

Pratham Education Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022 was released this morning in New Delhi, by Mr. Ajay Piramal Chairman, Piramal Group and Chairman, Pratham Education Foundation. This is the seventeenth ASER report. Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Ajay Piramal, Chairman, Piramal Group said, **"I congratulate Pratham on the release of ASER 2022. This is the largest citizen-led rural survey, delineating the status-quo of primary education in India.**

Primary education is an important element to mould the children with right schooling and education in their formative years. The report unveils high enrolment of children in schools which is a good performance indicator for government programmes like Nipun Bharat Mission. Another positive is the increase in the number of girl child in schools. This indicates synergies and effectiveness of Government programs like Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

Although there is good monitoring, feedback and capacity building mechanism in place by the Government, more effort needs to be put into enhancing foundational literacy to raise the overall standards of children's education in the country.

This report gives us the direction and also the sense that to enhance education standards, the eco-system involving Government, Corporates, Civil Society and NGOs need to work together. A concerted effort by all in the education space is needed to propel India's economic and social development."

ASER 2022 returned to the field nationwide after a gap of 4 years, reaching 616 rural districts. This year's data will be especially valuable as it comes after schools reopened after prolonged closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, this household survey recorded the schooling status of children in the age group 3-16 and assessed children aged 5-16 in basic reading and arithmetic. Children's English ability was also tested this year.

A national ASER survey has been done every year since 2005, except for 2015. The 'basic' ASER implemented in 2022 focuses on foundational skills of children in the elementary school-going age group and was done annually from 2005 to 2014 and then again in 2016 and 2018. Because tools, sampling strategies, and survey methods are comparable over time, ASER 2022 data can be compared with previous years to provide trends over time. Estimates of "learning loss" between 2018 and 2022 can provide important information to states and districts as they plan interventions for "learning recovery" and "catch up".

Key findings from ASER 2022 (Rural)

ASER 2022 reached 616 districts and a total of 19,060 villages in rural India. 374,544 households and 699,597 children in the age group 3 to 16 were surveyed.

Enrollment and attendance

- **Overall enrollment (age group 6-14):** The enrollment rate for the 6 to 14 age group has been above 95% for the past 15 years. Despite school closures during the pandemic, overall enrollment figures have increased

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from 97.2% in 2018 to 98.4% in 2022. **The proportion of children in this age group who are not currently enrolled has dropped to 1.6%.**

- **Government school enrollment:** The period 2006 to 2014 saw a steady decrease in the proportion of children (age 6 to 14) enrolled in government school. In 2014, this figure stood at 64.9% and did not change much over the following four years. However, **the proportion of children (age 6 to 14) enrolled in government school increased sharply from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022.** Increase in government school enrollment is visible in almost every state in the country.
- **Proportion of girls who are not currently enrolled:** In 2006, the All India figure for the percentage of girls age 11-14 who were out of school stood at 10.3%, falling over the following decade to 4.1% in 2018. **This proportion has continued to drop. In 2022, the all India figure for 11-14-year-old girls not enrolled in school stands at 2%.** This figure is around 4% only in Uttar Pradesh and is lower in all other states.

The decrease in the proportion of girls not enrolled in school is even sharper among older girls in the 15-16 age group. In 2008, nationally, more than 20% of girls in the 15-16 age group were not enrolled in school. Ten years later, in 2018, this figure had decreased to 13.5%. **The proportion of 15-16-year-old girls not enrolled has continued to drop, standing at 7.9% in 2022.** Only 3 states have more than 10% of girls in this age group out of school: Madhya Pradesh (17%), Uttar Pradesh (15%), and Chhattisgarh (11.2%).

