

The Goodness Index — methodology

Construct, instruments, scoring, sampling, known limits and licence — published so the Index can be criticised properly.

Version 0.9 draft September 2026 CC BY 4.0 research@instituteofgoodness.org

1 · The construct

The Goodness Index treats character as five measurable foundations — Integrity, Responsibility, Compassion, Respect and Stewardship — each carrying equal weight in the Index. The claim is not that these five exhaust moral life. It is that they are the dimensions on which behaviour can be observed by a third party, described identically in several languages, and compared over time.

Two design decisions follow. First, no item asks a respondent to rate their own virtue; every item asks what they would do in a described situation. Second, scoring is deterministic: a published rubric maps each response to a value, and the same response always produces the same score. Language models are used in the Institute's products to converse and to personalise, never to score.

2 · Instruments

- **Situational judgement items.** Fifteen in the public calculator, 45 in the research instrument, stratified across the five foundations and across home, work, public and online settings.
- **Administrative indicators.** Open data at region level — civic reporting rates, volunteering, blood donation, waste segregation compliance — used only for regional estimates, never for individuals.
- **Institutional evidence.** For GI Certification, documented policy and outcome evidence assessed against the same rubric by two independent reviewers.

3 · Scoring

Each item is scored 0–3. Indicator scores are the mean of their items; a foundation score is the weighted mean of its indicators, rescaled to 0–100; the Index score is the unweighted mean of the five foundations, rescaled to 0–100 for people and 0–10 for regions. Weights are published below and in machine-readable form.

Foundation	Indicator	Definition	Weight
Integrity	Honesty under pressure	States the inconvenient fact when silence would cost nothing.	0.30
	Owning mistakes	Names an error before it is discovered, and repairs the cause.	0.30
	Fairness in small transactions	Corrects an error that fell in their favour.	0.25

	Promise keeping	Honours casual commitments nobody is tracking.	0.15
Responsibility	Acting beyond the role	Steps into shared work that is slipping without being asked.	0.30
	Civic initiative	Reports or fixes a fault in shared infrastructure.	0.25
	Follow-through	Completes what was started, including the unglamorous end of it.	0.25
	Reliability to dependants	Keeps commitments to people with least power to complain.	0.20
Compassion	Noticing the isolated	Registers who is excluded, and acts on it.	0.30
	Dignity for service workers	Treats those serving them as people, not functions.	0.25
	Care in friendship	Checks on withdrawal rather than matching it.	0.25
	Help at some cost	Helps when helping costs time, money or comfort.	0.20
Respect	Listening fully	Lets a speaker finish and answers the point actually made.	0.30
	Fairness in shared order	Upholds the queue without humiliating anyone.	0.25
	Courtesy across hierarchy	Same manner with a cleaner as with a chairperson.	0.25
	Disagreement without contempt	Engages an opposing view on its merits.	0.20
Stewardship	Waste habits	Carries waste to a bin; refuses casual littering.	0.30
	Energy and water habits	Acts on avoidable consumption in shared spaces.	0.25
	Reuse and repair	Repairs or passes on rather than replacing and discarding.	0.25
	Long-horizon acts	Acts whose benefit accrues to people they will not meet.	0.20

Consistency, not peak virtue. The spread across the five foundation scores is reported alongside the mean. A person or region strong on two foundations and weak on three is a different object from one that is even, and the Index says so.

4 · Sampling

Regional estimates use a stratified sample by state, settlement type (metro, urban, rural) and age band, with post-stratification weights to the most recent census projections. Target n for the 2028 India Goodness Report is 42,000 respondents across 28 states and 8 union territories.

The web calculator is explicitly a convenience sample. Its responses are excluded from every Index estimate and are used only to monitor item behaviour — how long items take, which options are never chosen, and where respondents abandon.

5 · Known limits

- **Social desirability.** Situational items reduce but do not remove the pull toward the flattering answer. Anonymity is the main defence; a subset of items has no obviously virtuous option.
- **Translation equivalence.** An item that works in English may not carry in Hindi, Tamil or Bengali. Equivalence testing across languages is the largest open piece of validation work.
- **Gaming.** Once a score carries consequences — certification, funding, ranking — it will be gamed. Institutional scoring therefore rests on evidence and review, not on questionnaires.
- **Predictive validity.** The Index has not yet been shown to predict behaviour over time. A longitudinal cohort is planned from 2028; until it reports, no causal claim should be made and none is made here.

6 · Pre-registration and openness

The analysis plan for the 2028 India Goodness Report will be pre-registered before fieldwork begins, and any deviation logged and published with the report. The rubric, the item bank structure and the published data are CC BY 4.0. Criticism of this document is welcome and should go to research@instituteofgoodness.org.

How to cite

Institute of Goodness. (2026). *The Goodness Index: measuring character at person, institution and nation scale* (Methodology paper v0.9). instituteofgoodness.org/downloads/goodness-index-methodology.pdf