

Inter State Variations in Education Enrolment Patterns in India

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ABSTRACT

Education plays an important role in building self-confidence among women it also enables to change she/her status in the society. Education enables and builds confidence to take decisions in a better way. A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development. Education for sustainable development ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university; and eliminating gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. The present paper mainly aims to study on the regional inequalities in the enrolment on education at macro level; to have a descriptive analysis on the State wise and Level wise enrolment Patterns, Disparity in Education Enrolment; to analyse the extent of inequalities in education in India; and to offer possible strategies for strengthening the education and bridging the interstate variations in India. The study is a descriptive study based on secondary data mainly gathered from Various Issues of Educational Statistics – At a Glance, published by Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi and The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE Plus) published by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Govt of India. Based on the UDISE Plus report it is observed that the GPI for primary education in India stands at 1.03, indicating a slight favorability towards girls. Several states and union territories show encouraging numbers, such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1.05), Arunachal Pradesh (1.01), Bihar (1.03), and Delhi (1.07). These regions demonstrate a relatively higher enrollment ratio for girls at the primary level, contributing to gender parity in early education. At the Upper Primary level, the Gender Parity Index for India is 1, indicating equal participation of girls and boys. Achieving universal school education by 2030 demands a multi-faceted approach, to achieve the goal; India must address systemic challenges through targeted policy interventions to bridge gaps in access, quality, and equity, ensuring every child receives a meaningful education. India's policy ecosystem for strengthening the education sector as a whole with the introduction of the NEP, updated guidelines, regulations for academic collaboration and mutual recognition of qualifications, building more world class infrastructures, providing welfare facilities and permissions for foreign branch campuses. Further, India's education sectors require unwavering focus to unlock the nation's true potential through integrated, accountable, and adaptive policy frameworks to build a future ready workforce.

Keywords: Gross Enrolment Ratio, NER, ANER, ASER, Gender Parity Index, New Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the Sustainable Development Goals. Education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people's lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods. It is to be stated that schools have become the most important means of transforming wealth of knowledge and skills from one generation to another. However, the role of institutions becomes more challenging in the modern world. Economic theories empirically proved that the participation of all human resources are highly inextricable for the process of development, and enhancing the multidimensional role of education and health will contribute to the

development of the whole society. They can play a more important role in the world economy in bettering economic and social conditions of people considerable potential is realized. Education is the pre-requisite for the development of a society. Among the various resources, the importance of education in human resource development has been recognized worldwide by all the sections of the society and it is an important component of development process. India's education system has made steady progress in improving access, quality, and outcomes in both school and higher education, it is noted that improvements have been driven by better community participation, stronger assessments, and closer links between education and skill development. Further, school enrolment has increased across levels, literacy rates have improved, and vocational education opportunities have expanded, helped by policies such as the Right to Education Act, 2009 and the National Education Policy 2020. It is also observed that the Gross Enrolment Ratio in schools now stands at 90.9 per cent at the primary level, 90.3 per cent at upper primary, 78.7 per cent at secondary, and 58.4 per cent at higher secondary. India now operates one of the world's largest school systems, with 14.71 lakh schools, 24.69 crore students, and over one crore teachers. To strengthen early learning, the government has co-located nearly three lakh Anganwadi centers with schools and expanded teaching materials in local languages through initiatives like Jaadui Pitara and the Bhartiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme. (Economic Survey 2025–26). Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development centers on quality education, which is composed of seven outcome targets and three means of implementation to create action to ensure quality education. The major objective of SDG 4 is to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality education in all countries and the opportunity to learn throughout their lives. The core objective is to increase enrolment ratio of children in education system and also to ensure that they must achieve proper academic success with help of properly tread educators and adequate school infrastructures which will lead to positive educational outcomes. Although education is a fundamental right, millions of children in the country are still not enrolled in schools. Low enrolment rates are especially prevalent among girls and marginalized communities, who often face discrimination and other socioeconomic barriers to education in one side and vast variations found among states on the other. Thus, Gender disparities and interstate variations remain a significant issue in the Indian education system. Through the growth of educational facilities has been tremendously improved, yet the rate of improvement is not found impressive to improve the quality and reduce the disparity in gender literacy and regional inequalities. Based on the context, the present paper mainly aims to explore the aspects of inequalities in the enrolment pattern among states in India.

