

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF STATES IN ACHIEVING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

Prasad R

Assistant Professor

Department of Economics, Government First Grade College for Women, Chamarajanagara

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### ABSTRACT

Inclusive education represents a cornerstone of India's commitment to equitable and universal elementary education. The Indian Constitution, through Article 21-A and various policy frameworks, upholds education as a fundamental right for all children, regardless of gender, caste, socio-economic status, or ability. This study analyzes the performance of Indian states in realizing inclusive education outcomes at the elementary level between 2020–21 and 2024–25. Using secondary data from UDISE+, NSS, and official government reports, the study evaluates Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), retention and dropout rates, and the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups and children with special needs (CWSN). Findings reveal that India has made commendable progress toward universal access and gender parity, yet considerable inter-state disparities persist—particularly in regions with weaker governance capacity and inadequate infrastructure. The results underscore the need for strengthened implementation of inclusive practices, improved teacher training, and targeted investments to address regional inequities. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for promoting equitable and sustainable inclusion in elementary education.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, elementary education, gender parity, gross enrolment ratio, dropout rate, CWSN, social inclusion, India

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of human development and a critical driver of social transformation, economic progress, and political empowerment. The framers of the Indian Constitution recognized education as a key instrument for promoting equality and social justice. Several provisions in the Constitution explicitly and implicitly underscore the importance of education as a fundamental right and a means of empowerment. Also, Article 45 of the Directive Principles originally directed the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen. A historic milestone in India's educational journey came with the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, which inserted Article 21-A into the Constitution. This article explicitly guarantees the Right to Education as a fundamental right for all children between 6 and 14 years of age. This amendment legally mandated the State to provide free and compulsory elementary education to every child in this age group.

In a nation as diverse as India, access to educational opportunity is decided by various factors such as social, economic, linguistic, and cultural and others. Therefore, the pursuit of inclusive education becomes not merely a policy goal but a constitutional and moral imperative. Inclusive education is a transformative approach that seeks to integrate all children into regular education settings. It promotes social justice and enhances the quality of education for all students. It also fosters a culture of acceptance, reduces discrimination, and prepares students to live in a diverse society. For children with disabilities, inclusive education provides opportunities for social interaction, skill development, and academic achievement.

Inclusive education aims to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, caste, economic background, or ability, has equal access to quality education. Moreover, at the elementary level, achieving inclusion is critical for national development, social justice, and sustainable progress. Inclusive elementary education in India stands at the intersection of constitutional rights, national development priorities, and global sustainability commitments. The journey from Article 45's moral directive to Article 21-A's legal entitlement, from the early efforts of Operation Blackboard to the holistic framework of NEP 2020, reflects India's persistent commitment to universalizing education with equity. However, achieving the vision of Education for All demands not just access but meaningful inclusion. The present study attempted to evaluate how effectively Indian states have worked toward creating an inclusive and equitable elementary education system. The analysis considers not only enrollment and retention rates, gender parity, participation of children from marginalized communities, and the inclusion of children with special needs..

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on inclusive elementary education in India spans policy analyses, programme evaluations, empirical studies of learning outcomes, and thematic studies on gender, caste, disability and language.

Early post-independence scholarship emphasized the expansion of physical infrastructure and universal access but warned about persistent inequalities. Foundational reviews by Tilak (1994) and Kingdon (1996) documented the chronic underfunding and regional disparities in primary education that structured later policy responses.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP, 1994) introduced decentralised, district-level planning and generated a stream of evaluative studies. The DPEP evaluations (including World Bank-supported reviews) credited the programme for innovations in local planning and for improvements in enrolment and gender parity in targeted districts, while also pointing to implementation heterogeneity across states (World Bank, 2004; Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2010).

SSA, launched in 2001, is the most intensively studied national programme. Evaluations and peer-reviewed studies show that SSA contributed significantly to school infrastructure expansion, teacher recruitment, and increased enrolment—especially among girls and disadvantaged communities (Aggarwal, 2008; Mehrotra, 2012).

