



India at 75 - Part II

For Prelims: Gender Gap Index (GGI), Global Hunger Index (GHI), Female Labour force, Human Development Index (HDI), Child Mortality, NFHS-5 related findings on Women, Infant Mortality, Global Climate Risk Index, Corruption Perceptions Index

For Mains: Status of women in contemporary India, Challenges to women related growth & development, India's status in the Human Development Index.

The Status of Women in Independent India

What is the Context?

- In the seven decades that followed India's independence, many have toiled to fulfil the vision of those who fought for its freedom. India has undergone significant changes, both socio-economic and political, and seen successes on the global stage.
- But the **status of women in the fight for freedom, dignity, equal rights and representation needs to be pondered upon** for they constitute half of the country's citizenry.

What is the Status of Gender Gap in Contemporary India?

- **Sex Ratio:** The past two decades have seen positive signs with the **ratio slightly improving to 943 per 1,000 men in 2011 from 933 in the 2001 census.**
 - The proportion of women exceeded men in 2021 for the first time in history. **For every 1,000 men, there are 1,020 women**, according to the [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)](#) data.
 - However, the experts believed that the figure was not an accurate representation of India's sex ratio due to the small sample size, compared to the decadal census.
 - According to Census 2011, the **child sex ratio dropped from 927 in 2011 to 914** per 1,000 males.
 - Several factors like discrimination towards the girl child and sex-selective abortions, are responsible for the skewed ratio.
- **Child Mortality:** A [UNICEF report](#) titled '**Children in India**' reported that **India is the only large country where more girls die than boys**, with the inverse sex ratio at birth being 900 girls born for every 1000 boys.
 - Globally 7% more boys die under the age of 5 compared to girls but in **India, 11% more girls die under the age of 5.**
 - India is also home to the **largest number of child brides** in the world.
- **Sex-Selective Abortions:** Eight women die from causes related to **unsafe abortions** each day in India, making **unsafe abortions the third leading cause of maternal mortality** in the country, according to the [United Nations Population Fund's State of the World Population Report, 2022.](#)
 - Over 65% of abortions in India were classified as unsafe between 2007 and 2011.
 - The **NFHS 5** further shows that more than one-fourth (**27%**) of abortions were **performed by untrained women without any assistance** at home.

- **Missing Females:** The [State of World Population 2020](#) defines **missing females** as **those missing from the population at given dates due to the cumulative effect of postnatal and prenatal sex selection** in the past.
 - India accounts for **4.6 crore of the world's 14.26 crore "missing females"**.
 - As per a UN report published in 2020, about 4.6 lakh girls in India were 'missing' at birth each year between 2013 and 2017.
 - It cited **sex selection** based on gender and **post-birth female mortality** as two main reasons behind the alarming number.
 - Since its inception in 1950, the SC has seen only 11 women judges.

What about Women's Education?

- **Literacy Rate:** The literacy rate of India was below 20% when the British left India. Over the years, India made significant progress and improved the overall rate to 74.04% (Census 2011).
 - The **NFHS-5 report**, which sampled a population of 7.24 lakh women and 1 lakh men in the age group of 15-49, found that the **female literacy rate climbed to 72%**.
 - However, it is still 15% less against the global **average rate of 87%**.
- **Status of Schooling: 23% of women** between the ages of 15-49 still had received **no schooling**, as compared to 11% of men. More than **one-fourth of rural women never attended school**, while the number stood at 13% for urban women.
 - Overall enrolment has increased over the years, but a lesser number of girls took admission than boys in primary, secondary and higher secondary levels between 2012 and 2021.
 - According to the [Unified District Information System for Education Plus \(UDISE+\)](#), 14.2% of girls dropped out at the secondary level in 2020-21, while **15.1% dropped out in 2019-20**.
 - **Family pressure** to leave education, **early marriage**, and **household responsibilities** are some of the reasons girls drop out of school.

What is the Healthcare Scenario?

