

Trends & Analysis of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in India (2017-18 to 2021-22)

AISHE 2021-22 is the latest Data on Higher Education in India

Introduction

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is a crucial indicator used to measure the level of participation in higher education within a given population. It is calculated as the total enrollment in higher education, irrespective of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official population (18 to 23 years) in the appropriate age group. A higher GER signifies better access to higher education and broader participation from various sections of society.

The importance of monitoring GER lies in its ability to gauge the effectiveness of policies and initiatives promoting inclusive and equitable access to higher education. It helps policymakers identify regions or demographic groups that may be underrepresented, enabling targeted interventions to bridge the gap and ensure equal opportunities.



Calculation of GER involves dividing the total enrollment in higher education institutions by the population in the corresponding age group, typically 18-23 years for most countries, including India. However, the age group may vary depending on a country's educational structure and norms. A higher GER is generally desirable as it reflects a more educated populace, which can contribute to economic growth, social development, and overall progress. However, it is essential to consider other factors, such as the quality of education, employment prospects, and the relevance of academic programs to societal needs.

The Data

Enrolment provided through the All India Higher Education Survey managed by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, has been used in the present article. The time lag in data, though decreased in the recent past, is still in 2024-25; data for 2021-22 only is made available, and because of this, it is not possible to make precise observations about the status of higher education in India. Even though GER has limitations and fails to present the actual participation of eligible population at higher education levels, it is the only enrolment ratio-based indicator available in the public domain. The Net Enrolment Ratio is considered a better indicator than the GER.

Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in India (2017-18 to 2021-22)

All India Level: The GER in higher education at the all-India level has shown a steady increase from 24.6 percent in 2017-18 to 28.4 percent in 2021-22.

Gross Enrolment Ratio at All Indi Level: 2017 18 to 2021-22

	All Categories		
Year	Male	Female	Both
2021-22	28.3	28.5	28.4
2020-21	26.7	27.9	27.3
2019-20	24.8	26.4	25.6
2018-19	24.4	25.5	24.9
2017-18	24.5	24.6	24.6
	Scheduled Castes		
Year	Male	Female	Both
2021-22	25.8	26.0	25.9
2020-21	22.4	23.9	23.1
2019-20	21.5	23.2	22.3
2018-19	21.4	22.8	22.0
2017-18	21.0	21.0	21.0
	Schedules Tribes		
Year	Male	Female	Both
2021-22	21.4	20.9	21.2
2020-21	18.8	19.1	18.9
2019-20	17	17	17
2018-19	16.7	16.1	16.4
2017-18	16	14.5	15.3

Source: AISHE 2021-22, Ministry of Education

The GER for males and females has been relatively similar, with a marginal difference in favor of females in recent years, also reflected in the Gender Parity Index.

The overall GER in 2021-22 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. Low participation at this level of education is also reflected in the GER of the SC and ST population analyzed below.

State-wise Analysis

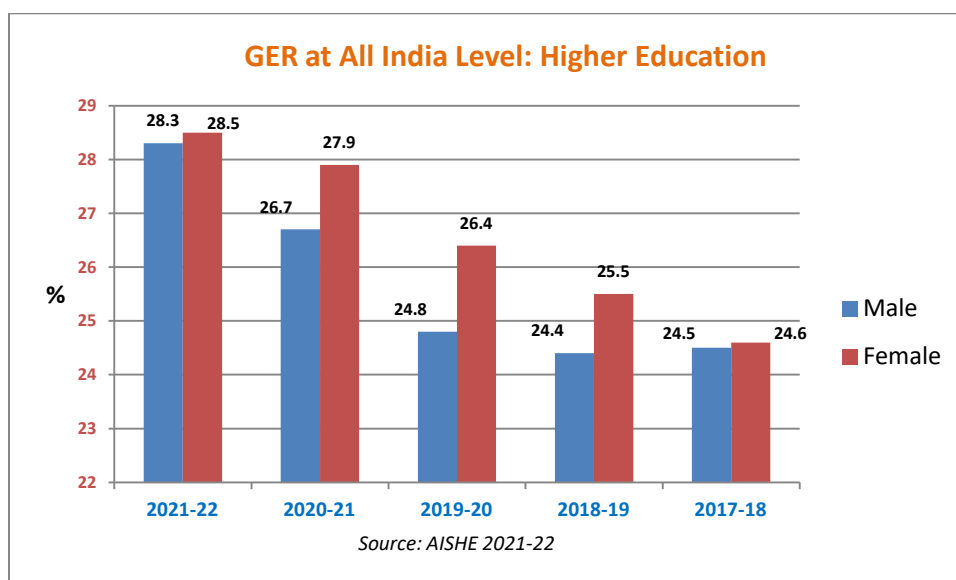
A higher GER is generally desirable as it reflects a more educated populace, which can contribute to economic growth, social development, and overall progress. However, it is essential to consider other factors, such as the quality of education, employment prospects, and the relevance of academic programs to societal needs.

