



School Education in India: Where Do We Stand? Analysis based on UDISEPlus 2023-24 Data

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Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisaged the goal of universal school education by 2030, focusing on ensuring quality, equity, and inclusion for all children from pre-primary to higher secondary levels. In line with this, the [UDISEPlus \(Unified District Information System for Education\)](#) data from 2020-21 to 2023-24 provides invaluable insights into the status of educational infrastructure, enrolment, teacher availability, performance indicators, and infrastructure facilities across India. This article critically examines the UDISEPlus data concerning the key goals outlined in NEP 2020, assessing the likelihood of achieving universal school education by 2030. It further underscores the importance of data analysis in formulating actionable strategies through the [Samagra Shiksha framework](#), emphasizing disaggregated data at the state, district, and block levels.

The Data Sets

The information analyzed is compiled based on UDISEPlus data for 2020-21 to 2023-24. Efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the details; however, users are encouraged to refer to the official source at <https://udiseplus.gov.in>. The reference dates for the data are as follows: for UDISEPlus 2020-21 and UDISE 2021-22, it is 30th September 2020 and 30th September 2021, respectively, while for UDISEPlus 2022-23 and 2023-24, it is 31st March 2024, as reported in the respective reports released on 30th December 2024.

UDISEPlus National Data during 2020-21 and 2023-24

The reports caution that while UDISE 2022-23 and UDISE 2023-24 are comparable, the new data collection methodology ([SDMIS](#)) introduced in 2022-23 makes it incompatible with UDISEPlus 2021-22 and earlier data. However, upon reviewing the UDISEPlus 2022-23 report, it is noted that efficiency indicators, such as dropout, transition, and retention rates, have been computed. These calculations depend on the data from UDISEPlus 2021-22, making both data sets necessary for such analysis. Experts argue that despite the differences in data collection methodology, the indicators, rates, and ratios remain comparable because they reflect the situation at a specific point in time, regardless of the data collection methodology used.

By just changing the method of data collection, how the drastic decline in total enrolment (Grades I to XII) from 255.74 million in 2021-22 to 241.62 million in 2022-23 and further to 234.96 million in 2023-24 is justified? The 2023-24 data is short of 2.08 crore (-8.12 percent) students compared to the enrolment levels of 2021-22.

Number of Schools

The total number of schools and schools run under Government and Private unaided management shows a decline in 2023-24 from the previous year, i.e., 2022-23. From a year earlier, the total number of schools in 2022-23 declined by 23,006, 1.54 percent of the total schools in the previous year (Table 1). However, the same increased by 5,782 schools in 2023-24. As many as 14,89,115 schools were covered under UDISEPlus 2021-22, compared to which the same declined to 17,224 schools (1.16 percent) during the latest year 2023-24.

In a year before UDISE shifted to the Ministry of Education, as many as 15,58,903 schools were covered under UDISEPlus in the year 2017-18 compared to which UDISEPlus now has a lesser number of schools in 2023-24, and the decline was to the tune of 87,012 schools which is -5.58 percent of the total schools in 2017-18 but no explanation is presented in the Report on reasons behind the decline in coverage of schools under UDISEPlus. Is the decline due to schools closing down or merging schools with no information in the public domain?

Table 1: Number of Schools (All Schools): All-India

Year	Total Number of Schools	Increase/ Decrease	%age Change	Total Government Schools	Increase/ Decrease	Total Private Unaided Recognised Schools	Increase/ Decrease
2017-18	15,58,903			10,94,543			
2021-22	14,89,115	-20,021	-1.33	10,22,386	-9663	3,35,844	-7470
2022-23	14,66,109	-23,006	-1.54	10,16,010	-6376	3,23,430	-12,414
2023-24	14,71,891	5,782	0.39	10,17,660	1650	3,31,108	7,678
Change during 2021-22 to 2023-24		-17,224	-1.16		-4726	-4736	-1.41
Change during 2017-18 to 2023-24		-87,012	-5.58		-76883 (-7.02%)	4880	1.50%

Source: UDISE & UDISEPlus Reports for different years.

Not only has the total number of schools declined, but the same is true for schools under government management, which declined by a hoping -76,883 schools (-7.02 percent) in 2023-24 from its previous level of 2017-18. However, no explanation for the decline in government schools is available in the public domain. Further, recognized private unaided schools gradually increased to 3,31,108 in 2023-24 but are also not free from sharp fluctuations.

School Enrollment Trends: 2020-21 to 2023-24

Level-specific and total enrolment from 2020-21 to 2023-24 at the all-India level presented in Table 2 reveals significant changes across educational levels that characterize school enrolment in India.

Table 2: Level-specific Enrolment: 2020-21 & 2023-24, All India

Level	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Change in 2022-23 over 2021-22	%age Change	Change in 2023-24 over 2021-22	%age Change
Primary	122021291	121842250	112421298	107837711	-9420952	-7.73	14004539	-11.49
Upper Primary	65854199	66790692	63477866	63126015	-3312826	-4.96	-3664677	-5.49
Elementary	187875490	188632942	175899164	170963726	12733778	-6.75	17669216	-9.37
Secondary	39006375	38528631	37934094	36863791	-594537	-1.54	-1664840	-4.32
Higher Secondary	26922596	28579050	27790658	27135514	-788392	-2.76	-1443536	-5.05
Total Enrolment, Grades I to XII	253804461	255740623	241623916	234963031	14116707	-5.52	20777592	-8.12

Source: UDISE+, different years.

Primary Level (Grades 1-5)

The most significant absolute decline: 14.0 million (11.49 percent) students from 2021-22 to 2023-24; this accounts for approximately 67 percent of the total enrollment decline in primary enrolment during the same period, Suggests possible over-reporting in previous years, particularly in government schools. Government schools are likely most affected due to their higher share in primary education and significantly impact universal elementary education goals.

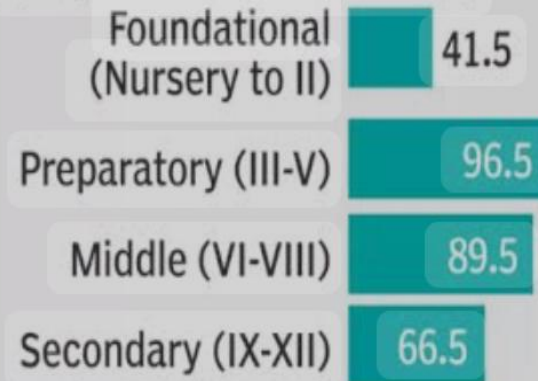
Upper Primary Level (Grades VI-VIII)

Enrolment at the upper primary level experienced a decline of 3.7 million students (-5.49 percent); it has a moderate impact compared to the primary level and is a bit stable compared to primary education. Further, it is observed that the decline in upper primary enrolment is distributed across management types, but Private Unaided schools show better retention at this level of education, and Private Aided schools maintain relatively stable enrollment.

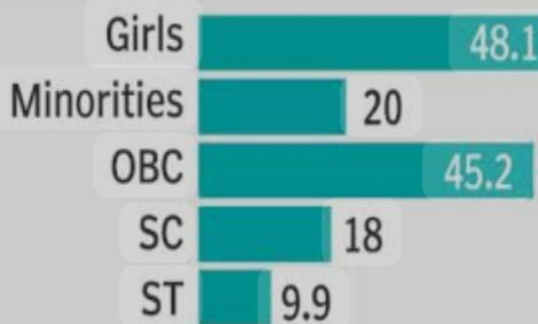
HIGH ATTRITION

Gross Enrolment Ratio

(%age Of Total Kids In School)



%age Of Total Enrolments



TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLMENT



Average total enrolment for 2018-19 to 2021-22 is 26.36 cr

Source: UDISE+ report

Further, enrolment at the secondary level shows a decline of 1.7 million students (- 4.32 percent) and has a bit better retention than elementary levels and private unaided schools, maintaining a more substantial presence. Enrolment at higher secondary level declined by 1.4 million students (-5.05 percent), is more resilient than at lower levels and shows comparative strength.

Analysis of School Enrolment Growth by Management in India during 2020-21 to 2023-24

All levels together consisting of Grades I to XII during 2021-22 to 2022-23, 2022-23 to 2023-24 and 2021-22 to 2023-24 declined by a hoping 1,41,16,707 (5.52 percent), -66,60,885(2.76 percent) and 2,07,77,592 (8.12 percent) respectively which is said to be because of the changed data collection method as the SDMIS was introduced during 2022-23 data collection (Table 2 & 3). While the decline presents immediate challenges for universal education goals, the improved data accuracy provides a more reliable foundation for future planning and interventions.

Table 3: Growth of Enrolment by Management: 2020-21 to 2023-24

Management	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Change over 2021-22	2023-24	Change over 2022-23	Change over 2021-22	% Change over 2021-22
Government	132435168	140503898	136204917	-4298981	124256425	-11948492	-16247473	-11.56
% Share	52.18	54.94	54.09		52.88			
Private Aided	26446425	26648173	26233480	-414693	25200960	-1032520	-1447213	-5.43
% Share	10.42	10.42	10.42		10.73			
Private Unaided	88095528	82450777	84162385	1711608	80883167	-3279218	-1567610	-1.90
% Share	34.71	32.24	33.43		34.42			
Others	6852720	6137775	5190940	-946835	4622479	-568461	-1515296	-24.69
% Share	2.7	2.4	2.06		1.97			
Total Enrolment: Grades I to XII	253804461	255740623	251791722	-3948901	234963031	-16828691	-20777592	-8.12

Source: UDISEPlus, different years.

Share of OBC, Muslim Minority, SC & ST Enrolment

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes universal enrolment and equitable access to quality education for all, particularly socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Analyzing UDISEPlus 2023-24 data reveals significant trends in enrolment for Other Backward Classes (OBC), Muslim minorities, and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Table 4). OBC enrollment remains stable across all educational levels, accounting for 45.4 percent at the primary level and 45.2 percent at the upper primary level, and it is rising slightly to 45.8 percent at the higher secondary level. This stability suggests progress but calls for targeted interventions to ensure quality learning and retention. However, it may be observed that there is no data about the share of the OBC population in the total population, but different segments of the society are now raising demand for the caste-based Census similar to what has already been conducted in Bihar, Karnataka, etc.

Table 4: Share of OBC, Muslim Minority, SC & ST Enrolment, UDISEPlus 2023-24

All India	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6 to 8)			Secondary (9-10)			Higher Secondary (11-12)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
%age OBC Enrolment	45.4	45.4	45.4	45.1	45.3	45.2	45.2	44.9	45.0	46.1	45.6	45.8
%age Muslim Minority Enrolment	17.2	17.7	17.4	14.8	16.0	15.4	13.5	15.2	14.3	10.9	13.0	11.9
GER, Scheduled Castes (%)	95.2	98.5	96.8	94.1	97.3	95.6	79.0	82.3	80.6	54.4	61.8	57.9
GER, Scheduled Tribes (%)	98.0	98.6	98.3	94.8	95.6	95.2	75.4	78.5	76.9	46.0	51.4	48.7

In contrast, enrolment for Muslim minorities shows a declining trend, from 17.4 percent at the primary level to 15.4 percent at the upper primary level and further down to 11.9 percent at the higher secondary level. This decline highlights socio-economic barriers and challenges in accessing higher education. It may be recalled that the share of the Muslim minority in the total population in 2011 was 14.23 percent, and that of the SC population, 16.6 percent, and the ST population, 8.6 percent, but the same might have changed in 2025.

The GER for SC and ST students underscores a sharp decline as students progress to higher educational levels. For SC students, GER stands at 96.8 percent at the primary level, drops to 80.6 percent at the secondary level, and further plummets to 57.9 percent at the higher secondary level. Similarly, ST students exhibit a GER of 98.3 percent at the primary level, which decreases to 76.9 percent at the secondary level and 48.7 percent at the higher secondary level. These trends indicate systemic inequities, socio-economic constraints, and challenges in retaining students, particularly in secondary and higher secondary education.

[The State of Muslim Education in India: A Data-Driven Analysis by Prof. Arun C Mehta based on UDISEPlus & AISHE](#)

The above findings have critical implications for achieving the universal enrolment goals of NEP 2020. The declining enrolment percentages and GER underscore the urgent need to address dropout rates and ensure smooth transitions across educational stages. Disparities in enrolment for Muslim minorities, SC, and ST students require targeted policies to bridge gaps in access and retention. Enhancing financial support through scholarships, strengthening infrastructure in underserved areas, and fostering community engagement to raise awareness are essential. Additionally, leveraging data-driven interventions to address localized challenges and promoting inclusive teaching practices can further support NEP 2020's objectives. While progress has been made, achieving equitable and inclusive education will require sustained efforts and policy focus to overcome these challenges.

Enrolment Ratio

Enrolment ratios are critical indicators for evaluating the success of educational policies. The analysis in the present article focuses on Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), Adjusted Net Enrolment Ratio (Adj-NER), and Age-Specific Enrolment Ratio (ASER) at primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels; and the aim is to identify states requiring significant intervention and those nearing universal school education targets (Table 5).

