

ASER 2024 National findings

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 is a nationwide rural household survey that reached 649,491 children in 17,997 villages across 605 rural districts in India. Facilitated by Pratham, in each surveyed district, a local organisation or institution conducted the survey.

Key findings of the ASER 2024 survey are presented separately below for three groups of children: Pre-primary (age group 3-5), elementary (age group 6-14), and older children (age group 15-16).

Pre-primary (age group 3-5 years)

Enrollment in pre-primary institutions

Major shifts are seen in levels and patterns of enrollment among children in the pre-primary age group.

- Among children aged 3-5 years, enrollment in some type of pre-primary institution (Anganwadi centre, government pre-primary class, or private LKG/UKG) has improved steadily between 2018 and 2024.
- Among 3-year-olds, enrollment in pre-primary institutions increased from 68.1% in 2018 to 75.8% in 2022 to 77.4% in 2024. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Telangana have achieved near-universal enrollment for this age group. On the other hand, Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh have the highest proportion of 3-year-olds not enrolled anywhere (over 50%).
- Among 4-year-olds, the All-India figure for enrollment in pre-primary institutions increased from 76% in 2018 to 82% in 2022 to 83.4% in 2024. In 2024, enrollment rates in pre-primary for this age exceed 95% in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha.
- Among 5-year-olds, this figure also showed big increases, rising from 58.4% in 2018 to 62.1% in 2022 to 71.4% in 2024. The states with enrollment exceeding 90% in pre-primary institutions for this age include Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, and Nagaland.

Type of pre-primary institution

- Anganwadi centres continue to be the biggest provider of services in pre-primary age group in India. Since 2018, more than half of all children aged 3 and 4 are enrolled in Anganwadi centres. In Odisha, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Karnataka, more than 75% children are enrolled in Anganwadi centres in both these age groups.
- Approximately one-third of all 5-year-olds attend a private school or pre-school in 2024. This figure was 37.3% in 2018, fell to 30.8% in 2022, and returned to 37.5% in 2024. Going against this trend are Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, where enrollment in government institutions has increased substantially since 2018 (11.3 percentage points in Punjab and 7.5 percentage points in Jammu and Kashmir). In both these states, this trend is driven by an increase in enrollment in pre-primary classes in government schools.

Age of entry to Std I

- The proportion of children who are “underage” (age 5 or below) is decreasing over time. In 2018, this figure was 25.6%, in 2022 it stood at 22.7%, and in 2024, nationally the percentage of underage children in Std I was at its lowest ever at 16.7%. On average, this proportion has either declined or remained stable across all states in India. In Gujarat, the decrease was particularly striking, with the figure dropping from 36.4% in 2022 to less than 4% in 2024.

Elementary (age group 6-14 years)

Enrollment

- **Children (age 6-14 years) currently enrolled in school:** Overall school enrollment rates among the 6-14 age group have exceeded 95% for close to 20 years. This proportion has stayed almost the same, from 98.4% in 2022 to 98.1% in 2024. Across all states, enrollment in this age group is above 95% in 2024.

- **Government school enrollment:** In 2018, 65.6% of children in the 6-14 age group in India were enrolled in government schools. The pandemic saw large increases in government school enrollments (72.9% in 2022). But by 2024, the all-India figure declined to 66.8%. This trend is visible in every state with the exception of Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir.

Reading

The ASER reading task assesses whether a child can read letters, words, a simple paragraph at Std I level of difficulty, or a “story” at Std II level of difficulty. In the sampled household, these tasks are administered one-on-one to each sampled child in the 5-16 age group. The child is marked at the highest level that she or he can reach comfortably. The assessment method has remained the same since 2006, enabling comparisons over time.

All-India figures indicate that reading levels have improved for children in government schools in all elementary grades (Std I-VIII) since 2022.

