

## **Out-of-School Children in India**

### **What is the issue?**

\n\n

\n

- The official numbers of out-of-school children in India are contradictory in different reports.

\n

- A recent data in this regard highlights the variations in out-of-school children proportion as well as the reasons behind.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the contradiction?**

\n\n

\n

- The 2011 Census reported the number of out-of-school children in the 5-17 age group as 8.4 crore.

\n

- This stands in contrast to a survey commissioned in 2014 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

\n

- As per this, the number of out-of-school children in the 6-13 age group was only 60.64 lakh.

\n

- This is a gross underestimation as it is unlikely that the number drastically came down from 2011 to 2014.

\n

- Notably, there were no significant changes in objective conditions so as to bring such a reduction.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the recent estimate?**

\n\n

\n

- The number of out-of-school children in India was recently calculated afresh.  
\n
- This was on the basis of the 71st round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) carried out in 2014.  
\n
- Children of the 6-18 age group were taken into account.  
\n
- It was found that out-of-school children in this age group were more than 4.5 crore in the country.  
\n

\n\n

- This is around 16% of the children in this age group.  
\n
- **States** - In some of the big States, about one-fifth of the children in this age group were out of school.  
\n
- These include Odisha (20.6%), UP (21.4%), Gujarat (19.1%), Bihar (18.6%), etc as also MP, Rajasthan and WB.  
\n
- In Kerala, Goa, Sikkim, HP and TN, the proportion was lower than the national average.  
\n
- **Region** - Out-of-school children proportion was around 17% in rural India as against 13% in urban India.  
\n
- In rural areas, the proportion of out-of-school girls (18.3%) was higher than of boys (16.3%).  
\n
- **Groups** - The proportion of children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) was the highest.  
\n
- This was followed by Other Backward Classes (OBCs).  
\n
- Among religious groups, the proportion of Muslims was as high as 24.1% in rural areas and 24.7% in urban areas.  
\n
- **In all**, the data show that out-of-school children came mostly from the rural areas.  
\n
- Also, a high proportion of them are SCs, STs, Muslims and from other economically backward communities.  
\n
- These children were mostly from low-income, landless and marginal families.

- \n
- Most of these children's parents were uneducated and mostly casual labourers.
- \n

\n\n

### **What is the Telangana Report's finding?**

\n\n

- \n
- The Telangana Social Development Report, 2018 brought out key patterns in this regard.
- \n
- The prejudice against educating girls that is prevalent in India is a major reason for children being out of school.
- \n
- According to the report, a proportionately larger percentage of girls than boys was not enrolled.
- \n
- In the rural areas, the gender gap on this count was as high as 13 percentage points.
- \n
- A relatively lower percentage of girls was found going to high fee-charging private schools.
- \n
- Similarly, a relatively lower percentage of girls took private coaching, involving additional costs.
- \n
- A much higher proportion of girls than boys dropped out of school after Class 10.
- \n
- Notably, after this, education is not necessarily free.
- \n
- In Telangana, the average expenditure on the education of girls was less than that for boys.
- \n

\n\n

### **What are the driving factors?**

\n\n

- \n
- **Work** - A key reason for boys to drop out of school was to take up jobs to supplement the family earning.

- \n
- For girls, it was the compulsion to participate in household work.
- \n
- Under RTE and Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Acts, these children fall under 'child labour' category.
- \n
- Ultimately, the largest number of child labourers in the world is in India.
- \n
- **Policies** - The shortfalls in implementing all the provisions of the RTE Act within the time limit is a key reason.
- \n
- E.g. the Act provided for the availability of a school
- \n

\n\n

- \n
- i. at a distance of 1 km from the child's residence at the primary level
- \n
- ii. at 3 km from the child's residence at the upper primary level
- \n

\n\n

- \n
- If implemented, a major reason for drop-out (distance of school) would have been eliminated.
- \n

\n\n

### **What does it call for?**

\n\n

- \n
- A large number of children being out of school is a matter of serious concern to the country.
- \n
- This is particularly even after the RTE Act being in place, and elevating RTE as a fundamental right.
- \n
- Implementation of provisions of the RTE Act in its true spirit is the need of the hour.
- \n
- Besides, an important reason for drop-out is the socio-economic conditions of the parents.
- \n
- There are clear evidences of a positive correlation between economic

incentives and a lower drop-out.

\n

- This calls for a more comprehensive approach that is not reflected in the RTE Act.

\n

- An important provision which ought to have been in the RTE Act is financial support to poor parents.

\n

- Awareness generation on the importance of school education and on the fact that education is now a legal right is essential.

\n

- Ironically, education is both the means and the end for this.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