Existing Literatures

There have been number of theoretical and empirical studies on educational inequality at different geographic tiers, encompassing administrative regions (Thomas, 2001; Edgerton et al, 2008), broader geographic regions (Qian and Smyth, 2008; Gumus and Chudgar, 2016), and district levels (Bramley and Fletcher, 1995; Hoglebe et al, 2008; Ataç, 2019). Additionally, studies explore rural/urban divides within countries (Qian and Smyth, 2008; Smanova, 2021). Education is regarded as the flag bearer of social transformation, economic growth, and sustainability and the promoter of social mobility and equality (Tilak, 2003). Mohanty and Jha (2008) viewed education as a remedy for poverty and social barriers. According to Solow (1956), country wise differences in productivity and thereby per capita income are due to variation in human resource development. The importance of education and its investment basically have evolved from growth theories of Solow (1956), Lucas (1988), and Romer (1990a, b). Lucas (1988) and Romar (1990) advocated the 'New Endogenous Growth' model to explain per capita income variation among countries through the differences in human capital. Educational investments complement the growth journey through better employment and wage opportunities (Muralidharan, 2013). Becker (1993) emphasized human capital formation for a country's growth and for tackling socioeconomic challenges. Empirical studies indicate that, among the three levels of education, primary education yields the highest rate of return. Returns are also higher for women's education, for general curricula, and in low-income countries (Psacharopoulos, 1994). The regional differences in educational outcome result in socioeconomic challenges among states, as educational indicators are more or less responsible for the movement of growth-oriented and socio-economic indicators (Chaudhuri & Gupta, 2009). The performance of educational indicators doesn't merely depend on their availability but on how efficiently these resources are utilized. It is possible that states with lesser resource bases might perform excellently due to efficient management, while others with large resource bases might not be able to convert their inputs to optimal outputs. An empirical analysis made by Chudasama (2020) on state-wise comparison of rankings between the Education Development Index (EDI) developed by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and the efficiency

index calculated through DEA highlighted the fact that states with high performance in EDI need not necessarily be efficient in input utilization. An evaluation study on elementary education efficiency in 28 major states of India made by Tyagi et al. (2009) found that the average value of the efficiency index to be 0.79, and the variation in scores ranged between 52 and 94.5 percent. Several NER states, like Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Manipur, ranked at the bottom, while states like Goa, Kerala, and Haryana stood at the top. Further, the study revealed that school infrastructure, public education expenditure, literacy, and urbanization rate influence efficiency positively. Kaul et al. (2017) in their paper examined the regional and socioeconomic inequality in access to ECE using larger samples and diverse locations in India. Zaw et al. (2021) find considerable gender, regional and socioeconomic inequality in pre-primary education access in developing world. Further, number of studies on education status, Rural Urban disparities, Gender disparities, Drop Out Status, Educational infrastructure, Developmental Programmes- Kothari R(1970); Pittman & Haughwout (1987); Cairns, Cairns & Neckerman (1989); Fetler (1989); Gupta D, (1991) ; Viler and Bissonnette (1992); Fortier & Guay (1993); Dreze J, Sen A. (1995) ; Hymel et al (1996) ; Rumberger and Larson (1998); Dreze & Kingdon (1999); Bayly S. (1999); Sharma KL, (1999); Sara et al. (2000); Anitha BK.(2000); Hasan M. (2001). Hannum E. (2002); Kulkarni PM. (2002); Thorat S, Aryama, Negi P. (2005). Desai S, Adams CD, Dubey A. (2006); Sabha & Gauri (2012); Mondal & Majumder (2013); Josheph (2014); Karthikeyan, R. and S.Ramasamy (2017); Karthikeyan, R., S.Dharmaraj and B.Kumutha (2025); Karthikeyan, R., M. Sulthana Barvin and V.Nalini (2025); Karthikeyan, R., V.Nalini and B.Sumathi (2025); and Karthikeyan, R. and V. Nalini (2025); Smyth, E., Barg, K., & Perinetti Casoni, V. (2026) Holstein, B. E. et.al. (2026), to mention a few.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The present paper mainly aims to study on the regional inequalities in the enrolment on education at macro level; to have a descriptive analysis on the Level wise and Social Group wise enrolment Pattern, Disparity in Education Enrolment; to analyse the extent of inequalities in education in India; and to offer possible strategies for strengthening the education and bridging the interstate variations in India. It is hypothesized that the GER at all level have been continuously increased and the GPI has come down at all level.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study is a descriptive study based on secondary data only. The data relating to the GER, NER, ANER and ASER at Primary Level, Primary Level, Upper Primary Level, Elementary Level, Secondary Level and Higher Secondary Level, state wise Gender Parity Index have been gathered from Various Issues of Educational Statistics – At a Glance, published by Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, New Delhi, Economic Survey, etc. Further, data retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Human Resource & Development, Govt., of India. Further, most of the data have been gathered from the report, The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE Plus) published by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Govt of India.