Studies by Jha and Parvati (2010) and Govinda (2009) highlight persistent issues: teacher absenteeism, inadequate pedagogical practices, and uneven coverage of remedial education for out-of-school children. State-level research uncovers large inter-state differences: while states such as Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu achieved high coverage and better outcomes, several large states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh) lagged due to governance and capacity constraints (Kingdon, 2010). Kumar, 2010; Raina, 2012 have argued that the RTE's statutory provisions—minimum infrastructure norms, pupil–teacher ratios, and the 25% reservation in private schools—represent a significant advancement in the rights-based approach.

Government reports claim improved compliance with infrastructure norms, but independent evaluations indicate gaps in the enforcement of RTE provisions, difficulties in implementing the 25% quota, and continuing disparities in teacher quality and learning outcomes (NUEPA, 2016; Srivastava, 2013).

Recent policy literature examines the integration of schemes under Samagra Shiksha (2018) and the priorities set by NEP 2020, especially the focus on foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), early childhood care and education, and teacher professional development. Authors such as Bordia (2019)

and NITI Aayog (2021) discuss how integration aims to reduce fragmentation and promote a continuum of school education. Research on FLN (Banerjee et al., 2021; NIPUN Bharat evaluations) highlights the urgency of addressing “learning poverty” where large shares of children do not acquire basic reading and arithmetic skills in early grades.

Singal (2006) and Alur & Timmons (2009) show that without systematic teacher training and curriculum flexibility, inclusion remains nominal. NCERT and state-level studies find that while enrolment of children with disabilities in regular schools has increased, learning support, reasonable accommodations, and accessible infrastructure remain inadequate in many states. Treating disability as a single, homogenous category; intersectionality with caste, gender and poverty produces distinct exclusionary experiences (Sharma & Deppeler, 2018).

Drèze & Sen (2013) and Jha & Jhingran (2005) reveal that while female enrolment has improved dramatically, socio-cultural constraints (early marriage, domestic workloads, safety concerns) persist in many regions. Caste-based discrimination and inequitable treatment in classrooms are documented by Thorat & Newman (2010) and Desai & Dubey (2012), who show that Dalit and Adivasi children often face both overt and subtle exclusionary practices that undermine learning and retention. Language and curriculum mismatch further marginalize tribal and linguistic minority children (Kumar, 2018).

### **Research Gap**

Despite significant strides made toward inclusive education in India, several research gaps persist in the existing literature, are most studies address national trends without adequately comparing inter-state disparities in achieving inclusivity at the elementary level. These research gaps highlight the need for a comprehensive, data-based, and comparative analysis of the performance of Indian states in achieving inclusive education at the elementary level.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the performance of Indian states in achieving inclusive education at the elementary level.
2. To analyze the GER, dropout, Gender Parity Index, enrollment of SC and ST students and CWSN patterns.
3. To assess interstate disparities in inclusive education outcomes.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

H1: There exists a significant inter-state variation in achieving inclusive education outcomes at the elementary level in India.

### **Research Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive and analytical research design. The study uses secondary data from government databases, supplemented by policy reviews and academic literature. Cross-sectional and time-series analyses are undertaken to compare inter-state variations and progress over time. The study relies primarily on secondary data from reliable national and international sources, including: Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), National Sample Survey (NSS), Census of India (2011 and updates), Reports from the Ministry of Education (GoI), and Sustainable Development Goals India Index by NITI Aayoga. Finally, the quantitative data will be analyzed using

descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models to determine the strength of relationships between inclusive education indicators and socio-economic variables.

### Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in India

GER refers to total enrolment at a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to that level of education in a given academic year. It shows the general level of participation at a given level of education. It also indicates the capacity of the education system to enroll students of a particular age group. GER is used as a complementary indicator to the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) by indicating the extent of over-aged and under-aged enrolment in the education system.

