



UNICEF's Prospects for Children in 2025 Report

For Prelims: [United Nations Children's Fund](#), [World Bank](#), [Digital Public Infrastructure](#), [Integrated Child Development Service](#), [Mission Vatsalya](#), [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#), [PM CARES Fund](#), [Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing](#)

For Mains: Global and National Child Protection Challenges, Child Welfare in India

Source: [DTE](#)

Why in News?

The [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) report "**Prospects for Children in 2025: Building Resilient Systems for Children's Futures**" warns of escalating **global crises** and their potential impacting children.

- It highlights the urgent need to strengthen national systems to protect children and provide essential support.

What are the Key Highlights of the UNICEF Report on Children's Challenges?

- **Impact of Conflict on Children:** In 2023, **over 473 million children**, or more than **one in six globally**, lived in conflict zones. The proportion of children affected by conflict has nearly doubled from **10% in the 1990s to 19%**.
 - Children face risks such as **displacement, starvation, disease, and psychological trauma**.
- **Debt Crisis and its Impact on Children:** Nearly **400 million children live in countries burdened by debt**, limiting investments in education, healthcare, and social services.
 - The [World Bank](#) estimates that a 5% rise in external debt for **low- and middle-income countries** could cut education spending by USD 12.8 billion. In 15 African countries, debt servicing exceeds education spending, while over 40 low-income nations spend more on debt than health.
 - Debt service now outpaces **social protection** by 11 times, leaving 1.8 billion children vulnerable to economic shocks and deepening poverty.
- **Climate Change Impact:** Only **2.4% of global climate finance** is allocated to child-responsive initiatives, weakening social services crucial for children.
- **Digital Inequality:** [Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\)](#) is transforming how governments deliver essential services like education, healthcare, and social protection to children.
 - However, a significant **digital divide** exists, with youth (15-24 years) in high-income countries enjoying internet access, while **only 53% of youth in Africa have internet access**, especially in low-income countries.
 - Adolescent girls and children with disabilities are particularly impacted, with **9 out of 10 adolescent girls in low-income countries being offline**.
- **Recommendations for Action:** The report calls for **additional financing for climate recovery efforts**, including support for children's **healthcare, education, and psychological**

well-being during [climate disasters](#).

- Create inclusive, fair, and responsible systems that prioritize children's rights and needs.
- Ensure better **integration of child rights** in digital initiatives to bridge the inequality gap.

What are the Key Facts About UNICEF?

- **Established:** UNICEF established in 1946, to help children affected by World War II. It currently operates in over 190 countries and territories, including India.
- **Global Headquarters:** New York City, USA.
- **Mandate:** To protect the rights of children, provide aid to children in need, and advocate for their welfare worldwide.
- **Funding:** UNICEF's programs are supported by voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, foundations, the private sector, and individuals.
- **Awards:** **Princess of Asturias Award** (2006), [Indira Gandhi Prize](#) (1989), and [Nobel Peace Prize](#) (1965).
- **Key Reports:** The State of the World's Children, Humanitarian Action for Children.
- **UNICEF and India:** UNICEF began its work in India in **1949**. Currently, UNICEF has a significant presence in 17 states, covering 90% of India's child population.
 - **Key UNICEF- India Initiatives:**
 - **ICDS (1975):** UNICEF played a pivotal role in the [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#), reaching nearly 40 million children.
 - **Polio Campaign (2012):** Contributed to India's success in eliminating [polio](#).
 - **Maternal and Child Nutrition (2013):** Promoted nutrition awareness through a nationwide campaign.
 - UNICEF helped reduce the [Maternal Mortality Rate \(MMR\)](#) and [Infant Mortality Rate \(IMR\)](#).
 - **India Newborn Action Plan (2014):** Helped launch the [India Newborn Action Plan](#) to reduce neonatal mortality and stillbirths.
- **Guiding Framework:** UNICEF follows the [Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989](#) (India ratified the Convention in 1992) aiming to establish children's rights as universal ethical principles and global standards of behavior towards children.

What are the Challenges Faced By Children in Contemporary India?