State-wise Analysis of Enrolment Ratio

Among the states in India, the states Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal have registered the NER of 100%, suggesting complete enrolment of age-appropriate children at the primary level; the territories Chandigarh (95.5%), Delhi (96.3%), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (96.8%), and Jammu and Kashmir (97.5%) have witnessed a near-universal age-appropriate enrolment. The states Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, and West Bengal have witnessed the ASER of 100%, indicate a complete participation of the 6-10 age groups in education, i.e. high in both ANER and ASER. The states Himachal Pradesh (ANER: 110.3%), Chandigarh (ANER: 109.0%), and Arunachal Pradesh (ANER: 100.4%), and have shown exceptional coverage when accounting for early advancement; they are also required to recheck their input data on enrolment and child population. These states have effectively addressed fundamental access challenges at the primary level and serve as models for educational inclusion strategies. It is also noted that Uttar Pradesh (NER: 67.0%) shows that one-third of age-appropriate children are not enrolled at the primary level; Madhya Pradesh (NER: 64.3%) has registered the lowest NER among central states, with over 35% of age-appropriate children not enrolled at the correct level; and Jharkhand (NER: 69.1%) has witnessed significant challenges in enrolling children at the appropriate age.

Table 1. State wise Enrolment Distribution at Primary Level in 2024-25

Sl.No	State/UTs	Total Enrolment (in Lakhs)	GER	NER	ANER	ASER
1	A &N Islands	0.71	85.1	79.4	95.3	95.3
2	Andhra Pradesh	84.55	91.9	82.9	86.5	86.5
3	Arunachal Pradesh	3.20	113.2	84.3	87.4	87.4
4	Assam	70.42	108.1	89.2	94.9	94.9
5	Bihar	211.33	77.2	63.8	70.6	70.6
6	Chandigarh	2.53	93.7	90.7	104.2	100.0
7	Chhattisgarh	58.07	89.2	77.9	87.0	87.0
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.47	108.7	97.7	107.2	100.0
9	Delhi	44.91	101.8	95.5	96.0	96.0
10	Goa	3.01	117.8	100.0	103.0	100.0
11	Gujarat	115.01	79.6	77.9	91.7	91.7
12	Haryana	57.69	91.6	77.4	80.3	80.3
13	Himachal Pradesh	14.25	99.5	85.4	110.6	100.0
14	Jammu and Kashmir	26.54	113.7	100.0	116.7	100.0
15	Jharkhand	74.367	92.5	75.8	82.2	82.2
16	Karnataka	117.80	104.5	90.7	90.8	90.8
17	Kerala	61.64	93.2	85.6	94.5	94.5
18	Ladakh	0.57	107.8	89.9	103.0	100.0
19	Lakshadweep	0.12	101.6	94.2	101.4	100.0
20	Madhya Pradesh	151.73	76.3	63.9	74.5	74.5
21	Maharashtra	212.73	104.5	94.9	102.7	100.0
22	Manipur	6.73	140.5	100.0	111.6	100.0
23	Meghalaya	10.61	180.7	100.0	140.1	100.0
24	Mizoram	2.80	138.0	100.0	116.1	100.0
25	Nagaland	4.14	95.4	78.2	84.2	84.2
26	Odisha	76.44	93.2	84.7	85.8	85.8
27	Puducherry	2.41	93.0	87.0	92.9	92.9
28	Punjab	59.08	105.6	90.6	103.0	100.0
29	Rajasthan	163.64	88.3	75.3	88.7	88.7
30	Sikkim	1.18	97.4	79.0	91.4	91.4
31	TamilNadu	125.18	91.6	85.7	88.9	88.9
32	Telangana	74.58	114.0	94.4	110.4	100.0

33	Tripura	6.90	117.9	100.0	112.9	100.0
34	Uttar Pradesh	427.89	83.1	62.6	65.1	65.1
35	Uttarakhand	24.27	109.9	92.5	107.6	100.0
36	West Bengal	170.82	106.6	85.7	85.8	85.8
37	India	2469.33	90.9	76.9	83.2	83.2

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education,

GoI, New Delhi

The enrolment level is not appreciable in the states Gujarat (ANER: 74.0%, ASER: 76.4%), Jharkhand (ANER: 70.0%, ASER: 70.3%), Bihar (ANER: 77.1%, ASER: 75.4%) where both the ANER and ASER have registered very low level. These states require urgent, targeted interventions to address fundamental barriers to primary education access, without which India is unlikely to attain the status of universal school education by 2030. The High GER with Moderate NER have registered in Meghalaya (GER: 178.4%, NER: 100.0%), Mizoram (GER: 151.8%, NER: 100.0%), Manipur (GER: 136.8%, NER: 100.0%); Moderate GER with Low NER, Maharashtra (GER: 103.3%, NER: 90.1%), and Karnataka (GER: 106.8%, NER: 92.9%).

