

Young Children: Enrollment and Learning Status – West Bengal

Analysis based on data from households. 17 out of 18 districts were surveyed in ASER 2018.

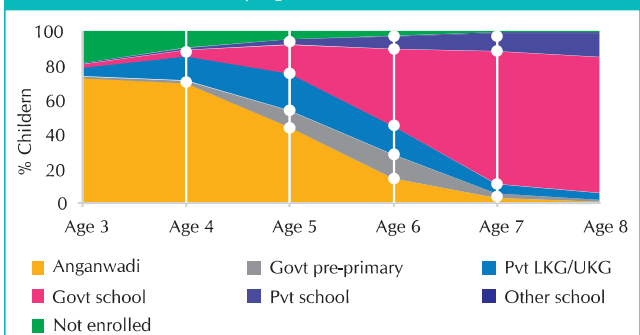
Early access to a supportive environment and exposure to developmentally appropriate activities can help children develop a solid foundation for future learning, both for school and for life. All major education policy and program documents in India now recognize this fact. However, recent ASER data shows major gaps between official norms and actual practice. These gaps are evident both when young children enter school and in what they are able to do in terms of foundational skills like reading and arithmetic. The gap between expectations and ground realities starts very early and needs to be addressed urgently. Once children fall behind, it is very difficult to catch up.

Age 3 to 8 years: Where are young children enrolled?

Table 1: % Children enrolled in different types of pre-schools and schools by age 2018

Age	Pre-school			School			Not enrolled	Total
	Anganwadi	Govt pre-primary	Pvt LKG/UKG	Govt	Pvt	Other		
Age 3	72.7	0.8	5.1	2.0	0.7	0.0	18.8	100
Age 4	69.6	1.5	14.1	3.7	1.0	0.3	9.9	100
Age 5	44.0	9.6	21.5	16.8	3.0	0.0	5.1	100
Age 6	14.2	14.0	16.5	44.8	7.0	0.5	3.1	100
Age 7	2.8	2.8	5.4	77.2	10.3	0.5	1.0	100
Age 8	0.6	1.2	4.0	79.0	13.8	0.4	1.0	100

Chart 1: % Children enrolled in different types of pre-schools and schools by age 2018



This table shows the proportion of children enrolled in different types of pre-schools and schools by age. For example, at age 3, 72.7% children are enrolled in anganwadis, 0.8% in government pre-primary classes, 5.1% in private LKG/UKG, 2% in government schools, and 0.7% in private schools. 'Other' includes children going to any other type of institution. 18.8% children are not enrolled anywhere. Chart 1, a stacked area chart, is a visual representation of Table 1.

Key takeaways:

Children's pathways through pre-school and school do not always follow policy prescriptions or curriculum expectations.

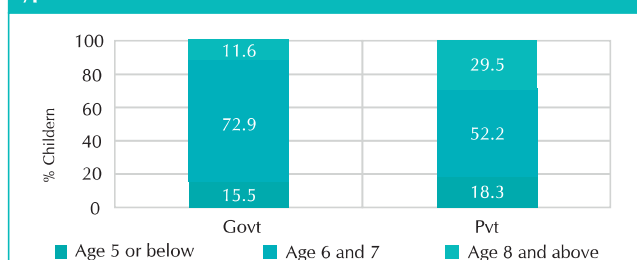
- **High enrollment in government institutions:** Anganwadi coverage is high for children who are 3 and 4 years old. At age 7 and 8, more than 70% children are enrolled in government schools. Among all children enrolled in Std I, 86.1% are enrolled in government schools. (Table 1 and Table 2)
- **Variation in enrollment by type of school at age 5 and 6:** At age 5, for example, 44% are still enrolled in anganwadis, 21.5% are in private pre-school and about 20% are enrolled in school. Even at age 6, while 44.8% children are in government schools, there continues to be around 44.7% children still enrolled in pre-school – in either government or private institutions. This means that what is offered to and expected from these young children in one specific age group varies enormously depending on whether they are enrolled in pre-primary grades or in primary school. (Table 1)
- **Age makes a difference:** Although the proportion of children in Std I who go to private schools is low, data indicates that a third of these children are age 8 or older. It is clear that older children can do more. For example, among children in Std I in government schools, 75.2% of 6-7 year olds can read at least letters, as compared to 85.7% of children age 8 and above. (Table 3)

Std I: Can young children read letters and recognize numbers?