- **Undernutrition and Anaemia:** India performed the worst in the "health and survival" sub-index of the [Global Gender Gap Index 2022](#) **ranking last among 146 countries**.
 - Government data shows that around **20% of women of reproductive age are undernourished**.
 - Nearly **60% of women between the 15-49 age group are anaemic**, compared to 20% of men.
 - The number of anaemic women increased from 53% in 2015-16 to 57% in 2019-21.
- **Impact of Undernourished Mothers on Children:** The nutritional status of mothers has a direct impact on children.
 - NFHS data reveals that **children born to underweight mothers are more likely to be stunted or underweight** than those born to mothers with a normal BMI or children whose mothers are overweight/obese.
 - It also highlights the role of education. More than 45% of children born to **mothers with no schooling were stunted**, compared with 26% born to mothers with 12 or more years of schooling.

How Participative are Women in the Workforce?

- Notwithstanding the increase in the female literacy rate, [labour force participation of women](#) has dropped sharply.
 - As per a report by the [Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy \(CMIE\)](#), about **9% of women were employed or looking for jobs** in 2021-22 — a **decline from 15% in 2016-17**.
- The impact of the **Covid-19 pandemic** was severe for women as the **unemployment rate shot up to 17%**, more than double the rate for men.
 - The proportion of working-age women taking part in **paid work** dropped to **19.2% in 2021** from **30.7% in 2006**.

- Government data also shows that men continue to be more likely to be employed than women in India. In comparison to 75% of men, around 25% of women are currently employed.
- **Literacy levels, the burden of marriage and social norms dictating the role of women** in the public domain are some of the important drivers for lower participation in the workforce.
 - Another reason is that the majority of Indian **women continue to be engaged in unpaid household work**.

What does the NFHS-5 say about Women's Financial Autonomy?

- Among working girls and women, **83% earn cash**, while **22% do not receive any compensation**.
 - The survey shows that **18% of married earning women** make **independent financial decisions**.
 - 85% of married women who earn cash say they make decisions alone or jointly with their husband on how their earnings are to be used.
 - The **husband is the sole decision-maker** regarding the use of a woman's earnings for 14% of females.
- **79% of women have a bank or savings account** that they themselves use.
- Just a little more than 50% of women in the age group have a mobile phone that they themselves use.
- **42% of women own a house alone or jointly with someone**.
- The percentage of employed women who earn about the same or more than their husband has **decreased from 42% (NFHS-4) to 40%**.

What about the Crime Against Women?

- Data shows that over the years, there has been an increase in cases of abuse, harassment, and sexual violence, including **marital rape**.
 - Government data on crimes against women revealed that **India reported a rape every 15 minutes on average in 2018**.
- With the advent of digitisation, things have become even worse with **women getting harassed online** and morphed photos, abuse, and **rape threats becoming more common**.
- The NFHS-5 data found that in India, around **one-third of women have experienced physical or sexual violence**.
 - 30% of women between the age of 18 and 49 have experienced physical violence since they were 15 years old and 6% have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.
- Domestic violence against women marginally declined from 31.2% to 29.3%, but 32% of married women experienced physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence.

What about Women's Representation in Decision Making?

- Not much has changed since independence as far as the **representation of women in decision-making is concerned**— Parliament remains a male-dominated institution.
 - Only **14%** of Members of Parliament in the current Lok Sabha are women. The global average is 25.
- According to the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**, **India ranks 144 in a list of around 200 countries** in terms of the percentage of elected women representatives in the Lower House of Parliament.
 - The representation of women in Lok Sabha has **failed to breach the 20% mark** in around seven decades of Independence.
- Over the years, political parties have promised 33% reservation to women multiple times but that has not happened so far.
- The situation is no different in the Indian **judiciary - women** constitute around **30% of the judges in the lower judiciary, 11.5% in the high courts** and only **four sitting judges out of 33 in the Supreme Court** are women.
 - Out of 1.7 million advocates registered, only 15% are women.
 - Since its inception in 1950, the **SC has seen only 11 women judges**.

Prelims:

Q. The endeavour of Janani Suraksha Yojana Programme is (2012)

1. to promote institutional deliveries
2. to provide monetary assistance to the mother to meet the cost of delivery
3. to provide for wage loss due to pregnancy and confinement

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. What are the continued challenges for Women in India against time and space? (2019)

India - Growth & Development since Independence

What is the Context?

