

Enrolment of school students aged 3 to 11 falls by 25 lakh: MoE report

Total school enrolment, from Class 1-12, drops by 11 lakh, an all-time low since 2018-19; officials say this could be due to falling birth rates and shifting demographics

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MAITRI PORECHA



Image for representational purposes only. The total number of school teachers across the country crossed the one crore mark during 2024–25, the Ministry of Education's said. | Photo Credit: M.A. Sriram

Total enrolment of students aged between three and 11 in schools across India – encompassing anganwadi, pre-school and Class 1 to 5 – dropped by nearly 25 lakh in 2024-25 as compared to 2023-24, say the latest Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) data released by the Ministry of Education (MoE) on Thursday (August 28, 2025).

The UDISE+ 2023-24 report said that 12.09 crore students enrolled in foundational and preparatory stages, which declined to 11.84 crore students, a dip of 24.93 lakh, in 2024-25.

The latest data show that the total school enrolment number (from Class 1-12) has fallen by 11 lakh students, from 24.8 crore (2023-24) to 24.69 crore (2024-25), an all-time low since 2018-19. These include students in government, government-aided, private and other schools.

Falling birth rates, migration

“The decline in the enrolment numbers may largely be attributed to demographic shifts with falling birth rates in primary school-age population. In addition, the decline could also be explained in terms of the presence of the children in pre-primary standalone private institutions,” a senior official in MoE told *The Hindu*.

Except Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Meghalaya, all States have achieved fertility rates below replacement levels. “Fewer children being born may be leading to lower enrollment,” said an official.

India’s total fertility rate (TFR) dropped to 1.91 per woman by 2021, below the replacement level of 2.1, according to the latest National Family Health Survey 2021 data which is available. TFR indicates average children born to a woman. Replacement level is the level of fertility at which a population replaces itself.

Officials said that for calculating parameters such as Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) – the total enrolment in a specific level of education and expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population – the 2011 Census data was used. “Once the 2026 census data is available, a lot of these projections will be modified,” the official added.

In the 2012-13 report, the total number of students studying in India from Class 1 to 12 was reported to be 26.3 crore. In November 2022, when the 2021-22 data were released, the number hovered around 26 crore. The 2022-23 data pegged the enrolment at 25.18 crore, which further fell to 24.8 crore in 2023-24, a drop of 6% or 1.22 crore, when compared to 2021-22.

MoE officials have given a disclaimer that the reports of 2022-23 and 2023-24 are not strictly comparable to previous years because of a change in the ‘methodology’ of data

collection.

Increased enrolment, better GER

Officials pointed out that there was an increase of total enrolment of students by approximately 6 lakh between 2023-24 and 2024-25 in middle school (Class 6 to 8). While 6.31 crore students were accounted for in the 2023-24 report, this increased to 6.36 crore in 2024-25. Total enrolment in secondary section (Class 9 to 12) saw an increase of roughly 8 lakh, a spike from 6.39 crore in 2023-24 to 6.48 crore in 2024-25.

While the total enrolment has gone down, officials said that GER has improved. At middle level, GER rose from 89.5% in 2023-24 to 90.3% in 2024-25, while at secondary level it increased from 66.5% in 2023-24 to 68.5% in 2024-25.

Also, dropout rates have reduced, meaning those joining school are not leaving as compared to earlier years. In preparatory stages, dropout rates have reduced from 3.7% to 2.3% between 2023-24 and 2024-25. During the same years in middle school, dropouts reduced from 5.2% to 3.5% and in secondary school from 10.9% to 8.2%.

Improved teacher-student ratio

The Ministry said that while there was one teacher for every 15 students at foundational stage in 2014-15, this has now improved to one teacher for every 10 students in 2024-25. At the preparatory stage, there was one teacher per 18 students in 2014-15, which has improved to one teacher per 13 students in 2024-25. In middle school, this has improved from one teacher per 26 students to one teacher per 17 students, and in secondary school, from one teacher per 31 students to one teacher per 21 students, during the same duration.

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