

2025

From the GUESSS India 2025 National Survey Report

Southern Region Brief

More students in the South want to start a business. **Governments, universities and incubators can now help them make their first sale.**



45 in 100

want to start a business



23 in 100

are building a business



8 in 100

already earn from a business

Out of every 100 students in the five southern states.



10,970

students studying in the South
answered the survey



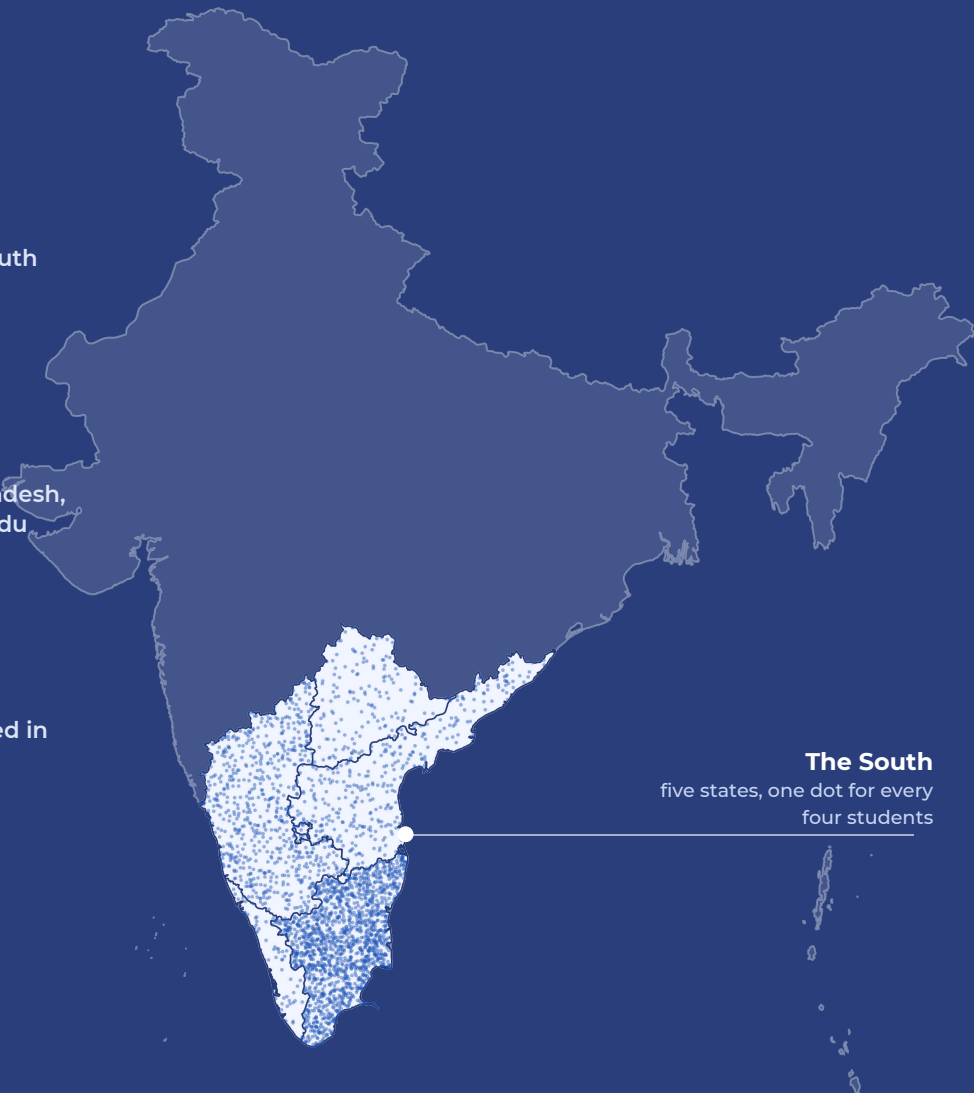
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southern states: Andhra Pradesh,
Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu
and Telangana



43%

of all students who answered in
India study in the South



The South

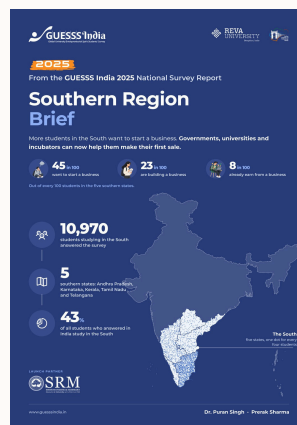
five states, one dot for every
four students

LAUNCH PARTNER





2025 • National Survey Report
25,783 students



2025 • Southern Region Brief
10,970 students

ABOUT GUESSS INDIA

GUESSS India is the official Indian chapter of GUESSS, the Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey. It is led by Dr. Puran Singh at the School of Management, IIT Mandi. It surveys higher education students every two years and turns the answers into evidence for students, educators, incubators and policymakers.

13,896

students in the first survey, 2023

1,200+

institutions in 2023

31

states and union territories in 2023

25,783

students in the second survey, 2025

1,200+

institutions in 2025

34

states and union territories in 2025

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Southern Region Brief · GUESSS India National Survey Report 2025 · a companion to the national report *How do we make Student Entrepreneurs?*

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Data: GUESSS India 2025 student survey, 25,783 respondents (10,970 in the five southern states), fieldwork September–December 2025. Puducherry (11 students) is not included in this brief.

Voices: Quotes are from episodes of the GUESSS India Podcast on YouTube.

Research: Published peer-reviewed studies cited in the national report.

Authorship and AI: The authors set the questions, the comparisons and the storyline. The draft, page design and data analysis (cross-tabulations and charts) were produced with AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic) under the authors' direction and edited to convey the intended meaning.

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About this brief

| This page explains what the brief is, who it is for, and what its main words mean.

In 2025, 25,783 students in India answered the GUESSS India survey. Of these students, 10,970 study at institutions in the five southern states. This brief looks only at these students. They are not necessarily residents of the South, although 90 in 100 of them come from a southern state. It compares them with students in the rest of India and in other countries, and suggests what governments, universities and incubators can do. It does not rank the states.



10,970

students in the South answered the survey



5

southern states are covered



43%

of all students who answered in India study in the South

WHO IT IS FOR



State governments

and their startup missions, education departments and innovation agencies



Universities

vice-chancellors, deans, faculty and entrepreneurship cells



Incubators

heads, managers and mentors on and around campus

WORDS USED IN THIS BRIEF

Southern students

Students who study at a university or college in the five southern states: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. They may come from any state: 90 in 100 come from a southern state.

Want to start a business

Students who plan to start a business right after their studies or within five years.

Building a business

Students who are trying to start a business now, or who already run one.

Earning from a business

Students whose business has had regular sales for at least three months.

Hard step

A step that costs money or creates a commitment: a sale, a funding request, registration, buying equipment or applying for a patent.

Campus support

How students rate the encouragement for entrepreneurship at their university, on a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high).

World average

The average of the 41 countries with more than 500 students in GUESSS 2025. India is not included.

Rest of India

All 14,684 students who study outside the five southern states.



About the data. Students mostly took part in the survey through campus ambassadors, so the sample is large but not random. Southern students who answered are younger and more often undergraduates (83% against 70% in the rest of India). Kerala (218 students) and Telangana (581 students) have small samples.

READ FIRST

Where the South stands: a summary

This page sums up what the survey shows about students who study at institutions in the five southern states, wherever they come from.



More students in southern institutions want to start a business.

[→ p. 09](#)

In southern universities and colleges, 45 in 100 students want to start a business, compared with 42 in 100 in the rest of India.



More southern students are already building a business.

[→ p. 09](#)

23 in 100 southern students are building or running a business, compared with 21 in 100 in the rest of India.



Southern students run revenue-generating ventures.

[→ p. 09](#)

The share of students whose business has regular sales is the same in the South and in the rest of India: 8 in 100.



Most southern student founders have not yet taken a hard step.

[→ p. 14](#)

Only 26 in 100 southern student founders have made a sale, asked for funding, registered the business, bought equipment or applied for a patent. The figure is 37 in 100 in the rest of India and 52 in 100 in the world.



Southern campuses feel more encouraging.

[→ p. 16](#)

Southern students rate the support for entrepreneurship on their campus at 4.7 out of 7, compared with 4.5 in the rest of India.



More southern student founders are women.

[→ p. 15](#)

Women are 39 in 100 student founders in the South, compared with 30 in 100 in the rest of India and 47 in 100 in the world.



About half of southern students have taken a course or know a founder.

[→ p. 17](#)

46 in 100 southern students have taken an entrepreneurship course (India average 47, world 48), and 47 in 100 know a founder outside their family (India average 50, world 67).



Southern incubators reach as many founders, but founders rate them lower.

[→ p. 18](#)

28 in 100 southern student founders are in an incubator, the same as in the rest of India. They rate their incubator 5.5 out of 10, compared with 6.2 in the rest of India.