- India's independence ushered in a new era of growth, opportunity, democratic rule and freedom. However, it was not the only region or country undergoing extreme change at that time.
- Several other Southeast Asian and African nations were also fighting for freedom from colonial rule or had become newly independent.
- The West was also recovering from the aftermath of [World War II](#).
- Undoubtedly, India has made significant progress in the past 75 years but **its position at the global level needs some serious attention** when it comes to the developed west or the other countries that gained independence during the same time period under similar circumstances.

How well has India made Progress?

- **Growth Indicators:** Newly independent India had an **extremely poor life expectancy rate and a high infant mortality rate**.
 - **Metalled roads were few and far between, and access to electricity was a luxury** for most.
 - Although India continues to be the world's second-most populated country, it has made major strides in healthcare, infrastructure and technology since then. All three are now accessible to a significant proportion of the population.
 - India's **infant mortality rate declined from 161.8 in 1960 to 27** in 2020.
 - While only 50% of households had access to electricity in the 1990s, the gap has practically closed now.
 - In 2020, **over 40% of Indians were using internet**.
- **Performance of States and UTs:** On various socioeconomic and development indicators, the states and UTs have all progressed over time. But the degree of improvement varies across States and UTs.
 - There are stark differences in the performances of the northern, southern, central, eastern, western and northeastern regions of India.

- **Southern and western States have fared better** than other regions.
- **Eastern States, such as Bihar, Odisha, and Jharkhand, have performed poorly** across indicators.

What do Several Indicators Present?

- **Human Development Index:**
 - **Human Development Index (HDI)** measures three key dimensions of human development:
 - **a long and healthy life** (measured by life expectancy at birth)
 - **knowledge** (measured by mean and expected years of schooling)
 - **decent standard of living** (measured by Gross National Income per capita in PPP terms in US\$).
 - On a scale of 0-1, 1 is the highest HDI possible.
 - India's HDI increased by 0.11 points in 1950 to **0.65 in 2019**.
- **Infant Mortality:** **Infant mortality rate** is the **number of infants who die before reaching one year of age**, per 1,000 live births, in a year.
 - Between 1960 and 1975, India had the seventh worst infant mortality rate. But in **2020, India, with an IMR of 27**, only fared better than Pakistan.
 - Five countries —Turkey, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Egypt and Nepal — **which were behind India in the 1960-75 period surged past with better IMRs** in 2020.
 - Among the states, Nagaland in 2018 surpassed Kerala for the lowest IMR (of **4**). As of 2018, **MP had the highest IMR (of 48)**.
- **Women in Government:** India has seen several women in government and political leadership positions in contrast to countries such as the United States. But when we look at the percentage of women in Parliament, the **number increased to merely 14% in 2021 from 7% in 1997-98**.
 - While the share of women in Parliament has doubled, the **relative pace of growth has been slow** with many countries surpassing India in the considered period.
- **Electricity and Internet Access:** Between 1993 and 2000, just above 50% of India's population had access to electricity. By 2020, India managed to provide **electricity access to 99% of its population**.
 - In the **past 20-odd years** that the Internet has been accessible to the public, **India has managed to provide access to 43% of its population**.
 - Bhutan is the only country in the Indian subcontinent that ranks higher at 53.5%.
 - While India has performed well on indicators such as Internet and electricity access, it has been outpaced by other countries on indicators such as HDI, GDP per capita, IMR and representation of women.

What is the State-Specific Scenario?

- **In terms of HDI:** Among the states and UTs, while in 1990, only Kerala and Goa had scored 0.55, all the States/UTs had crossed this mark by 2019.
 - Only Bihar and Uttar Pradesh had an HDI of less than 0.6 in 2019.
- **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP):** **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)** is the **aggregate of the economic value of all goods and services** produced within a State, counted without duplication during a year.
 - While the State Domestic Product of all the States was below the ₹20,000 mark in 1993-94, it crossed ₹30,000 by 2019-20.
 - In fact, by this time, all the States in the south, west (except Rajasthan) and north (except Uttar Pradesh) had crossed the ₹1 lakh mark.
- **Poverty Rate:** During the mid-1990s, the **poverty rate** was above 30% in more than half of the States/UTs in India.
 - With more than 50% of its population below the poverty line, Bihar had the highest share of poor people in 1993-94.
 - By 2011-12, less than 10 States had a poverty rate above 30%.
 - **Chhattisgarh** (39.9%) had replaced Bihar as the **worst performing State**.
 - **Punjab** (11.8%) had the lowest share of people living in extreme poverty in 1993-94.
 - **Goa had the lowest share (5.1%) by 2011-12**.

