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The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 was released this morning in New Delhi, by co-founders of Pratham Dr. Madhav Chavan and Ms. Farida Lambay. This is the fourteenth 'basic' ASER report.

The 'basic' ASER survey generates district, state and national level estimates of the enrollment status of 3 to 16-year-old children, and basic reading and arithmetic skills of 5 to 16-year-old children. Additionally, in ASER 2024, older children aged 14 to 16 were asked questions about their digital access and usage and were administered a set of smartphone-based tasks to gauge their digital abilities.

ASER 2024 reached 649,491 children in 17,997 villages across 605 rural districts in India. Facilitated by Pratham, in each surveyed district, a local organization 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).

ASER 2024: Highlights from the household survey

Pre-primary (age 3-5 years):

- NEP 2020 recommends universal provision of early childhood education. ASER 2024 data shows that enrollment in ECE centres/preschool is high and rising. In 2024, more than 80% of children age 3-4 in rural India are enrolled in some type of pre-primary institution (including ICDS centres).
- The proportion of "under-age" (age 5 and below) children entering Std I is declining. Nationally the percentage of underage children in Std I was at its lowest ever, at 16.7% in 2024.

Elementary (age 6-14 years)

- Overall school enrollment rates of children in the age group 6-14 remains high and stable at around 98% since 2022.
- Both reading and arithmetic levels have improved for children in all grades in most states. This increase is largely due to learning gains of children enrolled in government schools. Children enrolled in the early grades in school (Std I-III) show significant increases as compared to data from ASER 2022.

Older children (age 15-16 years)

- The proportion of older children (age 15-16) not enrolled in school has been decreasing steadily in recent years. Today approximately 7% of this age group (both boys and girls) are currently not enrolled in school.
- Nationally, more than 90% of rural adolescents (age 15-16) have access to a smart phone. About 70% adolescents in this age group could do basic digital tasks like setting an alarm, find information on the net and locate specific on-line content and share with others

ASER 2024: Highlights from the school observations:¹

In 2024, ASER surveyors also visited 15,728 government schools with primary sections.

- Provision of basic school facilities like mid-day meals, toilets, drinking water and libraries has been improving year on year.
- Rollout of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) programs and activities under NIPUN Bharat program has reached the majority of schools visited.

More details on key findings of ASER 2024 are available in the following pages and also in the ASER 2024 report.

¹As 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.

ASER 2024: Key findings

Data from the household survey

Pre-primary (age 3-5 years):

Enrollment in ECE centres/preschool is high and rising (age 3-5).

Proportion of “under-age” (age 5 and below) children entering Std I is declining.

- **Enrollment:** Enrollment of young children aged 3-4 years has increased steadily since 2018. In 2024, more than 80% children in this age group are enrolled in some form of pre-primary institution.
- **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%.

Elementary (age 6-14 years)

Overall enrollment rates of children in the elementary school age group have remained stable since 2022. Improvement is seen in both reading and arithmetic levels for all elementary grades, driven by learning gains of children enrolled in government schools.

Enrollment

- **Children (age 6-14 years) currently enrolled in school:** This proportion has exceeded 95% for close to 20 years. It crossed 98% in 2022 and has stabilized since then, standing at 98.1% in 2024.
- **Government school enrollment:** The pandemic saw large increases in government school enrollments (72.9% in 2022). But in 2024, the all-India figure government school enrollment stands at 66.8%, close to pre-pandemic levels.

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 in 2005. 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. This improvement is higher than the corresponding “learning recovery” for children enrolled in private schools.
- **Std V:** Reading levels recovered to pre-pandemic levels 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.
- **Std VIII:** All India figures show that reading levels increased among children enrolled in Std VIII in government schools. This proportion was 66.2% in 2022, and stands at 67.5% in 2024.

Arithmetic

The ASER arithmetic tasks assess whether a child can recognize numbers from 1 to 9, recognize numbers from 11 to 99, do a numerical subtraction problem (2 digit 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 2007, enabling comparisons over time.

Nationally, children’s basic arithmetic levels 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% (2018), fell to 25.9% (2022) and has increased to 33.7% (2024). Among government school students, this figure increased from 20.9% (2018) to 27.6% (2024). Students enrolled in private school showed smaller improvement since 2022.
- **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 learning gains among government school students.
- **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 15-16 years)

The proportion of older children not enrolled in school has been decreasing steadily in recent years.

Older children's access to and ability to use smartphone technology is substantial, but differences are visible by both age and gender.

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.

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, and more than 80% report knowing how to use a smartphone (85.5% of boys as compared to 79.4% of girls). However, 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.
- **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. 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'.
- **Digital skills:** On the day of the survey, 70.2% boys and 62.2% girls were able to bring a smartphone (their own/from a family member or friend) to use for doing 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 each of these tasks successfully. Among those who could locate the video on YouTube, over 90% were able to share it.
 - Age and gender gaps were observed in performance on every task. Older children did better and boys were more adept relative to girls.

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 upper primary schools or those with higher grades, but had primary sections.

Rollout of activities related to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) is visible across the country. Provision of basic school facilities continues to improve.

- 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 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.
- Nationally, all Right to Education-related indicators included in ASER have shown small improvements between 2018, 2022, and 2024. This includes the fraction of schools with useable girls' toilets, drinking water available, and the proportion of schools with books other than textbooks being used by students among other indicators.

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