Primary Education Level

Primary education forms the foundation of the education system, and universal access at this level is a prerequisite for achieving broader educational goals. In the case of primary education, it is observed that several states and union territories of India demonstrate strong performance across enrolment indicators viz, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal: All show NER of 100%, suggesting complete enrolment of age-appropriate children at the primary level, while Chandigarh (95.5%), Delhi (96.3%), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (96.8%), and Jammu and Kashmir (97.5%): These territories show near-universal age-appropriate enrolment.

The Strong Overall Participation attributed with high ANER and ASER in the states Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, and West Bengal ASER of 100%, indicating complete participation of the 6-10 age group in education. States Arunachal Pradesh (ANER: 100.4%), Chandigarh (ANER: 109.0%), and Himachal Pradesh (ANER: 110.3) have effectively addressed fundamental access challenges at the primary level and serve as models for educational inclusion strategies. The Critical Enrolment Gaps i.e.

NER less than 70% is found in the states Uttar Pradesh (NER: 67.0%), Madhya Pradesh (NER: 64.3%), Jharkhand (NER: 69.1%) where the state intervention is highly needed to strengthen GER. Low Overall Enrolment attributed to Low ANER and ASER is in the states Gujarat, Jharkhand and Bihar which require urgent, targeted interventions to address fundamental barriers to primary education access, without which India is unlikely to attain the status of universal school education by 2030.

Several states Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur where unusual pattern of enrolment i.e. High GER with Moderate NER is registered while in the states Maharashtra and Karnataka moderates GER with Low NER is witnessed. These patterns highlight the complex challenges in ensuring enrollment and age-appropriate educational progression. (Refer Table 1)

Upper Primary Education Level

In the case of Upper Primary Enrolment the states Chandigarh, Delhi, and Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Punjab are identified as the High-Performing States/UTs which demonstrate promising enrolment metrics in one hand and in contra, the states Low-Performing States Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Assam, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and Ladakh face significant challenges where the most concerning metrics with a GER of 68.4% and NER of 48.1%, indicating that over half of age-appropriate children are not enrolled at the upper primary level. (See Table 2)

Elementary Education Level

The elementary-level metrics are noticeably more substantial than the upper primary figures alone. There is a 17.3 percentage point difference between elementary NER (83.3%) and upper primary NER (66%). The High-Performing States/UTs are Chandigarh, Delhi, Goa, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram Meghalaya, West Bengal, Punjab (95.8% NER), and Manipur (93.2% NER) demonstrate strong performance approaching universal enrolment. Despite overall improvement, significant challenges remain in the states Bihar which continues to show the lowest performance with a GER of 77.7% and NER of 70.6%, although these figures represent an improvement over its upper primary metrics, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat show an interesting pattern of 100% NER despite relatively low GER values, which requires further investigation as it may indicate data anomalies and Maharashtra (71.1% NER) and Uttarakhand (72% NER) show surprisingly low NER values despite GER values over 100%, suggesting significant age-grade misalignment. (Refer Table 3)

Secondary Education Level

There is a significant decline in enrolment metrics in secondary level compared to elementary and upper primary levels, highlighting a critical challenge in retaining students through the secondary education phase. In the case of enrolment in elementary education the High-Performing States/UTs are Pondicherry, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. On the other side, states, Bihar shows the most alarming metrics with a NER of 27.8% and a GER of 45.6%, indicating that nearly three-quarters of age-appropriate children are not enrolled in secondary education followed by Assam (33.8% NER), Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh presents an unusual case with a GER of 100.1% but a NER of only 39%, suggesting significant age-grade misalignment despite high overall enrolment. It is noted that that the substantial gap between GER and NER (29.1 percentage points nationally) reveals extensive age-grade misalignment at the secondary level.

