

4. CONSUMER JUSTICE REPORT 2026

The India Justice Report released the Consumer Justice Report 2026 and highlighted major weaknesses in India's consumer grievance redressal system.

1.Introduction

1. The Consumer Justice Report 2026 provides a comprehensive assessment of the functioning of consumer dispute redressal commissions in India.
2. It highlights systemic inefficiencies in delivering timely and accessible justice to consumers despite a strong legal framework under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
3. The findings underline the need for institutional strengthening to ensure effective consumer rights enforcement.

2.About Consumer Justice Report 2026

Nature and Objective of the Report

1. The Consumer Justice Report 2026 is a first-of-its-kind evaluation of consumer dispute redressal mechanisms in India.
2. It has been released by the India Justice Report initiative to assess the performance of district, state, and national consumer commissions.
3. The report aims to identify gaps in efficiency, infrastructure, staffing, and transparency in the consumer justice system.

Data Sources and Methodology

1. The report is based on data collected between 2020 and 2024.
2. It uses multiple sources including official commission websites, RTI responses, parliamentary data, and publicly available government records.
3. The methodology focuses on indicators such as case pendency, disposal rates, staffing levels, and transparency.

3.Key Highlights of the Report

Rising Case Pendency and Delays

1. Case pendency increased by 21 percent between 2020 and 2024, indicating worsening backlog.
2. The number of pending cases rose sharply from around 88,000 to over 5.15 lakh.
3. More than one-third of cases remained unresolved for over three years.
4. This violates the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which mandates disposal within three to five months.

Severe Vacancy Crisis

1. Nearly half of the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions were functioning without a president.
2. Around one-third of district commissions also lacked a presiding officer.
3. Approximately 40 percent of sanctioned member posts remained vacant.
4. These vacancies significantly reduce institutional capacity and delay case disposal.

Lack of Transparency and Data Gaps

1. Several State Commissions failed to provide data even under RTI requests.
2. In contrast, District Commissions performed relatively better in transparency.
3. Lack of reliable data hampers accountability and evidence-based policymaking.

Regional Disparities in Performance

1. States such as Kerala, Jharkhand, and Jammu and Kashmir reported 70–80 percent of cases pending for more than three years.
2. Andhra Pradesh emerged as the best-performing large state in terms of case disposal efficiency.
3. Telangana ranked lowest in performance, indicating serious institutional weaknesses.
4. Maharashtra recorded high case filings but relatively lower disposal rates, leading to backlog accumulation.

Declining Gender Representation

1. Women's representation in consumer commissions declined from 35 percent in 2021 to 29 percent in 2025.
2. Only Delhi and Sikkim appointed women Presidents in 2024.
3. This reflects limited progress in ensuring gender diversity in quasi-judicial bodies.

4. Structural Issues in Consumer Justice Delivery

Institutional Capacity Constraints

1. High vacancy rates and inadequate infrastructure weaken the functioning of consumer commissions.
2. Lack of trained personnel affects the quality and speed of adjudication.

Inefficient Case Management Systems

1. Absence of modern case tracking and management systems contributes to delays.
2. Limited use of digital platforms reduces efficiency and transparency.

Weak Enforcement of Timelines

1. Statutory timelines under the Consumer Protection Act are not strictly enforced.
2. This undermines the objective of speedy and accessible justice.

Limited Awareness and Access

1. Many consumers, especially in rural areas, are unaware of their rights and redressal mechanisms.
2. This leads to underutilisation of consumer courts in some regions.

5. Recommendations of the Report

Filling Vacancies and Strengthening Staffing

1. The government should ensure time-bound appointments to fill vacant posts.
2. Adequate staffing is essential for improving case disposal rates.

Improving Infrastructure and Resources

1. Investment in physical and digital infrastructure is necessary to enhance efficiency.
2. Modern courtrooms and e-governance tools can improve service delivery.

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

1. Commissions should proactively disclose data on case pendency and disposal.
2. Strengthening RTI compliance can improve public trust.

Promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution

1. Mediation and other ADR mechanisms should be encouraged to reduce case burden.
2. Pre-litigation settlement mechanisms can expedite resolution.

6. Way Forward

Digitisation and E-Governance

1. Adoption of end-to-end digital case management systems can streamline processes.
2. Online filing and virtual hearings can improve accessibility and efficiency.

Capacity Building and Training

1. Regular training programmes for members and staff can enhance adjudication quality.
2. Specialisation in consumer law can improve outcomes.

Strengthening Legal Awareness

1. Consumer awareness campaigns can empower citizens to seek redressal.
2. Integration with educational and community programmes can expand outreach.

Ensuring Inclusive Representation

1. Efforts should be made to increase women's representation in consumer commissions.
2. Diversity can improve sensitivity and inclusiveness in decision-making.

Conclusion

The Consumer Justice Report 2026 highlights critical gaps in India's consumer dispute redressal system. Addressing issues of pendency, vacancies, and transparency is essential to uphold consumer rights. With targeted reforms and institutional strengthening, India can ensure a more efficient, accessible, and accountable consumer justice system.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/andhra-pradesh-tops-in-consumer-justice-ranking-reveals-ijrs-2026-report/article70762421.ece>

