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It is now 59 years since we made that historic tryst with destiny. Today, most Indians can take pride in the enormous strides we have made. There is, of course, the downside. Nothing illustrates the dual face of 59 years of Independence, the gains and losses, as forcefully as numbers. Our Independence Day special is a statistical snapshot of India. When our research team started compiling the statistical bedrock for the stories in this issue, we unearthed some startling facts. To make the exercise more meaningful, we collected data to show where we stand compared to the rest of the world.

Some of our findings are troubling. We are, for example, a young nation: our median age is 24.9 compared to 32.7 years for China. Yet, their life expectancy is 72.58 years compared to 64.71 years for India. Some of the data is fun: 23 million people watch Indian movies every day, compared to 20 million in the US but Indians are far less addicted to TV than the Americans. Some numbers demolish myths: It takes a business 264 hours to file taxes in India, much less than 325 for the US. India is a scientific superpower but the gross expenditure on R&D for every Indian is \$19.8 compared to \$56.2 for China and \$1005.9 for the US. We are an IT superpower but have only 32 Internet subscribers per 1,000 people, compared to 73 in China.

From the average age of this Lok Sabha, compared to the first Lok Sabha, from the number of elections held in India so far to the number of times the Constitution has been amended, this issue has everything you wanted to know about India but were afraid to ask.

It also has stunning news reports of what makes this country great—from the first woman graduate of a tiny tribal village to a mall for farmers in Madhya Pradesh, a bio-fuel experiment in a Gujarat laboratory to a mosque run by a Hindu family, this is India as it is.

Putting all these statistics together was the responsibility of a young team (Gaurav Rajkhowa, Abbas Khan and Mallika Raghunathan) that scoured every possible storehouse of information. Executive Editor Kaveree Bamzai was overall in charge of the issue that will, we hope, serve as a collector's issue for the mine of information we have managed to dig up, information that paints an accurate portrait of India, warts and all. There is this old cliché which says that statistics are often used as a drunk uses a lamppost: for support rather than illumination. In this case, we hope this issue enlightens you.



Our earlier Independence Day special issues

(Aron Purie)