States like Chandigarh (64.8 percent), Puducherry (61.5 percent), and Delhi (49.0 percent) 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.



Scheduled Castes (SC) & Scheduled Tribes GER

Let's analyze the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) populations at the all-India level:

Scheduled Castes (SC) Population

The GER for the SC population has shown a steady increase from 21.0 percent in 2017-18 to 25.9 percent in 2021-22.

While the overall GER has improved, it still lags behind the national average, indicating the need for targeted efforts to enhance access to higher education for the SC community.

In 2021-22, the GER for the SC population was 25.9 percent, suggesting that around one-fourth of the eligible SC population was enrolled in higher education.

The positive trend obscures the stark regional variations that exist across the country. States like Chandigarh (53.4 percent), Himachal Pradesh (34.4 percent), and Punjab (19.2 percent) have relatively higher GER for the SC population, reflecting focused efforts and initiatives in these regions.

On the other hand, states like Bihar (16.4 percent), Jharkhand (14.8 percent), and Assam (18.8 percent) lag significantly behind, highlighting the urgent need for targeted intervention to enhance participation in higher education for the SC community in these areas.

Scheduled Tribes (ST) Population

The GER for the ST population has witnessed a significant improvement, rising from 15.3 percent in 2017-18 to 21.2 percent in 2021-22.

Despite the positive growth, the GER for the ST population remains relatively low compared to the national average and the SC population.

In 2021-22, the GER for the ST population stood at 21.2 percent, indicating that only around one-fifth of the eligible ST population was enrolled in higher education.

As has already been indicated above, at the national level, the GER for the ST population in 2021-22 was a mere 21.2 percent, a substantial gap compared to the overall GER of 28.4 percent, but a few states have GER above the national level, and others, below the national level. While states like Mizoram (32.5 percent), Meghalaya (23.3 percent), and Manipur (23.0 percent) have made commendable strides, several others lag alarmingly.

States like Uttar Pradesh (39.4 percent), Rajasthan (28.2 percent), and Chhattisgarh (13.1 percent) paint a grim picture, with exceptionally low GER for the ST population, underscoring the urgency

of addressing the barriers & challenges faced by SC & ST communities in accessing higher education.

Observations and Implications

The GER for the SC and ST populations has improved over the years, reflecting the impact of various government initiatives and policies promoting inclusive higher education.

However, the GER for these marginalized communities is still considerably lower than the national average, highlighting the persistent gaps and disparities in access to higher education.

Targeted interventions, such as scholarships, hostel facilities, remedial coaching, and awareness campaigns, are crucial to encourage and support the enrollment of SC and ST students in higher education institutions.

Addressing socio-economic barriers, ensuring affordability, and providing a conducive learning environment are essential to improve the GER for these communities further.

Monitoring and evaluating the progress at the state and district levels can help identify specific regions or pockets where the GER for SC and ST populations is low, allowing for focused efforts and resource allocation and

Collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations is vital in creating a supportive ecosystem that promotes higher education among the SC and ST populations.

While progress has been made, concerted efforts are still required to bridge the gaps and ensure equitable access to higher education for all sections of society, including the marginalized SC and ST communities.

State/Year	Gross Enrolment Ratio: Selected States, 2017-18 to 2021-22								
	ALL			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Bihar									
2021-22	17.8	16.3	17.1	19.0	13.6	16.4	38.0	31.0	34.6
2020-21	16.6	15.1	15.9	13.3	9.7	11.5	22.0	17.4	19.7
2019-20	12.7	11.5	12.1	11.2	7.1	9.2	19.0	15.6	17.3
2018-19	12.4	10.7	11.6	10.4	6.6	8.6	18.0	13.1	15.6
2017-18	12.1	10.5	11.4	9.6	6.3	8.0	15.3	10.8	13.2
Delhi									
2021-22	48.3	49.7	49.0	36.6	35.6	36.1			
2020-21	46.7	48.5	47.6	26.3	23.8	25.1			
2019-20	48.0	50.2	49.0	36.6	38.4	37.5			
2018-19	45.7	48.3	46.9	33.7	35.1	34.3			
2017-18	47.1	46.2	46.7	33.3	30.8	32.1			
Gujarat									
2021-22	25.2	22.7	24.0	33.6	30.8	32.3	19.9	21.0	20.4
2020-21	23.6	20.6	22.2	30.1	26.7	28.5	17.7	17.9	17.8
2019-20	21.8	19.6	20.8	27.9	25.7	26.9	15.7	16.7	16.2
2018-19	21.1	18.7	20.0	27.6	24.8	26.3	14.4	14.8	14.6
2017-18	21.0	18.2	19.7	28.0	24.2	26.2	13.3	13.6	13.4