GER can be calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled at a given level of education, regardless of age, by the population of the age group corresponding to the given level of education, and multiplying by 100. A high GER generally indicates a high degree of participation, whether pupils belong to the official age group or not. A GER value approaching or exceeding 100% means that a country can accommodate all of its school-age population, but it does not indicate the proportion already enrolled. The achievement of a GER of 100% is therefore a necessary but not sufficient condition for enrolling all eligible children in school. The negative feature of GER is that it can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged and under-aged students because of early or late entrants, and grade repetition

Table 1 shows state-wise Gross Enrolment Ratio in India during the 2020-21 to 2024-25 period. The calculated average GER has decreased throughout the reference period it decreases from 107 to 100. The CV represents the interstate variation of the states in terms of the achievement of GER. The CV of GER fluctuates with a decreasing trend, and it has hovered between 23.52 to 14%. After 2020-21, the disparity among the states decreased. It indicates that the regional disparity among the states is decreasing, but it should be achieved at a faster rate.

At the all-India level, the GER has continuously increased, increasing from 108% in 2020-21 to 96% in 2024-25. States and UTs such as Chandigarh, Andaman and Nicobar, Uttaranchal and Goa have shown an increasing trend during the period. On the other hand, states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Odisha reported a substantial increase during the concerned period.

**Table 1:**

States and Uts	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
A & N	-	69.2	92	89.5	87.9
AP	105.5	100.1	100.8	98.6	95.4
Arunachal Pra.	-	109.9	103.1	104.2	102.3
Assam	131.5	109.8	106.2	103.5	101.5
Bihar	110.7	96.2	85.7	77.7	74
Chandigarh	31.8	88.5	114.2	108.4	103.9
Chhattisgarh	102.9	95.9	91.2	89.7	90
Dadar N & H	121.8	89.8	110	107.7	109.9
Delhi	63.1	121.3	111.2	108	107.7
Goa	63.6	91.1	119.7	119.3	117.1
Gujarat	88.8	92.4	95.9	84.8	84.6
Haryana	101.7	103.2	98.4	94.7	95.7
HimachalPradesh	100.6	106	104.9	105.2	101
JammuandKashmi r	104.6	90.1	92	97.7	97.4

Jharkhand	103.4	97	90.6	89	88.8
Karnataka	103.2	107.1	108.6	106.1	103.8
Kerala	97.2	101	98.1	97.4	95.4
Ladakh	173.2	74.3	101.5	100.1	98.5
Lakshadweep	-	73.2	92.3	91.7	93.4
MP	94.3	88.7	81.8	80.2	78.3
Maharashtra	105.4	104.3	99.9	101.3	101.4
Manipur	141.6	117.6	114.9	117.7	120.4
Meghalaya	118.1	155.7	149.1	153	154.3
Mizoram	113.01	137.5	130.3	136.4	124.3
Nagaland	-	87.3	83.6	84.7	85.2
Odisha	101.4	95.4	95.6	96.1	94.1
Puducherry	88.4	77	101.3	98.7	95.2
Punjab	108.8	109.6	106.5	105.6	104
Rajasthan	108.4	101.8	99.4	93.6	89.7
Sikkim	150.2	92.9	90.5	89.5	87.9
TamilNadu	102.6	98.8	97.6	98.4	93.9
Telangana	113.3	110.2	108.9	111	113.1
Tripura	121.8	109.1	109	111.1	110.2
Uttar Pradesh	117.1	98.1	82.2	81.4	83.4
Uttarakhand	111.1	113.2	109.3	109.9	107.6
WestBengal	120.5	108.5	103.5	106.7	104.5
India	108.6	100.1	93.9	91.7	90.6
<b>Average</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CV</b>	<b>23.52</b>	<b>16.66</b>	<b>13.08</b>	<b>14.71</b>	<b>14.68</b>

**GER of States during 2020-21 to 2024-25**

Source: Compiled from Various reports of Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+)

**GER of SC and ST students in Elementary Education in India**

Education is the single effective tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education, an essential goal in its own right, is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. Table 2 shows the gross enrollment ratio of SC and ST students during the 2020-21 to 2024-25 period.

