

Aadhaar: Myth Vs Fact

Myth 1: Aadhaar has a poorly verified database.

Fact: Aadhaar enrolment is done through registrars, which are credible institutions like state government, banks, Common Service Centres (CSCs) which employ enrolment agencies empanelled by UIDAI. These agencies employ operators who are certified by UIDAI. Aadhaar enrolments are done only through customized software developed and provided by UIDAI. Every day, the operators have to log into the enrolment machine through their Aadhaar number and fingerprints. Once an enrolment is done, the operator is required to sign through his/ her biometrics. At the time of enrolment itself, the captured data is encrypted and can't be read by anyone other than the UIDAI server. These are just few of the security measures to ensure that Aadhaar enrolment system is secure.

Myth 2: A person can give fake I-card and obtains an Aadhaar number.

Fact: Let us explain this case with a simple example - Suppose Ram Kumar fabricates his identity documents such as ration card or voter's ID card in the name of Shyam Kumar. However, Ram will also need an Aadhaar in his real name. When he goes to enroll in the name of Ram Kumar he will be rejected because his biometrics are already in the database mapped to some Shyam Kumar. So, if somebody has Aadhaar with a fake identity, then he will be stuck with that fake identity for whole life. If this person indulges in any crime, he will be caught very soon and prosecuting agencies will find it much easier to prove his crime because all his acts are digitally recorded. Therefore, very few will dare to use fake Aadhaar identities using biometrics to commit a crime of impersonation

Myth 3: People may use fake Aadhaar cards to facilitate an act of terror or open a bank account for money laundering.

Fact: It is wrong to assume that the authorities would rely only on Aadhaar for allowing access to all type of services. If an agency is using Aadhaar, it does not mean that it is required to give up other necessary verifications. After having confirmed the identity of the person through Aadhaar, biometrics or OTP, the agency is at liberty to prescribe additional checks. For example, if a person opens a bank account with his Aadhaar and wants to undertake high value transactions, the bank should do additional checks to make further verifications about the individuals.

Further, for the sake of argument assume a person is able to open a bank account using an Aadhaar with a fake name and address and launders money or commits some crime or terror acts. The person can do the same through any other fake ID like a fake voter ID card or ration card as well. The only difference is that, if he has used his Aadhaar, it will be easier for investigating agencies to find the culprits and conspirators, bring them to justice, and prove their crime in a court of law. If the person had used his

fake ration card, the authorities would find it much harder to find him and will hit a dead end in many cases.

Myth 4: There have been few reports of leaks of Aadhaar number. This has raised concerns.

Fact: This is false. The fact is some agencies of central or state governments have been putting up details of their beneficiaries state-wise, district-wise, village-wise through a search menu as required under the RTI Act. Now IT Act and Aadhaar Act are there. They impose restrictions on publication of Aadhaar numbers, bank account, and other personal details. As soon as it came to notice that some agencies were displaying Aadhaar numbers and bank account numbers of beneficiaries in a search menu, they were told to remove them and they complied. Remember that no biometrics were displayed. No data has been leaked from UIDAI. Therefore to say that Aadhaar has been breached, data has been leaked, is completely incorrect and misleading

Myth 5: I shared my Aadhaar number publicly on a social platform unknowingly. Now anyone can steal my identity.

Fact: Aadhaar number, bank account number and mobile numbers are not secret. They are sensitive personal identity information. Secret numbers are your PIN, passwords etc. While these should not be shared, one can give his sensitive personal identity information such as bank account number and Aadhaar number to others for transactional purposes. When you write a cheque, it will have your bank account number. Just because someone knows your bank account number, it will be wrong to assume he will be able to hack your bank account. If someone knows your Aadhaar number, it will be wrong to assume he will be able to hack your Aadhaar-linked bank account. However, a prudent practice is that you should not put up your sensitive personal information such as bank account numbers, Aadhaar number on website or social media platform.

Myth 6: Section 7 of Aadhaar Act ensures that no one will be denied benefits because of not having Aadhaar. But notifications mandate Aadhaar in contravention of this provision.

Fact: Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act is very clear that if a subsidy is to be given from the Consolidated Fund of India then the government can ask for Aadhaar number. If the beneficiary does not have an Aadhaar then he/ she can be mandated to enroll for Aadhaar and till then benefits shall have to be given through alternative means of identification.

Myth 7: I had to give my fingerprints to the telecom company for getting a SIM card. Can the telecom company keep my biometrics for future use?

Fact: No. The telecom company cannot store your biometrics at its end. The biometrics collected should be encrypted by the service provider and sent to UIDAI at that instant itself. Any storage of biometric by any agency is a serious crime punishable with up to three years of imprisonment under the Aadhaar Act.

Myth 8: There are reports that Aadhaar will be used to track me.

Fact: Aadhaar Act provides that no agency will be able to track any individual through Aadhaar. Any attempt to track an individual through Aadhaar number is an offence under the Aadhaar Act.