- **Climate and Environmental Hazards:** India ranks **26th out of 163 countries** in the [Children's Climate Risk Index](#), with children facing escalating risks from extreme heat, floods, and air pollution.
 - Exposure to [heatwaves](#) is expected to increase eightfold compared to the 2000s. These climate crises will further **strain children's health and education**, particularly in rural and low-income areas where access to healthcare and education is already limited.
- **Child Trafficking:** India faces widespread [child trafficking](#), where children are exploited for **labor, begging, sexual services, and child pornography**.
- **Child Labor:** As per Census 2011, 259.6 million children (5-14 years) reside in India, with **10.1 million working**, mostly in agriculture, domestic work, and small industries.
 - Despite laws like the [Child Labor \(Prohibition and Regulation\) Act \(1986\)](#), which regulate rather than **ban child labor**. Recent amendments allow children to **work in family enterprises**, raising concerns about potential exploitation, especially in rural and informal economies.
- **Juvenile Crimes:** In India, a total of **30,555 crimes were committed by minors** in 2022. The root causes include factors like poverty and lack of education.
- **Child Marriage:** India ranks **4th in South Asia** for [child marriage](#), following Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan.
 - Early marriage not only limits educational and health opportunities for girls but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality.
- **Gender Inequality:** Girls in India, particularly from low-income or rural backgrounds, face higher

risks of **dropping out of school**, **early marriage**, and **inadequate healthcare**.

- **Disadvantaged Children:** Children from rural areas, **slums**, **scheduled castes and tribes**, and urban poor families face severe deprivation in key areas such as **Poverty**, malnutrition, poor school attendance, inadequate sanitation, and poor access to clean water.
- **Population Growth:** By 2050, India will have **350 million children**, making up **15% of the global child population**. With **urbanization**, nearly half of India's population will live in cities, requiring climate-resilient, child-friendly urban planning.