IN SHORT

The South is good at getting students to start a business. The next step is to help these students make their first sale.

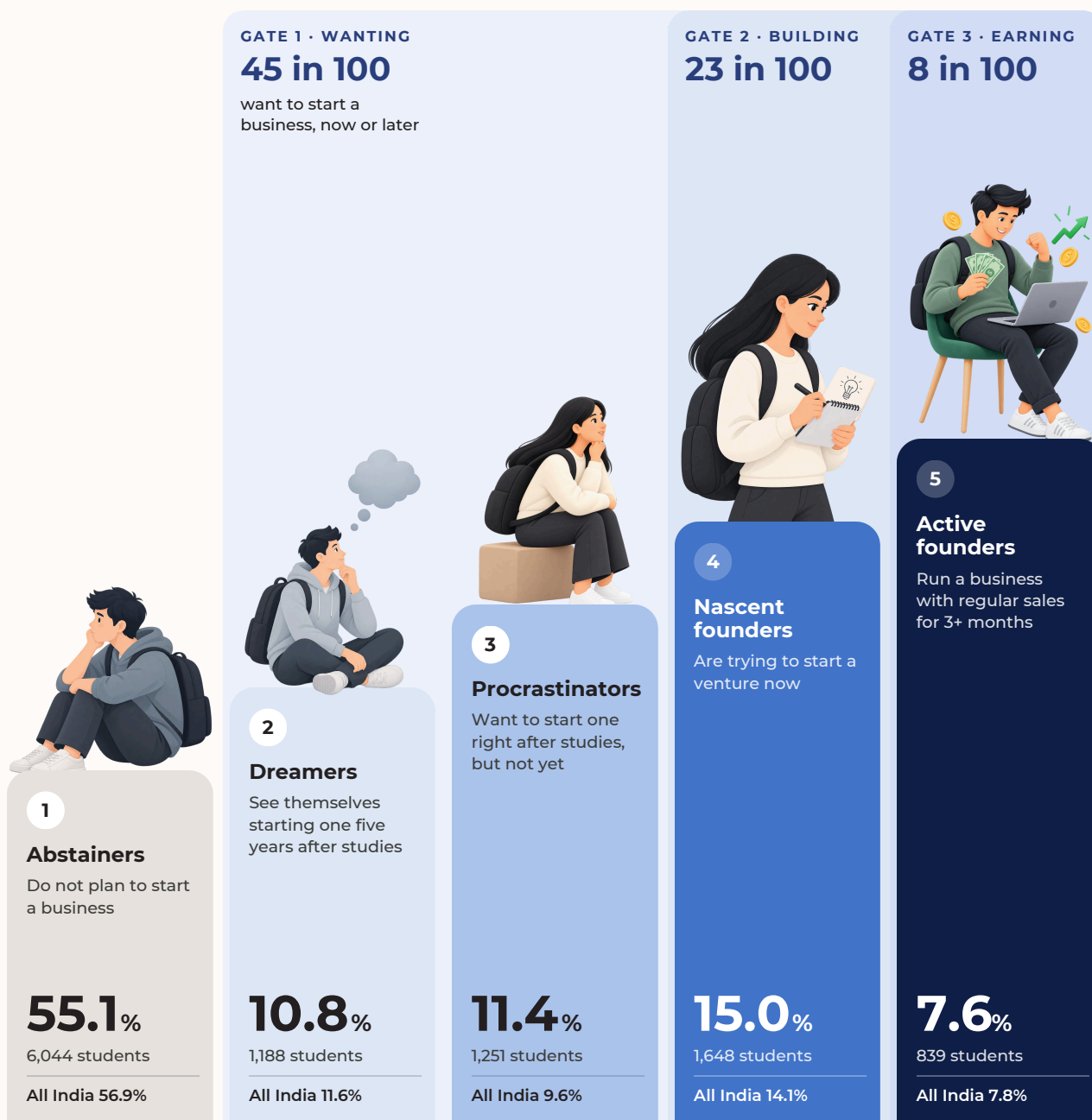
Pages 21 to 25 suggest what governments, universities and incubators can do.

READ FIRST

The entrepreneurial ladder

Every student is placed on one of five steps. This page shows how many southern students are on each step.

What is the entrepreneurial ladder? The ladder places every student on one of five steps, based on how close the student is to running a business. The survey asked two questions: what the student is doing now, and what career the student expects after studies (Holienska et al., 2017). Each student is placed on one step only, the highest one that applies. Three gates separate the steps: **wanting to start, building, and earning**.



Percentages of all 10,970 southern students. Each student is counted once.

Intenders • 22.2% • 2,439

Student entrepreneurs • 22.7% • 2,487

Source: GUESSS India 2025 student survey (September–December 2025). South = 10,970 students in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana (Puducherry not included); rest of India = 14,684. World average = 41 countries with 500+ students, India not included.

READ FIRST

Who answered in the South?

10,970 students studying in the South answered the survey: 43% of all students who answered in India.

CHART 1
Students who answered, by state of study
Darker = more students · 90 in 100 come from a southern state

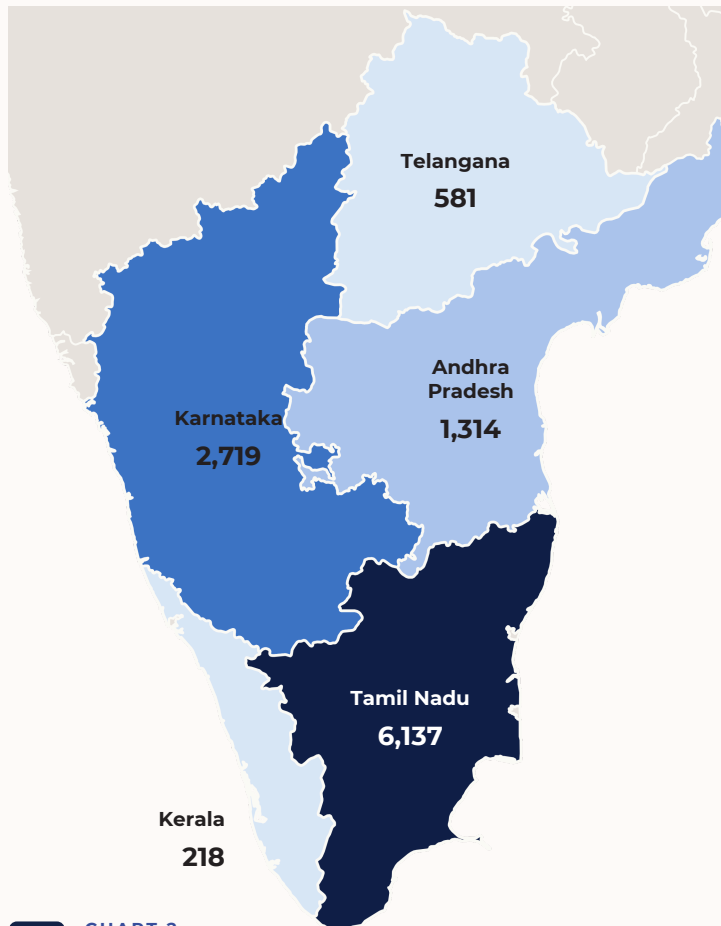
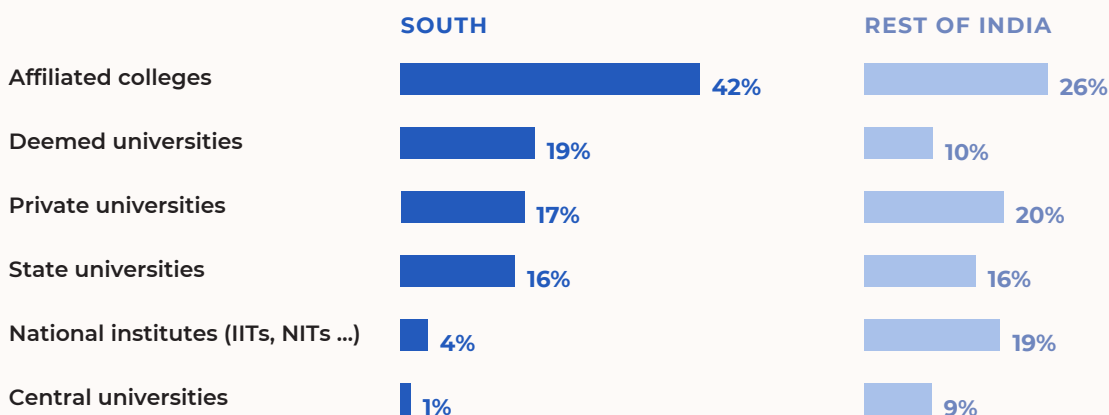


CHART 2
Where students study, by type of institution
% of students in each region · the South on the left, the rest of India on the right



49%
of southern students who answered are **women**.
Rest of India: 38%

83%
of southern students are **undergraduates**.
Rest of India: 70%

19 years
is the **typical age** (median) of southern students.
Rest of India: 20 years

36%
of southern students have **parents who run a business**.
Rest of India: 30%

READ FIRST

The South in five numbers

Each card compares the South with the rest of India and with the world average.