Table 2: % Children enrolled in Std I by school type 2018

% Children in Std I enrolled in	Govt	Pvt	Total
	86.1	13.9	100

Chart 2: % Children enrolled in Std I by age and school type 2018



This chart shows the distribution of Std I children enrolled in different types of schools by age.

Table 3: Reading and arithmetic levels for Std I children by age and school type 2018

Age	% Children who	
	Can read at least letters	Can recognize at least numbers (1-9)
Government schools		
Age 5	50.1	57.6
Age 6 and 7	75.2	79.6
Age 8 and above	85.7	87.8
All	73.2	77.8
Private schools		
Age 5	77.4	76.2
Age 6 and 7	88.4	94.2
Age 8 and above	Data insufficient	Data insufficient
All	88.2	91.4

This table shows the proportion of children in Std I who can read at least letters and recognize at least numbers up to 9.

Young Children: Enrollment and Learning Status by Sex – West Bengal

Analysis based on data from households. 17 out of 18 districts were surveyed in ASER 2018.

Age 4 to 8 years: Where are young boys and girls enrolled?

Table 4: % Children age 4-8 enrolled in Govt pre-schools/schools by sex 2018

Age	Enrolled in govt pre-schools/schools		Sex-wise difference in enrollment in percentage points
	Boys	Girls	
Age 4	73.9	75.4	1.6
Age 5	68.3	72.6	4.3
Age 6	72.5	73.3	0.8
Age 7	83.2	82.4	-0.8
Age 8	77.5	83.7	6.2

Note: Government pre-schools/schools include anganwadis, government pre-primary classes and government primary schools.

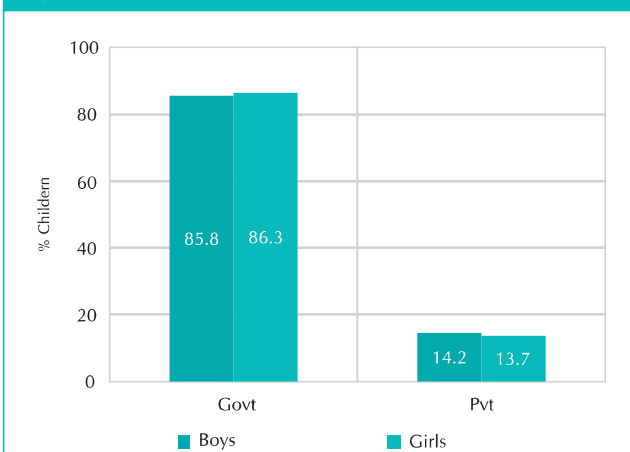


Key takeaways:

- **Sex-wise difference in enrollment:** In West Bengal, there is a high proportion of both boys and girls enrolled in government schools (more than 70% for almost all age groups between 4 and 8 years). However, for every age with the exception of age 7, there is a slightly higher proportion of girls enrolled than that of boys. (Table 4)
- **Not much difference in enrollment trends and learning levels between boys and girls in Std I government schools:** High enrollment continues to be the trend in Std I in government schools, with the proportion of boys and girls greater than 85%. In terms of learning levels, there is not much variation in abilities of 6-7 year old children to read at least letters and recognize at least single-digit numbers by sex; girls seem to perform marginally better than boys. (Chart 3 and Table 5)

Std I: Can young boys and girls read letters and recognize numbers?

Chart 3: % Children enrolled in Std I by sex and school type 2018



The chart shows the distribution of Std I children enrolled in different types of schools by sex. For example, of all boys enrolled in Std I, 85.8% of boys are enrolled in government schools and 14.2% of boys are enrolled in private schools. Of all girls enrolled in Std I, 86.3% of girls are enrolled in government schools and 13.7% of girls are enrolled in private schools.

Table 5: Reading and arithmetic levels for Std I children by age, sex, and school type 2018

Age	% Children who			
	Can read at least letters		Can recognize at least numbers (1-9)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Government schools				
Age 5	Data insufficient			
Age 6 and 7	74.4	76.2	79.3	79.9
Age 8 and above	Data insufficient			
All	72.9	73.5	77.4	78.0
Private schools				
Age 5	Data insufficient			
Age 6 and 7	Data insufficient			
Age 8 and above	Data insufficient			
All	85.6	91.3	89.2	94.1

This table shows the proportion of children in Std I who can read at least letters and recognize at least numbers up to 9. The data shows patterns by age and sex.