- **Enrollment in the pre-primary age group:** Across rural India, the proportion of 3-year-olds enrolled in some form of early childhood education stands at 78.3% in 2022, an increase of 7.1 percentage points over 2018 levels. There is a substantial shift in enrollment patterns of young children in the age group 3-5 years who have moved into the ICDS (anganwadi) system from other forms of pre-school and school provision. **In 2022, 66.8% of 3-year-olds were enrolled in Anganwadi Centres as compared to 57.1% in 2018. Among 4 year olds, Anganwadi enrollment has increased from 50.5% (2018) to 61.2% (2022).**

Paid private tuition classes:

- Over the past decade, rural India has seen small, steady increases in the proportion of children in Std I-VIII taking paid private tuition classes. Between 2018 and 2022 this proportion increased further, among students in both government and private schools. **Nationally, the proportion of children in Std I-VIII taking paid private tuition classes increased from 26.4% in 2018 to 30.5% in 2022.** In Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, the proportion of children taking paid private tuition increased by 8 percentage points or more over 2018 levels.

Learning levels: Foundational skills in reading and arithmetic

Reading: *The ASER reading test 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. The test is administered one on one to all children in the age group 5 to 16 in sampled households. Each child is marked at the highest level that she or he can reach comfortably.*

Nationally, children's basic reading ability has dropped to pre-2012 levels, reversing the slow improvement achieved in the intervening years. Drops are visible in both government and private schools in most states, and for both boys and girls.

- **Std III:** The percentage of children in Std III in government or private schools who can read at Std II level dropped from 27.3% in 2018 to 20.5% in 2022. This decline is visible in every state and for children in both

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government and private schools. States showing a decline of more than 10 percentage points from 2018 levels include those that had higher reading levels in 2018, such as Kerala (from 52.1% in 2018 to 38.7% in 2022), Himachal Pradesh (from 47.7% to 28.4%), and Haryana (from 46.4% to 31.5%). Large drops are also visible in Andhra Pradesh (from 22.6% to 10.3%) and Telangana (from 18.1% to 5.2%).

- **Std V:** Nationally, the proportion of children enrolled in Std V in government or private schools who can at least read a Std II level text fell from 50.5% in 2018 to 42.8% in 2022. States where this indicator held steady or improved marginally include Bihar, Odisha, Manipur, and Jharkhand. States showing a decrease of 15 percentage points or more include Andhra Pradesh (from 59.7% in 2018 to 36.3% in 2022), Gujarat (from 53.8% to 34.2%), and Himachal Pradesh (from 76.9% to 61.3%). Drops of more than 10 percentage points are visible in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.
- **Std VIII:** Although drops in basic reading ability are visible among Std VIII students as well, these are smaller as compared to observed trends in Std III and Std V. Nationally, 69.6% of children enrolled in Std VIII in government or private schools can read at least basic text in 2022, falling from 73% in 2018.

Arithmetic: *The ASER arithmetic test assesses 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). The tasks are administered one on one to all children in the age group 5 to 16 in sampled households. Each child is marked at the highest level that she or he can reach.*

Nationally, children's basic arithmetic levels have declined over 2018 levels for most grades. But the declines are less steep and the picture is more varied than in the case of basic reading.

- **Std III:** The All India figure for children in Std III who are able to at least do subtraction dropped from 28.2% in 2018 to 25.9% in 2022. While Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh maintained or improved slightly over 2018 levels, steep drops of more than 10 percentage points are visible in Tamil Nadu (from 25.9% in 2018 to 11.2% in 2022), Mizoram (from 58.8% to 42%), and Haryana (from 53.9% to 41.8%).
- **Std V:** The proportion of children in Std V across India who can do division has also fallen slightly, from 27.9% in 2018 to 25.6% in 2022. While Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Sikkim show slight improvements over 2018 levels, steep drops of more than 10 percentage points are visible in Mizoram (from 40.2% in 2018 to 20.9% in 2022), Himachal Pradesh (from 56.6% to 42.6%), and Punjab (from 52.9% to 41.1%) among several others.
- **Std VIII:** The performance of Std VIII in basic arithmetic is more varied. Nationally, the proportion of children who can do division has increased slightly, from 44.1% in 2018 to 44.7% in 2022. This increase is driven by improved outcomes among girls as well as among children enrolled in government schools, whereas boys and children enrolled in private schools show a decline over 2018 levels. Children in Std VIII in government schools did significantly better in 2022 than in 2018 in Uttar Pradesh (from 32% to 41.8%) and Chhattisgarh (from 28% to 38.6%), but significantly worse in Punjab (from 58.4% to 44.5%).

