects – Responsive (RPR) scheme. This approach of ICSSR's research funding meets both the dimensions of adequacy, however, it would always be a welcome move to bring further more number of projects in the funding banner. An increasing trend in this ratio of proposals received to projects sanctioned could signify better adequacy of funding in the field of social science research.

A comparison of Per capita expenditure incurred by each of the BRICS Nations on total Research and development reveals that India stands at the lowest level in Per capita expenditure with \$ 23.2 in the year 2005 and \$38.5 for the year 2011, among all the BRICS nations. On the contrary Russia has the highest per capita expenditure in 2011 (\$245.7) revealing a sharp increase from \$ 126 per capita expenditure over 2005. China has revealed a threefold increase from \$ 66.5 in the year 2005 to \$183.8 by 2011. These comparisons reveal that India's funding for social science research is of a much smaller order and posing a cause for concern. Share of Gross expenditure on Research and development (GERD) in GDP in Indian Context is just 0. 0.81 and hardly reached to 0.82 in 2011.

**Table 2: Aggregate Expenditure on Research and Development**

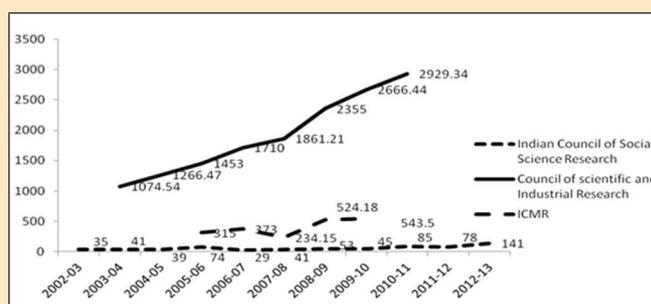
Countries	2005		2011	
	Per capita @ PPP (\$)	GERD/GDP (%)	Per capita @ PPP (\$)	GERD/GDP (%)
Brazil	109	1	169.1	1.14
Russia	126.2	1.07	245.7	1.09
India*	23.2	0.81	38.5	0.82
China	66.5	1.2	183.8	1.79
South Africa	83.8	0.86	NA	0.73
Pakistan	15.7	0.44	14.2	0.33
Sri Lanka*	8.8	0.18	11.9	0.16

Sources: Authors' computation using UNESCO data.

Notes: \*figures for the year 2004 and 2010 data is used for 2005 and 2011 for Sri Lanka

Examining the trends in expenditure by the lead institutes that support research in various streams like ICSSR for social science research; CSIR for science research and ICMR for medical research reveals that the share of expenditure incurred by government towards different fields indicate that expenditure incurred towards natural science increased to 81.85% in 2012-13 from 75.08% in 2008-09 whereas the share of social sciences and humanities is 13.44% in 2012-13, indicating that the share of expenditure incurred towards social science and humanities is meagre compared to science and Technology. It is also disturbing to note that the funding support extended to social science research is not only low but revealing a diverging trend compared to the pure science funding. While in the initial year, social sciences constituted 3.87 percent share in that of pure science funding, by the end of the study period, the share has declined to 2.92 percent, accounting for a gross negligence of social science research in the country and relegation of social sciences to lesser importance.

**Figure 2: Patterns of expenditure by ICSSR, CSIR and ICMR (Rs. Crore)**



Source: Authors' estimation using data from MHRD, Outcome Budget, and Department of Science.

While Government remains the main source of funding, it is also to be noted that, with rising demand, it could be insufficient to ensure the financial viability of higher education system to render support for sustained social science research. Driving diversified sources of funding ought to be explored to increase financial sustenance, both for granting agencies and research institutions.

The ICSSR review committee, 2007 had suggested that to begin with about 0.1 percent of the public sector's annual plan outlay be earmarked and set apart as investment for augmenting socially relevant and useful knowledge. (ICSSR, 2007, 42) Further, the report also stated that the 0.1 percent would yield about Rs 400 crore which would be nearly ten times the then budget of ICSSR. The committee also suggested evaluation by a committee after ten years and possible based on the

assessment enhance the funding to 0.2 percent of public sector annual plan outlay. An attempt was made in the present study to estimate the suggested (0.1 percent) plan outlay and found that it would yield about Rs 414 crore and if calculated at 0.2 percent level the yield would be Rs 827 crore and the gap continues to be more than ten times the current funding, proving the point that the recommendation made no difference to the funding for Social Science research in India.