01

→ p. 09

45 in 100



southern students want to start a business

In the rest of India the figure is 42 in 100. The share who already earn from a business is 8 in 100 in both.



02

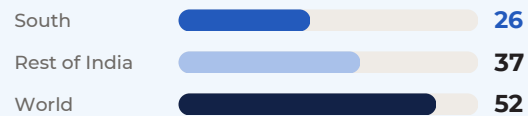
→ p. 14

26 in 100



southern student founders have taken a hard step

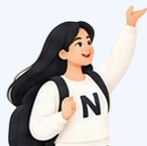
A hard step costs money or creates a commitment, such as a sale, funding or registration.



03

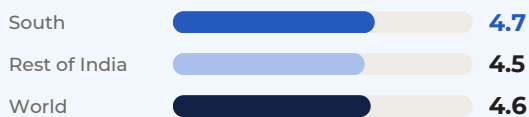
→ p. 16

4.7 of 7



is how southern students rate campus support

Students in the rest of India give 4.5, and the world average is 4.6.



04

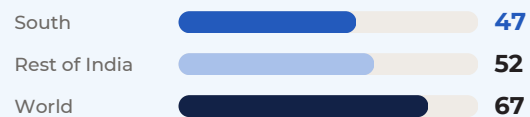
→ p. 17

47 in 100



southern students know a founder outside their family

In the rest of India 52 in 100 do, and the world average is 67 in 100.



05

→ p. 18

5.5 of 10

is how southern student founders rate their incubator

Founders in the rest of India give 6.2. Southern incubators reach as many founders (28 in 100).



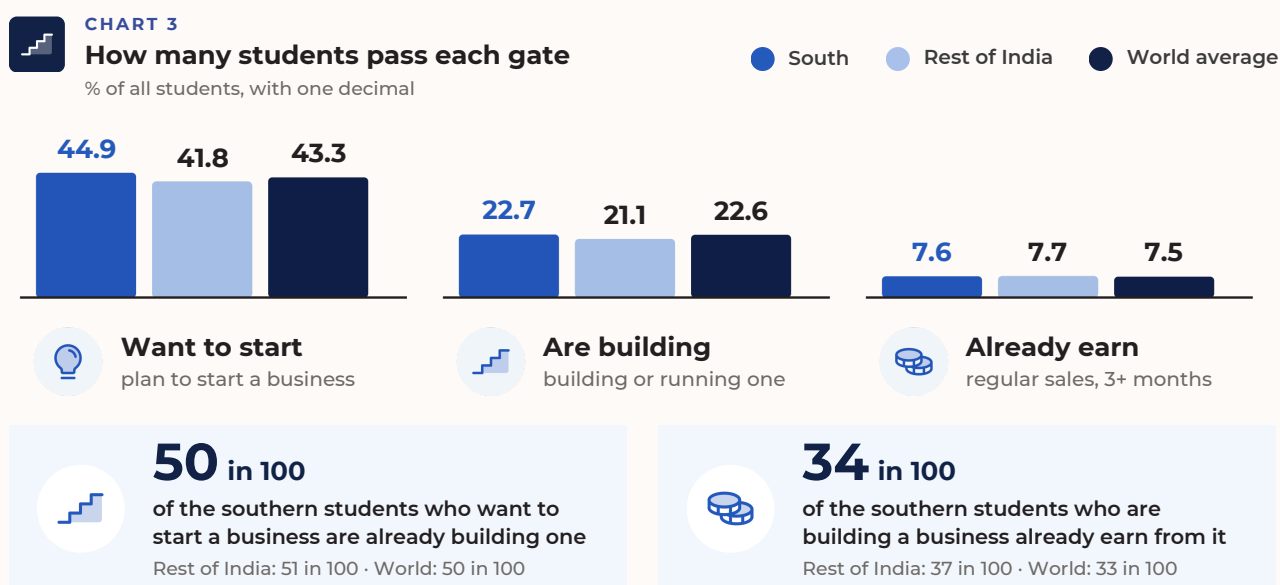
Source: GUESSS India 2025 student survey (September–December 2025). South = 10,970 students in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana (Puducherry not included); rest of India = 14,684. World average = 41 countries with 500+ students, India not included.

1

More students **want to start**, and more are **building**

More southern students want to start a business and are building one, but the share who earn from a business is the same as in the rest of India.

In the South, 45 in 100 students want to start a business. In the rest of India the figure is 42 in 100, and the world average is 43 in 100. More southern students are also already building a business: 23 in 100, compared with 21 in 100 in the rest of India. **But the share of students whose business already earns money is the same in the South and in the rest of India: 7.6 in 100.**



RESEARCH

Starting a business is only the beginning: in the studies reviewed, more than half of new businesses closed within five years (Colombelli et al., 2016).



HIS ONE MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

“If you have guts in you, you know how to get up after failure, if you are not limited by immediate obligation, go for it. ... But you should be prepared to fail, fall and get up and try again.”

Prof. Ashok Jhunjunwala

Chairman, ITEL; Institute Professor, IIT Madras · GUESSS India Podcast, Episode 17



NEXT MOVE · CONTINUE for government and universities

Fund the **entrepreneurship cells, student startup schemes and campus events** in southern institutions. Today 45 in 100 of their students want to start a business, more than in the rest of India.

2

Five states, side by side

Each state is compared with the all-India average, not with the other states.

This page compares each southern state with the average for all of India. In Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the share of students who want to start a business and the share who are building one are at or above the India average. Andhra Pradesh is also above India on earning: 9.5 in 100 students earn from a business, compared with 7.8 in India. **In Telangana, the shares are below the India average at all three gates.** Students rate campus support at or above the India average in every state except Kerala.



CHART 4

The five southern states, side by side

% of students (campus support: average, 1 to 7) · black mark = India · alphabetical order, not a ranking

	Andhra Pradesh 1,314 students	Karnataka 2,719 students	Kerala* 218 students	Tamil Nadu 6,137 students	Telangana* 581 students
Want to start India 43.1%	46.0%	48.5%	50.5%	43.4%	39.6%
Are building India 21.8%	25.9%	23.3%	25.2%	22.2%	16.4%
Already earn India 7.8%	9.5%	7.8%	3.7%	7.7%	4.0%
Campus support (1–7) India 4.6	4.7	4.9	4.3	4.7	4.6
Took a course India 46.7%	49.9%	48.0%	40.0%	43.9%	43.0%
Know a founder India 50.2%	50.4%	52.6%	56.9%	43.7%	52.7%

* Kerala (218 students) and Telangana (581 students) have small samples, so their figures can change by several points with a few answers.



Taking a course

In Andhra Pradesh (50 in 100) and Karnataka (48 in 100), more students have taken an entrepreneurship course than the India average (47). In Tamil Nadu (44), Telangana (43) and Kerala (40), fewer have taken a course.



Knowing a founder

In Tamil Nadu, 44 in 100 students know a founder outside their family, fewer than the India average of 50 in 100. In the other four states, between 50 and 57 in 100 students know a founder.



RESEARCH

Who starts a business, and how, depends on layers of context, such as family, place and institutions, that act together, not one by one (Baker & Welter, 2020).