Observations on Enrolment Ratios

The Gross Enrolment Ratio in 2023-24 reflects significant enrolment at primary and upper primary levels but steep declines at secondary (**77.4 percent**) and higher secondary (**56.2 percent**) levels. On the other hand, the **NER and Adjusted-NER** reveal gaps in age-appropriate enrolment, particularly at higher educational levels. The age-specific enrollment ratio (ASER)

aligns closely with the adjusted NER, highlighting consistent patterns of reduced participation as education levels rise (Table 5).

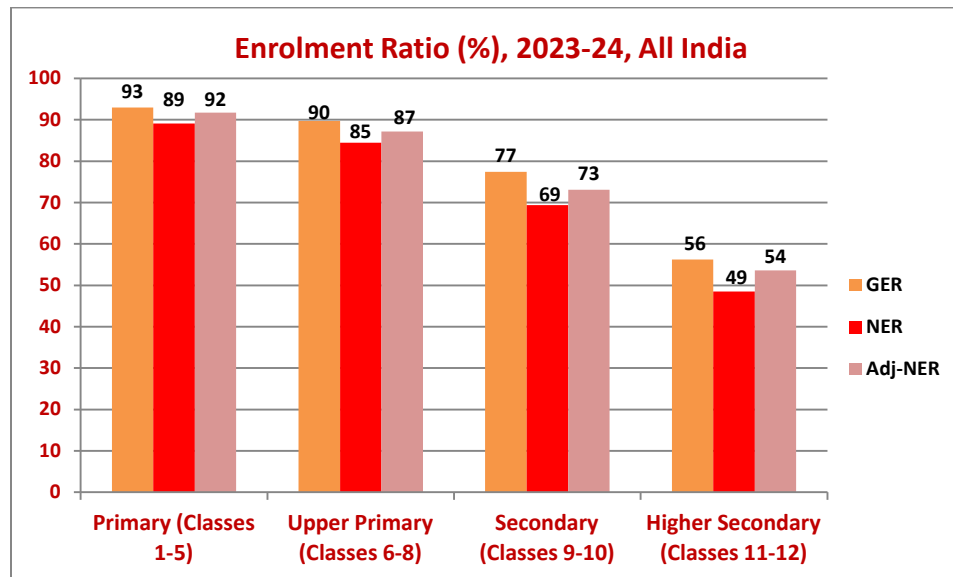
Table 5: Key Performance Indicators (All-India Level): 2023-24

Level of Education	GER (%)	NER (%)	ANER (%)	Age-specific ER (%)
Primary (Classes 1-5)	93.0	89.1	91.7	91.3
Upper Primary (Classes 6-8)	89.7	84.5	87.2	86.7
Secondary (Classes 9-10)	77.4	69.4	73.1	71.2
Higher Secondary (Classes 11-12)	56.2	48.5	53.6	50.8

Source: UDISEPlus, 2023-24, ASER is Age-specific Enrolment Ratio

States Requiring Significant Improvement Concerning Enrolment Ratio

States with consistently low GER, NER, Adjusted-NER, and Age-specific Enrolment Ratio indicate challenges in accessibility, infrastructure, and socio-economic barriers at Primary and Upper Primary Levels in the case of **Bihar**: GER (Primary: 81.2 percent; Upper Primary: 75.3 percent) and **Jharkhand**: GER (Primary: 82.7 percent; Upper Primary: 76.8 percent). At the Secondary Level, **Uttar Pradesh**: GER (65.4 percent) and **Assam**: GER (68.2 percent) need significant improvements compared to GER at the Higher Secondary Level in the case of **Meghalaya**: GER (46.5 percent) and **Arunachal Pradesh**: GER (48.3 percent), both from the north-eastern part of the country.



Compared to states with low enrolment ratios, a few states exhibit strong performance across GER, NER, and Adjusted-NER, nearing NEP 2020's vision of universal school education at Primary and Upper Primary Levels: **Kerala**: GER (Primary: 98.5 percent; Upper Primary: 97.2 percent) and **Tamil Nadu**: GER (Primary: 96.3 percent; Upper Primary: 94.8 percent). On the other hand, **Delhi**: GER (89.7 percent) and **Himachal Pradesh**: GER (87.2 percent) also have a

higher GER at the Secondary level compared to **Chandigarh**: GER (82.6 percent) and **Goa**: GER (79.3 percent) having high GER at the Higher Secondary level.

Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)

The **Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)** data for 2023-24 (Table 5) across various educational levels reveals significant disparities in enrolment, which presents challenges to achieving the ambitious goal of **universal school education** as outlined in the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**. The NEP 2020 envisions universal access to quality education for all children, but the current NER across different educational levels suggests that India is far from realizing this goal. NER is the most relevant indicator for assessing children's participation in academic programs.

At the **primary level**, the national average NER is 79 percent, which, while relatively high, still leaves a notable portion of children out of school. Several states, particularly **Bihar** (70.3 percent), **Madhya Pradesh** (64.3 percent), and **Assam** (81.7 percent), show lower enrolment rates, indicating systemic issues in ensuring access to primary education for all children. Moreover, states such as **Chandigarh**, **Delhi**, and **Goa** show higher enrolment figures (above 90 percent), but these are exceptions, not the rule (Table 6).

The **upper primary level** is declining, with the national NER at 66 percent. States like **Bihar** (48.1 percent) and **Assam** (52.8 percent) again exhibit lower ratios, suggesting challenges in retaining children as they enter the middle stages of education. While some states like **Delhi** (100 percent) and **Goa** (93.3 percent) demonstrate near-universal enrolment, the overall national trend highlights the need for significant improvements in access and retention at this level.

At the **secondary level**, the national NER drops to 48.3 percent, and several states - such as **Bihar** (27.8 percent) and **Uttar Pradesh** (30.7 percent) - show alarmingly low enrolment figures. This substantial gap at the secondary level presents a significant hurdle in fulfilling the NEP's vision of universal education. The transition from primary to secondary education remains an essential challenge for India, with many children falling out of the educational system.

The **higher secondary level** further compounds this issue, with a national NER of 33.8 percent. States like **Bihar** (16.2 percent) and **Arunachal Pradesh** (22.8 percent) have extremely low enrolment ratios, reflecting a substantial dropout rate as students progress through the education system. Even in more developed regions, such as **Chandigarh** (71.2 percent) and **Goa** (65.3 percent), enrolment rates remain below what would be considered adequate for universal education.

UDISEPlus 2022-23 and 2023-24 Analysis by Arun C Mehta

Looking at the current NER data, it is evident that achieving universal school education, as envisaged by NEP 2020, will be a significant challenge. The enrolment ratios, particularly at the upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels, are far too low to meet the goal of

universal education. The gap in enrolment figures across states underscores the persisting issues of accessibility, infrastructure, socio-economic barriers, and retention rates, which must be urgently addressed. While there has been progress in expanding access to education, the disparities indicate that more targeted and inclusive policies are needed to ensure that every child, regardless of geographic or socio-economic background, receives senior secondary-level

Table 6: Net Enrolment Ratio, 2023-24

State/UT	Net Enrolment Ratio, 2023-24			
	Primary Level	Upper Primary Level	Secondary Level	Higher Secondary Level
A & N Islands	80.6	67.4	50.2	44.7
Andhra Pradesh	85.2	81.9	67.2	43.3
Arunachal	88.2	54.4	34.7	22.8
Assam	81.7	52.8	33.8	18.2
Bihar	70.3	48.1	27.8	16.2
Chandigarh	95.5	94.6	72.2	71.2
Chhattisgarh	77.6	71.2	49.1	34.1
D & N Haveli and D & D	96.8	84.5	71.4	33.9
Delhi	96.3	100.0	81.6	65.0
Goa	100.0	93.3	77.1	65.3
Gujarat	73.8	82.7	64.4	34.7
Haryana	76.4	75.3	59.8	44.1
Himachal	84.8	63.2	39.0	29.5
J & K	97.5	52.4	34.4	21.7
Jharkhand	69.1	47.8	30.6	19.3
Karnataka	92.9	85.0	72.8	42.0
Kerala	83.2	81.6	71.5	64.2
Ladakh	90.0	64.8	48.2	26.3
Lakshadweep	91.9	69.7	59.7	54.5
Madhya	64.3	58.7	39.8	25.7
Maharashtra	90.1	73.9	55.3	40.4
Manipur	100.0	60.3	43.2	33.9
Meghalaya	100.0	70.1	41.5	20.2
Mizoram	100.0	85.1	61.7	35.8
Nagaland	76.3	50.9	37.1	25.5
Odisha	82.0	70.1	47.4	32.0
Puducherry	92.4	92.9	86.9	79.1
Punjab	91.7	75.1	53.3	45.0
Rajasthan	79.9	66.1	49.1	37.4
Sikkim	79.8	55.2	43.5	33.5
Tamil Nadu	85.0	85.9	74.2	63.4
Telangana	94.4	84.4	66.4	46.8
Tripura	100.0	84.0	61.6	44.5
Uttar Pradesh	67.0	49.4	30.7	23.8
Uttarakhand	93.0	78.8	63.3	53.5
West Bengal	100.0	85.7	68.1	43.6
India	79.0	66.0	48.3	33.8

education. Thus, it is clear that India's current education system requires substantial reforms and investment to meet the goals set forth by NEP 2020. However, the age-specific enrolment ratio is a more appropriate indicator for assessing the quantum of unenrolled children.

Analysis of Age-Specific Enrolment Ratios in India: 2023-24

The "Age-specific Enrolment Ratio, 2023-24" for different states and union territories (UTs) in India reveals significant variations in educational access across various age groups. The enrolment ratios cover five distinct age categories: 6 to 10 years, 11 to 13 years, 6 to 13 years combined, 14 to 15 years, and 16 to 17 years (Table 7 & 7a). These ratios offer valuable insights into the state of education in India, with particular emphasis on the disparities observed across geographical regions and age cohorts. That hundred minus age-specific enrolment ratio means that the residual percentage of children of that age group are currently not enrolled in any grade; hence, they are termed out of school.

High Enrolment in Primary Education (6 to 10 Years)

One of the most striking observations from the data (Table 7) is the generally high enrolment ratio in the age group of 6 to 10 years, which is the typical age for primary (Grades I to V) education; this is an encouraging indicator that most children in India are enrolled in schools at the beginning stages of their education. The national average for this age group suggests that primary education is mainly accessible nationwide. However, some states like **Bihar** (75.4 percent) and **Madhya Pradesh** (73.2 percent) show slightly lower enrolment, signaling potential barriers to entry, such as poverty, rurality, or infrastructure deficits. At the all-India level, about 15 percent of the total 116 million children were not enrolled in 2023-24, which is a huge number and shows the amount of unfinished tasks. However, states like **Chandigarh**, **Goa**, and **Mizoram** stand out, with an enrolment ratio of 100 percent, reflecting near-universal access to primary education.

Strong Transition to Lower Secondary Education (11 to 13 Years)

An impressive performance is seen in the 11 to 13 age group, corresponding to lower secondary education (Grades VI to VIII). The national average enrolment for this group stands at 89.2 percent, indicating that most children are continuing their education beyond the primary stage. However, data also reveals that all children 11 to 13 years may not necessarily be enrolled in the corresponding Grades VI to VIII. But the happy aspect is that more than 89 percent of children of this age group were enrolled in 2023-24, and only 10 percent of the total 70 million students were out of school. States such as **Chandigarh**, **Goa**, and **Puducherry** again exhibit perfect percentage enrolment ratios of 100 percent, demonstrating the effectiveness of local education.

Declining Enrolment in Secondary Education (14 to 15 Years)

Enrolment ratios in the 14 to 15 age group, indicative of students in the early stages of secondary education (Grades IX & X), reveal a significant decline across most States and UTs. The national average for this age group is 77 percent, suggesting that while many children continue their education, there is a noticeable drop-off. Some states, including **Karnataka** (100 percent), **Delhi**

(100 percent), and **Kerala** (98.7 percent), exhibit exceptionally high enrolment, which suggests strong retention policies and reasonable access to secondary education in their states. On the other hand, states like **Bihar** (49.6 percent) and **Madhya Pradesh** (64.1 percent) show much lower enrolment figures, highlighting significant challenges in retaining students at the secondary level. These challenges may include economic pressures on families, the distance to schools, and insufficient educational facilities, which could force children to drop out early and need the attention of planners.