**Table 3: Estimates using suggested spending**

Source	Estimated amount (Rs in crores)	Current exp as % to col 2
ICSSR review 2007		
0.1 percent of plan outlay	414	34
0.2 percent	827	17
ICSSR Review committee 2011		
10 times (Next two years,)	850	16.6
25 times	2125	4

Source: ICSSR.

## Conclusion

- (1) On studying the overall scenario compared to funding the sciences, the share of humanities and social sciences is clearly slender, consequently leading to issues of visibility, quality, and impact of the field.
- (2) Funding support from central ministries other than MHRD is larger for data collection and processing than core research funding. Even, the share has increased from a little more than 50 per cent in total to 70 per cent over five years from 2004–05.
- (3) Conceptualizing adequacy of funds has been a major challenge in the absence of any demand estimates or norms. However, all four approaches to assess adequacy, viz., ICSSR 2007 Committee recommendations, international comparison specially with BRICS countries, comparison with funding from Indian councils on natural sciences and use of research proposals received as an indicator of demand for research clearly highlight the funding plight of SSR in India strongly underline an urgent need to significantly step up government support to SSR in India.
- (4) In comparison to funding councils for sciences, while ICSSR's fund remains low and have shown a very small increase, CSIR had a very high and increasing funding support over the years. Even, ICMR's funding pattern is larger than that of ICSSR. It is also disturbing to note that the funding support extended to SSR is not only low but reveals a declining trend compared to the pure science funding.
- (5) There is an uneven regional distribution with reference to number of SSR institutions, faculties and number of grants. For instance, most of the institutes are concentrated in northern zone accounting for 34.6 per cent to total number of institutes and very few institutes are situated in east and north-east with 3 and 1 institutes respectively. Further the zone-wise fund distribution is highly uneven, as a major share of the grants goes to northern zone with a fund support of Rs 19.77 crore, accounting for 40.8 per cent share in total funding from Indian council of SSR and south zone is in the second place with fund support of Rs 13.34 crore, constituting 27.50 per cent share in total. The lowest share goes to eastern and north eastern zones with a funding support of Rs 4.69 and Rs 2 crore respectively.
- (6) In UGC, maximum number of proposals has been accepted in disciplines of economics, commerce, and management and thus,

logically, they possess major shares in funding compared to other disciplines.

- (7) Within ICSSR funding, the overall trends wherein a larger share of total research funding is deployed to salaries, administrative and establishment expenses constitute larger share while that of project and dissemination related expenses is on the decline is a cause for concern, especially when the SSR is languishing due to shortage of funds.

## Policy Recommendations

- (1) Inadequate and unpredictable funding plight of SSR in India strongly underlines an urgent need to step it up significantly. SSR needs to be pegged at an adequate level and should be insulated from adhoc reductions arising out of resource uncertainties.
- (2) There is an urgent need to set up a committee to examine the issues of demand and supply to suggest the funding requirement that is adequate for the promotion of quality research in social sciences.
- (3) A periodical review of funding requirement is essential to defray the growing manpower and material costs and accordingly enhance the funding support.
- (4) Government can also consider setting up of a exclusive fund for SSR and can encourage companies to earmark resources for SSR under the Corporate Social Responsibility policy.
- (5) The gap in funding for science research and SSR have been widening over the years. To mitigate the gap, a special policy attention for escalating SSR funding is absolutely necessary.
- (6) There is an uneven regional distribution with reference to number of SSR institutions, faculties and number of grants. Further, the zone-wise fund distribution is also highly uneven, as a major share of the grants goes to northern and southern zones. Thus, the heavy concentration of research support in the North and South needs rectification by providing adequate research funding support to other parts of the country.
- (7) As result shows, in UGC, disciplines of economics, commerce, and management have received major share of project funding compared to other disciplines, a special focus is required for proper allocation of funding across disciplines.
- (8) The current lopsided distribution of SSR funding towards salaries, administrative and establishment expenses need to be balanced by increasing fund for core research component.

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