

## DROPOUT AND NON-ENROLMENT IN INDIA: STATE LEVEL ANALYSIS

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### How to cite this paper:

Ahmed Nazneen (2026)  
Dropout and Non-Enrolment  
in India: State Level  
Analysis, Journal of Global  
Resources, Vol. 12 (01)

### DOI:

**10.46587/JGR.2026.v12i01.016**

**Received:** 02 Nov. 2025

**Reviewed:** 24 Nov. 2025

**Final Accepted:** 03 Dec. 2025



**Freely available Online**

[www.isdesr.org](http://www.isdesr.org)

**Abstract:** *The present research paper examines the persistent problem of school dropout and non-enrolment in India through a state-level analysis, with special reference to primary and upper primary education. The study is based on secondary data obtained from the 71st and 75th rounds of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), which provide a comprehensive picture of educational participation across Indian states. By comparing patterns of enrolment and dropout across two different survey rounds, the paper attempts to identify regional disparities and continuity in trends over time. The analysis reveals that several central Indian states, particularly Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, consistently lag behind other states in terms of school enrolment and retention at both primary and upper primary levels. The persistence of similar patterns in both NSSO rounds indicates that structural and region-specific challenges such as poverty, inadequate school infrastructure, distance to schools, and socio-economic constraints continue to hinder universal access to education.*

**Key words:** Non-Enrolment, NSSO Data, State-Level Analysis, Access to Schooling, Education Policy

## Introduction

The modern education came with British and now after independence, the education in India has seen four policies, 1968, 1986, 1992 and 2021-22. The education policy of India focused on the issue of access but even now the basic issue of access is present. Children still are out of school because there are not adequate schools available in the isolated and remotely located villages. Therefore, the commuting distance of these drops out children for these villages' schools must be reduced for accessibility and long-term solution of this problem. The quality of education was taken with Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000 and the SSA only made text books free (The Dawn, 2023) and updated infrastructural facilities in schools. There was no enough research work taken up as to how to improve quality of education or learning in school. The policy to develop infrastructure was taken by SSA but then the standards of infrastructures were low for government schools and there was no inspection to check whether these facilities were working or not (The Tribune, 2022). The policy focused on elementary education and not on pre-school, secondary school and senior secondary school. It was in 2014 that policy focused on classes 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> (the Telegraph, 2021). The government did notice NGOs, where there were learning in school but the until now the methods are not taken by government. The policy of 2021-22 also focused on quality of education but what quality includes is not discussed in detail and how quality is going to improve is also not mentioned. Because of low learning in schools, children dropout from school.

Another issue of education is equity and India has strata of schools (The Dawn, 2021). Equity too relates to learning levels. Now let us see the strata of schools in India. The schools for upper class are there which are high fees International Schools in metros, which are for children of ambassadors of different countries, it is difficult for even children of upper middle class to get admission ( The Tribune, 2022). Then there are schools for upper middle class and middle class which are private schools in both metros and cities which also charge high fees in metros ( The Tribune, 2022). In villages also there are private schools to serve the paying class. There are government school for every grade of officers, there are Kendriya Vidhyalaya for central government employees and then there are government schools for all children. Sainik schools are there for children of military officers, then railway schools are there for children of railway workers, then there are schools by government which are based on welfare concept, these are Social Welfare Department and Tribal Welfare Department Schools. Jawahar Navodaya Schools are there for rural children who have good potential. Kasturba Gandhi Vidyalaya schools are there for rural girls so that girls are free from daily chores and learn in schools (The Tribune, 2022). There are state sponsored government school for class IV employees that does not charge fees. Now, learning levels in these schools vary with the strata.

Now let us focus on policies in elementary education. The Policy of 1968 brought changes in curriculum level, it also brought changes which contributed to making of strong education background, the policy had many new beginnings but only curriculum in school has been successful (The Tribune, 2021). Then there were wars and the entire focus of country was on wars. Then came period of peace and it was in 1986 the policy was again made for the country. The policy focused on curriculum again and brought education to lower class on very low fees. The policy was to make Indian curriculum comprehensive ( The Tribune, 2021). Then came Operation Blackboard in 1990 and basic infrastructure was given to rural schools. In 1992 another policy of Education came and this policy opened the gates of privatization for schools. Now, the private schools were already there, but the no. increased to a great extent. In 2000 Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) came and this was funded by World Bank. The SSA updated the school infrastructure of urban schools and some rural schools only and not of

remote and interior rural schools in the field but the policy was for all schools (The Telegraph, 2021). The learning among the children increased because of the availability of text books (The Dawn, 2016). The programme stopped in 2014 and the policies under the programme is still going on. In 2021 the education policy was again made but because the policy did not have reachable goals (The Dawn, 2021).