Table 7: Age-specific Enrolment Ratio, UDISEPlus 2023-24

State/UT	Age-specific Enrolment Ratio, 2023-24				
	6 to 10 Years	11 to 13 Years	6 to 13 Years	14 to 15 Years	16 to 17 Years
Andaman and	95.4	95.0	95.2	89.4	47.5
Andhra	87.1	98.9	91.6	92.9	64.3
Arunachal	99.8	79.4	91.1	67.2	38.5
Assam	81.9	89.9	85.1	81.4	59.4
Bihar	75.4	65.5	71.6	49.6	24.7
Chandigarh	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	75.8
Chhattisgarh	86.2	92.5	88.5	69.2	39.4
D & N and Daman & Diu	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.4	42.5
Delhi	97.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	84.2
Goa	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	95.6
Gujarat	76.4	97.4	84.1	83.5	45.7
Haryana	79.2	100.0	87.2	93.5	69.5
Himachal	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.3	30.7
Jammu and	100.0	69.8	91.3	56.7	26.9
Jharkhand	70.3	80.7	74.4	77.0	50.1
Karnataka	91.7	100.0	97.6	100	68.6
Kerala	83.1	100.0	89.7	98.7	90.7
Ladakh	92.0	89.5	91.0	75.9	56.6
Lakshadweep	98.0	77.7	89.9	74.4	54.8
Madhya	73.2	82.0	76.3	64.1	33.0
Maharashtra	100.0	97.5	100.0	82.5	43.2
Manipur	100.0	84.5	100.0	68.8	40.5
Meghalaya	100.0	100.0	100.0	88.9	54.2
Mizoram	100.0	100.0	100.0	93	58.9
Nagaland	81.7	65.7	74.8	57.5	38.9
Odisha	95.9	92.7	94.7	73.7	35.4
Puducherry	94.8	100.0	97.0	97.4	82.4
Punjab	100.0	100.0	100.0	90.2	51.7
Rajasthan	81.7	92.9	85.9	85.7	60
Sikkim	90.8	70.8	81.7	66.4	44.4
Tamil Nadu	84.6	100.0	92.2	99.7	81.5
Telangana	97.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	71.3
Tripura	100.0	91.7	100.0	74.8	51.8
Uttar Pradesh	77.2	78.7	77.7	64.9	34.5
Uttarakhand	96.2	100.0	100.0	98.0	74.1
West Bengal	100.0	98.1	100.0	84.4	55.2
India	85.3	89.2	86.7	77.0	75.5

Table 7a: Age-specific Enrolment Ratio, UDISEPlus 2023-24

India/State/ UT	Age-Specific Enrolment Rate										
	Age 6-10 years			Age 11-13 years			Age 6-13 years			Age 14-15 years	
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
India	82.7	88.2	85.3	88.4	90.0	89.2	84.8	88.9	86.7	75.9	78.2
Andhra Pradesh	85.2	89.3	87.1	99.7	98.1	98.9	90.6	92.6	91.6	94.0	91.6
Arunachal Pradesh	97.3	100.0	99.8	77.3	81.5	79.4	88.8	93.4	91.1	65.3	69.2
Assam	78.6	85.6	81.9	86.9	92.9	89.9	81.8	88.5	85.1	76.1	87.0
Bihar	72.0	79.3	75.4	63.5	67.8	65.5	68.8	74.9	71.6	46.1	53.6
Chandigarh	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Delhi	93.1	100.0	97.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.8	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Goa	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gujarat	74.2	79.0	76.4	96.8	97.9	97.4	82.5	86.1	84.1	85.1	81.8
Haryana	77.1	81.6	79.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	85.9	88.7	87.2	94.0	93.1
Himachal Pradesh	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	89.9	95.0
Jammu and Kashmir	100.0	100.0	100.0	68.1	71.9	69.8	89.8	93.0	91.3	56.0	57.6
Jharkhand	68.9	71.9	70.3	80.7	80.6	80.7	73.5	75.3	74.4	76.9	77.0
Karnataka	90.4	93.0	91.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	96.8	98.4	97.6	100.0	100.0
Kerala	82.4	83.8	83.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	89.2	90.2	89.7	98.2	99.2
Madhya Pradesh	70.3	76.5	73.2	80.1	84.2	82.0	73.8	79.3	76.3	62.5	65.8
Maharashtra	100.0	100.0	100.0	97.7	97.4	97.5	99.2	100.0	100.0	82.2	82.8
Odisha	95.8	96.0	95.9	93.0	92.4	92.7	94.8	94.6	94.7	72.7	74.9
Punjab	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	88.3	92.5
Rajasthan	79.5	84.3	81.7	93.6	92.2	92.9	84.6	87.2	85.9	87.6	83.6
Tamil Nadu	83.0	86.3	84.6	100.0	100.0	100.0	91.1	93.4	92.2	99.2	100.0
Telangana	94.3	100.0	97.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Uttar Pradesh	74.2	80.7	77.2	78.3	79.3	78.7	75.6	80.2	77.7	65.0	64.9
Uttarakhand	92.4	100.0	96.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	98.1	100.0	100.0	96.7	99.6
West Bengal	100.0	100.0	100.0	96.8	99.4	98.1	100.0	100.0	100.0	80.8	88.1

Further Decline in Senior Secondary Education (16 to 17 Years)

The most notable decline in enrolment ratios is observed in the 16 to 17 age group, corresponding to the senior secondary (Grades XI to XII) education stage; this reflects a general trend of increasing dropout rates as students progress to higher levels of education. The national enrolment ratio for this group is 75.5 percent, which is concerning given the importance of this stage in shaping young individuals' future educational and career opportunities, thus indicating that one in four of the total 48 million children of this age group were not enrolled in any grade.

Goa (95.6 percent), **Kerala** (90.7 percent), and **Delhi** (84.2 percent) report high enrolment figures, indicating that these states have made significant strides in supporting students through to the final stages of secondary education. Conversely, states like **Bihar** (24.7 percent), **Madhya Pradesh** (33 percent), and **Uttar Pradesh** (34.5 percent) show alarmingly low enrolment in this category. These states may face various systemic challenges, such as poverty, child labor, early marriage, and insufficient infrastructure, which significantly hinder the ability of students to continue their education. Without bringing the remaining children under the education umbrella, the dream of universal school education envisaged in the NEP 2020 is not likely to be cherished by 2030.

To sustain the progress made in primary education and ensure that every student continues to secondary education, a concerted effort is required across various states to address the disparities in educational access and must find a place in each state's annual work plan under the *Samagra*

Shiksha initiative. Substantial efforts are needed to address the gaps at secondary and higher secondary levels. Strategic investments in education, particularly in underperforming regions, are critical to achieving the NEP 2020 vision of universal education by 2030.

Dropout Rates

Dropout rates are critical indicators of educational challenges, reflecting systemic inefficiencies, socio-economic constraints, and infrastructural inadequacies. The dropout rates, particularly at the secondary and higher secondary levels, remain high despite an overall decrease in dropout rates for primary and upper primary levels. The dropout rate at the secondary level is a critical concern, remaining at 12.61 percent in 2021-22 and increasing to 14.1 percent in 2023-24; this directly contradicts the NEP 2020 goal of reducing dropout rates at all levels of schooling. Compared to dropout rates in 2021-22, irrespective of educational level, have increased in 2023-24 (Table 8).

Table 8: Dropout Rates at All India Level: 2020-21 to 2022-23

Level	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Primary (Grades 1-5)	0.8	1.45	7.8	1.9
Upper Primary (Grades 6-8)	1.9	3.02	8.1	5.2
Secondary (Grades 9-10)	14.6	12.61	16.4	14.1
Higher Secondary (Grades 11-12)	Data not explicitly available in the UDISE report, but implied retention was 45.6% in 2023-24.			

Source: UDISEPlus Report, different years.

Observations on Dropout Rates

The UDISEPlus data reveals that the dropout rate at the primary level is low (1.9 percent), which may be because of strong foundational programs such as [mid-day meals](#) and free education schemes under the [Right to Education Act 2009](#). The dropout rate at this level in the previous year, 2022-23, was as high as 7.8 percent, thus reflecting a steep decline in enrolment during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Dropped Out Children based on UDISEPlus 2022-23 & 2023-24 Data

Average Annual Dropout Rate at Upper Primary Level Cohort 2022-23

Note: Dropout rates as per the UDISEPlus 2023-24 Report, which is based on all schools and not common schools, as has been the practice in the past. Actual dropout rates may be higher than presented. Map Source: UDISEPlus 2023-24, DOSE&L, Ministry of Education, Government of India.

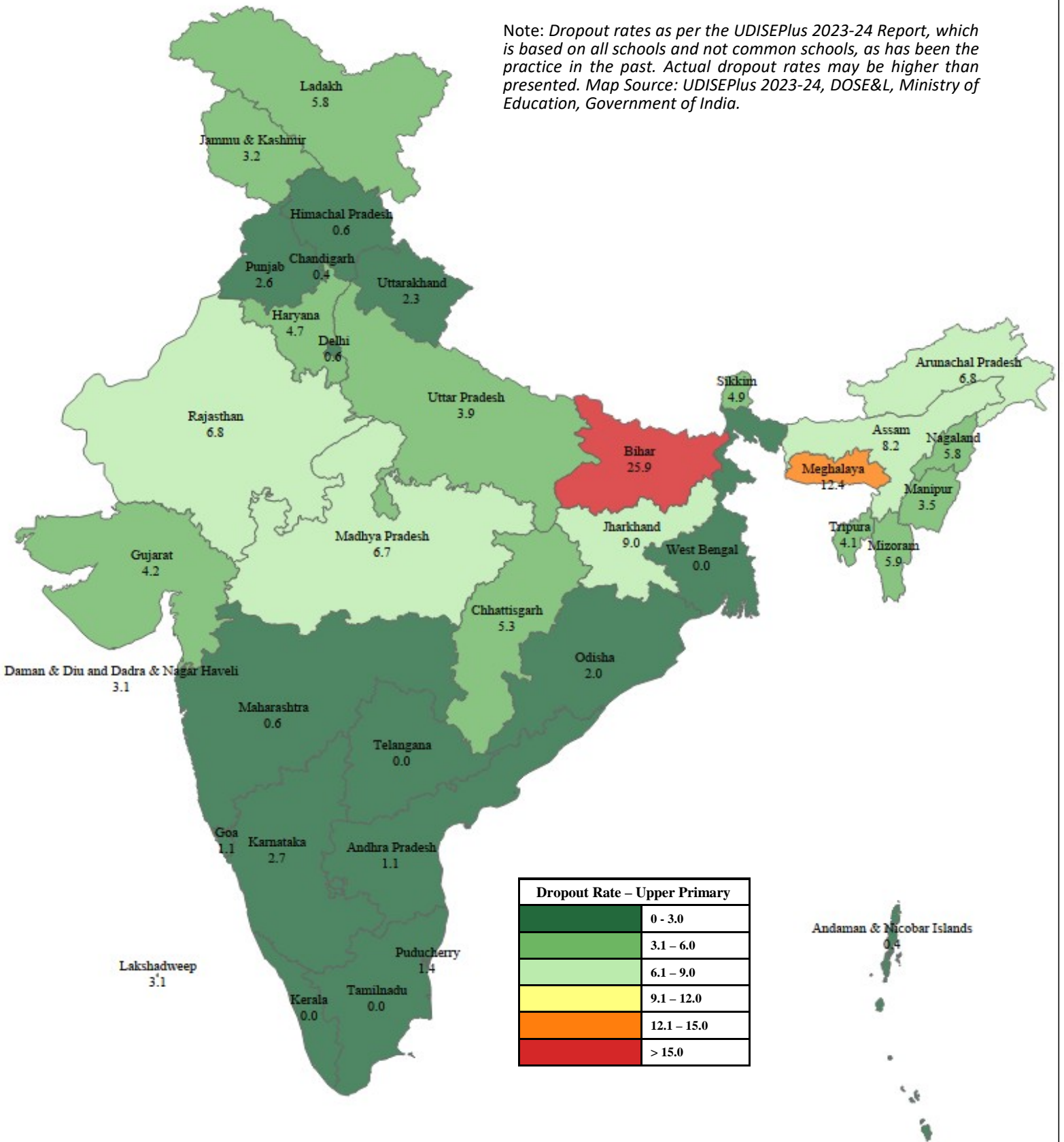


Table 9: Dropout Rate, State & All-India Level: Cohort 2022-23 (Year 2023-24)

India/State /UT	Dropout Rate						
	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Secondary (9-10)
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys
A and N Islands	1.0	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.4	
Andhra Pradesh	0.3	0.0	0.2	1.3	0.8	1.1	14.2
Arunachal Pradesh	5.7	5.1	5.4	7.2	6.5	6.8	20.4
Assam	7.1	5.2	6.2	10.3	6.1	8.2	25.2
Bihar	9.0	8.7	8.9	26.0	25.9	25	26.2
Chandigarh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.4	
Chhattisgarh	2.0	1.5	1.8	6.2	4.3	5.3	20.2
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1.8	1.5	1.6	3.2	3.0	3.1	21.8
Delhi	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.6	11.6
Goa	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.1	10.2
Gujarat	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.5	4.9	4.2	23.3
Haryana	1.6	0.7	1.2	5.4	3.7	4.7	15.7
Himachal Pradesh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.4	0.6	
Jammu and Kashmir	1.9	1.3	1.6	3.2	3.3	3.2	14.1
Jharkhand	1.1	0.6	0.9	9.4	8.6	9.0	15.2
Karnataka	1.9	1.5	1.7	2.9	2.4	2.7	24.5
Kerala	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Ladakh	4.9	3.6	4.3	7.3	4.3	5.8	23.3
Lakshadweep	3.1	1.4	2.3	6.3	0.0	3.1	
Madhya Pradesh	1.2	0.7	1.0	7.0	6.5	6.7	19.6
Maharashtra	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.5	0.6	11.0
Manipur	4.5	4.4	4.5	3.9	3.0	3.5	15.6
Meghalaya	8.3	6.8	7.5	13.9	11.1	12	23.2
Mizoram	3.7	3.3	3.5	6.7	4.9	5.9	15.2
Nagaland	4.8	4.2	4.5	6.4	5.2	5.8	12.2
Odisha	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.7	2.0	14.1
Puducherry	1.5	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.4	10.4
Punjab	0.1	0.0	0.1	3.0	2.2	2.6	
Rajasthan	8.1	7.0	7.6	7.1	6.4	6.8	12.2
Sikkim	3.3	1.7	2.6	5.9	4.0	4.9	21.0
Tamil Nadu	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.8
Telangana	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	13.3
Tripura	0.8	0.3	0.5	4.5	3.6	4.1	10.7
Uttar Pradesh	1.7	1.7	1.7	3.1	4.8	3.9	
Uttarakhand	0.3	0.0	0.1	2.6	1.9	2.3	
West Bengal	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.5
India	2.1	1.7	1.9	5.2	5.3	5.2	15.5

Source: UDISE+ 2023-24.