- **Std III:** Nationally, in 2024, basic reading levels for Std III children enrolled in government schools are the highest that they have been since the inception of the ASER survey. The percentage of Std III children able to at least read Std II level text was 20.9% in 2018. This figure fell to 16.3% in 2022, and has increased to 23.4% in 2024. The improvement in government schools is higher than the corresponding recovery for private schools. Following a decline in Std III reading levels in government schools in most states in 2022, all states have shown a recovery in 2024. States with more than a 10 percentage point increase in this proportion between 2022 and 2024 in government schools include Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, and Maharashtra.
- **Std V:** Reading levels improved substantially among Std V children, especially for those who are enrolled in government schools. The proportion of Std V children in government schools who can read a Std II level text fell from 44.2% in 2018 to 38.5% in 2022 and then recovered to 44.8% in 2024. Small improvements are also seen in reading levels for Std V children in private schools, which fell from 65.1% in 2018 to 56.8% in 2022 and increased to 59.3% in 2024. In 2024, Mizoram (65.9%), Punjab (66%) and Himachal Pradesh (70.1%) had the highest proportions of Std V children in government schools able to read Std II level text. States with over a 10 percentage point increase in this proportion in government schools include Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Std VIII:** Reading levels increased among children enrolled in Std VIII in government schools, which fell from 69% in 2018 to 66.2% in 2022 but then rose to 67.5% in 2024. The performance of private school students remains unchanged between 2022 and 2024. State-level performance varies widely. Government schools in states such as Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Sikkim show notable improvements. However, declines are observed in states like Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Arithmetic

The ASER arithmetic tasks assess whether a child can recognise numbers from 1 to 9, recognise numbers from 11 to 99, do a 2-digit numerical subtraction problem with borrowing, or correctly solve a numerical division problem (3-digit by 1-digit). In the sampled household, these tasks are administered one-on-one to each sampled child in the 5-16 age group. The child is marked at the highest level that she or he can reach comfortably. The assessment method has remained the same since 2006, enabling comparisons over time.

Nationally, children’s basic arithmetic levels also show substantial improvement in both government and private schools, reaching the highest level in over a decade.

- **Std III:** The All-India figure for children in Std III who are able to at least do a numerical subtraction problem was 28.2% in 2018 and 25.9% in 2022. This figure has increased to 33.7% in 2024. Among government school students, this figure went from 20.9% in 2018 to 20.2% in 2022, increasing to 27.6% in 2024. For private school students, this number showed a smaller improvement since 2022. Government schools across most states have shown gains since 2022, with over 15 percentage point increases recorded in states like Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh.
- **Std V:** At the all-India level, the proportion of children in Std V who can at least do a numerical division problem has also improved. This figure was 27.9% in 2018, 25.6% in 2022 and then rose to 30.7% in 2024. This change is also driven mainly by government schools. States with the showing most improvement (more than 10 percentage points) in government schools include Punjab and Uttarakhand.

- **Std VIII:** The performance of Std VIII students in basic arithmetic remains similar to earlier levels, going from 44.1% in 2018 to 44.7% in 2022 to 45.8% in 2024.

Older children (age group 15-16 years)

Enrollment

- The proportion of 15-16-year-old children who are not enrolled in school dropped sharply from 13.1% in 2018 to 7.5% in 2022, but stayed about the same at 7.9% in 2024 at the all-India level.
- The proportion of girls not enrolled has increased slightly from 7.9% in 2022 to 8.1% in 2024. While several states have seen a decline in the proportion of girls who are not enrolled, this proportion remains higher than 10% in a few states. These include Madhya Pradesh (16.1%), Uttar Pradesh (15%), Rajasthan (12.7%), Mizoram (12.2%), Gujarat (10.5%), and Chhattisgarh (10%).

Digital literacy

For the first time in the nationwide household survey, ASER included a section on digital literacy which was administered to older children in the 14-16 age group. It included self-reported questions on access, ownership, and use of smartphones, as well as a one-on-one assessment of some basic digital skills.