Table 2. State wise Enrolment Distribution at Upper Primary Level in 2024-25

Sl.No	State/UTs	Total Enrolment (in Lakhs)	GER	NER	ANER	ASER
1	A &N Islands	0.71	92.1	66.0	92.0	93.7
2	Andhra Pradesh	84.55	101.0	82.6	87.8	97.0
3	Arunachal Pradesh	3.20	86.9	51.4	55.8	87.4
4	Assam	70.42	91.1	66.3	74.2	89.6
5	Bihar	211.33	68.9	48.9	58.5	71.3
6	Chandigarh	2.53	120.3	94.5	117.2	100.0
7	Chhattisgarh	58.07	91.3	71.9	88.9	94.1
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.47	111.8	89.5	105.5	100.0
9	Delhi	44.91	117.1	99.7	100.9	100.0
10	Goa	3.01	116.2	94.6	94.7	100.0
11	Gujarat	115.01	92.8	67.5	88.0	90.3
12	Haryana	57.69	102.5	76.2	80.0	100.0
13	Himachal Pradesh	14.25	103.2	63.5	104.8	100.0
14	Jammu and Kashmir	26.54	77.3	52.6	70.9	77.2
15	Jharkhand	74.367	83.1	58.6	68.3	82.3

16	Karnataka	117.80	102.8	83.6	84.0	100.0
17	Kerala	61.64	98.9	83.2	98.5	99.7
18	Ladakh	0.57	84.3	59.4	77.2	82.5
19	Lakshadweep	0.12	81.1	70.1	80.2	80.6
20	Madhya Pradesh	151.73	81.8	57.6	74.1	81.3
21	Maharashtra	212.73	96.5	82.1	100.9	100.0
22	Manipur	6.73	92.8	66.7	70.7	100.0
23	Meghalaya	10.61	115.6	71.5	78.0	100.0
24	Mizoram	2.80	104.3	79.6	86.2	100.0
25	Nagaland	4.14	71.0	50.6	57.7	70.1
26	Odisha	76.44	95.5	81.6	83.7	96.3
27	Puducherry	2.41	98.6	87.9	98.1	99.8
28	Punjab	59.08	101.5	75.1	97.2	100.0
29	Rajasthan	163.64	92.1	63.9	84.2	91.0
30	Sikkim	1.18	75.8	53.5	68.8	74.6
31	TamilNadu	125.18	97.6	88.8	94.6	98.6
32	Telangana	74.58	111.6	79.6	103.3	100.0
33	Tripura	6.90	99.9	85.7	91.9	98.8
34	Uttar Pradesh	427.89	83.9	57.0	62.8	94.0
35	Uttarakhand	24.27	103.9	72.9	98.2	100.0
36	West Bengal	170.82	101.4	67.2	67.4	99.3
37	India	2469.33	90.3	67.3	77.9	92.7

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education,

GoI, New Delhi

Table 3. State wise Enrolment Distribution at Elementary Level in 2024-25

Sl.No	State/UTs	Total Enrolment (in Lakhs)	GER	NER	ANER	ASER
1	A &N Islands	0.71	87.9	84.3	94.7	94.7
2	Andhra Pradesh	84.55	95.4	88.6	90.5	90.5
3	Arunachal Pradesh	3.20	102.3	85.6	87.4	87.4
4	Assam	70.42	101.5	89.7	92.8	92.8
5	Bihar	211.33	74.0	67.2	70.9	70.9
6	Chandigarh	2.53	103.9	100.0	110.2	100.0
7	Chhattisgarh	58.07	90.0	83.3	89.6	89.6
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.47	109.9	100.0	109.5	100.0

9	Delhi	44.91	107.7	100.0	101.4	100.0
10	Goa	3.01	117.1	100.0	108.3	100.0
11	Gujarat	115.01	84.6	83.5	91.2	91.2
12	Haryana	57.69	95.7	86.8	88.2	88.2
13	Himachal Pradesh	14.25	101.0	92.8	109.2	100.0
14	Jammu and Kashmir	26.54	97.4	90.9	99.1	99.1
15	Jharkhand	74.367	88.8	78.5	82.2	82.2
16	Karnataka	117.80	103.8	96.4	96.6	96.6
17	Kerala	61.64	95.4	90.6	96.5	96.5
18	Ladakh	0.57	98.5	87.8	94.9	94.9
19	Lakshadweep	0.12	93.4	89.0	93.0	93.0
20	Madhya Pradesh	151.73	78.3	71.0	77.0	77.0
21	Maharashtra	212.73	101.4	95.5	102.9	100.0
22	Manipur	6.73	120.4	100.0	109.1	100.0
23	Meghalaya	10.61	154.3	100.0	132.4	100.0
24	Mizoram	2.80	124.3	100.0	114.5	100.0
25	Nagaland	4.14	85.2	75.3	78.3	78.3
26	Odisha	76.44	94.1	89.0	89.8	89.8
27	Puducherry	2.41	95.2	91.6	95.6	95.6
28	Punjab	59.08	104.0	95.1	103.7	100.0
29	Rajasthan	163.64	89.7	81.9	89.6	89.6
30	Sikkim	1.18	87.9	77.3	84.0	84.0
31	TamilNadu	125.18	93.9	90.4	92.6	92.6
32	Telangana	74.58	113.1	100.0	109.8	100.0
33	Tripura	6.90	110.2	100.0	106.9	100.0
34	Uttar Pradesh	427.89	83.4	73.5	75.7	75.7
35	Uttarakhand	24.27	107.6	98.0	108.0	100.0
36	West Bengal	170.82	104.5	91.1	91.1	91.1
37	India	2469.33	90.6	82.8	86.8	86.8