On the other hand, the dropout rate at the Upper primary levels increases to 5.2 percent in 2023-24 from 8.1 percent in 2022-23, reflecting challenges in the transition from primary education, particularly among girls in rural areas. At the secondary level, the dropout rate is 14.1 percent, which may be linked to economic pressures, a lack of secondary schools, and inadequate vocational training opportunities. Though the dropout rate at the Higher Secondary level is not available through the UDISEPlus, high attrition at this level is inferred from retention rates, with less than 50 percent of students progressing beyond secondary education, one of the significant areas of concern.

States Requiring Significant Intervention Concerning Dropout Rate

In **Meghalaya**, the dropout rate at the Primary level exceeds 6 percent, one of the highest in India, indicating challenges even at foundational stages; the dropout rate in **Arunachal Pradesh** also remains high at the primary level (4.5 percent). On the other hand, the dropout rate at the Upper Primary level in **Bihar** remained high at 8.7 percent in 2023-24, thus highlighting transition challenges. **Jharkhand**, too, has a high dropout rate at the Upper Primary level of 7.4 percent, compounded by socio-economic constraints. In **Assam**, the dropout rate exceeds 20 percent, one of the highest in the country at the secondary level, as in the case of **Uttar Pradesh**, which has a high dropout rate of 18.9 percent, reflecting infrastructure and socio-economic issues (Table 9).

State-wise Number of Children Dropped out between 2022-23 and 2023-24

On the other hand, the dropout rate at the Primary level in the states of **Kerala and Delhi** is below 1 percent, attributed to robust public schooling and targeted welfare schemes. At the upper primary level, **Tamil Nadu** has a low dropout rate of 2.5 percent, among the lowest in India, followed by **Chandigarh**, which has a dropout rate below 2 percent, showcasing urban advantages in accessibility and monitoring. On the other hand, **Himachal Pradesh** (7.8 percent) and Goa (6.5 percent) have significantly better dropout rates at the Secondary level than at the national average (Table 9).

The dropout rates highlight significant progress at primary levels but reveal persistent challenges at secondary and higher secondary stages. While states like **Kerala and Tamil Nadu** showcase near-universal retention, others like **Bihar and Assam** require urgent attention to address socio-economic and infrastructural barriers. Achieving NEP 2020's vision demands targeted interventions and sustained commitment at all levels of education.

Transition and Retention Rates

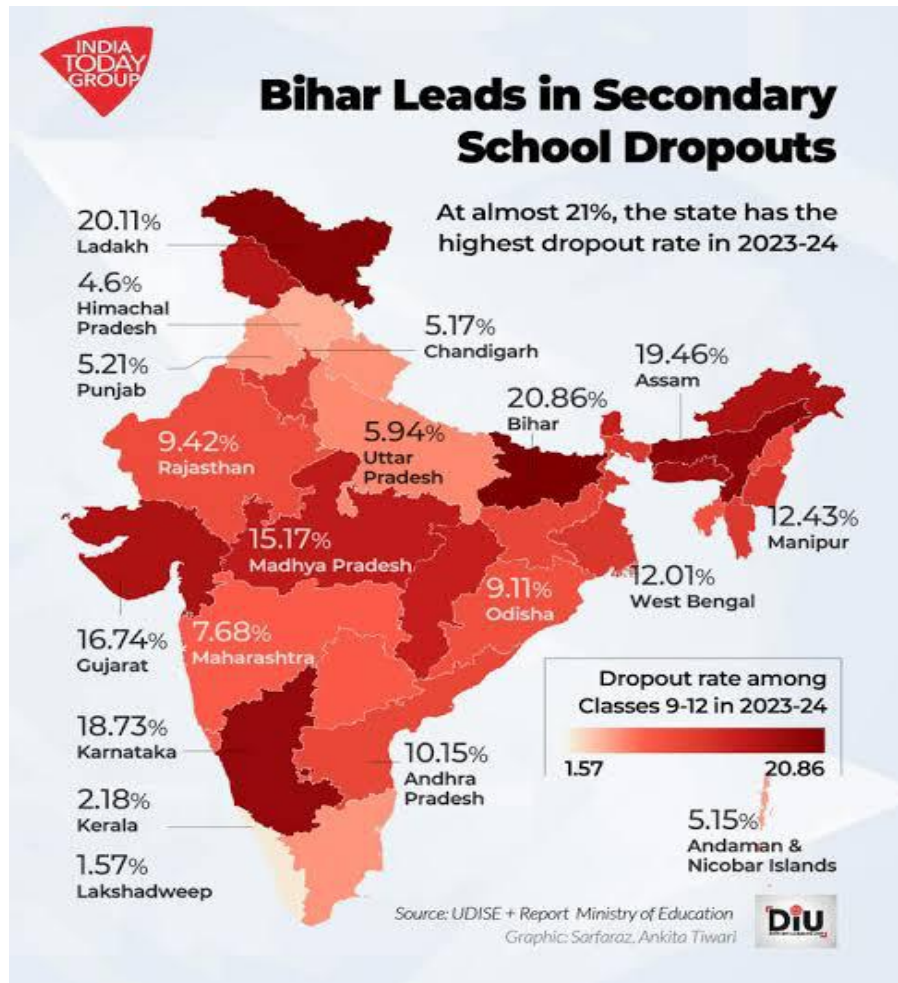
Transition and retention rates are pivotal for evaluating student progression across educational levels. High transition rates reflect a robust system facilitating smooth progression, while retention rates reveal the system's ability to maintain student engagement over time. This analysis examines the 2023-24 UDISEPLUS data, highlighting states requiring attention and those nearing universal education goals under NEP 2020.

Observations on Transition & Retention Rates

The UDISEPlus 2023-24 data on transition rates show a consistent decline as students progress from lower to higher education levels, with a steep drop at secondary-to-higher secondary transitions (71.5 percent). Though the gender disparities are minimal nationally, socio-economic and regional disparities remain pronounced. On the other hand, data shows that the retention rate

Table 10: Transition and Retention Rates at All-India Level, 2023-24

Indicator	Rate (%)
Transition Rates	
Primary to Upper Primary	88.8%
Upper Primary to Secondary	83.3%
Secondary to Higher Secondary	71.5%
Retention Rates	
Primary (Class 1 to 5)	85.4%
Elementary (Class 1 to 8)	78.0%
Secondary (Class 1 to 10)	63.8%
Higher Secondary (Class 1 to 12)	45.6%



at the Primary level is observed to be relatively high (85.4 percent) in 2023-24 due to strong foundational programs but declines sharply at secondary (63.8 percent) and higher secondary levels (45.6 percent), reflecting systemic challenges (Table 10).

Transition Rate

The state-specific rates reveal that states are at different levels of retaining capacity; however, a few states are on the verge of universal retention, but a few others still need concerted efforts to move towards universal school education. The transition rate between the primary and upper primary levels in the case of Jharkhand is low at 79.2 percent, which is well below the national average compared to the same in Bihar, which is 82.1 percent in 2023-24, indicating gaps in infrastructure and quality education. A low transition rate of 73.8 percent in one of the most populous states, Uttar Pradesh, is because of the high dropouts in middle school. One of the significant north-eastern region states, namely Assam, has a transition rate of 74.5 percent, indicative of socio-economic and gender-based barriers. Another state from this region, namely Meghalaya, has a low transition rate of 62.3 percent from secondary to higher secondary, one of the lowest nationally compared to Arunachal Pradesh, with a transition rate of 65.7 percent, signaling challenges in rural accessibility. Compared to these states, Kerala (97.8 percent) and Tamil Nadu (96.3 percent) have an almost universal transition from Primary to Upper Primary level, which may be attributed to a robust primary education system and showcasing of inclusive policies. States such as Delhi (92.4 percent) and Chandigarh (94.7 percent) have a high transition rate from Upper primary to Secondary level, and Goa (85.6 percent), a testament to strong secondary education and Himachal Pradesh (84.2 percent) shows balanced progression.

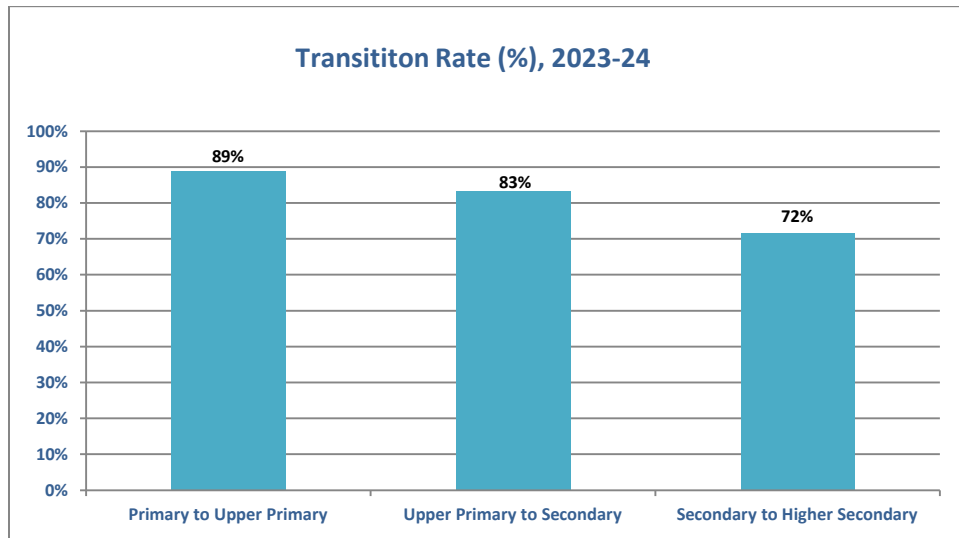


Table 11: Retention Rate by Level of Education, 2023-24

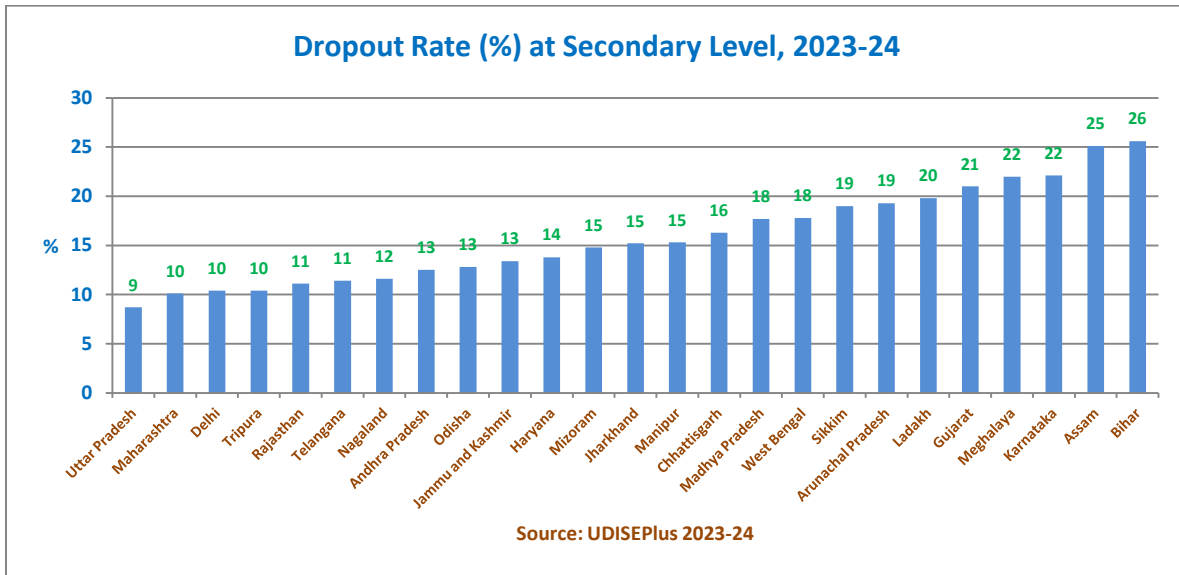
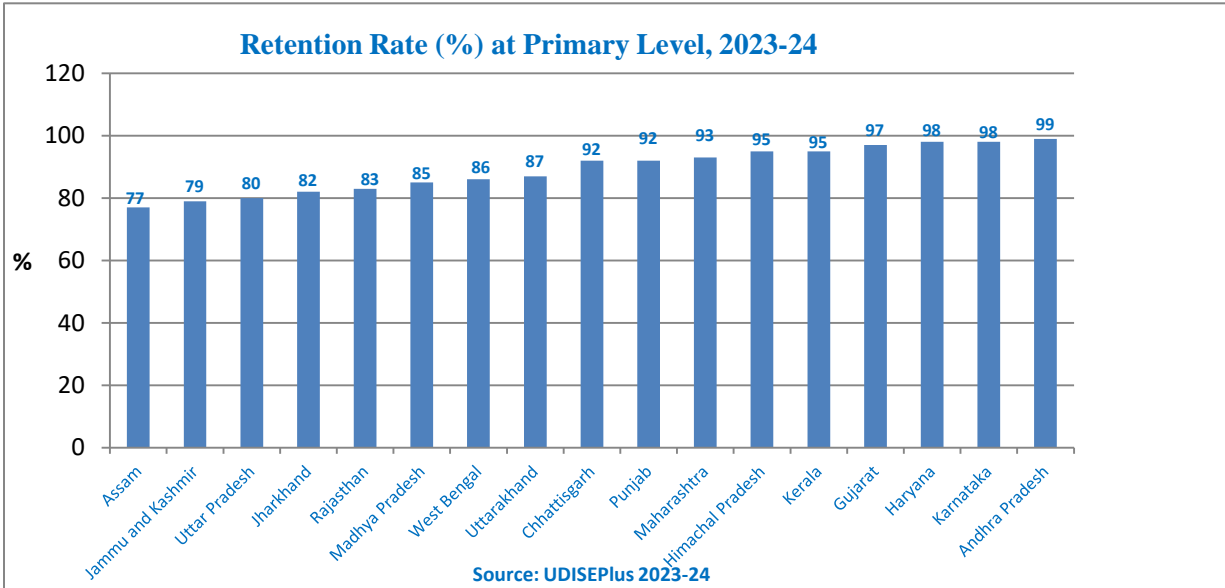
India/State	Primary (1 to 5)	Elementary (1 to 8)	Secondary (1 to 10)	Higher Secondary (1 to 12)
	India	85	78	64
Andhra Pradesh	99	104	90	55
Assam	77	65	46	24
Bihar	104	79	57	29
Chhattisgarh	92	85	61	45
Gujarat	97	90	72	44
Haryana	98	100	86	66
Himachal Pradesh	95	95	90	79
Jammu and Kashmir	79	76	58	34
Jharkhand	82	77	49	32
Karnataka	98	94	88	56
Kerala	95	97	99	90
Madhya Pradesh	85	80	51	31
Maharashtra	93	91	84	68
Odisha	101	88	76	48
Punjab	92	87	76	67
Rajasthan	83	75	59	49
Tamil Nadu	101	97	88	69
Telangana	103	86	78	62
Uttar Pradesh	80	69	57	37
Uttarakhand	87	83	72	59
West Bengal	86	85	82	44