English: *The ASER English test assesses children's ability to read capital letters, small letters, simple 3-letter words, and short easy sentences in English. The test is administered one on one to all children in the age group 5 to 16 in sampled households. Each child is marked at the highest level that she or he can reach. Children who can read at word or sentence level are also assessed for comprehension of what they have read.*

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- ASER last assessed children's English ability in 2016. Nationally, children's ability to read simple English sentences has stayed more or less at the 2016 level for children in Std V (from 24.7% in 2016 to 24.5% in 2022). Slight improvements are visible for children in Std VIII (from 45.3% in 2016 to 46.7% in 2022).
- Of children in Std III who can read words but not sentences, in 2022 about half could tell the meaning of the words they had read (55.3%). For children who are able to read sentences, comprehension increases in higher grades. For example, 55.3% of all Std III children who can read sentences in English were able to tell the meaning of the sentences, while 68.5% of all Std VIII children who can read sentences could do so.

School observations:

As part of the ASER survey, one government school with primary sections is visited in each sampled village. Preference is given to a government upper primary school (Std I-VII/VIII) if one exists in the village. In 2022, ASER surveyors visited 17,002 government schools with primary sections. 9,577 were primary schools and 7,425 were upper primary schools.

- Small schools and multigrade classrooms: **The proportion of government schools with less than 60 students enrolled has increased every year over the last decade.** Nationally, this figure was 17.3% in 2010, 24% in 2014, 29.4% in 2018, and stands at 29.9% in 2022. The states with the highest proportion of small schools in 2022 include Himachal Pradesh (81.4%) and Uttarakhand (74%). However, some states show a decrease in the fraction of small schools, such as Uttar Pradesh (from 10.4% in 2018 to 7.9% in 2022) and Kerala (from 24.1% in 2018 to 16.2% in 2022).
- **The proportion of multigrade Std II and Std IV classrooms also shows a steady increase over the past decade.** For example, the proportion of Std II classrooms observed to be sitting with children from other grade(s) was 54.8% in 2010, 61.6% in 2014, 62.4% in 2018, and stands at 65.5% in 2022. Increases over 2018 levels are visible in Gujarat (from 50.9% in 2018 to 69.3% in 2022) and Chhattisgarh (from 71.3% in 2018 to 79.5% in 2022), among other states.
- Teacher and student attendance: At the All-India level, no major change is seen in students' and teachers' attendance. Average teacher attendance increased slightly, from 85.4% in 2018 to 87.1% in 2022. **Average student attendance continues to hover at around 72% for the past several years**, with considerable variations across states.

School facilities:

- Nationally, small improvements are visible in all Right to Education-related indicators over 2018 levels. For example, the fraction of schools with useable girls' toilets increased from 66.4% in 2018 to 68.4% in 2022. The proportion of schools with drinking water available increased from 74.8% to 76%, and the proportion of schools with books other than textbooks being used by students increased from 36.9% to 44% over the same period.
- However, the national averages hide major variations across states. For example, the proportion of schools with drinking water available increased from 58.1% in 2018 to 65.6% in Andhra Pradesh and 82.7% in 2018

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to 92.7% in Punjab. Over the same period, drinking water availability declined from 88% to 71.8% in Gujarat, and 76.8% to 67.8% in Karnataka.

- Most sports-related indicators also remain at close to the levels observed in 2018. For example, in 2022, 68.9% schools have a playground, up slightly from 66.5% in 2018.

Other school indicators:

- Most children had received their textbooks for the current academic year. Textbooks had been distributed to all grades in 90.1% of primary schools and in 84.4% of upper primary schools.
- About 80% of all primary schools had received a directive to implement Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) activities with their students, and about the same proportion had at least 1 teacher who had received training on FLN.

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