Jharkhand										
2021-22	18.6	18.7	18.6	15.8	13.7	14.8	13.1	14.7		
2020-21	16.5	17.5	17.0	13.4	12.6	13.0	11.6	13.2	12.4	
2019-20	17.5	18.7	18.1	14.0	13.1	13.6	12.2	14.3	13.2	
2018-19	16.5	16.9	16.7	14.4	13.4	13.9	11.3	12.7	12.0	
2017-18	15.8	16.1	15.9	13.0	11.5	12.3	10.4	11.7	11.1	
Kerala										
2021-22	34.1	49.0	41.3	20.4	36.8	28.3	24.0	33.8		28.9
2020-21	34.5	52.3	43.2	23.4	44.6	33.7	23.1	35.1	29.1	
2019-20	29.8	42.3	35.9	17.3	33.5	25.2	17.7	27.6	22.7	
2018-19	28.2	41.1	34.5	16.6	32.0	24.1	17.3	25.8	21.6	
2017-18	29.6	38.7	34.0	16.5	30.9	23.5	16.1	24.3	20.3	
Madhya Pradesh										
2021-22	29.7	28.0		27.3	26.7	27.0	17.8	17.2		
2020-21	27.3	26.8	27.1	25.5	25.8	25.6	15.3	16.1	15.7	
2019-20	22.9	23.0	23.0	21.6	21.8	21.7	11.8	11.4	11.6	
2018-19	20.8	20.2	20.5	19.1	18.5	18.8	11.2	10.5	10.8	
2017-18	20.8	19.5	20.2	19.8	17.9	19.0	10.7	9.2	9.9	
Odisha										
2021-22	23.5	20.6	22.1	25.2	19.9	22.6	16.7	14.3		
2020-21	21.3	20.1	20.7	21.4	18.4	20.0	14.2	12.8	13.5	
2019-20	21.6	19.5	20.5	20.5	16.9	18.8	13.7	12.0	12.8	
2018-19	22.8	19.3	21.1	21.4	16.7	19.1	13.6	10.9	12.2	
2017-18	22.6	19.5	21.1	20.6	15.3	18.0	13.6	10.4	11.9	
2017-18	26.5	32.5	29.2	18.6	23.0	20.6				
Rajasthan										
2021-22	29.0	28.1	28.6	27.2	26.1	26.7	28.9	27.6		28.2
2020-21	26.1	26.0	26.1	22.9	22.6	22.8	22.8	23.8	23.3	
2019-20	23.7	24.0	23.8	20.6	20.8	20.7	21.3	21.7	21.5	
2018-19	22.4	23.1	22.7	20.0	19.3	19.7	21.5	20.4	21.0	
2017-18	22.0	20.5	21.3	17.7	16.1	16.9	19.2	17.1	18.2	
Tamil Nadu										
2021-22	46.8	47.3	47.0	38.4	40.4	39.4	50.2	37.6		43.9
2020-21	45.4	48.6	46.9	34.7	38.9	36.8	42.9	38.2	40.6	
2019-20	48.1	49.9	49.0	37.3	40.7	39.0	42.0	38.1	40.0	
2018-19	46.6	47.5	47.0	38.8	41.0	39.9	40.5	32.0	36.3	
2017-18	46.2	47.7	46.9	39.3	42.0	40.7	43.0	35.2	39.1	
Uttar Pradesh										
2021-22	23.9	24.4	24.1	21.0	22.6	21.8	41.4	37.4		39.4
2020-21	22.3	24.3	23.2	18.5	21.9	20.1	39.8	44.2	42.0	
2019-20	20.8	24.5	22.5	18.7	23.1	20.7	33.1	35.3	34.2	
2018-19	21.3	25.0	23.0	19.3	24.0	21.4	38.2	38.1	38.1	
2017-18	22.3	24.3	23.2	18.7	20.4	19.5	33.8	30.0	31.9	
West Bengal										
2021-22	25.9	26.8	26.3	23.4	22.4	22.9	15.0	15.7		15.3
2020-21	20.3	22.3	21.3	16.7	17.5	17.1	11.5	11.8	11.6	
2019-20	19.8	21.4	20.6	17.0	17.5	17.2	11.3	11.5	11.4	
2018-19	19.4	20.2	19.8	16.3	16.0	16.2	10.7	10.3	10.5	
2017-18	19.4	18.8	19.1	16.4	15.0	15.7	10.7	9.5	10.1	