Source: UDISE+ 2023-24, RR above 100 is because of the inconsistent data.

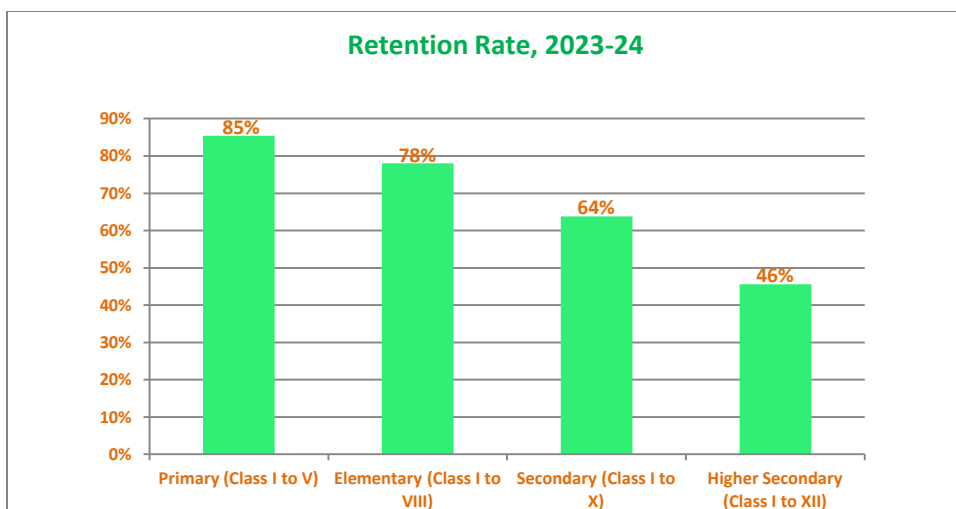
Retention Rate

In the case of Nagaland, the retention rate at the primary level (up to Grade V) is low (78.3 percent), highlighting foundational deficiencies, and with an 80.2 percent retention rate, Jharkhand indicates early disengagement (Table 11). However, Bihar has the lowest retention rate, with 69.5 percent at the Elementary level compared to the retention rate of 72.8 percent in Uttar Pradesh, signaling inefficiencies in middle schooling. Assam (58.7 percent) and Odisha (61.2 percent) have a low retention rate at the Secondary level (Class I to X), reflecting infrastructural and economic barriers. On the other hand, Kerala (98.5 percent) and Tamil Nadu (96.8 percent) have high retention rates at the Primary level, reflecting efficient foundational education. Delhi (90.4 percent), Chandigarh (89.7 percent) at the Elementary level, Goa (81.2 percent), and Punjab (80.5 percent) at the Secondary level also have high

to very high retention rates in 2023-24.



The analysis of UDISEPLUS 2023-24 data presented above highlights commendable progress in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Chandigarh, demonstrating near-universal retention and high transition rates. Conversely, states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam require significant interventions to address systemic inefficiencies. Achieving NEP 2020's goals necessitates sustained efforts to ensure equitable and quality student education.



Children Dropped-out between 2022-23 & 2023-24

School dropouts continue challenging India's education system, with recent data highlighting alarming trends. However, it may be known that there is no systematic procedure for collecting information on the number of dropout children. The Government's transition to individual student data collection in 2022-23 through the SD MIS under UDISEPlus may explain part of the initial decline in dropout numbers. It is hoped that, in time, the Government will come out with the actual number of children who drop out rather than present the average annual dropout rate.

According to the Ministry of Education, "a dropout child has enrolled in school but has discontinued it before completing the educational stage to which they were admitted without transferring to another institution." Dropouts are a critical concern as they reflect barriers to sustained participation in education and pose challenges to achieving universal schooling.

In the absence of recent surveys, estimating dropped-out children based on UDISEPlus data remains the only option presented in Tables 12 & 13 below:

Key Trends & Observations

Dropout Numbers Across Levels

- Between 2021-22 and 2022-23, 9.5 million children dropped out at the primary level, while 5.4 million exited at the upper primary level.
- Between 2022-23 and 2023-24, dropouts declined to 5.43 million, with a significant reduction at the primary level.

Gender-Specific Trends

- Boys accounted for a higher share of dropouts than girls across all levels. For instance, boys comprised 57.4 percent of dropouts at the primary level in 2023-24, compared to 42.6 percent for girls. Quite a similar trend is also valid for 2022-23.

- This gender disparity persisted at the upper primary level, with boys comprising 51.3 percent of dropouts during the same period.

Table 12: Children Dropped-out Between 2021-22 and 2022-23

Between the Years	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Elementary (1-8)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2021-22 & 2022-23	4954377	4549318	9503696	2726428	2679152	5405580	7680805	7228471	14909276
2022-23 & 2023-24	1231782	914005	2136005	1710314	1621122	3300849	2942096	2535127	5436853

% Children Dropped-out by Gender Between

Between the Years	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Elementary (1-8)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2021-22 & 2022-23	52.1	47.9	100.0	50.4	49.6	100.0	51.5	48.5	100.0
2022-23 & 2023-24	57.7	42.8	100.0	51.8	49.1	100.0	54.1	46.6	100.0

% Distribution of Children Dropped-out by Level

Between the Years	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Elementary (1-8)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2021-22 & 2022-23	64.5	62.9	63.7	35.50	37.06	36.26	100.00	100.00	100.00
2022-23 & 2023-24	41.9	36.1	39.3	58.13	63.95	60.71	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: UDISEPlus Reports, different years.

Level-Wise Distribution of Dropout Children

- In 2021-22, 63.7 percent of dropouts occurred at the primary level, declining to 39.2 percent in 2022-23, indicating a shift toward more significant attrition at the upper primary level.

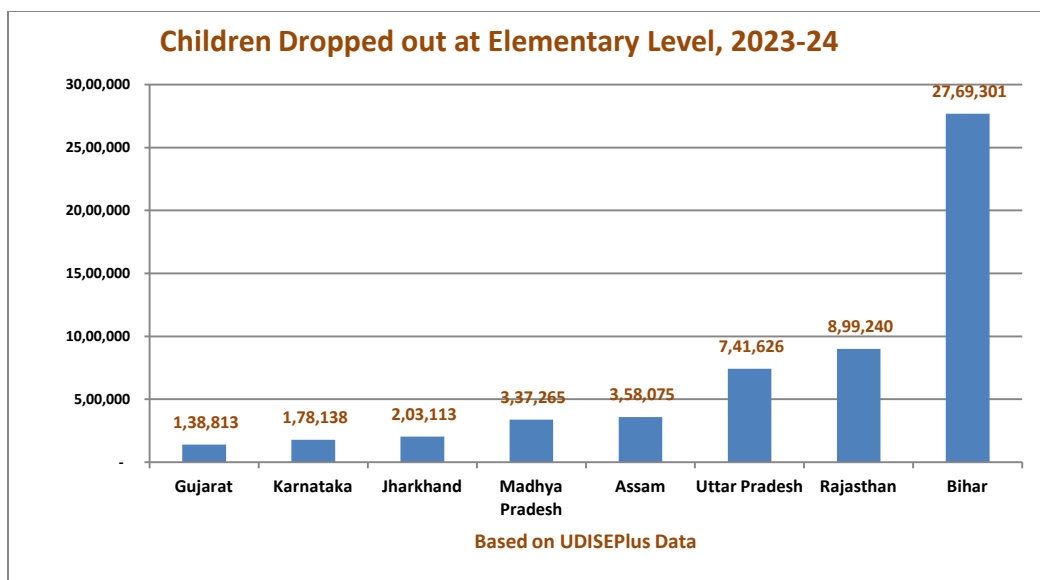
The high dropout rates jeopardize India's targets of achieving universal education by 2030, as envisioned in NEP 2020 and SDG4. Several socio-economic, institutional, and individual factors contribute to school dropouts; the integrated approach of the *Samagra Shiksha* program holds immense potential for addressing the pressing issue of school dropouts.

Regional Variations in Children Dropped-out

At the national level, India demonstrates a concerning gender disparity in dropout rates across elementary education (Grades 1-8). Boys account for 53.7 percent of dropouts, while girls represent 46.3 percent, with 5,477,223 students dropping out during 2022-24. This gender gap is more pronounced at the primary level (57.4 percent boys, 42.6 percent girls) than upper primary (51.3 percent boys, 48.7 percent girls).

Table 13: State-specific % Children Dropped out by Gender between 2022-23 & 2023-24

	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Elementary (1-8)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
India	57.4	42.6	2145787	51.3	48.7	3331436	53.7	46.3	5477223
A & Islands	68.0	32.0	192	100.0	0.0	71	76.7	23.3	
Andhra	100.0	0.0	5647	64.1	35.9	23682	0.4	0.2	29
Arunachal	53.5	46.5	7914	51.2	48.8	5461	52.5	47.5	13
Assam	58.5	41.5	211423	61.2	38.8	146652	59.6	40.4	358
Bihar	52.6	47.4	1122631	50.2	49.8	1646670	51.2	48.8	2769
Chandigarh			0	100.0	0.0	307	100.0	0.0	
Chhattisgarh	58.2	41.8	44526	59.7	40.3	76686	59.1	40.9	121
Dadra and	57.1	42.9	1015	54.8	45.2	1131	1.0	0.8	2
Delhi			0	53.2	46.8	7000	53.2	46.8	7
Goa	48.9	51.1	1021	56.3	43.7	786	52.1	47.9	1
Gujarat	69.3	30.7	8317	45.0	55.0	130496	46.5	53.5	138
Haryana	73.4	26.6	28645	64.4	35.6	68746	67.0	33.0	97
Himachal	0.0	0.0	0	65.8	34.2	1861	65.8	34.2	1
Jammu and	61.5	38.5	17047	51.6	48.4	18463	20.2	15.6	35
Jharkhand	66.4	33.6	29505	52.9	47.1	173608	54.9	45.1	203
Karnataka	57.7	42.3	92924	56.5	43.5	85214	57.1	42.9	178
Kerala	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Ladakh	58.8	41.2	962	62.1	37.9	695	60.2	39.8	1
Lakshadweep	70.2	29.8	118	100.0	0.0	92	83.2	16.8	
Madhya	65.2	34.8	65100	54.0	46.0	272164	56.1	43.9	337
Maharashtra	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33636	61.5	38.5	33
Manipur	51.9	48.1	13081	57.1	42.9	4911	53.3	46.7	17
Meghalaya	55.7	44.3	36969	52.3	47.7	28563	68.9	58.1	65
Mizoram	54.3	45.7	4391	58.3	41.7	3856	56.1	43.9	8
Nagaland	54.7	45.3	7363	55.0	45.0	5285	54.8	45.2	12
Odisha	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40911	113.4	82.4	40
Puducherry	64.1	35.9	1068	57.1	42.9	803	61.1	38.9	1
Punjab	100.0	0.0	1199	61.4	38.6	35115	62.7	37.3	36
Rajasthan	56.4	43.6	610302	55.7	44.3	288938	56.2	53.8	899
Sikkim	68.2	31.8	1103	60.6	39.4	1371	64.0	36.0	2
Tamil Nadu	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Telangana	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	917	37.1	0.0	
Tripura	73.4	26.6	1682	55.6	44.4	7001	59.1	40.9	8
Uttar Pradesh	52.6	47.4	343062	40.9	59.1	398563	46.3	53.7	741
Uttarakhand	100.0	0.0	1577	60.5	39.5	12995	1.3	0.7	14
West Bengal	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	