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education,

GoI, New Delhi

Higher Education Secondary

In the case of higher secondary education reveals a further decline in enrolment compared to previous educational levels. The figures indicate that while approximately three-quarters of 16-17-year-olds are enrolled in some form of education, only one-third is in age-appropriate higher secondary classes. The national higher secondary NER (33.8%) represents a further 14.5 percentage point drop from the secondary level NER (48.3%), continuing the pattern of declining enrolment as students progress through the education system which reveals

systemic challenges in educational progression and retention across India. High-Performing States/UTs Puducherry maintains its leadership position with a 79.1% NER, significantly outperforming all other regions followed by Delhi (65%), Goa (65.3%), Kerala (64.2%), Tamil Nadu (63.4%) and Chandigarh (71.2%) continue to demonstrate strong educational outcomes. As usual the states Bihar shows extremely concerning metrics with just 16.2% NER, indicating that less than one-fifth of age-appropriate students are enrolled in higher secondary education followed by Assam, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir demonstrate similarly alarming enrolment patterns. Further, Himachal Pradesh continues its unusual pattern with a relatively high GER (81.6%) but low NER (29.5%), suggesting persistent age-grade misalignment issues.

Table 4. State wise Enrolment Distribution at Secondary Level in 2024-25

SL.No	State/UTs	Total Enrolment (in Lakhs)	GER	NER	ANER	ASER
1	A &N Islands	0.71	92.3	51.0	88.0	90.8
2	Andhra Pradesh	84.55	89.4	64.6	71.0	88.5
3	Arunachal Pradesh	3.20	69.3	34.4	38.5	74.1
4	Assam	70.42	79.6	47.8	55.0	76.5
5	Bihar	211.33	51.1	28.8	41.6	54.3
6	Chandigarh	2.53	110.1	72.6	105.8	100.0
7	Chhattisgarh	58.07	77.5	46.5	61.1	67.0
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.47	104.9	71.1	90.6	100.0
9	Delhi	44.91	101.1	77.1	78.7	100.0
10	Goa	3.01	107.5	75.3	75.4	100.0
11	Gujarat	115.01	74.7	42.1	63.9	67.0
12	Haryana	57.69	90.3	60.1	64.9	94.5
13	Himachal Pradesh	14.25	102.6	40.9	92.6	94.8
14	Jammu and Kashmir	26.54	66.1	35.2	54.6	61.2
15	Jharkhand	74.367	72.6	44.4	56.6	76.5
16	Karnataka	117.80	101.3	71.4	71.8	99.5
17	Kerala	61.64	98.7	73.8	95.3	97.4
18	Ladakh	0.57	82.6	47.8	65.0	71.9
19	Lakshadweep	0.12	79.5	61.8	71.8	72.3
20	Madhya Pradesh	151.73	68.2	37.3	53.4	62.1
21	Maharashtra	212.73	93.6	62.2	82.6	85.9
22	Manipur	6.73	78.8	52.4	55.1	83.4
23	Meghalaya	10.61	86.2	42.3	47.6	94.4
24	Mizoram	2.80	95.5	62.6	68.1	94.8
25	Nagaland	4.14	61.8	37.5	44.6	60.0
26	Odisha	76.44	84.0	65.1	67.3	84.4

27	Puducherry	2.41	98.1	80.2	93.4	95.8
28	Punjab	59.08	92.6	53.9	82.5	91.6
29	Rajasthan	163.64	82.2	45.6	70.8	79.2
30	Sikkim	1.18	72.0	41.5	58.6	67.3
31	TamilNadu	125.18	95.5	81.3	89.1	94.7
32	Telangana	74.58	99.9	59.4	84.7	94.0
33	Tripura	6.90	80.2	63.3	69.9	79.4
34	Uttar Pradesh	427.89	64.3	31.9	38.6	68.4
35	Uttarakhand	24.27	93.4	50.2	84.5	94.5
36	West Bengal	170.82	99.4	44.2	44.4	92.1
37	India	2469.33	78.7	47.5	59.8	77.3

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, GoI.