- **Access:** Access to smartphones is close to universal among the 14-16 age group. Almost 90% of both girls and boys report having a smartphone at home. More than 80% report knowing how to use a smartphone (85.5% of boys as compared to 79.4% of girls). In Bihar, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, the proportion of those who have a smartphone at home and those who can use a smartphone are lower as compared to other states.
- **Ownership:** The fraction of 14-16-year-olds who own smartphones is low, but increases with age. Of the children who could use a smartphone, 27% of 14-year-olds and 37.8% of 16-year-olds reported having their own phone. Moreover, there is a large gender gap in smartphone ownership: 36.2% of boys as compared to 26.9% of girls reported owning their own smartphone. This gender gap is seen across all states.
- **Use:** 82.2% of all children in the 14-16 age group reported knowing how to use a smartphone. Of these, 57% reported using it for an educational activity in the preceding week while 76% said that they had used it for social media during the same period. While the use of a smartphone for educational activities was similar among girls and boys, girls were less likely than boys to report using social media (78.8% of boys as compared to 73.4% of girls). Kerala stands out in this respect, with over 80% children who reported that they used the smartphone for educational activity and over 90% using it for social media.
- **Digital safety:** Among children who used social media, knowledge of basic ways to protect themselves online was relatively high. 62% knew how to block or report a profile, 55.2% knew how to make a profile private, and 57.7% knew how to change a password. Boys' awareness of these safety features was substantially higher than girls' across a majority of the states.
- **Digital skills:** On the day of the survey, 70.2% boys and 62.2% girls were able to bring a smartphone (their own, a family member's, or a neighbour's) to do the digital tasks. These children were asked to do 3 tasks using the smartphone: set an alarm, browse for a specific piece of information, and locate a YouTube video. If they were able to locate the video, they were asked to share it with someone else via any messaging platform.
 - More than three-quarters of children to whom these tasks were given were able to perform them successfully. Among those who could locate the video on YouTube, over 90% were able to share it.
 - Gender gaps were observed in performance on every task, with the largest gap in childrens' ability to set an alarm on the smartphone (81.5% boys as compared to 72.4% girls). In some southern states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, girls either outperform boys or are at the same level as them.

School observations

As part of the ASER survey, one government school with primary sections is visited in each sampled village. If there is more than one government school in the village, then the school with the highest enrollment in primary sections is chosen.

In 2024, ASER surveyors visited 15,728 government schools with primary sections. 8,504 were primary schools and 7,224 were schools which also had upper primary or higher grades.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) activities

- Over 80% of schools had received a directive from the government to implement FLN activities with Std I-II/III, both in the previous as well as in the current academic year. A similar proportion had at least one teacher who had received in-person training on FLN.
- More than 75% schools had received TLM and/or funds to make or purchase TLM for FLN activities.
- More than 75% schools reported implementing a school readiness program for students prior to entering Std I, in both the previous and the current academic year.
- More than 95% schools reported having distributed textbooks to all grades in the school, a substantial increase over 2022 levels.

Student and teacher attendance

- Student and teacher attendance in government primary schools show small but consistent improvements since 2018. Average student attendance increased from 72.4% in 2018 to 73% in 2022 to 75.9% in 2024. Average teacher attendance increased from 85.1% in 2018 to 86.8% in 2022 to 87.5% in 2024. This trend is largely driven by changes in teacher and student attendance in Uttar Pradesh.

Small schools and multigrade classrooms

- The proportion of government primary schools with less than 60 students enrolled shows a sharp increase, rising from 44% in 2022 to 52.1% in 2024. More than 80% primary schools in these states are small schools: Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nagaland, and Karnataka. Himachal Pradesh has the highest proportion of small Upper primary schools at 75%.
- Two-thirds of Std I and Std II classrooms in primary schools were multigrade, with students from more than one grade sitting together.

School facilities

- Nationally, all Right to Education-related indicators included in ASER have shown small improvements between 2018, 2022, and 2024 levels. For example, the fraction of schools with useable girls' toilets increased from 66.4% in 2018 to 68.4% in 2022 to 72% in 2024. The proportion of schools with drinking water available increased from 74.8% to 76.1% to 77.7%, and the proportion of schools with books other than textbooks being used by students increased from 36.9% to 43.9% to 51.3% over the same period. These improvement in school infrastructure can be seen across all states, but schools in Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland continue to lag behind in these facilities.
- Sports-related indicators remain at close to the levels observed in 2018. For example, in 2024, 66.2% schools have a playground, similar to 68.9% in 2022 and 66.5% in 2018.