Several states mentioned below exhibit particularly troubling gender-specific patterns:

- The *Andaman & Nicobar Islands* show an acute gender disparity, with boys comprising 76.7 percent of total dropouts. The upper primary level is more striking, where 100 percent of dropouts are boys, suggesting possible data anomalies or specific regional factors requiring further investigation, though the absolute number shows that it has only a few dropped-out children.
- *Andhra Pradesh* presents an extreme case with 100 percent male dropouts at the primary level, while the overall elementary statistics show negligible dropout rates (0.4 percent boys, 0.2 percent girls), indicating potential data inconsistencies or reporting issues.
- *Bihar*, with the highest absolute number of dropouts (2,769,301), shows nearly equal gender distribution at the upper primary level.
- *Uttar Pradesh* presents an interesting reversal of the national trend, with girls representing a higher proportion of dropouts (53.7 percent) compared to boys (46.3 percent) at the elementary level, particularly pronounced in upper primary (59.1 percent girls).
- *Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal* report zero dropouts across all levels, which warrants further investigation into their successful retention strategies or potential under-reporting. Needless to say, dropout rates under UDISEPlus are calculated based on all schools and not common schools, as has been the practice in the past years,
- *Goa* shows a relatively balanced gender distribution in dropouts (52.1 percent boys, 47.9 percent girls), suggesting more equitable educational access and retention.

The analysis of dropout patterns across Indian states during 2022-24 reveals several critical insights that warrant attention from policymakers and educational stakeholders: These observations underscore the need for a multi-faceted approach to addressing school dropouts, combining improved data management, targeted interventions, and cross-state learning to create

more effective retention strategies. The focus should be reducing dropout rates and addressing gender-specific challenges while ensuring data accuracy for better policy formulation and implementation.

Out-of-School Children

Accurate data on Out-of-School Children (OOSCSs) must be gathered directly from their locations, such as households, to understand the scope of the issue effectively. However, concrete information on OOSCS is unavailable without a recent comprehensive survey. As an alternative, the estimates presented here rely on UDISEPlus data for 2023-24, released by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, on 30th December 2024 (Table 14).

Table 14: Out-of-School Children based on UDISEPlus in 2023-24 Data

Age Group	Projected Child Population	Age-Specific Enrolment Ratio (%)	Out-of-School Children
6 to 10 years	116,013,877	85.3	17,054,040
11 to 13 years	70,348,227	89.2	7,597,609
6 to 13 years	186,362,104	86.7	24,651,649
14 to 15 years	47,636,171	77.0	10,956,319
16 to 17 years	48,295,923	75.5	11,832,501
Total (6-17 years)	282,294,198	83.2	47,440,469

Source: Computed based on UDISEPlus projected child population and 2023-24 age-specific enrolment ratio at different levels of school education, presented in UDISEPlus 2022-23 Report.

Who Are Considered Out-of-School Children?

Out-of-school children (OOSCSs) fall within the official age range for schooling but are not enrolled in or regularly attending any formal or informal educational institution. This category typically includes:

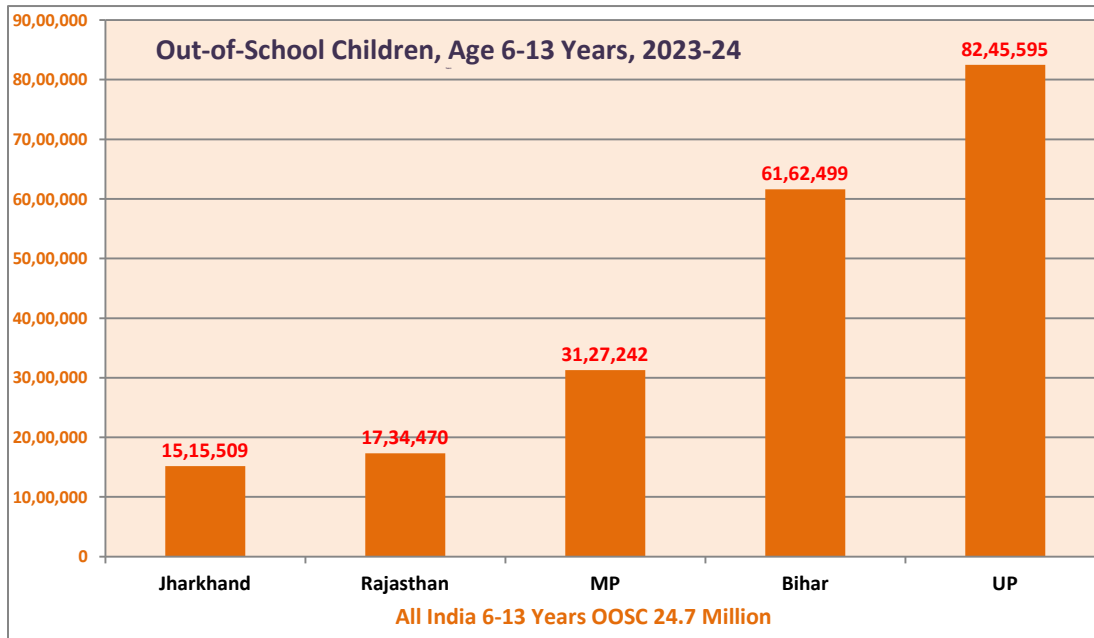
1. **Never-Enrolled Children:** Children who have never attended school.
2. **Dropouts:** Children who were enrolled in school but left before completing the grade or educational cycle they were attending and
3. **Irregular Attendees:** Children who are enrolled but do not attend school regularly face a high risk of dropping out.

Out-of-School Children (OOSCS) in the Light of UDISEPlus 2023-24 Data
State-wise Out-of-School Children Out of School Children based on UDISE Plus 2023-24

The definition may also extend to children enrolled in unrecognized informal institutions that do not meet the standards of formal education systems and are not covered in administrative surveys.

Out-of-School Children 2023-24

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aspires to ensure universal access to quality education and achieve a 100 percent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) across all educational levels by 2030. However, [UDISEPlus 2023-24](#) data analysis reveals that approximately 47.4 million children aged 6–17 years, accounting for 16.8 percent of this age group (Tables 14,15 & 16), remain out of school. This article explores the implications of significant findings on the NEP 2020 objectives and suggests strategic measures to integrate Out-of-School Children (OOSCS) into the education system). A breakdown by age group further shows:



- 6-10 years: 17.05 million OOSCs (14.7 percent of the projected child population); this highlights a significant challenge in early childhood education.
- 11-13 years: 7.60 million OOSCs (10.8 percent of the projected child population) indicate many children dropping out of primary school.
- 14-15 years: 10.96 million OOSCs (23.0 percent of the projected child population); this suggests a substantial dropout rate at the lower secondary level.
- 16-17 years: 11.83 million OOSCs (24.5 percent of the projected child population); this indicates a high dropout rate during higher secondary school.

The data clearly shows that the challenge of OOSCs is not uniform across age groups. The older the child, the higher the percentage of out-of-school children; this suggests that retention is a critical issue. Further analysis is needed to understand the reasons for non-enrollment or dropout in each age group (e.g., poverty, geographical inaccessibility, repeated failures, not being interested in education, poverty, socio-cultural factors, lack of relevant education, etc).

Table 15: % Share of Out-of-School Children to Total 6-13 Years OOSCSs, 2023-24

State/UT	Age 6-10 years		Age 11-13 years		Age 6-13 years		
	Total	% to 6-13 Years	Total	% to 6-13 Years	Boys	Girls	Total
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1271	58.4	905	41.6	1378	820	2176
Andhra Pradesh	460351	95.0	24145	5.0	279107	202672	484495
Arunachal Pradesh	251	1.4	17956	98.6	11763	7955	18206
Assam	539126	73.9	190236	26.1	459830	269848	729362
Bihar	3313381	53.8	2849118	46.2	3532020	2614176	6162499
Chhattisgarh	383116	75.9	121725	24.1	280112	223855	504841
Daman and Diu	0		0		0	0	0
Delhi	38138	100.0	0	0.0	62760	0	38138
Goa	0		0		0	0	0
Gujarat	1372323	93.9	89443	6.1	874253	591140	1461766
Haryana	515050	100.0	0	0.0	309562	206890	515050
Himachal Pradesh	0		0		0	0	0
Jammu and Kashmir	0	0.0	222272	100.0	125112	96608	222272
Jharkhand	1077473	71.1	438036	28.9	815499	699971	1515509
Karnataka	404774	100.0	0	0.0	244474	163114	404774
Kerala	402478	100.0	0	0.0	214283	188569	402478
Ladakh	1662	55.0	1360	45.0	1931	1119	3022
Lakshadweep	105	11.9	771	88.1	394	477	876
Madhya Pradesh	2258382	72.2	868860	27.8	1802320	1315531	3127242
Maharashtra	0	0.0	140857	100.0	69020	68469	140857
Manipur	0	0.0	23841	100.0	13614	10239	23841
Meghalaya	0		0		0	0	0
Mizoram	0		0		0	0	0
Nagaland	31481	42.8	41992	57.2	42528	30976	73474
Odisha	145179	47.3	161551	52.7	156187	150461	306730
Puducherry	4529	100.0	0	0.0	2237	2288	4529
Punjab	0		0		0	0	0
Rajasthan	1410434	81.3	324036	18.7	999342	730734	1734470
Sikkim	3918	28.8	9689	71.2	7206	6412	13607
Tamil Nadu	767567	100.0	0	0.0	443530	325402	767567
Telangana	67080	100.0	0	0.0	80508	0	67080
Tripura	0	0.0	14747	100.0	10253	4651	14747
Uttar Pradesh	5385021	65.3	2860573	34.7	4786976	3440909	8245595
Uttarakhand	33060	100.0	0	0.0	35963	0	33060
West Bengal	0	0.0	82137	100.0	70624	12696	82137

Source: Computed based on information provided in UDISEPlus Report 2023-24. A wide variation is observed between the estimated OoSCs based on ASER at the all-India level and on state-specific ASER and the corresponding child population, which is valid for all levels of education. Since all-India figures are obtained based on state data, the discrepancy observed is unexplained; thus, there is a question mark about the reliability of enrolment data.

State-wise Out-of-School Children (OOSCS)

The Table above reveals a considerable Number of out-of-school children across different age groups. Estimated OOSCSs at the all-India level are of limited use unless the same is also available state-wide and within the state, gender-specific, given which an attempt has been made

to estimate the same by using state-wise Age-specific Enrolment Ratio in different age groups, which is then applied to the child population in that age group provided in the UDISEPlus 2023-24 Report to obtain OOSs.

A wide variation is observed between the estimated OoSCs based on ASER at the all-India level and state-specific ASER, which is valid for all levels of education. Since all-India figures are obtained based on state data, the discrepancy observed is unexplained; thus, there is a question mark about the reliability of enrolment/age-specific population data. In all the cases, all-India estimates of OOSCs are much below the ones computed based on state-specific ASER. Needless to say, one hundred minus the age-specific enrolment ratio is the percentage of children out of school, which is then applied to the Child Population of that age group to obtain out-of-school children.

Table 16: Share of Girls to Total OOSCs in 6 to 11 & 6 to 13 Years, 2023-24

State	% Girls OOSCs, 6 to 11 Years	Total 6 to 11 Years OOSCs	% Girls OOSCs, 6 to 13 Years	Total 6 to 13 Years OOSCs	% to Total 6 to 13 Years
Odisha	47.3	145179	49.1	306730	1.2
Kerala	46.9	402478	46.9	402478	1.6
Karnataka	40.3	404774	40.3	404774	1.6
Andhra Pradesh	39.6	460351	41.8	484495	2.0
Chhattisgarh	44.7	383116	44.3	504841	2.0
Haryana	40.2	515050	40.2	515050	2.1
Assam	38.0	539126	37.0	729362	3.0
Tamil Nadu	42.4	767567	42.4	767567	3.1
Gujarat	40.7	1372323	40.4	1461766	5.9
Jharkhand	45.1	1077473	46.2	1515509	6.1
Rajasthan	39.9	1410434	42.1	1734470	7.0
Madhya Pradesh	42.0	2258382	42.1	3127242	12.7
Bihar	40.0	3313381	42.4	6162499	25.0
Uttar Pradesh	39.5	5385021	41.7	8245595	33.4
India	37.9	17054040	39.8	24651648	100.0

Source: Calculated based on UDISEPlus 2023-24 data.