Higher Education

The National Education Policy 2020 targets to achieve a 50 percent increase in higher education enrolment by 2035. Considering the current GER of 28.4 percent at the all-India level, attaining this ambitious goal within the stipulated timeframe will require significant and sustained efforts from the central and state governments. The overall GER stands at 28.4 percent, indicating that nearly three out of every ten individuals in the eligible age group are enrolled in higher education in India; this also shows that the remaining 62 percent are not enrolled in higher education.

Table 5. State wise Enrolment Distribution at Higher Secondary Level in 2024-25

Sl.No	State/UTs	Total Enrolment (in Lakhs)	GER	NER	ASER
1	A &N Islands	0.71	85.8	45.3	48.7
2	Andhra Pradesh	84.55	67.8	47.5	64.7
3	Arunachal Pradesh	3.20	43.7	24.2	57.7
4	Assam	70.42	43.5	27.7	47.7
5	Bihar	211.33	38.1	20.2	28.9
6	Chandigarh	2.53	107.4	70.7	75.6
7	Chhattisgarh	58.07	53.5	34.2	40.1
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.47	68.4	44.9	53.1
9	Delhi	44.91	82.7	63.5	85.3
10	Goa	3.01	93.8	64.7	98.4
11	Gujarat	115.01	47.3	24.0	26.1
12	Haryana	57.69	71.7	49.0	74.8
13	Himachal Pradesh	14.25	84.7	33.1	34.7
14	Jammu and Kashmir	26.54	44.8	23.0	28.1

15	Jharkhand	74.367	48.6	26.8	41.0
16	Karnataka	117.80	61.4	44.6	73.6
17	Kerala	61.64	89.5	66.0	68.3
18	Ladakh	0.57	57.7	32.6	41.9
19	Lakshadweep	0.12	51.1	40.0	42.2
20	Madhya Pradesh	151.73	45.0	24.7	31.3
21	Maharashtra	212.73	70.8	46.7	50.4
22	Manipur	6.73	58.5	43.1	65.5
23	Meghalaya	10.61	39.7	21.4	56.4
24	Mizoram	2.80	53.9	36.2	57.9
25	Nagaland	4.14	39.8	25.3	39.4
26	Odisha	76.44	60.7	44.6	60.4
27	Puducherry	2.41	95.5	78.6	81.7
28	Punjab	59.08	79.5	45.5	52.8
29	Rajasthan	163.64	66.1	34.2	41.6
30	Sikkim	1.18	49.6	28.6	37.6
31	TamilNadu	125.18	83.4	71.0	76.4
32	Telangana	74.58	67.6	37.7	43.8
33	Tripura	6.90	56.4	45.3	52.8
34	Uttar Pradesh	427.89	57.4	31.1	56.9
35	Uttarakhand	24.27	80.9	41.5	49.1
36	West Bengal	170.82	51.5	29.1	76.2
37	India	2469.33	58.4	35.8	77.2

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy,

Ministry of Education, GoI.

States like Chandigarh (64.8 percent), Puducherry (61.5 percent), Delhi (49.0 percent) and Tamil Nadu (47%) have consistently maintained high GER values, reflecting better access to higher education in these regions. Several states in the North-Eastern region, such as Mizoram (32.3 percent), Himachal Pradesh (43.1 percent), and Sikkim (38.6 percent), have performed well in terms of GER, possibly due to focused efforts and initiatives in these areas. States like Bihar (17.1 percent), Jharkhand (18.6 percent), and Uttar Pradesh (24.1 percent) have relatively lower GER values, indicating the need for more concerted efforts to improve access to higher education in these regions. There is a considerable variation in GER across states, with some states like Chandigarh and Delhi having GER values more than three times higher than states like Bihar and Jharkhand.

Gender Parity and Equality

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in education is a socioeconomic ratio measuring the relative access of girls/women compared to boys/men to education. Ranging from 0 to over 1, a value of 1 indicates perfect equality. It is a key indicator for monitoring SDG 4, helping identify where interventions are needed to ensure equal opportunities. There has also been impressive progress towards bridging gender gap in enrolment and retention in elementary education. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Gross Enrolment Rate in primary, upper

primary and elementary Education has been improving steadily over the period. The Gender parity Index for Gross Enrolment Rate in primary education, upper primary education, elementary education, and Secondary and Higher Secondary level found a positive move. Based on the UDISEPlus report it is observed that The GPI for primary education in India stands at 1.03, indicating a slight favorability towards girls. Several states and union territories show encouraging numbers, such as Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1.05), Arunachal Pradesh (1.01), Bihar (1.03), and Delhi (1.07). These regions demonstrate a relatively higher enrollment ratio for girls at the primary level, contributing to gender parity in early education. At the Upper Primary level, the Gender Parity Index for India is 1, indicating equal participation of girls and boys.