- **Life Expectancy at Birth:** **Life expectancy** is the average number of years an individual is likely to live if exposed to the same mortality conditions until death.
 - With an average life expectancy of 72.9 and 75.2 during the early 1990s and 2013-17, respectively, Kerala remained the State with the highest life expectancy at birth.
 - Madhya Pradesh had the lowest life expectancy (54.7) in the 1991-95 period,
 - Uttar Pradesh took its place with a life expectancy of 65 in the 2013-17 period.
- **Toilet Facilities:** In a majority of States, **less than 60% of households had any [access to toilet facilities](#)** in the early 1990s. The northeastern States, along with Kerala, had more than 70% of households with access to toilet facilities in 1992-93.
 - While the share of households with toilet facilities in the northern States was poor during this period, such States caught up with the others by 2019-21.
 - **Mizoram had the highest share of households with any toilet facility during both periods.**
 - By 2019-21, only Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar had not crossed the 70% mark.
- **Unclean Fuel:** The share of households cooking with solid fuel like wood was very high during the early 1990s. The southern States and the northeastern States lagged behind others during this period.
 - By 2019-21, while southern States outpaced other regions, northeastern States were left behind.
 - In most eastern and Central States, **more than 40% of households continued using solid fuel for cooking.**

How is India's Performance on Other Indices?

- **Press Freedom Index:** It ranks countries on a score ranging from 0 to 100, with **100 being the best score**.
 - The **[2022 edition of the World Press Freedom Index](#)** ranked India at **150** out of 180 countries.
 - **India's global score was 41**, against **Norway's 92.65** that was ranked at the top.
 - India's position has **fallen from 80 in 2002**.
- **Environmental Performance Index:** **[Environmental Performance Index \(EPI\) 2022](#)** ranked India at the bottom among 180 countries based on performance across parameters related to mitigating climate change, improving environmental health, and protecting ecosystem vitality.
 - **India's rank fell by 55 points in the last 10 years.**
- **Global Hunger Index:** The **[Global Hunger Index \(GHI\)](#)** is an annual ranking of countries based on the following indicators: Undernourishment, Child wasting, Child stunting, Child mortality.
 - The report was first published in **2006**, and **India was ranked 96 out of 119 countries**. In the latest report published in October 2021, **India was ranked 101 out of 116 countries**.
- **Global Climate Risk Index:** It analyses the extent to which countries have been affected by weather-related loss events like storms, floods, etc. **The higher the rank, the worse the effect of weather-related events** on a country.
 - As per the **[2021 Global Climate Risk Index](#)**, the countries that were worst affected in 2019 were Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and the Bahamas.
 - **India was among the top ten, ranked seventh.**
- **Corruption Perceptions Index:** It scores countries by "**perceived levels of public sector corruption**, according to experts and business people". On a scale of 0 to 100, **0 is highly corrupt, while 100 is very clean**.
 - **India scored 40** on the **[2022 Corruption Perceptions Index](#)** and was **ranked 85**. This was, however, not India's worst performance on the index.
- **Henley Passport Index:** It measures how powerful a country's passport is (the number of destinations that a country's passport holder can visit without a prior visa).
 - The first edition of the **[Henley Passport Index](#)** was published in **2006**, when **India was ranked 71**.
 - **In the 2022 edition of the report, India is ranked 87**; Indian passport-holders can access 60 visa-free destinations around the world.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2009)

1. Infant mortality rate takes into account the death of infants within a month after birth.
2. Infant mortality rate is the number of infant deaths in a particular year per 100 live births during that year.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. Despite Consistent experience of high growth, India still goes with the lowest indicators of human development. Examine the issues that make balanced and inclusive development elusive. **(2019)**

Q. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. **(2016)**

Q. Why do some of the most prosperous regions of India have an adverse sex ratio for women? Give your arguments. **(2014)**

[India at 75 - Part I](#)

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