The most successful policies in the Education history of India were Lok Jumbish Programme. The other effective programmes were Shiksha Karmi Project, Education Guarantee Scheme, Mid-Day Meal, Bicycle Scheme of Bihar (The Telegraph, 2017). The NGO's that made learning process easy for children are Pratham, Eklavya and Nanhi Kali. ASER is the NGO which on yearly basis checked learning of children in government and private school. ASER only checked about the 3R's and not the learning in school and the type of learning in schools and check whether it is required or not (The Telegraph, 2018). Government plans not for learning but for access as even now many children are out of school and many children dropout because of lack of interest in studies and due to financial constraints. The education system of India specially government education system is not growing with other developed countries, where schooling include many other activities as well. Education system should make children capable to read and write with confidence but usually it has been found that children do not read and write up to even class 6<sup>th</sup> (The Telegraph, 2023, 2014).

In India dropout takes place because the system is not that effective to keep children in school. Child not interested in studies is the major reason for keeping children out of the school system and policies are not made to make the system such that there is interest of child in studies. Also, financial constraints keep children away from school when they reach the age of 11 and more. Non enrolment is there in India because even now in rural India schools are not present and children needs to walk a long distance to school which is not possible. All government schools do not have bus facility, which must be there for rural areas. Major problem for India is dropout and non-enrolment and there is a need to address the reasons behind dropout and non-enrolment. To address the reasons, one needs to find the pattern of dropout and non-enrolment in different states of India. This article discusses the issue of dropout and never-enrolled children on the All-India level for two NSSO Rounds 71<sup>st</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> for primary and upper primary sections. Non enrolment is a condition where children are never enrolled in school and a child is said to be dropout when child joins the school system but do not retain in school and comes out of school system. Primary and Upper Primary sections are the building blocks of student and if the base is strong, students excel in higher studies. The article discusses the non-enrolment and dropout at state level and tries to connect the reasons of non-enrolment and dropout from the existing literature of newspapers. No study has been made on state level analysis that connects to the literature available. Through the study the picture becomes clearer as to what needs to be done at the state-level. Also, by knowing the pattern of dropout and non-enrolment, state specific policies can be made.

### **Research Question**

What is the status of non-enrolment and dropout in India (state-wise) at elementary school level at all India level.

### **Objective**

To know the never enrolled and dropout children state-wise for two consecutive NSSO rounds.

### **Methodology**

To know non-enrollment and dropout, raw data from National Sample Survey Organization for two latest rounds have been taken and processed in STATA software, so that data become

readable. Tables are prepared separately for primary and upper primary level for all Indian states. Next, reasons for non-enrolment and dropout are processed at India level only. Thirdly, to know the picture of non-enrolment and dropout at India level table is prepared from 48<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> rounds (only those rounds where data of education is present).

### Dropout and Non-Enrolment in India

Let us have a look at the out of school children which comprise of children who have never been to school and those children who have dropped out in several rounds of NSSO by looking at Table 1.1

The Table 1.1 shows out of school children which comprises of dropout and never enrolled children. The following are the observations-

- i) The out of school children have decreased and over the period of 18 years from 1999-2000 to 2018.
- ii) There are more school dropouts as compared to never enrolled children since 66<sup>th</sup> Round.
- iii) There is continuous decline in out of school children, however the rate of decline is not satisfactory.