The **6 to 13-year-old** age group in India represents the core years of elementary education, and the estimate based on the UDISEPlus 2023-24 data reveals significant variations across states in terms of OOSCs percentages. Free and compulsory education is a fundamental right of every child between 6 and 13 years old in India.

States with a High to Very High Percentage of Total OOSCs: 6 to 13 Years Age Group

Uttar Pradesh: With 33.4 percent of the national OOSCs in this age group, Uttar Pradesh stands out as a state with many out-of-school children. The state's high population density and socio-

economic factors might have contributed to this, or fewer schools were covered in UP during UDISEPlus 2023-24 data collection.

Bihar: Contributing 25 percent to the total national OOSCS in the 6 to 13-year-old age group, Bihar's educational challenges are compounded by high poverty levels, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-cultural barriers.

Madhya Pradesh: With 12.7 percent of the total national OOSCS, Madhya Pradesh has a significant portion of children out of school, primarily due to rural underdevelopment and lower female literacy rates.

Rajasthan: With 7 percent of the total OOSCS, Rajasthan faces challenges regarding access to education, especially in remote and tribal areas.

Uttar Pradesh and **Bihar** also remain the top contributors in the 6 to 10-year group, reflecting their overwhelming share of the OOSCS population. On the other hand, **Madhya Pradesh**, **Jharkhand**, and **Chhattisgarh** show substantial percentages of OOSCS in this younger age group, often linked to issues of early marriage, child labor, and socio-economic constraints on schooling.

Gender Disparities in OOSCSs

The percentage of girls among OOSCS is notably lower than that of boys across both age groups (6-10 years and 6-13 years). For example, in the 6 to 11 years age group, girls account for approximately 37.9 percent of the total OOSCS, whereas boys constitute 62.1 percent, and in the 6 to 13 years age group, girls account for 39.8 percent, with boys making up 60.2 percent of the OOSCS.

Many OOSCSs, especially in populous states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, pose significant challenges to achieving universal school education by 2030. High OOSCS figures in these states indicate that many children still lack basic access to education, directly undermining efforts to meet global educational goals. The vast number of children out of school reflects not only access barriers but also challenges related to the quality of education, including inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and a lack of learning resources. These OOSCS populations, if not re-engaged in the formal education system, could face long-term economic and social exclusion, further perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. Several provisions and strategies under *Samagra Shiksha*, the flagship program for children's education, can play a pivotal role in bringing OOSCS under the education umbrella.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) has improved at the primary and upper primary levels, though there are still concerns at the secondary and higher secondary levels (Table 13). The PTR at the higher secondary level is notably high, indicating a potential shortage of teachers, especially in

critical subjects; this challenges the NEP's objective to ensure quality education through qualified teachers.

Despite a comfortable PTR, still, 1,10,971 schools were reported to be single-teacher schools in 2023-24, and 31,981 schools with zero enrolments and an average of seven teachers per school, all of which indicate that it is not an issue of shortage of teachers but an issue of deployment of teachers. It is also a fact that the appointments of contractual teachers across the country are on the rise, and India had a total of 9.8 million teachers in 2023-24. In addition, about 12 percent of Primary school teachers and 11 percent of Upper primary school teachers are not professionally qualified, and about 8 percent of teachers at these levels are untrained, despite the ongoing *Samagra Shiksha* (Table 15).

Table 13: Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), All India

Educational Level	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
PTR at the Primary level	26	26	23	21
PTR at the Upper Primary level		19	18	18
PTR at the Secondary level		18	17	16
PTR at Higher Secondary level		27	26	24

Source: UDISEPlus Reports, different years.

Schools without Enrolment & Single-Teacher Schools

This analysis evaluates schools without enrolment and single-teacher schools based on UDISEPlus 2023-24 data. It critically examines the distribution of such schools across states and union territories, their implications for educational quality and access, and the challenges posed to achieving NEP 2020 objectives.

Analysis of Teacher Training & Professional Qualifications in India (UDISEPlus 2023-24 Data)

The presence of schools without enrolment and single-teacher schools represents a significant challenge to educational inclusivity and quality. At the national level, 0.88 percent of schools have zero enrolment, while 7.54 percent are single-teacher schools. However, disparities across States & Union Territories highlight critical issues:

Zero-Enrolment Schools

States like Arunachal Pradesh (6.88 percent) and Ladakh (3.52 percent) report higher percentages of schools without enrolment, reflecting population dispersion and insufficient planning. Conversely, states like Bihar, Chandigarh, and Odisha report negligible zero-enrolment schools, indicating better optimization of resources (Table 14).

Table 14: Schools without Enrolment & Teachers, UDISEPlus 2023-24

India/State/UT	Total number of			%age Zero Enrolment Schools	Schools with Single Teachers	%age Single-Teacher School	%age Enrolments in Single-Teacher to Total Schools
	Schools	Enrolments	Teachers				
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	412	72119	5750	0.73	11	2.67	0.12
Andhra Pradesh	61373	8741885	338293	0.14	12611	20.55	2.49
Arunachal Pradesh	3490	323717	24700	6.88	618	17.71	2.47
Assam	56630	6922533	342199	0.00	2633	4.65	1.34
Bihar	94686	21348149	657063	0.12	2637	2.78	1.36
Chandigarh	230	265706	10237	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Chhattisgarh	56615	5776548	278798	0.19	5840	10.32	3.73
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	432	141282	4995	0.00	1	0.23	0.00
Delhi	5497	4506578	160479	0.00	13	0.24	0.01
Goa	1487	304735	14594	0.27	238	16.01	1.03
Gujarat	53626	11496709	394053	0.51	2462	4.59	0.76
Haryana	23517	5599742	250909	0.34	867	3.69	0.73
Himachal Pradesh	17826	1426412	101131	0.03	3473	19.48	4.61
Jammu & Kashmir	24296	2629949	167046	0.49	1330	5.47	1.18
Jharkhand	44475	7143255	206591	0.45	8353	18.78	5.74
Karnataka	75869	11926303	433942	1.42	7821	10.31	2.30
Kerala	15864	6281704	291096	0.66	76	0.48	0.02
Ladakh	995	56642	6432	3.52	83	8.34	1.29
Lakshadweep	37	12591	911	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	123412	15361543	639525	0.98	13198	10.69	3.82
Maharashtra	108237	21375970	738114	0.02	8196	7.57	0.78
Manipur	4646	647434	40921	1.79	320	6.89	1.19
Meghalaya	14601	1052884	55726	1.00	1451	9.94	4.89
Mizoram	3941	293763	23013	0.99	96	2.44	1.03
Nagaland	2725	412975	32602	0.44	31	1.14	0.09
Odisha	61693	7756910	335496	0.01	1065	1.73	0.65
Puducherry	735	244828	13202	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Punjab	27404	5988681	273092	0.05	2092	7.63	1.16
Rajasthan	107757	16786065	775745	2.01	7688	7.13	1.34
Sikkim	1254	121395	15489	0.08	34	2.71	0.23
Tamil Nadu	58722	12993050	550558	0.83	2758	4.70	0.62
Telangana	42901	7293644	341460	4.89	5985	13.95	1.21
Tripura	4923	689408	37661	0.20	311	6.32	1.00
Uttar Pradesh	255087	41662794	1538479	0.36	8866	3.48	1.47
Uttarakhand	22551	2372400	130741	0.20	3447	15.29	2.27
West Bengal	93945	18015525	576557	3.46	6366	6.78	1.38
India	1471891	248045828	9807600	0.88	110971	7.54	1.61

Table 15: Percentage of Trained and Professionally Qualified Teachers, 2023-24

%age Trained Teachers, 2023-24					Percentage of Professionally Qualified Teachers, 2023-24			
State/UT	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	96.9	94.5	95.3	95.7	95.9	92.0	92.8	93.2
Andhra Pradesh	97.0	93.5	91.1	83.3	96.0	92.7	90.6	71.5
Arunachal Pradesh	88.5	91.5	89.2	94.0	81.3	85.9	85.5	92.0
Assam	84.0	78.7	66.4	65.7	73.4	65.8	50.2	52.0
Bihar	89.5	87.1	93.3	90.9	86.4	83.5	91.3	87.7
Chandigarh	93.6	88.2	98.8	98.8	93.2	88.1	98.5	98.2
Chhattisgarh	91.9	93.7	87.4	89.2	86.2	89.9	83.6	85.8
D & N Haveli and D & Diu	94.2	95.3	96.5	94.8	91.8	92.6	94.3	92.5
Delhi	96.7	96.5	98.5	99.5	96.6	96.4	98.4	99.4
Goa	98.4	97.9	97.9	98.1	97.3	97.3	97.1	95.4
Gujarat	96.1	94.9	97.2	97.5	94.3	93.8	96.4	96.6
Haryana	92.2	91.9	95.3	96.1	89.8	89.9	93.7	94.7
Himachal Pradesh	96.7	95.0	96.3	97.0	95.5	93.9	95.0	95.1
Jammu & Kashmir	77.3	78.5	91.4	92.0	68.6	72.5	87.5	87.2
Jharkhand	90.4	91.4	95.4	93.5	85.6	86.8	93.5	90.3
Karnataka	97.2	97.0	89.5	92.0	95.5	95.5	88.3	82.2
Kerala	98.5	97.3	97.8	98.7	97.8	96.5	97.2	97.2
Ladakh	88.1	88.7	92.1	91.4	79.2	82.2	87.4	87.5
Lakshadweep	95.3	93.2	94.9	97.9	95.2	94.1	94.3	98.3
Madhya Pradesh	91.6	91.7	80.9	87.8	87.7	87.9	78.2	85.6
Maharashtra	96.9	95.5	97.8	97.9	95.5	94.2	96.7	96.3
Manipur	83.1	82.6	76.4	82.0	76.4	75.1	69.6	73.3
Meghalaya	69.8	79.3	65.6	62.5	62.4	73.7	56.9	51.3
Mizoram	87.4	91.2	82.0	82.2	84.0	88.8	76.3	77.6
Nagaland	74.9	76.3	71.6	79.1	66.8	68.2	63.5	72.7
Odisha	96.1	96.2	96.3	79.4	93.7	94.7	94.9	71.2
Puducherry	96.6	93.9	98.1	98.6	94.8	92.7	97.2	97.3
Punjab	92.4	91.5	97.3	97.2	88.9	88.6	95.4	94.9
Rajasthan	92.8	94.7	96.5	97.5	89.1	92.4	94.8	96.2
Sikkim	83.7	86.9	86.7	91.2	75.1	79.3	81.3	87.0
Tamil Nadu	99.4	98.8	00.0	00.0	99.4	98.8	00.0	00.0
Telangana	92.6	92.1	97.4	69.5	89.6	90.3	96.4	62.7
Tripura	74.6	91.9	84.3	92.5	65.4	88.2	81.3	89.5
Uttar Pradesh	88.0	88.3	88.9	88.4	83.3	84.0	84.9	83.9
Uttarakhand	91.2	93.6	96.8	97.2	86.3	90.5	95.6	95.9
West Bengal	88.5	94.9	97.2	97.7	85.7	93.2	96.3	97.1
India	91.7	92.0	92.9	92.2	88.2	89.0	90.7	89.0

Source: UDISEPlus Report 2023-24.

Single-Teacher Schools

States with a high percentage of single-teacher schools include Andhra Pradesh (20.55 percent), Himachal Pradesh (19.48 percent), and Jharkhand (18.78 percent). These figures raise concerns about educational quality, as single teachers often struggle to address the diverse needs of students across multiple grades. In contrast, states like Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry report no single-teacher schools, showcasing efficient resource allocation (Table 14).

Enrolment Impact in Single-Teacher Schools

Nationally, 1.61 percent of enrolments are in single-teacher schools, with states like Jharkhand (5.74 percent) and Meghalaya (4.89 percent) reporting higher enrolments. Such reliance on single-teacher schools undermines student learning and retention (Table 14).

Arunachal Pradesh: High percentages of zero-enrolment schools (6.88 percent) and single-teacher schools (17.71 percent) reflect logistical and demographic challenges in remote areas.

Himachal Pradesh: Despite being a smaller state, the high prevalence of single-teacher schools (19.48 percent) underscores the need for improved staffing policies.

Telangana and West Bengal: These states also report concerning percentages of single-teacher schools (13.95 percent and 6.78 percent, respectively), demanding focused interventions.

Addressing the challenges posed by zero-enrolment and single-teacher schools is essential for realizing the universal enrolment and quality education objectives outlined in NEP 2020. Resolving these issues requires a coordinated effort, combining state-specific initiatives with robust national-level support to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all. The prevalence of zero-enrolment and single-teacher schools undermines equitable access to quality education and contradicts the aspirations of NEP 2020. Tackling these challenges demands a comprehensive approach that includes enhanced teacher recruitment and deployment, rationalization of school infrastructure, and technology integration to expand educational access and improve outcomes.

Infrastructure Facilities

While there is a significant improvement in infrastructure facilities, such as electricity, drinking water, and toilets, there are still gaps, particularly in the availability of computers, internet, and facilities for children with special needs (CWSN). The NEP 2020 stresses the importance of digital education and the need for inclusive infrastructure, which remains underdeveloped, especially in remote areas.

