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School Dropout Rate Declines: UDISE+ 2025–26 and PGI 2.0 Reports

Published On: 10-07-2026

Recent Developments:

- The Union Ministry of Education has released the UDISE+ 2025–26 Report and Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0 for 2025–26, highlighting improvements in **dropout rates, student retention, teacher strength, digital infrastructure, and school governance**, while indicating that **learning outcomes and regional disparities** remain major policy concerns.

UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus):

- UDISE+ is the **official national database** for school education maintained by the **Ministry of Education**.
- It serves as the primary **Education Management Information System (EMIS)** for evidence-based educational planning and policy formulation.
- The database compiles information uploaded by schools with active **UDISE+ Codes** on:
- **School infrastructure, student enrolment, teacher-related indicators, basic amenities, digital facilities, learning environment and institutional characteristics.**
- The database supports **resource allocation, monitoring of educational indicators, implementation of NEP 2020 and achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education).**

Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0:

- **PGI 2.0** evaluates the performance of **States and Union Territories** in school education through a uniform assessment framework.
- The framework assesses performance across six domains:
- **Learning Outcomes, Access, Infrastructure & Facilities, Equity, Governance Process, Teacher Education & Training.**
- **PGI 2.0** contains **73 indicators** carrying a total weightage of **1,000 marks** and classifies States and UTs into a **10-tier grading system** instead of conventional rankings, encouraging continuous improvement rather than direct competition.

Key Findings of UDISE+ 2025–26:

Dropout Rate:

- **Preparatory-level dropout** declined from **2.3%** to **1.8%**.
- **Secondary-level dropout** declined from **8.2%** to **7.0%**.
- **Ladakh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka** recorded comparatively higher secondary-level dropout rates.
- Improved performance has been supported by **better school accessibility, expansion of secondary schools, targeted government interventions and improved school environments.**

Student Retention:

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- **Middle-level** retention increased from **82.8%** to **83.7%**.
- **Secondary-level** retention improved from **47.2%** to **51.9%**.
- **Foundational** and **Preparatory** stages recorded a marginal decline after three years of continuous improvement.
- Nearly **one-half of students entering Class I continue up to Class XII**, indicating persistent educational attrition at higher stages.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):

- **Secondary-level GER** increased from **68.5%** to **71.7%**, indicating improved access and continuation in secondary education.

Teacher Strength and Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR):

- Total school teachers crossed **1.02 crore** for the first time, recording an **8.3% increase** compared to **2022–23**.
- **Women teachers** constituted **54.9%** of the teaching workforce.
- Improved **PTR** remained significantly better than the **NEP 2020 benchmark of 30:1**:
- **Foundational: 10**
- **Preparatory: 12**
- **Middle: 17**
- **Secondary: 21**
- Better PTR is expected to improve **individual attention, classroom interaction and learning quality**.

School Rationalisation:

- **Zero-enrolment schools** declined by **29%** to **5,663**.
- **Single-teacher schools** declined by **3%** to **1,00,843**, indicating improved institutional consolidation and teacher deployment.

Girls' Education:

- Girls constituted **48.4%** of total enrolment, showing a marginal improvement over the previous academic year.

Digital Infrastructure and School Facilities:

- Schools with **computer facilities** increased from **64.7%** to **69.9%**.
- **Internet connectivity** improved from **63.5%** to **67.4%**.
- Availability of essential facilities remained high:
- **Safe drinking water: 99.5%**
- **Girls' toilets: 98.5%**
- **Boys' toilets: 97.2%**
- **Grid electricity: 95%**
- **Playground availability** declined from **83%** to **81.9%**, raising concerns regarding physical education.

Inclusive Education:

- Schools with **ramps and handrails** for children with disabilities increased from **54.9%** to **58.2%**, improving accessibility.

Enrolment Profile:

- **Minority communities** accounted for over **20%** of total enrolment.

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- Minority composition included:
- **Muslims:** 79.4%
- **Christians:** 10.1%
- **Sikhs:** 7.1%
- **Buddhists:** 2.0%
- **Jains:** 1.3%
- **Parsis:** 0.1%
- Social category distribution comprised:
- **OBC:** 44.9%
- **General:** 27.5%
- **SC:** 17.7%
- **ST:** 10%

Key Findings of PGI 2.0:

Overall Performance:

- No **State** or **Union Territory** achieved any of the top three grades of the PGI framework.
- **Chandigarh** emerged as the highest performer with a score of **766**, becoming the only UT to enter the 'Uttam-3' category.

Performance Categories:

- **Prachesta-1:** Delhi, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Kerala and Punjab.
- **Prachesta-2:** Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Odisha and Lakshadweep.
- Most States were placed in **Prachesta-3** and **Akanshi-1** categories.
- States in the lower-performing **Akanshi** category included **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Jamm& Kashmir, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Meghalaya.**

Domain-wise Leaders:

- **Learning Outcomes:** Punjab, Kerala.
- **Access:** Kerala, Puducherry.
- **Teacher Education & Training:** Kerala, Lakshadweep.
- **Equity:** Tamil Nadu.

States Showing Decline:

- **Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha and Uttarakhand** registered lower PGI scores compared to the previous year.

Inter-State Disparity:

- The performance gap between the highest and lowest scoring States reduced to **31.4%**, compared with **51%** in **2017–18**, indicating gradual reduction in regional disparities.

Major Significance:

Positive Developments:

- **Lower dropout rates** indicate improved school participation.
- **Higher retention and GER** demonstrate better educational continuity.
- **Teacher recruitment and improved PTR** strengthen classroom effectiveness.

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- **Expansion of digital infrastructure** supports technology-enabled learning.
- **Near-universal access to basic amenities** reflects improvement in school infrastructure.
- **Reduction in zero-enrolment and single-teacher schools** improves institutional efficiency.

Key Challenges:

- **Only about half of Class I students reach Class XII**, indicating substantial long-term attrition.
- **Learning outcomes** continue to remain weaker than improvements in access and infrastructure.
- **Foundational-stage retention** requires renewed policy attention.
- **Regional disparities** continue across educational quality and governance.
- **Declining playground availability** may adversely affect holistic development.
- **Gender parity** has improved only marginally despite sustained interventions.
- **Teacher distribution** remains uneven across several regions.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Relevant Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 21A:** Right to free and compulsory education for children aged **6–14 years**.
- **Article 45:** Early Childhood Care and Education.
- **Article 46:** Promotion of educational interests of **SCs, STs and weaker sections**.

Important Acts and Policies:

- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**
- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020**
- **Samagra Shiksha**
- **NIPUN Bharat Mission**
- **PM SHRI Schools Scheme**
- **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** for national assessment reforms