**Table 01: Out of School Children in India in following NSSO Rounds**

Rounds	Out of School (percent)	Dropout (percent)	Non-Enrolment (percent)
48th (1995-96)	39	10	29
55th (1999-2000)	37	18	17
58th (2002)	33	19	22
66th (2009-10)	31	16	15
67th (2010-11)	29	17	12
71st (2014-15)	27.80	14	13.80
75th (2018)	24	13	11

### Dropout Children

A child is considered to dropout when the child joins the school system and then discontinues the school system forever. There are several reasons of dropout but in this article pattern of dropout at state level for India in NSSO 71<sup>st</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Rounds are considered. Following analysis is made after analyzing table 2. The national average for dropout has decreased in subsequent rounds, this is good sign. However, dropout is increasing when one goes from primary to upper primary sections. Highest dropout is observed for Nagaland at 5.02 percent (Primary section in 71<sup>st</sup> Round) and this is because the state needs to have social policy to prevent dropout and also the dropouts are usually children from those tribes which are not settled (The Tribune, 2015). Chattisgarh too has a second higher dropout rates and the reason is that the state does not have adequate infrastructural facilities and also there are tribes which are still not abreast with cultural set up of the place they are living (The Tribune, 2015). In case of U.P the higher dropout rates are associated to the governance of the state (The New York Times, 2018). U.P, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have higher dropouts than national average and the policy need to address the region-specific problems. Chattisgarh with 11.36 percent dropouts (Upper Primary in 71<sup>st</sup> Round) has the highest dropouts and this is because the state has tribal population and these tribes are not settled in one place therefore, they dropout (The Tribune, 2015). The dropout is more because the age in which the children are, is the age in which children can contribute in labor. Low infrastructural facilities are also another factor of high dropout rate. In Chandigarh and Delhi high dropout rates in 75<sup>th</sup> Round (Upper Primary) is because there is reporting of the dropout which is not there in other states and UTs.

**Table 02: Dropout in Primary and Upper Primary Sections in 71<sup>st</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Round**

State & UT's	Primary (71st)	State & UT's	Primary (75th)	State & UT's	Upper Primary (71st)	State & UT's	Upper Primary (75th)
Nagaland	5.02	Nagaland	2.86	Daman & Diu	83.32	Uttar Pradesh	6.39
Chhattisgarh	3.93	Uttar Pradesh	2.66	Chhattisgarh	11.36	Delhi	6.28
Uttar Pradesh	3.55	Madhya Pradesh	2.56	Gujrat	8.96	Gujrat	5.34
Madhya Pradesh	3.06	Arunachal Pradesh	2.25	Uttar Pradesh	7.23	West Bengal	5.07
Maharashtra	2.64	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1.75	Madhya Pradesh	6.64	Orissa	4.59
Bihar	2.54	Bihar	1.56	Sikkim	5.86	Madhya Pradesh	4.42
Gujrat	2.39	Rajasthan	1.51	Andhra Pradesh	5.37	Chandigarh	4.14
India	2.19	Assam	1.41	Rajasthan	4.95	Rajasthan	4.11
Jharkhand	2.13	India	1.40	Jharkhand	4.91	Puducherry	4.05
Rajasthan	2.10	Gujrat	1.33	West Bengal	4.90	Arunachal Pradesh	3.58
Haryana	2.00	Jharkhand	1.25	India	4.76	India	3.44
Delhi	1.96	Meghalaya	1.24	Punjab	4.30	Nagaland	3.38
West Bengal	1.90	Maharashtra	1.15	Bihar	4.10	Jharkhand	3.36
Meghalaya	1.84	Haryana	1.14	Arunachal Pradesh	3.99	Haryana	3.17
Manipur	1.70	Chhattisgarh	1.11	Delhi	3.96	Chhattisgarh	2.85
Karnataka	1.40	West Bengal	1.09	Jammu & Kashmir	3.60	Assam	2.73
Orissa	1.32	Mizoram	1.04	Orissa	3.53	Jammu & Kashmir	2.67
Himachal Pradesh	1.28	Manipur	0.91	Assam	3.33	Uttarakhand	2.23
Punjab	1.14	Punjab	0.87	Maharashtra	3.17	Maharashtra	2.20
Mizoram	0.88	Karnataka	0.76	Haryana	3.15	Manipur	2.05
Andhra Pradesh	0.73	Orissa	0.38	A & Nicobar Islands	2.95	Meghalaya	2.02
Sikkim	0.65	Tamil Nadu	0.23	Karnataka	2.69	Tripura	1.76
Jammu & Kashmir	0.64	Delhi	0.19	Puducherry	2.62	Andhra Pradesh	1.64
Arunachal Pradesh	0.63	Telangana	0.12	Chandigarh	2.37	Bihar	1.56
Assam	0.52	Andhra Pradesh	0.11	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	2.32	Karnataka	1.54
Tamil Nadu	0.48	Tripura	0.08	Uttarakhand	2.30	Sikkim	1.46
Telangana	0.43	Jammu & Kashmir	0.02	Nagaland	2.05	Punjab	1.27
Kerala	0.41	Kerala	0.01	Manipur	1.82	Daman & Diu	1.05
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.10	Chandigarh	0.00	Meghalaya	1.41	A & Nicobar Islands	1.03
Tripura	0.07	Himachal Pradesh	0.00	Telangana	1.21	Mizoram	0.95
Chandigarh	0.00	Uttarakhand	0.00	Tamil Nadu	1.09	Himachal Pradesh	0.66
Uttarakhand	0.00	Sikkim	0.00	Himachal Pradesh	0.32	Tamil Nadu	0.32
Daman & Diu	0.00	Daman & Diu	0.00	Tripura	0.19	Telangana	0.22
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.00	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.00	Mizoram	0.00	Goa	0.19
Goa	0.00	Goa	0.00	Goa	0.00	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.00
Lakshadweep	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00
Puducherry	0.00	Puducherry	0.00	Kerala	0.00	Kerala	0.00

