



# Covid-19 Impact on Learning: ASER 2021

## Why in News

Recently, the **16<sup>th</sup> edition of the [Annual Status of Education Report \(ASER 2021\)](#) survey was released.** The survey **analysed the impact of Covid-19 on learning.**

- It shows an increase in dependence on private tuitions and an absence of ready access to smartphones.
- Specific attention is needed to help make up for learning losses, especially in the lowest classes.

## Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Survey

- The ASER survey, which is facilitated by Pratham Education Foundation, is the oldest survey of its kind in the country.
- It is well regarded for the range of insights it provides on levels of foundational learning at the elementary level.
- 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.

## Key Points

- **Increasing Enrollment in Government School:**
  - There was an **unprecedented jump in government school students, and a 10-year low in private school enrolments.**
  - A clear shift from private to government schools — from 64.3% in 2018 to 65.8% in 2020, to 70.3% in 2021.
  - A fall in private school enrolment from 28.8% in 2020 to 24.4% in 2021.
- **Tuition-dependent:**
  - It has reported a **growing dependency on private tuition classes.**
  - Students, especially those from poor families, are dependent more than ever on private tuition.
- **Digital Divide:**
  - There exists a **stark digital divide**, which carries the risk of severely affecting the learning abilities of primary grade students.
  - Almost a third of all children in Classes I and II did not have a smartphone available at home.

▪ **Problems with New Entrants:**

- From having no experience of pre-primary class or anganwadis to the lack of access to digital devices, the pandemic has left the youngest entrants in India’s formal education system **particularly vulnerable**.
- 1 in 3 children in Classes I and II have never attended an in-person class.
- Students who entered the school system after the pandemic will require time to settle down, get ready for the **formal education system**.

▪ **Learning Gap:**

- 65.4% teachers flagged the problem of children being “unable to catch up” as one of their biggest challenges.
- This is also a warning that their learning outcomes are set to be affected unless addressed with urgency.
- During the recent **National Achievement Survey (NAS)** of the central government, teachers and field investigators across the country reported that **primary grade kids struggled to make sense of questions to test basic comprehension and numerical skills**.

▪ **Positive Trend:** The report captured a **decline in the proportion of children not currently enrolled in the 15-16 age group**. This is one of the sections which faces the highest risk of dropping out.

- In 2010, the proportion of 15-16-year-olds who were out of school was 16.1%.
- Driven by the government’s push to universalise secondary education, this number has been steadily declining and stood at 12.1% in 2018. The decline continued in 2020 to 9.9% and to 6.6% in 2021.



**CHART 1**

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH ACCESS TO SMARTPHONES (ALL CLASSES AVG)

	Smartphone at home	Access at all times	Sometimes	No access
I-II	64.9	19.9	40.8	39.3
III-V	66.6	23.7	47.2	29
VI-VIII	66.6	27.6	50.2	22.2
IX-XII	72.6	35.4	47.5	17
All	67.6	27	47	26.1

**CHART 2**

CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS (ALL CLASSES)

% Facing challenges	Low attendance	Children unable to catch up	Connectivity issues
70.2	29.1	65.4	22

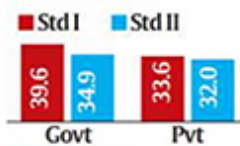
**CHART 3**

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE HELP FROM FAMILY MEMBERS

Class I-II	Class III-V	Class VI-VIII	Class IX-XII
74.3	71	64.9	56.7

**CHART 4**

PERCENTAGE OF CLASS I-II WHO’VE NEVER ATTENDED IN-PERSON CLASS



**CHART 5**

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WITH TEXTBOOKS (ALL CLASSES AVG)



**SURVEY COVERED**

- 25 states, 3UTs, 581 districts
- 17,184 villages
- 76,706 households
- 75,234 children (age 5-16)
- 7,299 schools



**19,414** in III-V  
**12,459** surveyed students in Classes I-II  
**20,064** in VI-VIII  
**15,793** in IX-XII



▪ **Related Government Initiatives:**

- [SWAYAM](#)
- [NEAT](#)
- [National Knowledge Network, \(NKN\)](#)
- [PRAGYATA Guidelines](#)
- [National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning](#)

## Way Forward

- **A Multi-Pronged Approach:** Flexible rescheduling the academic timetable and exploring options in collaboration with schools, teachers, and parents for providing access to education to a larger section of students.
  - Giving priority to the less advantaged students who do not have access to e-learning.
- **Making Online Education More Effective:** Shorter but quality discussions rather than long hours of monotonous sitting and one-way communication, should be preferred.
  - The teacher's role has to go beyond just being in control of the class to being a facilitator for the transfer of knowledge.
- **Focussing more on Knowledge Aspect:** Education is not about competence but more about motivation. The students are meant to discover not just cover the syllabus.

[Source: IE](#)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/covid-19-impact-on-learning-aser-2021>