**Table: 2: GER of SC and ST students in Elementary Education during 2020-21 to 2024-25**

States and Uts	SC					ST				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
A & N	-	-	-	-	-	98.1	92.5	145.8	94.3	93.7
AP	105.5	106.4	106.7	104.7	102.8	109.7	109.7	114.1	116.8	119
Arunachal Pra.	-	-	-	-	-	107.1	107.1	99.9	101.2	103.1
Assam	131.5	131.8	105.2	107.3	107.8	117.8	116.8	117.9	113.5	116.6
Bihar	110.7	117	100.6	90.7	83.9	176.9	193.3	124.3	114.6	112.4
Chandigarh	31.8	30.7	37.6	26.3	24.2	-	-	-	-	-
Chhattisgarh	102.9	105.2	97.6	96.1	96.6	92.1	93	89	87.7	91.5
Dadar N & H	121.8	102.3	119.9	90.7	99.9	73.9	73.3	87.5	67.6	69.9
Delhi	63.1	65.6	56.7	58.9	58.4	-	-	-	-	-

Goa	63.6	64.4	115.8	86.5	92	67.2	67.4	92.7	66.6	68.2
Gujarat	88.8	89.3	91.2	79.5	77.9	95.6	95.7	97.4	86.4	89.1
Haryana	101.7	104.4	94.5	88.6	87.3	-	-	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	100.6	103	100.4	99.6	93.9	98.9	101.8	100.2	99.6	100.3
Jammuand Kashmir	104.6	110.2	112	117.1	114.5	95.1	104.5	108.2	116.3	130.1
Jharkhand	103.4	104.9	92.6	90	87.9	97.5	98.8	94.3	93.9	97.4
Karnataka	103.2	104.4	104.9	101.1	97.7	104.6	106.5	107.2	105.2	107.5
Kerala	97.2	98	96.5	94.6	92.7	95.1	95.1	91.2	91.5	93.2
Ladakh	173.2	223.6	505	460.8	455.6	77	75.5	100.3	68.7	71
Lakshadweep	-	-	-	-	-	70.9	74	92.2	67.9	71.6
MP	94.3	93.5	86.7	84.8	82.1	90.8	88.1	83.6	82	82.1
Maharashtra	105.4	107.1	100.8	101.2	99.9	103	105	100	101.2	105.2
Manipur	141.6	143.9	157.7	152	150.8	104.3	103.6	98.3	102.7	107.7
Meghalaya	418.1	390.4	717.3	580	165.6	155.5	159.6	152.3	157	164.7
Mizoram	1130.1	1374.7	1527.4	141.20	108	132.2	141.1	131.2	139	131.8
Nagaland	-	-	-	-	-	81.8	83.6	78.9	80	83.5
Odisha	101.4	100.4	100.8	100.8	98.6	98.3	97.6	97.1	98	98.7
Puducherry	88.4	78.6	99.3	68.1	68.4	-	-	-	-	-
Punjab	108.8	110.6	107.3	105.2	101.8	-	-	-	-	-
Rajasthan	108.4	108.6	106	99.3	94.4	105.6	106.4	103.4	97.9	96.1
Sikkim	150.2	152.3	164.8	155.8	147.1	92.7	92.2	91.2	88.6	89.6
TamilNadu	102.6	103.2	101.1	100.8	97.2	110.6	111.7	110.6	113.1	115.4
Telangana	113.3	116.5	114.8	112.1	111.3	102	104.2	100.2	97.5	99.7
Tripura	121.8	123.3	119.6	120.9	118.1	105.7	106.6	107.7	109.6	113.8
Uttar Pradesh	117.1	117	94.1	90.4	91	156.2	180.4	134.2	129.6	133
Uttarakhand	111.1	114.2	106.3	105.5	101	100.1	104.2	89.1	85.2	86.3
WestBengal	120.5	119	116.1	119.5	115.8	111.7	107	483.2	108.1	108.3
India	108.6	109.7	99.6	96.3	94	102.7	103.4	102.3	97.1	99
average	148.0	156.7	179.9	125.9	110.1	104.1	106.3	116.9	99.4	101.6
min	31.8	30.7	37.6	26.3	24.2	67.2	67.4	78.9	66.6	68.2
max	1130.1	1374.7	1527.4	580	455.6	176.9	193.3	483.2	157	164.7
Std. ev	189.15	229.84	277.88	107.38	68.03	23.97	28.10	70.20	20.56	21.06
CV	127.78	146.67	154.45	85.26	61.77	23.02	26.42	60.06	20.69	20.72