However, variations can be observed among states and union territories. Noteworthy examples include Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1.02), Arunachal Pradesh (1.07), Assam (1.1), Chandigarh (1.13), and Goa (1.03), where girls display higher enrollment ratios compared to boys, fostering gender equality in this stage of education. Considering the general elementary education, which includes primary and upper primary levels, the GPI in India stands at 1.02. This indicates a marginal favorability towards girls in terms of enrollment. States & Union Territories like Andaman & Nicobar Islands (1.04), Arunachal Pradesh (1.03), Assam (1.07), Chandigarh (1.12), and Daman and Diu (1.05) exhibit more pronounced gender parity, with higher enrollment ratios for girls. The GPI for secondary education in India is 1, suggesting equal participation of both girls and boys. While the national level reflects gender parity, certain regions show disparities. For instance, Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1.12), Assam (1.2), Chandigarh (1.12), Daman and Diu (1.1), and Kerala (0.99) showcase variations in enrollment ratios, requiring targeted efforts to bridge the gender gap in secondary education. At the higher secondary level, the GPI for India stands at 1.02, indicating a slight favorability towards girls. States and union territories like Chandigarh (1.17), Daman and Diu (1.58), Goa (1.07), and Lakshadweep (0.92) demonstrate notable variations in enrollment ratios, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies and interventions to ensure equal access to higher secondary education.(wide Table 6)

Table 6. State wise Level wise Gender Disparity Index of Enrolment Distribution in 2024-25

State/UTs	Primary	Upper Primary	Elementary	Secondary	Higher Secondary
A & N Islands	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.3
Andhra Pradesh	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Arunachal Pradesh	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1
Assam	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.2
Bihar	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Chandigarh	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.3
Chhattisgarh	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.3
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.8
Delhi	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Goa	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2
Gujarat	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1
Haryana	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Himachal Pradesh	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Jammu and Kashmir	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1
Jharkhand	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1
Karnataka	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.3

Kerala	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Ladakh	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.4
Lakshadweep	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Madhya Pradesh	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Maharashtra	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Manipur	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0
Meghalaya	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.4
Mizoram	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2
Nagaland	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2
Odisha	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Puducherry	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2
Punjab	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Rajasthan	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Sikkim	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2
TamilNadu	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Telangana	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1
Tripura	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2
Uttar Pradesh	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Uttarakhand	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
West Bengal	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.2
India	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1

Source: Reports of UDISE+, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education,

GoI, New Delhi

CONCLUSION

Despite substantial progress towards the goal of Education for All, education sector in India faces several challenges include quality-related deficiencies in general education; gaps in enrolment rates ; incidence of drop-out rates, especially among children belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged population groups; incidence of lower level of student attendance rate in some of the educationally backward States; unsatisfactory level of student learning; deficiencies relating to teacher quality and teaching-learning process; inadequate vocational education and training facilities; lack of infrastructure and shortage of funding for some of the education sector development programmes. Hence, strengthening measures may be taken for ; Ensuring equitable access to quality elementary, secondary, higher secondary and tertiary education; Bridging gender and social category gaps and inequalities in access to education, teaching-learning process and learning outcomes; Measures for improving the quality of education and teacher quality with information and communication technologies to ensure improved student learning at all levels; Expanding opportunities for skill development and vocational education and training; Ensuring increased and well-targeted financing of education programmes; Institutionalizing a responsive, participatory and accountable systems for governance of education sector . Achieving universal school education by 2030 demands a multi-faceted approach, to achieve the goal; India must address systemic challenges through targeted policy interventions to bridge gaps in access, quality, and equity, ensuring every child receives a meaningful education. India's policy ecosystem for strengthening the education sector as a whole with the introduction of the NEP, updated guidelines, regulations for academic

collaboration and mutual recognition of qualifications, building more world class infrastructures, providing welfare facilities and permissions for foreign branch campuses. Further, India's education sectors require unwavering focus to unlock the nation's true potential through integrated, accountable, and adaptive policy frameworks to build a future ready workforce.

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