



ASER Survey 2020

Why in News

Recently, the **Annual State of Education Report** (ASER) survey has been released which provides a glimpse into the **levels of learning loss that students in rural India are suffering**, with varying levels of access to technology, school and family resources resulting in a **digital divide** in education.

- This year, in the wake of the **pandemic**, the survey was **conducted via phone calls**, reaching 52,227 rural households with school-age children in 30 States and Union Territories (UTs).

Annual Status of Education Report

- It is a **nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes** in terms of **reading and arithmetic skills** that has been conducted by the **NGO Pratham** for the last 15 years.
- It uses **Census 2011** as the sampling frame and continues to be **an important national source of information about children's foundational skills** across the country.
- **ASER 2018** surveyed children in the age group of 3 to 16 years and included almost all rural districts in India and generated estimates of foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of children in the age group 5 to 16 years.
- **ASER 2019** reported on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 years in 26 rural districts, focused on the "early years" and laid emphasis on "developing problem-solving faculties and building a memory of children, and not content knowledge".
- **ASER 2020** is the **first ever phone-based** ASER survey and it was conducted in **September 2020**, the sixth month of national school closures.

Learning hit

Some highlights from the Annual Status of Education Report's September survey:

▪ 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years are not enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018

▪ Around 20% of rural children did not have textbooks at home by September

▪ About 70% of rural

children did some learning activity. Of these, only 11% had live online classes

▪ Less than 36% of rural children received some learning materials or activities from the school. Almost 75% of such school interaction was via Whatsapp

Key Points

▪ Enrollments:

- **5.5%** of rural children are **not currently enrolled for the 2020** school year, up from 4% in 2018.
 - This **difference is the sharpest among the youngest children** (6 to 10) where 5.3% of rural children had not yet enrolled in school in 2020, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018.
 - Due to the **disruptions caused by the pandemic, families are waiting for the physical opening of schools** to enrol their youngest children, with about 10% of six-year-olds not in school.
- **Among 15-16 year-olds**, however, **enrollment levels are slightly higher** than in 2018.
- The **proportion of boys** enrolled in government schools **has risen** from 62.8% in 2018 to 66.4% in 2020, while **for girls, that number has gone up** from 70% to 73% in the corresponding period.
- Patterns show a **slight shift toward government schools**, with private schools seeing a drop in enrolment in all age groups.
- The **Centre has now permitted States to start reopening schools** if they can follow Covid-19 safety protocols but the majority of the country's 25 crore students are still at home.

▪ Availability of Smartphones:

- Among enrolled children, **61.8% live in families that own at least one smartphone** which was merely 36.5% in 2018.
 - About **11% of families bought a new phone** after the [lockdown](#), of which 80% were smartphones.
- **WhatsApp is by far the most popular mode of transmitting learning materials** to students, with 75% of students receiving input via this app.

▪ Availability of Learning Material:

- **Overall more than 80%** of children said they **had textbooks for their current grade**.
 - This proportion was **higher among students enrolled in government schools** (84.1%) than in private ones (72.2%).
- In Bihar, less than 8% got such materials from their schools, along with 20% in West

Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

- More than 80% of rural children in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala and Gujarat received such input.

▪ **Learning Activities:**

- **Most children (70.2%) did some form of a learning activity** through material shared by tutors or family members themselves, with or without regular input.
- 11% had access to live online classes, and 21% had videos or recorded classes, with much higher levels in private schools.
- About 60% studied from their textbooks and 20% watched classes broadcast on TV.

Suggestions

- **Fluid Situation:** When schools reopen, it will be important to continue to **monitor who goes back to school** as well as to understand **whether there is learning loss** as compared to previous years.
- **Building on and Strengthening Family Support:** Parents' increasing levels of education can be integrated into planning for learning improvement, as advocated by [National Education Policy, 2020](#). **Reaching parents at the right level** is essential to understand how they can help their children and **older siblings also play an important role**.
- **Hybrid Learning:** As children do a variety of different activities at home, effective ways of hybrid learning need to be developed which **combine traditional teaching-learning with newer ways of "reaching-learning"**.
- **Assessment of Digital Modes and Content:** In order to **improve digital content and delivery** for the future, an **in-depth assessment** of what works, how well it works, who it reaches, and who it excludes is **needed**.
- **Mediating the Digital Divide:** Children from families who had **low education** and also **did not have resources** like smartphones had **less access to learning opportunities**. However, even among such households, there is evidence of effort with family members trying to help and schools trying to reach them. These children **will need even more help than others when schools reopen**.

Way Forward

- Covid-19 has left the nation with deep economic distress and uncertainty over school-reopenings and thrown open new challenges in every sector.
- The nationally representative sample highlighted the role played by the families where everyone in the family supported children regardless of their education levels.
- This strength needs to be leveraged by reaching out to more students and reducing the distance between schools and homes.

[Source: TH](#)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/aser-survey-2020>