NEXT MOVE · START for state governments

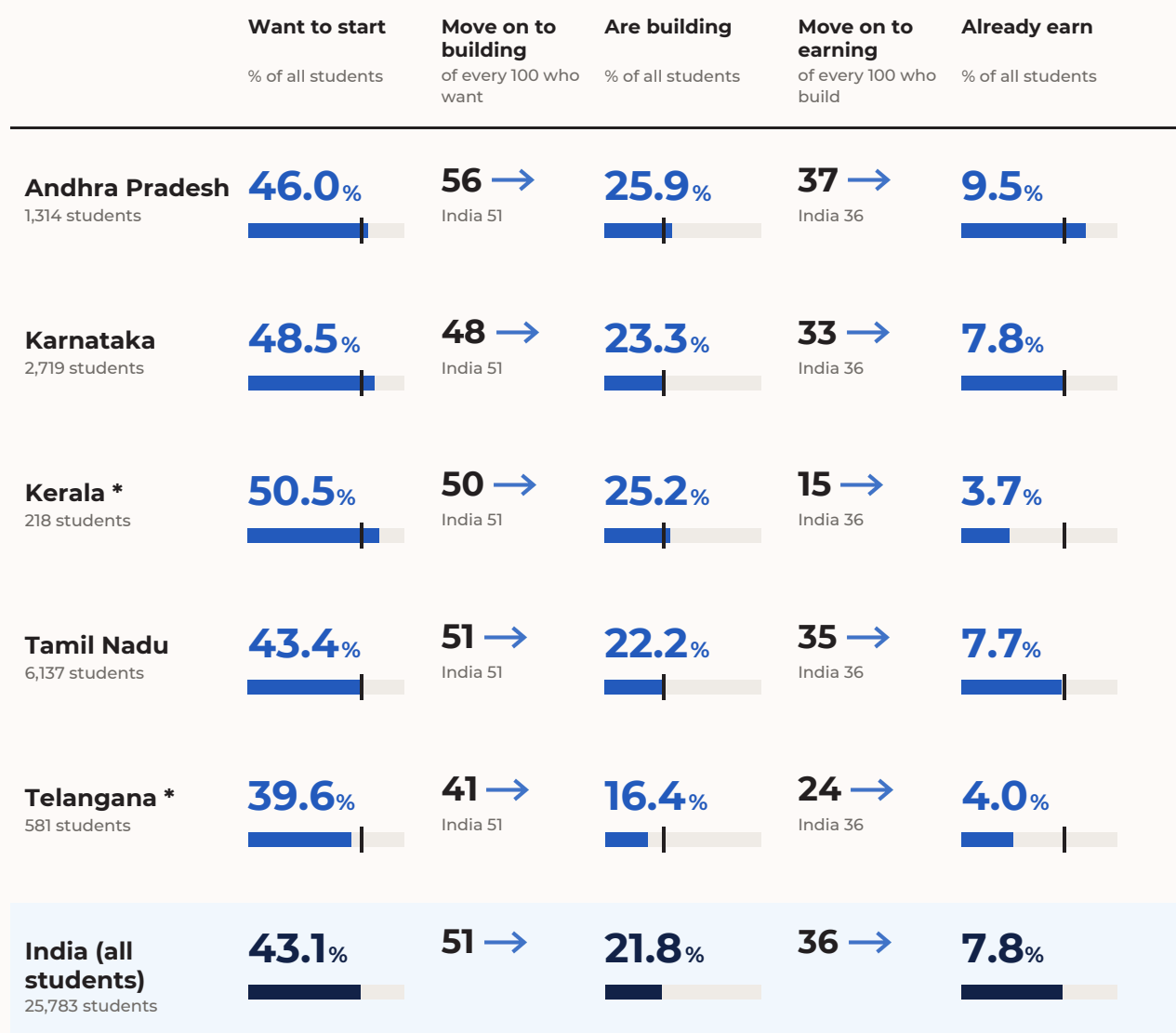
Use these numbers as your **starting point**: set a target for each gate in your state, and check it in the next GUESSS India survey in 2027.

Source: GUESSS India 2025 student survey (September–December 2025). South = 10,970 students in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana (Puducherry not included); rest of India = 14,684. World average = 41 countries with 500+ students, India not included.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS • THE STATES

Each state, from wanting to earning

Each row follows one state through the three gates. Read down a column to compare the states at the same step.



Black mark on each bar = India. * Kerala and Telangana have small samples, so their figures can change by several points with a few answers.

How to read a row. Take Telangana: 40 in 100 students want to start a business. Of every 100 of them, 41 are already building one. Of every 100 students who are building, 24 already earn from it. Then compare each step with the India row at the bottom. For example, Kerala keeps its students up to building, but only 15 in 100 of its builders earn (India 36).

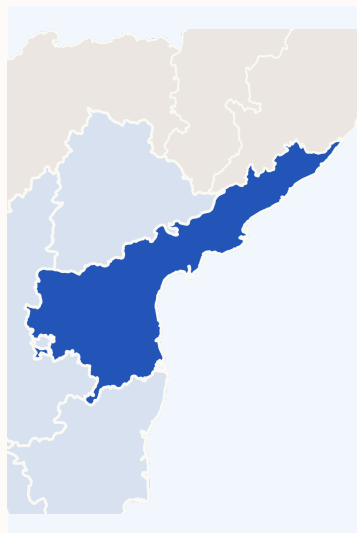
→ **NEXT MOVE • START** for state governments

Find the step where your state loses the most students compared with India, and fund support for that step first.

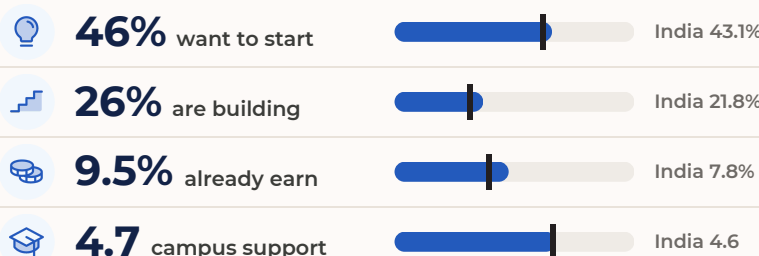
WHAT THE DATA SHOWS • THE STATES, ONE BY ONE

The states, one by one

For each state, the blue bar shows the state and the black mark shows the India average.

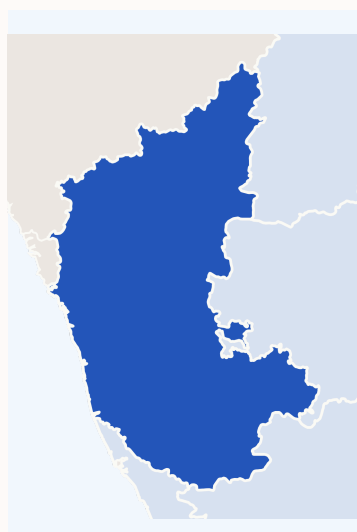


Andhra Pradesh 1,314 students

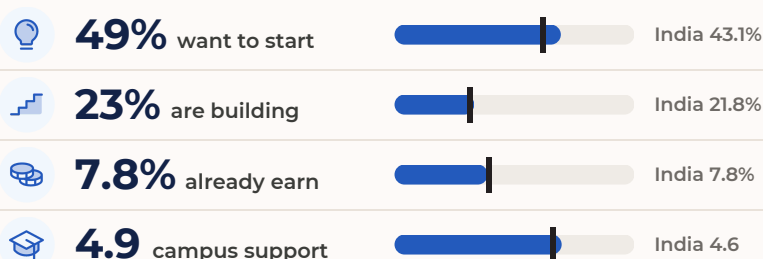


Andhra Pradesh is above the India average at all three gates: 46 in 100 students want to start a business, 26 are building one and 9.5 earn from one. **But only 24 in 100 of its student founders have taken a hard step** (India 32).

→ **Help student founders in Andhra Pradesh make their first sale.**



Karnataka 2,719 students

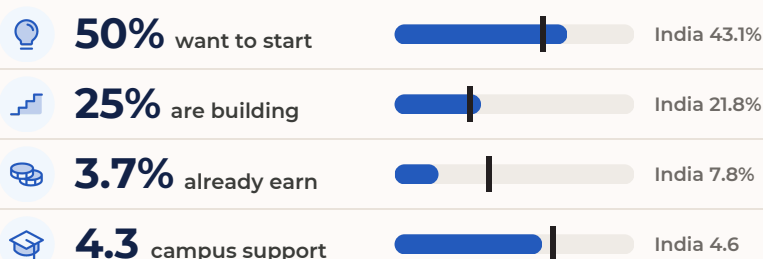


Students in Karnataka rate campus support well above the India average (4.9 against 4.6), and 49 in 100 want to start a business. **But the share who earn from a business, 7.8 in 100, is the same as the India average.**

→ **Turn Karnataka's strong campus support into first sales.**



Kerala * 218 students



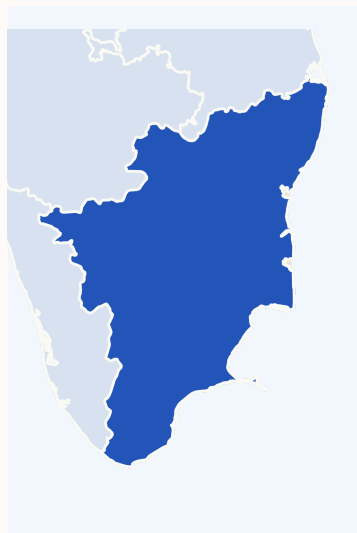
In Kerala, 50 in 100 students want to start a business and 25 are building one. **But only 3.7 in 100 earn from a business, about half the India average.** Campus support (4.3) and course-taking (40 in 100) are below the India average.

