

Q. With the widening digital divide, majority of rural population is excluded from the vaccination drive in the country. Do you agree with this view? Comment (200 words)

→ The country's majority population still resides in the rural belt where literacy, electricity, knowledge and Internet connection is yet to reach. Hence a situation of digital divide exist causing the exclusion of majority of rural population from the vaccination drive.

Reasons for exclusion of rural population from the vaccination drive in the country,

- Low internet penetration: National Sample Survey data shows 17% in rural and 42% in urban areas have Internet facilities, because of which they can't access the COWIN web portal or the Aarogya setu.

- Lack of stable connections: Internet latency is more in rural areas, thereby causing hurdles in access.

- Less no. of Internet subscribers in rural areas: India's Telecom Services Performance Indicator Report Oct-Dec 20, shows that the percentage of the rural population that subscribed to the Internet is 34.60%.

- Language barrier: the web site is only available in English making it harder to navigate and Register.

- platform and app based solutions can exclude the poor entirely or squeeze their access to scarce health services further.
- stable and continuous electric supply: there is still large number of rural households which are either un-electrified, or lack a stable supply.

Way forward.

- Implementation of the PMWANI Scheme, in letter and spirit.
- Prolitication of the Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana.
- organising campaign and door to door registration by ASHA and Anganwad: Workers {
- taking the vaccine to the last village, last home by organising village vaccination drive by NRHM

Conclusion:

Only mass vaccination can put an end to covid and end this pandemic, as a socialist and democratic nation we hold the responsibility to vaccinate our citizens of which majority live in rural areas.

Digital divide should not cause hurdle in this path of vaccination resulting in 1st class (urban) and 2nd class (rural) citizens in our society.