Madhya Pradesh too showing higher dropout rates and the reason is that the state is good in bringing children to school and retaining as well (Education Guarantee Scheme) but the problem lies not with Madhya Pradesh but with other states where the dropouts are not

shown by the teachers (The Tribune, 2015). A few states are doing good because they have research institutes for education system and they perform better, such states are Mizoram and Tripura (The Tribune, 2015). States like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have good bridge courses, these bridge courses prepare children well and this is the reason why there is nearly no dropout (The Tribune, 2015).

### **Never Enrolled Children**

A child who does not join the school system at the age of 6 and above is known to be never enrolled. A child remains never enrolled because the child does not have school in the village. Never enrolled children indicate a gap between educational initiatives and outreach to school-going age children. For India never enrolled is seen at the state level in both the NSSO (71<sup>st</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Round). Table 3 shows never enrolled children in both the NSSO rounds. Summarized view of the Primary and Upper Primary sections in both the rounds (Table 3). There has been decline in the never enrolled children from 71<sup>st</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> NSS round. Never enrolled children have declined both in primary to upper primary sections. There have been states like Kerala, Tripura and Mizoram where the never enrolled children are very less and this is because of their effective policy (The Tribune, 2015). Central states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh) have higher percentage of never enrolled children and this is because these states do not have effective policy to address never enrolled children. Schools are not there in small rural hamlets. Arunachal Pradesh (8.23 percent) (71<sup>st</sup> Round Upper Primary) has the maximum never enrolled children because there are a smaller number of schools in the state because of the rugged terrain. Delhi has higher percentage of never enrolled children (75<sup>th</sup> Round Upper Primary) and this because there is reporting of the never enrolled children as compared to other states and UTs.

### **Conclusion**

India over the time has reduced never enrolled children but dropout children are more, this means children are coming to schooling but leaving school system as there are several reasons such as no interest in studies, financial constraints and lack of school in the near vicinity (Telegraph, 2020). Both never enrolled children and dropout children are more in central Indian states like U.P, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. UTs like Delhi and Chandigarh have higher percentages of out of school children as there is more reporting of data because other states and UT's do not report the correct data. Arunachal Pradesh also recorded more out of school children because of the lack of schools and the reason is known by the government but nothing is done to build more schools. States like Tripura and Mizoram have research institutes for school education and because of this out of school children are less, and this model of research institutes need to be there in other states and UTs. Government must address state specific problem through policy. Government must learn from successful programs (in terms of learning) and successful NGO's (Pratham and Eklavya) where learning is made easy for children. Next, by giving free bicycles to children of upper primary age group to address issue of access to some extent. State should take initiative to start free bus services to school to connect remote areas to schools. Scholarships must be given from the class one and the amount must be that much that can solve the issue of financial constraints of the family to some extent.