→ **Kerala's sample is small (218 students): read these numbers with care.**

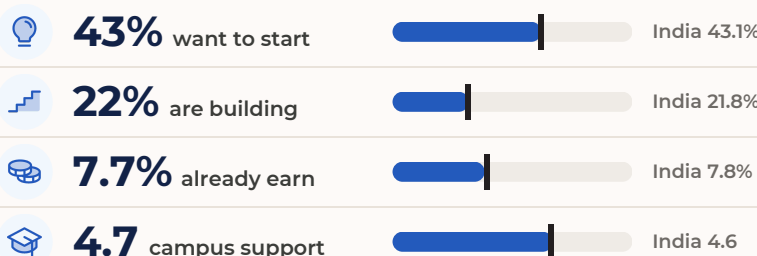
WHAT THE DATA SHOWS • THE STATES, ONE BY ONE

The states, one by one

For each state, the blue bar shows the state and the black mark shows the India average.

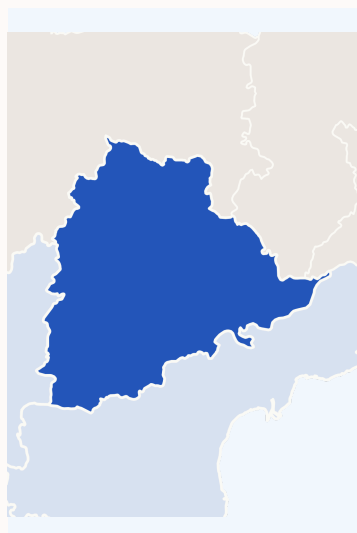


Tamil Nadu 6,137 students

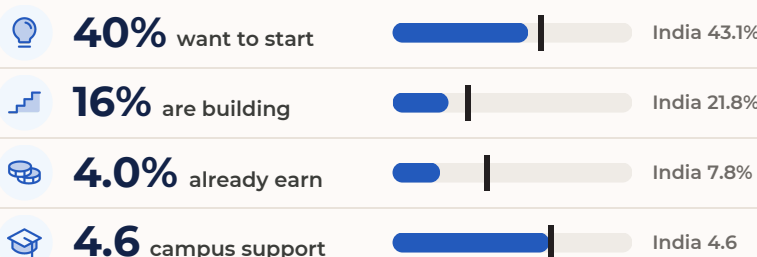


Tamil Nadu gives more than half of the South's answers. **Women are 43 in 100 of its student founders** (India 34). But only 44 in 100 of its students know a founder outside their family, and only 23 in 100 of its student founders have taken a hard step (India 32).

→ [Connect students in Tamil Nadu with founders.](#)



Telangana * 581 students



Telangana is below the India average at all three gates: 40 in 100 students want to start a business, 16 are building one and 4 earn from one. Students rate campus support at the India average (4.6).

→ [Telangana's sample is small \(581 students\): read these numbers with care.](#)

WHAT ALL FIVE STATES SHARE



In all five states, less than 4 in 10 student founders already earn from their business

Of the students who are building or running a business, the % whose business already has regular sales. The black mark shows India (36%).



3

Students are building, but **not yet selling**

Most southern student founders stop before the steps that cost money or create a commitment.

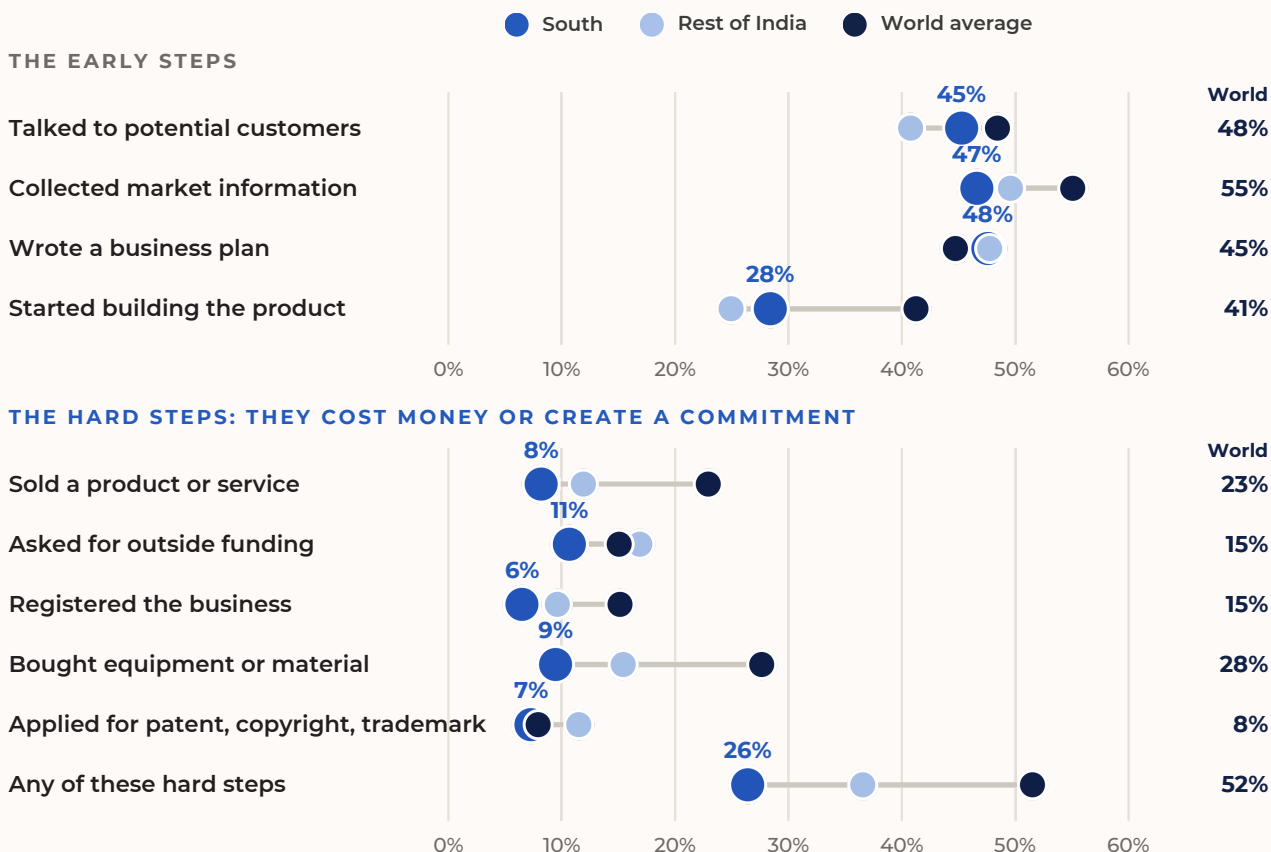
Building a business takes many steps. Most southern student founders have taken the early steps: 45 in 100 have talked to potential customers, and 48 in 100 have written a business plan. **But only 26 in 100 southern student founders have taken any of the hard steps**, compared with 37 in 100 in the rest of India and 52 in 100 in the world. Only 8 in 100 have sold anything, compared with 23 in 100 in the world. The gap remains when we look only at undergraduates (25 against 38 in 100), and after we take study level, age, field and gender into account.



CHART 5

The steps student founders have taken

% of student founders who are building a business (no regular sales yet) and have taken each step



RESEARCH

When the future is very uncertain, a detailed plan can mislead; small tests with limited losses suit it better (Alvarez & Barney, 2007).



NEXT MOVE • START for government and incubators

Reward student founders with incentives, academic credit or access to funding when they test their idea with customers, register their business or get a first order.

Source: GUESSS India 2025, student founders who are building a business (no regular sales yet) and were shown the list of steps. World average = 41 countries with 500+ students.

4

Southern students are **slightly bolder**, and **more founders are women**

Southern students score slightly higher on entrepreneurial mindset, and 39 in 100 southern student founders are women.

The survey measured each student's entrepreneurial mindset with 16 statements, on a scale of 1 to 7. Southern students score 4.89 on average, compared with 4.83 in the rest of India and 4.71 in the world. The larger difference is in who builds a business: **39 in 100 southern student founders are women**, compared with 30 in 100 in the rest of India.