The UDISEPlus 2023-24 data underscores the critical importance of digital infrastructure in schools for successfully implementing India's digital education initiatives (Tables 16 & 17). While some states have made remarkable progress, significant disparities persist, particularly in states like Meghalaya, Bihar, and Manipur. Addressing these gaps is essential to achieving the NEP 2020 equitable and inclusive education goals. A coordinated effort involving state and

national-level interventions, public-private partnerships, and innovative technology solutions can bridge the digital divide and empower schools to participate fully in India's digital transformation.

Table 16: Infrastructure Facilities

Facility	2022-23	2023-24
%age Schools having Electricity Connection	91.7	91.8
%age Schools having Computer Facility	47.7	57.2
%age Schools having internet Facility	49.7	53.9

Source: UDISEPlus Reports, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

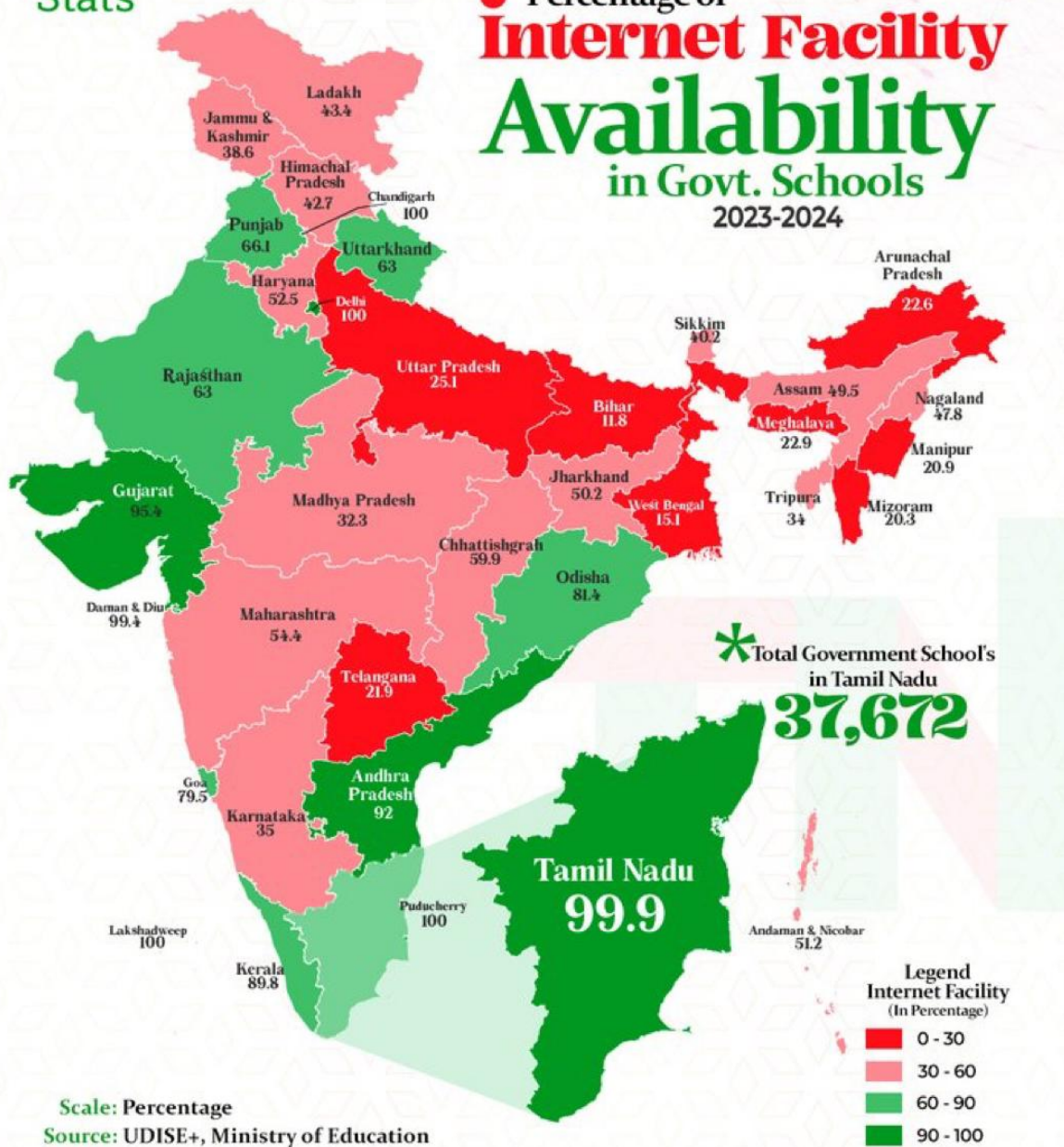
Challenges to Achieving Universal School Education by 2030

Based on the UDISEPlus data presented above, it is evident that achieving universal school education by 2030 is contingent upon addressing several systemic issues, including a few mentioned below. Based on the present status concerning enrolment ratio, dropout rate, transition and retention rates, and other indicators, especially at the secondary and higher secondary levels of education, it is sure that with the present rates, it is sure that it will not possible for India to attain the status of universal school education envisaged in NEP 2020.

- **Low Retention at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels:** High dropout rates remain a significant hurdle. Addressing this requires strengthening retention strategies, especially for marginalized communities, ensuring career counseling, scholarships, and improved infrastructure to keep students engaged. A thorough diagnosis exercise may help identify locations and target groups that need the immediate attention of planners.
- **Teacher Shortages and High PTR:** Teacher availability is critical, especially in secondary and higher secondary schools. The current PTR suggests that improving teacher recruitment and professional development and ensuring equitable distribution of teachers across regions should be prioritized; there is a need to improve the deployment process of teachers across states.
- **Disaggregated Data Analysis:** To effectively address issues of exclusion and inequality, a detailed analysis of disaggregated data at state, district, and block levels is essential; this should cover Gender, caste, minority status, and CWSN. Tailored interventions can then be designed based on the specific challenges different states and demographics face.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Despite improvements, gaps in digital and inclusive infrastructure remain. The NEP's vision for a digitally enabled education system requires focused investments in internet connectivity and digital tools in schools, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas.



Percentage of
Internet Facility
Availability
in Govt. Schools
2023-2024



Digital Infrastructure in Schools: Challenges and Progress in India (UDISEPlus 2023-24)

**Table 17: State-specific Percentage of Schools by Facilities,
UDISEPlus 2023-24**

India/State/ UT	Percentage of Schools with Electricity Connection	Percentage of Schools with Computer Facility	Percentage of Schools with Internet Facility Available
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	93.2	68.7	58
Andhra Pradesh	99.8	87.3	93.9
Arunachal Pradesh	68.8	42.6	30.5
Assam	87	67.9	45
Bihar	79.8	19.6	18.5
Chandigarh	100	100	99.6
Chhattisgarh	94.7	67.3	61.3
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	100	97	99.3
Delhi	100	100	100
Goa	100	56.2	87.6
Gujarat	99.9	98	93.9
Haryana	99.8	96.6	67.7
Himachal Pradesh	99.6	47.5	48.7
Jammu & Kashmir	91	41.4	45.3
Jharkhand	95.2	75.3	52.7
Karnataka	99	52.9	49.2
Kerala	99.9	99.4	92.1
Ladakh	79.5	53	45.7
Lakshadweep	100	100	100
Madhya Pradesh	89.8	49.3	43.3
Maharashtra	94.6	81.5	67.5
Manipur	67.6	33.5	32.3
Meghalaya	29.3	18.8	24.5
Mizoram	87.2	46.6	24.9
Nagaland	81	84.3	56.3
Odisha	96.5	59.4	82
Puducherry	100	100	100
Punjab	99.9	98.8	74
Rajasthan	91.4	51.6	68.3
Sikkim	98.8	91.9	46.8
Tamil Nadu	99	72.7	99
Telangana	95.2	77.9	39.9
Tripura	79.2	49.3	35.3
Uttar Pradesh	86.4	40.2	38.6
Uttarakhand	92.3	86.6	68.5
West Bengal	98	22.3	17.5
All-India	91.8	57.2	53.9

Importance of Thorough Data Analysis in Formulating Policies

For meaningful implementation of NEP 2020, it is essential that the UDISEPlus data, with its rich disaggregation by Gender, caste, and other social categories, is thoroughly analyzed when formulating the Annual Work Plan under the *Samagra Shiksha* initiative. Such detailed analysis helps to:

- **Identify Regional Disparities:** Closely examining data at district and block levels will highlight regions with critical gaps in enrolment, retention, infrastructure, and teacher availability.
- **Design Targeted Interventions:** Policies can be tailored for specific groups (e.g., SC, ST, minorities, CWSN) to ensure equitable access to education, focusing on removing barriers to participation and retention.
- **Monitor progress Effectively:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation using disaggregated data will ensure that strategies are adjusted in real time to address emerging challenges, helping to meet the 2030 goal.

Concluding Observations

The analysis based on the UDISEPlus 2023-24 data provides critical insights into the state of school education in India, reflecting progress and persisting challenges under the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Below are the key concluding observations:

Data Limitations & Fluctuations in Enrolment

The UDISEPlus data from 2020-21 to 2023-24 provides invaluable insights into school education trends; however, certain limitations and inconsistencies warrant careful consideration. The introduction of a new data collection methodology, SDMIS, in 2022-23 resulted in a significant decline in reported enrolments, with total enrolment dropping from 255.74 million in 2021-22 to 234.96 million in 2023-24 - a reduction of 8.12 percent. This fluctuation raises questions about potential over-reporting in earlier datasets and the comparability of data across years. Additionally, gaps in data collection, such as incomplete information on teacher qualifications and school-level resources, hinder a comprehensive understanding of systemic issues. The absence of granular, verified data on out-of-school children further limits the accuracy of estimates, making it challenging to address localized disparities effectively. These issues highlight the need for standardized methodologies and robust validation mechanisms to enhance the reliability and utility of educational statistics.

UDISE+ 2023-24: Insights and Perspectives by Prof. Arun C. Mehta

1. Progress Towards Universal Education Goals

- **Enrolment Trends:** While India has made commendable progress in expanding primary and upper primary enrolment, significant challenges remain at the secondary and higher secondary levels. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) drops sharply from 93 percent at the primary level to 56.2 percent at the higher secondary level, indicating a pressing need for targeted interventions.
- **Retention and Transition:** Retention rates are robust at the primary level (85.4 percent) but decline drastically to 45.6 percent at the higher secondary level. Transition rates also

show a consistent decline, particularly from secondary to higher secondary education, standing at 71.5 percent.

2. Disparities in Educational Access

- **Socio-Economic and Regional Inequalities:** Enrollment disparities persist, with states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu nearing universal access, while Bihar, Assam, and Jharkhand exhibit alarmingly low enrolment ratios and high dropout rates.
- **Marginalized Groups:** Enrolment rates for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Muslim minorities reflect systemic inequities, particularly at higher levels of education. For example, GER for ST students drops from 98.3 percent at the primary level to 48.7 percent at the higher secondary level.

3. Teacher Deployment and Infrastructure

- Despite a comfortable pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) at the primary and upper primary levels, inefficiencies in teacher deployment persist, with over 110,000 single-teacher schools and 31,981 schools reporting zero enrolments.
- Infrastructure gaps in underperforming regions hinder access and quality, emphasizing the need for region-specific resource allocation.

4. Dropout Challenges

- Dropout rates remain critical at the secondary level (14.1 percent) and higher secondary levels, undermining NEP 2020's goal of reducing attrition across all stages of education. Economic pressures, cultural norms, and inadequate facilities contribute to these trends.

5. Out-of-School Children (OoSCs)

- The issue demands urgent attention, with 47.44 million children aged 6-17 remaining out of school in 2023-24. The highest dropout rates are observed in the 14-17 age group, corresponding to secondary and higher secondary levels.

6. Policy and Intervention Recommendations

- **Strengthening Targeted Programs:** Enhance financial support mechanisms, such as scholarships, to reduce economic barriers, especially for marginalized communities.
- **Teacher Training:** Address the 12 percent of unqualified teachers and reduce dependency on contractual staff to ensure quality teaching.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Leverage disaggregated UDISEPlus data for localized strategies under the Samagra Shiksha framework.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster awareness and involvement of local communities to address cultural barriers and promote retention.

- **Special Focus on Underperforming States:** States like Bihar, Assam, and Jharkhand require tailored interventions to improve transition and retention rates, reduce dropout rates, and expand access.

7. Alignment with NEP 2020 Goals

- Achieving universal school education by 2030, as envisioned in NEP 2020, necessitates bridging current disparities, addressing systemic inefficiencies, and ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality education. Strategic investments, robust monitoring, and a sustained commitment to policy goals are imperative for success.

The data highlights the pressing necessity for coordinated action across all levels of governance, supported by active community engagement and innovative strategies, to achieve the goal of inclusive & equitable education for all children in India by 2030. Based on current levels of children's participation in various educational programs during the 2023-24 period, it is evident that India is unlikely to meet the objective of universal school education by 2030 without substantial, focused efforts. Identifying key issues and target groups that require particular attention is critical. These areas of concern should be addressed through issue-specific initiatives, which can facilitate the development of annual plans under the ongoing Samagra Shiksha initiative.

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