Source: Compiled from Various reports of Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+)

### Dropout Rates in India

For many decades dropout rate has been a major problem in elementary education in India. It is also an important output indicator to compare the performance of an education system. Drop-out rates are estimated as the percentage of pupils who drop out from a given grade or cycle, or level of education, in a school year before completing a certain level. All states in India have taken serious steps to reduce the dropout rate in recent decades. Moreover, under SSA, the state governments have adopted effective and comprehensive and continuous methods to curb the dropout rate.

The ability of a state to minimize the number of dropouts is an indication of its good performance. It may be noted that after the introduction of SSA, the dropout rates have been decreasing in all states, because the SSA programme has introduced the objectives of reducing dropout rates and increasing

the enrolment rate at the primary and upper primary level as very crucial in the country. Since the 1990s, the government has introduced new steps to reduce the dropout rate.

Table 3 shows the dropout rates in elementary education across states in India in 2024-25. At the all-India level, the dropout rate is 3.5. The dropout rate of Girls (2.5%) is less than that of boys, 4.1% per cent. The dropout rate has decreased due to increasing the retention rate in educationally backward states; later, the dropout rate of these states also stagnated, and this contributed to the overall increase in the dropout rate.

The CV explains interstate variation in dropout rates. According to it, the CV of the dropout rate of 85 % in 2024-25 shows a larger variation in dropout rate among the states. The dropout rate is less than one per cent in states like Puduchery, Kerala, Manipur and Delhi. But Mizoram, Meghalaya and Bihar have reported higher dropout rates in 2024-25.

**Table 3: Dropout rate of Elementary Education in India during 2024-25**

States and Uts	Dropout rate		
	Boys	Girls	Total
India	4.1	2.9	3.5
A & N	1.4	0.8	1.1
AP	4.7	2.6	3.7
Arunachal Pra.	4.9	5.3	5.1
Assam	7	3.2	5
Bihar	11.9	6.6	9.3
Chandigarh	0.9	0	0.4
Chhattisgarh	4.2	2.5	3.4
Dadar N & H	2.3	0.8	1.6
Delhi	1.3	0.2	0.8
Goa	0.8	0.8	0.8
Gujarat	5.4	6.3	5.8
Haryana	2.4	0.9	1.7
HimachalPradesh	0.8	0.3	0.5
JammuandKashmir	3.1	3.2	3.2
Jharkhand	3.3	0	1.7
Karnataka	2.6	1.6	2.1
Kerala	0.6	0.3	0.4
Ladakh	5.3	3.7	4.5
Lakshadweep	3.1	1.5	2.3
MP	6.7	5.9	6.3
Maharashtra	0.5	0.6	0.6
Manipur	1	0.3	0.6
Meghalaya	9.9	6	7.8
Mizoram	12.8	10.3	11.6
Nagaland	5.6	3.8	4.7
Odisha	3.7	2.6	3.2
Puducherry	0	0	0
Punjab	3	2.4	2.7
Rajasthan	3.5	3.6	3.6
Sikkim	3.7	1.6	2.7
TamilNadu	3.2	2.4	2.8
Telangana	0.3	0	0

Tripura	4.1	2.3	3.2
Uttar Pradesh	2.9	3.1	3
Uttarakhand	2	0.8	1.4
WestBengal	4.4	1.5	3
Average	3.7	2.4	3.0
CV	81.5	96.9	85.6

Source: Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report of 2024-25.