CHART 6

Entrepreneurial mindset

Average score, 1 to 7, all students · numbers on the right: the South

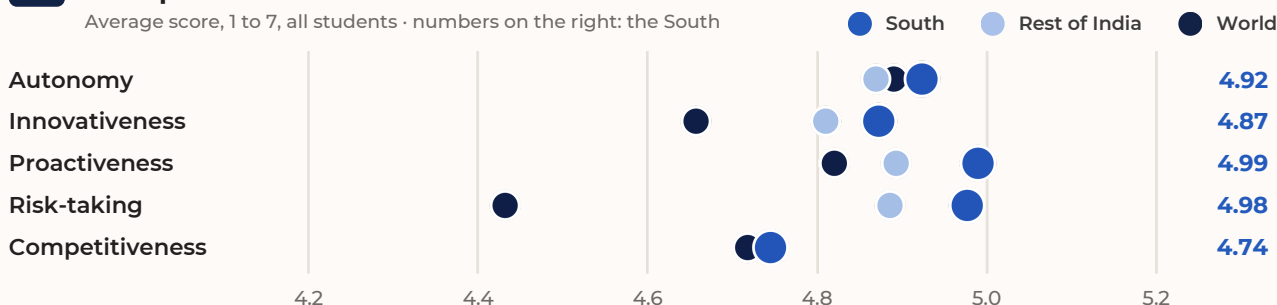
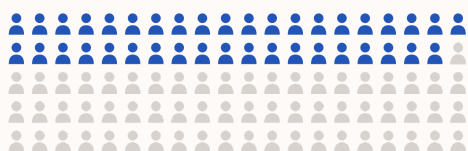


CHART 7

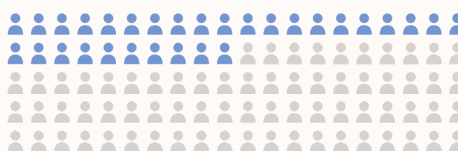
Women among student founders

Of every 100 student founders (building or running a business)

South · 39 in 100



Rest of India · 30 in 100



World average 47 in 100.



A REVA UNIVERSITY STUDENT ON RUNNING HER BUSINESS

"To be honest, my father doesn't know that I'm running a venture and also having community. Probably through this podcast, he'll know that I'm actually doing this."

Aparna Kulkarni

BSc Biotechnology student, REVA University; runs a mental-health venture · GUESSS India Podcast, Episode 14



NEXT MOVE · CONTINUE for universities and incubators

Keep programmes **open and welcoming to women students**: in the South, 39 in 100 student founders are women, closer to the world average (47) than the rest of India (30).

5

Campuses that encourage

Southern students feel more encouraged to start a business on their campus than students elsewhere.

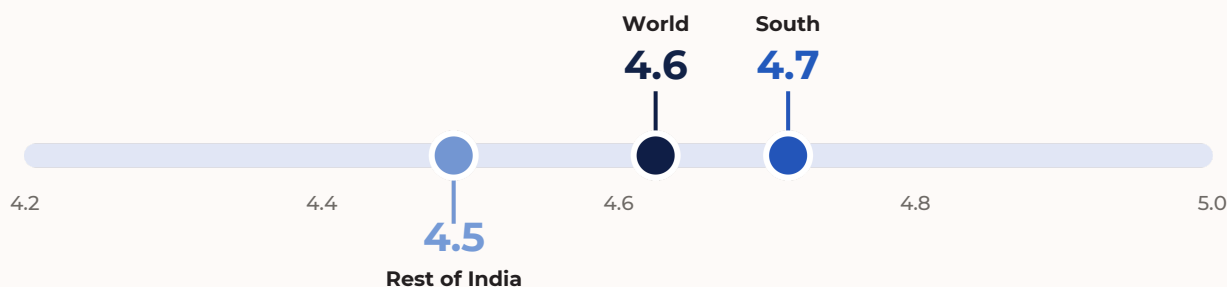
Southern students rate the support for entrepreneurship on their campus at **4.7 out of 7**, compared with 4.5 in the rest of India. They also find it easier to get advice on starting a business (4.9 against 4.5 out of 7), and they see more support from their university (3.52 against 3.34 out of 5). Students in private and deemed universities give the highest ratings. Students in state universities give ratings close to national level.



CHART 8

How encouraging is the campus?

Average of three statements, 1 to 7: the atmosphere inspires, the climate favours, the university encourages



IN THE SOUTH, BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION



Central universities (157 students) are not shown due to small sample.



ON WHAT MAKES A CAMPUS ENTREPRENEURIAL

“The entrepreneurship at any institute depends on the ecosystem. And this ecosystem is not just the incubation center ... or the money ... But it starts from the place where students live, and how students talk to each other, their mess tables, their coffee houses.”

Prof. Milind Atrey

Deputy Director, IIT Bombay; former Professor-in-Charge, SINE IIT Bombay · GUESSS India talk



NEXT MOVE · CONTINUE for universities

Keep the **advice, events and encouragement** that lead southern students to rate their campus **4.7 out of 7**.

6

Fewer than half have **taken a course** or **know a founder**

46 in 100 southern students have taken an entrepreneurship course, and 47 in 100 know a founder outside their family.

Southern students rate their campus well, but two important things are missing for many of them. **Only 46 in 100 southern students have taken an entrepreneurship course**, about the same as in the rest of India (48) and the world (48). **Only 47 in 100 southern students know a founder outside their family**, such as a friend, a classmate or a professor. In the rest of India the figure is 52 in 100, and in the world 67 in 100. Only 6.5 in 100 southern students know a professor who has started a business.



CHART 9

Have taken an entrepreneurship course

% of students who answered

46%



CHART 10

Know a founder outside their family

% of students

47%



Know a professor who has started a business

South **6.5%** • rest of India 7.5% • world **13%**



Students who know founders build more often.

Among southern students who know three or more kinds of founders, 54 in 100 are building a business.

Among those who know no founder, 15 in 100 are. This is a link, not proof that one causes the other.

54% 15%

know 3+ kinds

know none



RESEARCH

At German universities, students felt a stronger entrepreneurial climate when more of their classmates had taken a required entrepreneurship course, even if they had not taken one themselves (Bergmann et al., 2018).



NEXT MOVE • START for universities

Make sure every student takes one practical entrepreneurship course and meets one founder before graduating.

7

Incubators reach as many founders, but founders rate them lower

Incubators in the South reach as many student founders as incubators elsewhere, but these founders rate them lower.

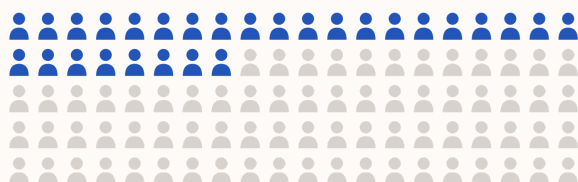
28 in 100 southern student founders are in an incubator, the same as in the rest of India. The difference is in how founders feel about it. **When asked whether they would recommend their incubator, southern founders give it 5.5 out of 10**, compared with 6.2 in the rest of India. Founders who receive more number of supports rate incubator higher.



CHART 11

Student founders in an incubator

Of every 100 student founders who answered



South: 28 in 100 are in an incubator. 16 in 100 are incubated at their own university.

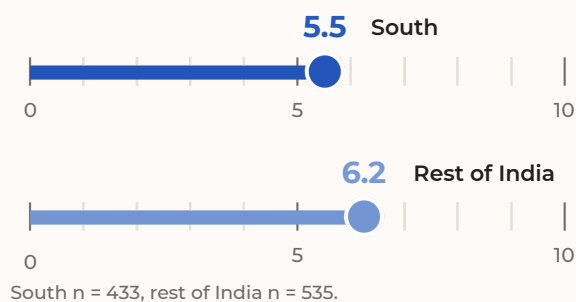
Rest of India: 28 in 100 in an incubator, 14 in 100 at their own university.



CHART 12

Would they recommend their incubator?

Student founders in an incubator, average score (0–10)



Of the southern student founders who are not in an incubator, **39% did not know that such programmes existed**. Only 6% said that no incubator was within their reach.



RESEARCH

In Austria and Germany, only about a quarter of founders had noticed an incubator or accelerator at their own university (Greven et al., 2024).



ON WHAT AN INCUBATOR SHOULD DO

"I always say incubators may not have answers to all the questions startups have. But incubators should know who can answer them. ... Incubator is not funding, incubator is telling where the funds are, what schemes to apply for."

Prasad Menon

President, ISBA; CEO, CIBA Mumbai • GUESSS India Podcast, Episode 19



NEXT MOVE • START for incubators

Ask every student founder which kinds of support they still need, and add them: founders who get more kinds of support rate their incubator higher.

Source: GUESSS India 2025, student founders who answered the incubation questions; the rating was asked of founders in an incubator only.

8

Institutions and the wider system

Students in all types of institutions start businesses at about the same rate, but some institutions create fewer chances for students to meet founders.

In the South, every type of institution has about the same share of students who are building a business: between 21 and 23 in 100. What differs is what students experience. In affiliated colleges and state universities more than half of the students have taken an entrepreneurship course, and **fewer of their students know a founder** (43 and 44 in 100). Outside the campus, southern students are a little more positive than students in the rest of India that India's institutions encourage entrepreneurs (3.6 against 3.5 out of 5), and a little more critical of bank loans and state laws.



CHART 13

The South's institutions, side by side

% of students (in an incubator: % of student founders who answered) · bigger circle = higher · not a ranking

Type of institution	Share of the South's students	Are building	Took a course	Know a founder	Founders in an incubator
Affiliated colleges n = 4,617	42%	23	45	43	27
Deemed universities n = 2,069	19%	23	49	52	33
Private universities n = 1,911	17%	23	47	54	25
State universities n = 1,765	16%	21	45	44	31
National institutes n = 419	4%	23	36	59	13*

* Fewer than 100 student founders answered, so read this number with care. National institutes are the Institutes of National Importance, such as the IITs and NITs. Central universities are a separate group and are not shown, because only 157 southern students from central universities answered.



