



Share public data with the public

Context:

- Issue of availability and accessibility to public data.

World scenario:

- From 2006 onwards, several open-source software enthusiasts and civil society activists came together in the U.S. and the U.K. with a demand to unlock the data gathered by governments for access and reuse by citizens.
- The basic argument was that the **data collected at public expense must belong to the people**. This principle is the basis for the **Open Data Charter** adopted by 22 countries since 2015.
- It calls upon governments to disseminate public data in open digital formats.



Indian scenario:

- **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP):** In India, a step towards making non-sensitive government data accessible online was taken in 2012 with the adoption of the **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)**.
- The main thrust of the policy is to promote data sharing and enable access to Government of India-owned data for national planning and development.
- The guidelines prescribe open digital formats suitable for analysis and dissemination.
- As part of the **Open Government Data (OGD)** initiative, **gov.in**, was launched in 2012.



What is the significance of sharing public data?

- With the availability of public data, there is a **potential for innovative, evidence-based policy solutions.**
- Sharing public data is a way to create **beneficial social impact.**
- Start-ups have built **novel applications** using Indian Railways data to provide ticket confirmation prediction and real-time train status.

What are the major concerns?

- Despite the lofty ideals of the NDSAP such as openness, flexibility, transparency, quality of data, the **implementation has lagged** far behind its stated objectives.
- Much of the Census and socio-economic data, publicly funded research data, and scientific data are **either not open or remain unused because of their unusable formats.**
- The lack of reliable data in the public domain has **hampered the search for policy alternatives.**

Way forward:

- Every government department must be mandated to share substantive data respecting privacy concerns.