### Gender Parity Index (GPI) in India

GPI is an important indicator to understand the equality in enrolment between boys and girls. GPI is the ratio of girls to boys' enrolment at a given level of education. A GPI close to 1.00 indicates parity at the given level of education. In other words, there is equal access in educational opportunity between boys and girls at a given level of education. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report, it ranges between 0.97 to 1.0.

GPI is used to measure the relative access of boys and girls to education and also to measure the progress of states in providing equal educational opportunity. Many international and national organizations aim to eliminate gender disparity in the world.

Table 4 describes the State-wise GPI at elementary education in India across states during in 2024-25 period. At the all-India level, the GPI is equal to 1.00, which indicates equal participation of girls students to boys students. It ranges from 1.00% in 2005-06 to 1.1% during 2024-25. Introduction of SSA, MDM, National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Yojana (KGBY) have made valuable contributions to the increase in the girls' enrolment in India. Gender Parity Index reached the level of one in the majority of the states.

**Table 4: Gender Parity Index in India during 2024-25**

States and Uts	Total
India	1
A & N	1
AP	1
Arunachal Pra.	1
Assam	1.1
Bihar	1.1
Chandigarh	1.1
Chhattisgarh	1
Dadar N & H	1
Delhi	1.1
Goa	1
Gujarat	1.1
Haryana	1
HimachalPradesh	1
Jammuand Kashmir	1
Jharkhand	1
Karnataka	1
Kerala	1
Ladakh	1.1
Lakshadweep	1
MP	1

Maharashtra	1.1
Manipur	1
Meghalaya	1.1
Mizoram	1
Nagaland	1.1
Odisha	1
Puducherry	1
Punjab	1
Rajasthan	1
Sikkim	1
TamilNadu	1
Telangana	1
Tripura	1
Uttar Pradesh	1
Uttarakhand	1.1
WestBengal	1
Average	1.02
CV	4.4

Source: Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report of 2024-25.

### Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in India

Children with Special Needs are a key focus group, as they require specific educational interventions, support systems, and adaptations to fully participate in the learning process. To make inclusion effective, various support systems are crucial, such as Resource teachers trained in special education, technologies (e.g., Braille books, hearing aids, screen readers), Accessible infrastructure (ramps, tactile paths, accessible toilets) awareness programmes.

Enrollment of CWSN students and Infrastructure facility is exhibited in Table 5. CV of ramps and toilet facilities shows greater variation across states. Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Tamil Nadu have provided better infrastructure facilities than other states. Assam, Ladakh, and Puduchery states should focus more on infrastructure facilities for CWSN children to achieve inclusive education.

**Table 5: Enrollment of CWSN students and Infrastructure facility**

States and UTs.	Boys	Girls	Total	Ramps	Toilet
A & N	297	169	466	50	0
AP	36619	25747	62366	86.6	17.9
Arunachal Pradesh	1062	1277	2339	29.2	16.7
Assam	26533	20427	46960	10	5.7
Bihar	86461	70957	157418	64.6	17
Chandigarh	1483	900	2383	85.7	71.4
Chhattisgarh	30440	25789	56229	59.6	47
Dadar N & H	515	345	860	87.5	50
Delhi	15024	11577	26601	97.5	95
Goa	1886	1072	2958	36.7	13.6
Gujarat	27597	18769	46366	63	21.4
Haryana	9663	6111	15774	75	50
HimachalPradesh	2408	1823	4231	0	0
JammuandKashmir	9009	6138	15147	100	100
Jharkhand	22232	17411	39643	32.8	7
Karnataka	35252	24889	60141	61	16.2

Kerala	45108	30239	75347	91.5	27.5
Ladakh	220	197	417	10.5	5.3
Lakshadweep	59	48	107	0	0
MP	68669	54796	123465	85.6	41.6
Maharashtra	100539	68858	169397	92.9	61.7
Manipur	1836	1704	3540	25.8	2.4
Meghalaya	1381	1101	2482	18	3.1
Mizoram	1307	1141	2448	31.9	6
Nagaland	640	517	1157	0	0
Odisha	39788	27618	67406	84.7	61.2
Puducherry	384	263	647	21.2	21.2
Punjab	21284	14490	35774	49.7	46.7
Rajasthan	29398	20489	49887	0	0
Sikkim	397	236	633	31.3	0
TamilNadu	51137	32721	83858	89.6	64.6
Telangana	31385	22203	53588	51.3	1.9
Tripura	1373	943	2316	66.7	21.4
Uttar Pradesh	179138	129935	309073	63.1	26.5
Uttarakhand	2370	1593	3963	69.8	11.9
WestBengal	65821	50848	116669	64.9	28.4
India	948715	693341	1642056	74.9	40.5
Min	59	48	107	0	0
max	179138	129935	309073	100	100
average	26353.2	19259.5	45612.7	52.4	26.7
std	37092.1	27260.8	64302.7	31.9	27.6
cv	140.8	141.5	141.0	60.9	103.4

Source: Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report 2024-25.

## Findings and Conclusion

### Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

The all-India GER declined from 108.6% in 2020–21 to 90.6% in 2024–25. Although this decline may reflect improved age-appropriate enrolment and reduced over-age participation, it should be interpreted cautiously, as it could also signal participation gaps in certain states. Encouragingly, interstate disparity narrowed during the study period. States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Odisha maintained stable enrolment levels, whereas Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh lagged behind. The findings suggest that while near-universal access has largely been achieved, sustaining participation remains a policy priority.

### GER of SC and ST Students

SC enrolment displayed fluctuations, with considerable interstate variation indicating uneven inclusion. ST participation remained relatively stable nationally but showed extreme values in some northeastern states. The stronger performance of states like Tamil Nadu and Telangana suggests that sustained policy focus can significantly improve outcomes among marginalized communities.

### Dropout Rates

The national dropout rate stood at approximately 3.5%, with boys exhibiting higher dropout levels than girls. States such as Kerala and Delhi demonstrated strong retention mechanisms, whereas Bihar

and Meghalaya reported relatively high dropout rates. The high coefficient of variation highlights persistent regional inequality despite national progress.

### **Gender Parity Index (GPI)**

India has achieved near gender parity at the elementary level, with minimal variation across states. Targeted initiatives promoting girls' education have contributed substantially to this achievement. However, future policy must ensure that parity in enrolment translates into parity in learning outcomes and educational attainment.

### **Children with Special Needs (CWSN)**

Approximately 1.64 million CWSN students were enrolled nationally, yet infrastructure accessibility remains uneven. While some states have made notable progress in providing ramps and accessible facilities, others require urgent intervention. This dimension represents one of the weakest links in India's inclusive education framework and demands immediate policy attention.

### **CONCLUSION**

India has made remarkable progress in expanding access to elementary education, achieving near-universal enrolment and gender parity. These gains reflect sustained constitutional commitment and policy investment. However, the transition from access to meaningful inclusion remains uneven across states. Persistent disparities in dropout rates, participation of marginalized communities, and infrastructure for children with disabilities highlight the need for targeted interventions. The relatively stronger performance of southern and western states suggests that governance quality, institutional capacity, and fiscal prioritization significantly influence inclusive outcomes. The next phase of educational development must prioritize quality, equity and accessibility alongside expansion.

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