RESEARCH

In European GUESSS data, between 13% and 24% of the differences in students' start-up activity lay between subject groups within universities (Bergmann et al., 2024).



NEXT MOVE · START for government

Run new student entrepreneurship schemes through affiliated colleges and state universities, where most southern students study.

9

What kinds of **businesses** do southern students build?

This page shows the sectors of the businesses that southern student founders are building or running, compared with the rest of India.

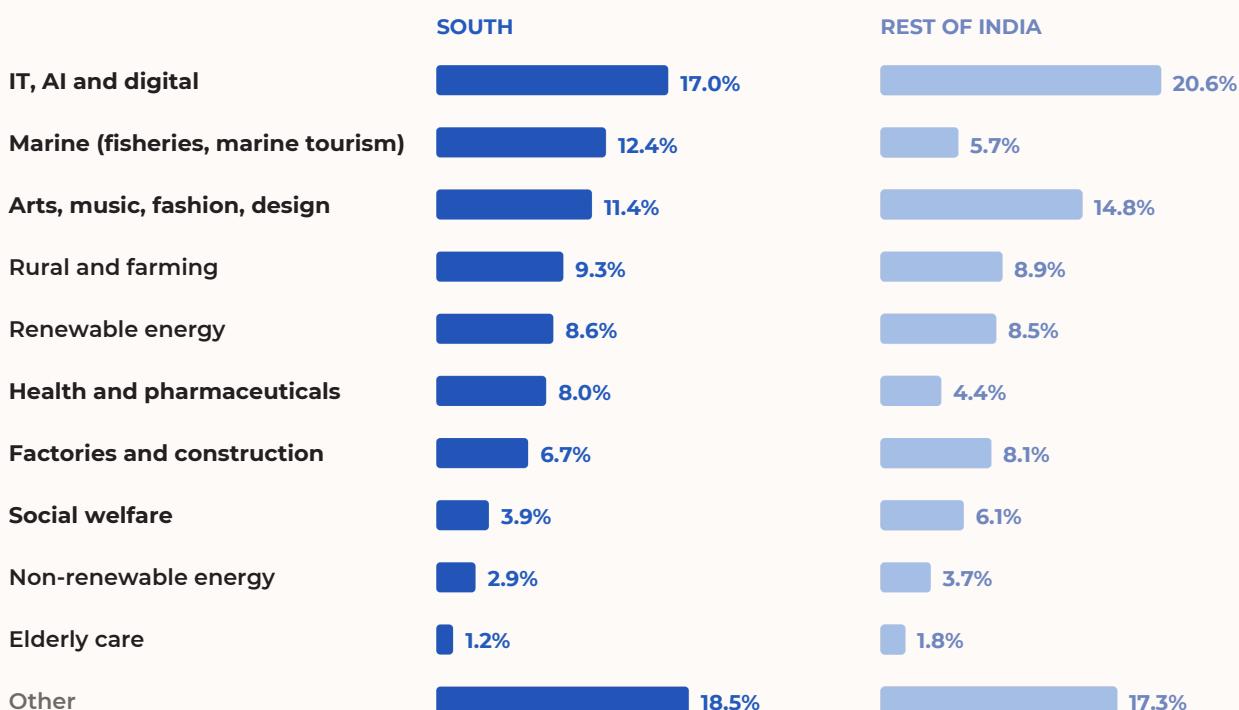
Each student founder chose the sector of their business from a list. **Southern student founders more often build businesses in the marine economy**, such as fisheries and marine tourism (12 in 100, against 6 in the rest of India), **and in health and pharmaceuticals** (8 against 4). They less often build businesses in IT, AI and digital services (17 against 21), in arts, music, fashion and design (11 against 15), and in social welfare (4 against 6). IT and digital is still the largest single sector in both.



CHART 14

The sector of each student founder's business

% of student founders who named a sector · bold = a tested difference



2,436 southern and 2,854 rest-of-India student founders named a sector, from the list of "colours of the economy". One business per founder.



NEXT MOVE · START for state governments and incubators

Support the sectors that southern students actually choose, such as **marine, health and farming businesses, and not only IT and digital.**

Source: GUESSS India 2025, student founders (building or running a business) who named a sector; one business per founder; sectors as in the national report.

What to do next?

This part suggests twelve actions: four each for governments, universities and incubators.



Continue

Keep doing it

It already works in the South, so protect it and keep funding it.



Stop

Stop doing it

It holds students back, or it measures the wrong thing.



Start

Start doing it

It is missing today, and the data shows that it matters.



Government

Help student founders make their first sale.

→ p. 22



CONTINUE

Keep funding campus entrepreneurship



STOP

Stop counting only ideas and events



START

Help student founders make their first sale



START

Reach affiliated colleges and state universities



Universities

Give every student a practical course and a founder to learn from.

→ p. 24



CONTINUE

Keep campus support strong



STOP

Stop ending courses with a business plan



START

Give every student an entrepreneurship course



START

Bring founders into the classroom



Incubators

Go out to student founders, and ask them what support they need.

→ p. 25



CONTINUE

Stay close to students on campus



STOP

Stop waiting for founders to come to you



START

Run short programmes that end in a sale



START

Ask founders what support they need

WHAT TO DO



For government

State governments, startup missions, education departments and innovation agencies

Four suggested actions for government: one to continue, one to stop and two to start. Each action links to the data behind it.



Continue

Keep doing it

Keep funding campus entrepreneurship

Southern students rate campus support higher than students in the rest of India (4.7 against 4.5 out of 7). Keep funding the entrepreneurship cells, clubs and events behind this.

→ The data: [page 16](#)



Stop

Stop doing it

Stop counting only ideas and events

The South already leads on students who want to start and who build. Count the students who make a first sale instead (today 8 in 100), state by state, until the next survey in 2027.

→ The data: [page 09](#)



Start

Start doing it

Help student founders make their first sale

Only 26 in 100 southern student founders have taken a hard step (52 in the world). Reward customer tests, registration and first orders with incentives, academic credit or access to resources. The next page lists five ways.

→ The data: [page 14](#)

Reach affiliated colleges and state universities

These institutions teach most southern students, and fewer of their students know a founder. Run new schemes through the affiliation networks of universities.

→ The data: [page 19](#)



ONE NUMBER
TO WATCH

8 in 100

southern students earn from a business today. Track this number for each state until the next survey in 2027.

Five ways to help student founders **make their first sale**

Suggested actions for state governments, startup missions, education departments and innovation agencies. Each point below provides guidance on a hard step that few southern student founders have taken so far.

1



First-sale rewards

Reward student founders who test with real customers (pre-orders, a paid pilot) with an incentive, academic credit or access to resources such as funding.

Only 8 in 100 southern student founders have sold anything (23 in 100 in the world).

2



Registration help on campus

Set up help desks with the state startup mission that help student founders register a business at no cost.

Only 6 in 100 have registered their business (15 in 100 in the world).

3



Shared equipment and materials

Give student founders access to labs, machines and materials through incubators and universities, so that they do not have to buy everything themselves.

Only 9 in 100 have bought equipment or materials (28 in 100 in the world).

4



Government as a first customer

Let government departments and public bodies place small first orders with student businesses, with simple buying rules.

Only 8 in 100 southern students earn from a business today.

5



Help with funding requests

Train student founders to prepare a funding request, and connect them with state startup funds and angel investors.

Only 11 in 100 have asked for outside funding (15 in 100 in the world).



HOW TO CHECK PROGRESS

Count the student founders who make a first sale in each state every year, and compare the number with the next GUESSS India survey in 2027. The data behind these steps is on page 14.

WHAT TO DO



For universities

Vice-chancellors, deans, faculty and entrepreneurship cells

Four suggested actions for universities: one to continue, one to stop and two to start. Each action links to the data behind it.



Continue

Keep doing it

Keep campus support strong

Southern students rate their campus 4.7 out of 7, above the rest of India and the world. Keep the encouragement, advice and events that earn this rating.

→ [The data: page 16](#)



Stop

Stop doing it

Stop ending courses with a business plan

Southern student founders often write a business plan (48 in 100), but few have sold anything (8 in 100). End courses and competitions with a test with real customers instead.

→ [The data: page 14](#)



Start

Start doing it

Give every student an entrepreneurship course

Only 46 in 100 southern students have taken an entrepreneurship course. Offer at least one practical course to students in every field of study.

→ [The data: page 17](#)

Bring founders into the classroom

Only 47 in 100 southern students know a founder outside their family, and only 6.5 in 100 know a professor who started a business (13 in the world). Invite alumni founders to teach, and support faculty who start businesses.