**Table 03: Never Enrolled Children in Primary and Upper Primary Sections in 71<sup>st</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> NSSO Rounds**

State & UT	Primary (71st)	State & UT	Primary (75th)	State & UT's	Upper Primary (71st)	State & UT's	Upper Primary (75th)
Uttar Pradesh	12.88	Daman & Diu	31.07	Arunachal Pradesh	8.23	Uttar Pradesh	5.52
Bihar	11.56	Bihar	8.29	Uttar Pradesh	6.66	Delhi	5.38
Rajasthan	8.64	Arunachal Pradesh	7.84	Rajasthan	6.28	Rajasthan	3.36
Chandigarh	7.12	Uttar Pradesh	7.73	Bihar	4.20	Bihar	3.21
Arunachal Pradesh	7.10	Rajasthan	5.87	Orissa	3.77	Arunachal Pradesh	2.66
Madhya Pradesh	6.69	Madhya Pradesh	5.07	Madhya Pradesh	3.28	West Bengal	2.61
Haryana	6.36	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	4.94	India	3.24	Madhya Pradesh	2.47
India	6.31	India	3.84	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3.24	India	2.43
Jharkhand	5.45	Chhattisgarh	2.45	Manipur	2.75	Haryana	2.40
Gujrat	4.89	Andhra Pradesh	2.43	Telangana	2.69	Chhattisgarh	1.83
Delhi	4.59	Punjab	2.35	Jharkhand	2.65	Andhra Pradesh	1.76
Chhattisgarh	4.40	Nagaland	2.30	West Bengal	2.43	Orissa	1.53
West Bengal	3.87	Jammu & Kashmir	2.12	Gujrat	2.37	Meghalaya	1.48
Orissa	3.76	Karnataka	1.85	Meghalaya	2.31	Telangana	1.43
Mizoram	3.62	Jharkhand	1.71	Karnataka	2.22	Gujrat	1.35
Meghalaya	3.49	Orissa	1.44	Himachal Pradesh	1.94	Manipur	1.20
Karnataka	2.77	Gujrat	1.25	Delhi	1.81	Jharkhand	1.18
Nagaland	2.59	West Bengal	1.19	Mizoram	1.81	Maharashtra	0.91
Assam	2.07	Assam	1.18	Jammu & Kashmir	1.79	Nagaland	0.52
Manipur	1.98	Uttarakhand	0.90	Assam	1.65	Assam	0.48
Jammu & Kashmir	1.95	Maharashtra	0.85	Punjab	1.55	Karnataka	0.37
Telangana	1.90	Delhi	0.81	Maharashtra	1.43	Jammu & Kashmir	0.19
Punjab	1.72	Mizoram	0.56	Andhra Pradesh	1.37	Tamil Nadu	0.17
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1.63	Haryana	0.54	Haryana	1.31	Punjab	0.13
Maharashtra	1.40	Admn & Nicobar Islands	0.45	Chandigarh	1.30	Goa	0.12
Tripura	1.21	Meghalaya	0.39	Chhattisgarh	0.93	Mizoram	0.12
Uttarakhand	1.14	Telangana	0.37	Nagaland	0.26	Puducherry	0.07
Himachal Pradesh	1.13	Manipur	0.32	Admn & Nico. Islands	0.10	Kerala	0.00
Andhra Pradesh	1.12	Tamil Nadu	0.19	Uttarakhand	0.00	Himachal Pradesh	0.00
Admn & Nico. Islands	0.28	Himachal Pradesh	0.12	Sikkim	0.00	Chandigarh	0.00
Tamil Nadu	0.27	Kerala	0.03	Tripura	0.00	Uttarakhand	0.00
Kerala	0.18	Chandigarh	0.00	Daman & Diu	0.00	Sikkim	0.00
Daman & Diu	0.15	Sikkim	0.00	Goa	0.00	Tripura	0.00
Sikkim	0.00	Tripura	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00	Daman & Diu	0.00
Goa	0.00	Goa	0.00	Kerala	0.00	Dadra & Nag.Haveli	0.00
Lakshadweep	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00	Tamil Nadu	0.00	Lakshadweep	0.00
Puducherry	0.00	Puducherry	0.00	Puducherry	0.00	Admn & Nico. Inds	0.00

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