Source: AISHE 2021-22

Observations on NEP 2020 Resolution

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 targets achieving 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.

To achieve this target, India must focus on:

- *Expanding the higher education infrastructure, particularly in underserved regions, by establishing new institutions and upgrading existing ones.*
- *Implementing targeted schemes and initiatives to promote access to higher education among disadvantaged and marginalized communities.*
- *Improving education quality at all levels ensures better preparedness and a smoother transition to higher education.*
- *Encouraging vocational and skill-based education programs to cater to diverse interests and career aspirations.*
- *Enhancing the affordability of higher education through increased funding, scholarships, and financial aid programs.*
- *Promoting distance and online education modes to reach remote areas and provide flexible learning opportunities.*

States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, which currently lag in GER, will require focused interventions and targeted programs to bridge the gaps and improve access to higher education as well as will be necessary significantly enhance the efficiency of the school education sector.

Recent Initiatives

The Government of India has undertaken several initiatives and launched various programs in recent years to improve higher education enrollment and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the higher education level. Some of the key efforts and programs are:

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA): RUSA is a centrally sponsored scheme that provides strategic funding to eligible state higher education institutions. It focuses on improving higher education access, equity, and quality through reforms and infrastructure development.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan: This initiative aims to connect higher education institutions with local communities to address developmental challenges through participatory knowledge creation and dissemination.

Study in India: Launched in 2018, the program aims to attract students from abroad to pursue higher education in India. It promotes India as a preferred destination for quality education and helps increase the inflow of international students.

PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana aims to provide industry-relevant skill training to youth, enabling better employment opportunities and promoting vocational education.

Institutions of Eminence (IoE): The IoE scheme aims to develop world-class teaching and research institutions in India by providing them with regulatory and financial autonomy.

SWAYAM and SWAYAM Prabha: These initiatives focus on providing affordable and quality education through online courses and digital classrooms, increasing access to higher education for remote and underserved areas.

Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT): IMPRINT is a joint initiative between Pan-IIT and IISc that addresses significant engineering challenges in various domains, promoting research and innovation in higher education institutions.

Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA): HEFA is a non-profit organization that provides affordable financing options for infrastructure development and expansion of higher education institutions.

Scheme for Academic & Research Collaboration Promotion: The SPARC aims to facilitate collaborations between Indian and foreign institutions to promote research and academic partnerships.

Prime Minister's Research Fellows (PMRF) Scheme: This scheme attracts talented students to pursue doctoral programs in cutting-edge research areas and promote quality research in higher education institutions.

These programs and initiatives, among others, address various aspects of higher education, including access, equity, quality, research, innovation, and skill development. By implementing these programs, the government aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio and improve India's overall higher education landscape.

Concluding Observations

The analysis presented on the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India from 2017-18 to 2021-22 reveals a positive trend at the national level, with a gradual increase in enrollment. However, significant disparities exist across states, with some regions performing remarkably well while others lag.

To achieve the ambitious target set by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of a 50 percent increase in higher education enrolment by 2035, India must intensify its efforts through a multi-pronged approach; this includes expanding infrastructure, promoting inclusivity, enhancing affordability, and ensuring quality education at all levels. India still has to travel a long to achieve the ambitious target, which is unlikely to be achieved without improving the efficiency of the school education sector as enrolment in higher education is a function of higher secondary graduates and not a function of relevant 18 to 23-year clientele population.

Collaboration between central and state governments and intensive participation of private sector & the Civil Society organizations is crucial in addressing the challenges to improve access to higher education nationwide.

By fostering an environment conducive to higher education and prioritizing human capital development, India can unlock true potential and pave the way for sustainable socio-economic progress and global competitiveness.

[Education for All in India](#)