→ [The data: page 17](#)



ONE NUMBER
TO WATCH

46 in 100

southern students have taken an entrepreneurship course. The aim should be every student.

WHAT TO DO



For incubators

Incubator heads, managers and mentors in the South

Four suggested actions for incubators: one to continue, one to stop and two to start. Each action links to the data behind it.



Continue

Keep doing it

Stay close to students on campus

16 in 100 southern student founders are in their own university's incubator, more than in the rest of India (14). Keep the incubator close to students.

→ The data: [page 18](#)



Stop

Stop doing it

Stop waiting for founders to come to you

39 in 100 southern founders outside an incubator did not know that such programmes existed. Visit classrooms, clubs and hostels to find them.

→ The data: [page 18](#)



Start

Start doing it

Run short programmes that end in a sale

Only 26 in 100 southern student founders have taken a hard step. Run short programmes that take students from customer talks to a registered business and a first order.

→ The data: [page 14](#)

Ask founders what support they need

Southern founders rate their incubator 5.5 out of 10, against 6.2 in the rest of India. Ask every group of founders what they still need, and add it.

→ The data: [page 18](#)



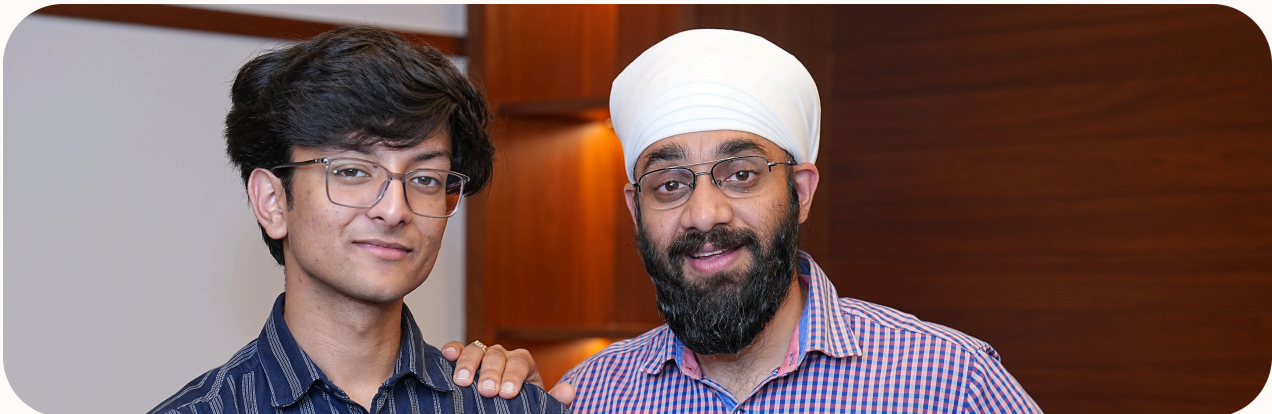
ONE NUMBER
TO WATCH

5.5 of 10

is how southern student founders rate their incubator. Ask them again every year.

ABOUT US

The authors



The authors, Prerak Sharma (left) and Dr. Puran Singh, at the REVA University Studio, Bengaluru, January 2026.

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What is next?

Transforming **Students' Entrepreneurial** journeys

T.Lab, from the School of Management, IIT Mandi, helps universities and incubators give students a real first step, early, with people around them. In the South, that step is the first sale.

Learn.

A hands-on course, early, in every field.

Only 46 in 100 southern students have taken a course

Build.

A real product and a first customer.

Only 26 in 100 southern student founders have taken a hard step

Mentor.

Founders and mentors within reach.

Only 47 in 100 southern students know a founder

Transform.

A campus that counts who starts.

8 in 100 southern students earn from a business today

BRING T.LAB TO YOUR CAMPUS OR INCUBATOR

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Let's build founders.



School of Management
Indian Institute of Technology Mandi

Watch the episodes

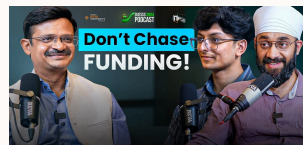


Hosted by Dr. Puran Singh and Prerak Sharma. Click a picture to open the episode on YouTube, or scan the code to see the podcast.



EP 1 Sneh Sharma

From Shimla to 30+ Countries



EP 2 Muralidhar Somisetty

Step-by-Step Guide to Student Entrepreneurship in 2026



EP 3 Gursimran Kalra

From College Student to Forbes 30 Under 30



EP 4 Inshada Mir

I Left Everything to Revive Kashmir's Crafts



EP 5 Sohan Balachandran

I Sold 400 Watches in 12 Minutes



EP 6 Abhishek Parmar

Complete Roadmap for Student Entrepreneurs



EP 7 Siddharth Gangal

The Only Startup Advice You Need as a College Student in 2026



EP 8 Adarsha K

How I Built a \$10M Healthcare Startup



EP 9 Prof. T. Prasad

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EP 10 Saurabh Mittal

Leading Self, Leading People, Leading Organisations



EP 11 Dr. K Suresh Kumar

Incubator Perspective on Student Entrepreneurship



EP 12 Poyini Bhatt

Are We Overhyping Student Entrepreneurship?



EP 13 Dr. P. Shyama Raju

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Money or Impact? What Student Entrepreneurs Really Want



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How to Start Your First Startup as a Student?



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What Research Reveals About Entrepreneurship



EP 17 Prof. Ashok Jhunjhunwala

Fail, Fall & Get Up: Everything You Need to Know about Startups



EP 18 Prof. Mukesh Sud

The 3 Questions Every Entrepreneur Asks Before Starting



EP 19 Prasad Menon

New Incubator Playbook



EP 20 Dr. Sudhir Varadarajan

Turning Students into Startups: The Design Spine Approach

More sessions and talks: youtube.com/@GUESSSIndia. Episodes 14, 17 and 19 are quoted in this brief.

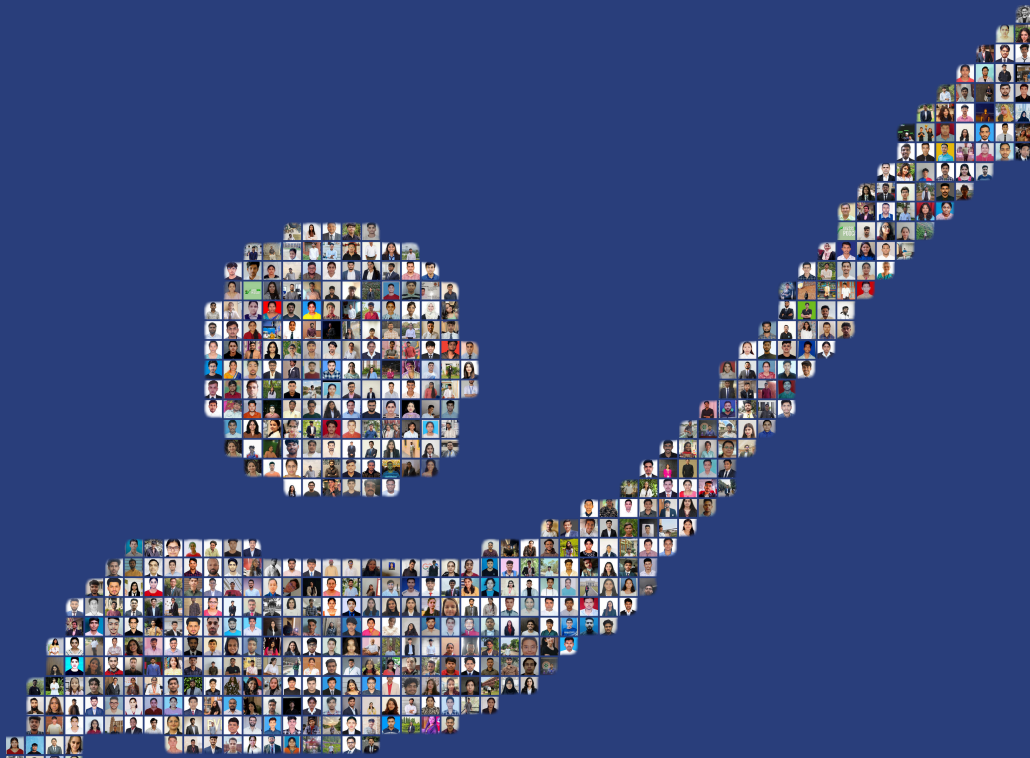
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OUR JOURNEY

600+ campus ambassadors

The students who carried GUESSS India 2025 to their campuses. Every square is one of them. 157 campus ambassadors are from 109 universities and colleges across five southern states.



BE PART OF IT

Join GUESSS India 2027

Universities and incubators in the South can run the next survey on their campus or network and host workshops and launches. Students can apply to be campus ambassadors when applications open.



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guesssindia.in



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Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey

