



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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As India climbs up HDI rankings, rising inequality poses challenge

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Context

In the 2025 Human Development Report, 'A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI', released on Tuesday, **India ranks 130 out of 193 countries**, from 133 in 2022. It registered an HDI value increase to 0.685 in 2023 from 0.676 in 2022.

HDI 2023 – Overview

- **India's life expectancy, at 72 years in 2023, is the highest level** it has reached since the inception of the index in 1990 (58.6 years).
- Children, the report noted, are **expected to stay in school for 13 years on average**, up from **8.2 years in 1990**; and **Gross National Income per capita has risen from \$2,167.22 in 1990 to \$9046.76 in 2023**.
- It gave a shout out to programmes such as MGNREGA, the Right to Education Act, the National Rural Health Mission and other initiatives for the improved status, but also sounded a word of caution about rising inequality, particularly significant income and gender disparities.
- Top and Bottom Ranks: **Iceland ranked first** with an HDI of 0.972, while **South Sudan ranked last** with an HDI of 0.388.
- Regional Comparison: Among India's neighbors, **China (78th), Sri Lanka (89th), and Bhutan (125th) rank** above India, while Bangladesh (130th) is on par. Nepal (145th), Myanmar (150th), and Pakistan (168th) are ranked below India

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HDI ranking and value (2023)

Rank	Country	HDI value
1	Iceland	0.972
2	Norway	0.970
2	Switzerland	0.970
4	Denmark	0.962
5	Germany	0.959
5	Sweden	0.959
7	Australia	0.958
8	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.955
8	Netherlands	0.955
17	United States	0.938
130	India	0.685

HDI: Human Development Index

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2025

- **Life Expectancy:** India's life expectancy rose from 58.6 years in 1990 to 72 years in 2023, the highest ever, reflecting a strong post-pandemic recovery.
- This progress is attributed to national health programs like **National Health Mission, Ayushman Bharat, Janani Suraksha Yojana, and Poshan Abhiyaan.**
- **Education:** India's mean years of schooling have increased, with children now expected to stay in school for 13 years, up from 8.2 years in 1990.
- Initiatives like the **Right to Education Act 2009, National Education Policy 2020, and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** have improved access, though quality and learning outcomes still require attention.
- **National Income:** India's Gross National Income per capita rose over **fourfold**, from USD 2,167 in 1990 to USD 9,046 in 2023 based on 2021 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).
- Additionally, **135 million Indians escaped multidimensional poverty** between 2015-16 and 2019-21, contributing to HDI improvement.

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Human Development Index (HDI)