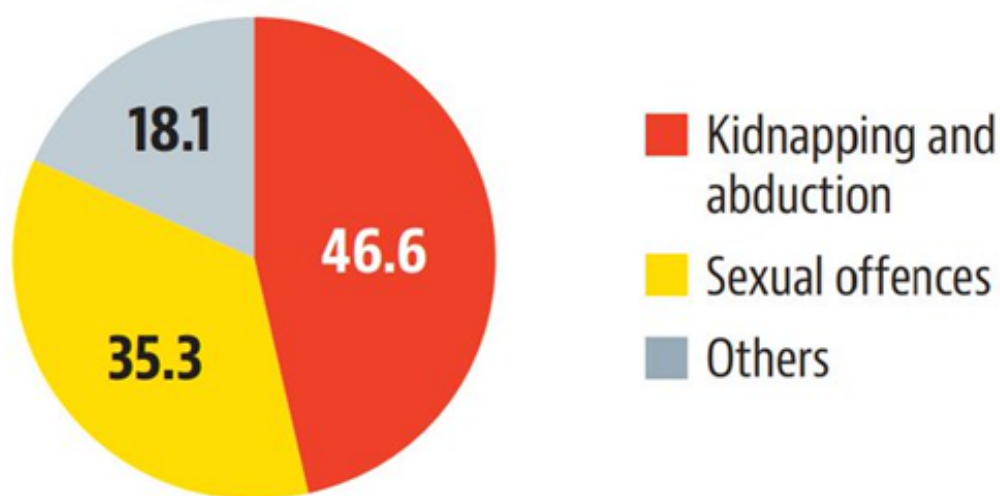
//



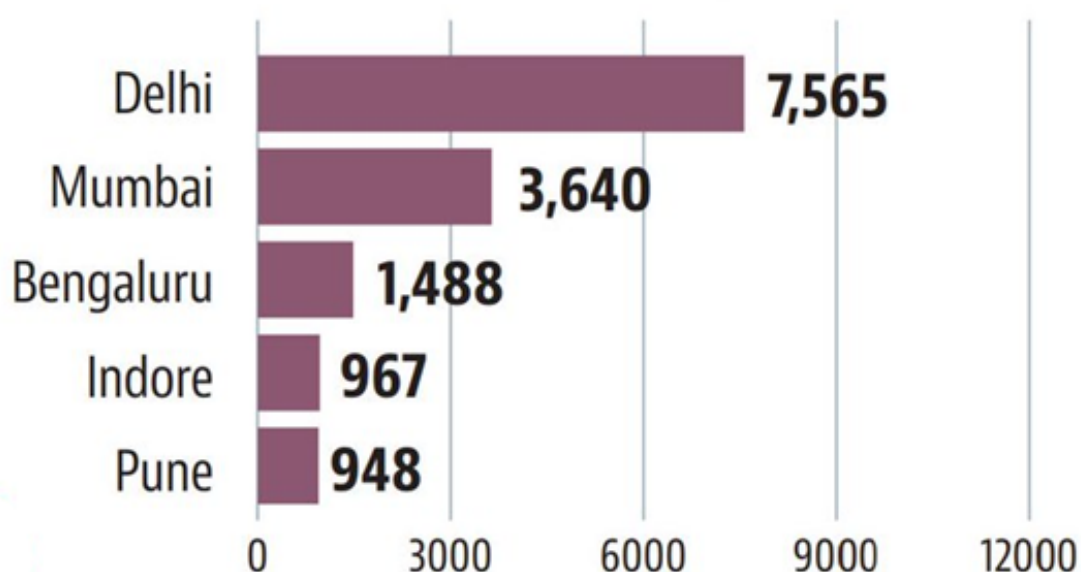
ABDUCTION MOST COMMON CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN

Against children, kidnapping and abduction, which formed 46.6% of all offences, was the most common crime, while sexual offences was on the second spot

SHARE (%) IN CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN



CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN, BY CITIES



Source: 'Crime in India' by the National Crime Records Bureau; Note: NCRB's city-wise data for 19 metropolitan cities which have a population of more than 2 million

What are India's Initiatives Related to Children Welfare?

- [Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0](#)
- [Mission Vatsalya](#)
- [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#)
- [PM CARES Fund](#)
- [Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing \(DIKSHA\)](#)
- [The Right to Education Act 2009](#)
- [Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 2016](#)
 - [Pencil Portal](#)
- [National Child Labour Project \(NCLP\) Scheme, 1988](#)
- [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(Amendment\) Act, 2019](#)
- [Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit](#)
- [The Juvenile Justice \(Care and Protection of Children\) Act, 2015](#)
- [Digital Personal Data Protection Act \(DPDPA\) 2023](#)

Way Forward

- **Sustainable Future for Children:** Ensure access to **healthcare and family planning services** to address demographic transitions. Develop child-friendly cities with **inclusive spaces and infrastructure** for marginalized children.
 - Prioritize children's needs in climate strategies and integrate resilience into local planning.
 - Promote digital literacy and implement rights-based governance for emerging technologies.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Strengthen schemes like **PM POSHAN** and [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(MGNREGA\)](#) to address child malnutrition and provide income security for families.
 - Enhance access to affordable healthcare and sanitation in rural and urban poor communities.
- **Strict Enforcement Against Trafficking:** Bolster the implementation of [anti-trafficking laws](#) with community-based vigilance systems.
 - Increase penalties and address systemic corruption to prevent trafficking networks.
 - **Expand NCLP** efforts to remove children from hazardous occupations and provide them with education.
- **Education Reform:** Improve infrastructure and quality of government schools, particularly in rural areas, through the [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) and the [DIKSHA platform](#).
 - Regulate and **monitor fee structures of private schools**, ensuring affordability and preventing exploitation.
- **Juveniles in Conflict with Law:** Focus on **rehabilitation programs rather than punitive measures**. Allocate greater resources for child protection and reintegration services.
- **Eradication of Child Marriage:** Offer **vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities to at-risk girls** and microloans to families to reduce early marriage pressures.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the impact of global crises like conflict and climate change on children. How can countries, including India, address these challenges?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, consider the following: (2010)

1. The Right to Development
2. The Right to Expression
3. The Right to Recreation

Which of the above is/are the Rights of the child?

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

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement. (2017)

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

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/unicefs-prospects-for-children-in-2025-report>

