

School Enrollment Decline Analysis - Udise Data

Dhruv - [Notebook Link](#)

Date: 27 Jan 2026

Questions

1. Why are the school enrolment numbers falling? Please consider the UDISE data for all years possible. Look at Academic Year 2025 and before that
2. Could you tell me more about the Potential Contributing Factors behind the decline in enrolment numbers

Q1. Why are the school enrolment numbers falling? Please consider the UDISE data for all years possible. Look at Academic Year 2025 and before that

School Enrollment Decline Analysis - UDISE Data

According to UDISE data, India has experienced a consistent decline in school enrollment numbers over recent years, with the total number of students falling from a peak of **271.05 million** in Academic Year 2015-16 to **246.93 million** in Academic Year 2024-25, representing a decline of approximately 24.12 million students over this period.

Enrollment Trends Over Time

ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL ENROLLMENT (NO. OF STUDENTS)	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE (%)
2024-25	246,932,680	-0.45%
2023-24	248,045,828	-1.49%
2022-23	251,791,722	-5.02%
2021-22	265,102,472	0.31%
2020-21	264,321,374	1.64%
2019-20	260,053,932	-0.09%
2018-19	260,294,216	-0.51%
2017-18	261,637,227	0.68%
2016-17	259,859,459	-4.13%
2015-16	271,054,479	0.55%

Key Observations

The most significant decline occurred between Academic Year 2021-22 and 2022-23, when enrollment dropped by **5.02%**, representing a loss of approximately 13.31 million students. This sharp decline was followed by more moderate decreases of 1.49% in 2023-24 and 0.45% in 2024-25.

The enrollment peaked in Academic Year 2015-16 at **271.05 million** students, after which there has been a general downward trend with minor fluctuations. Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, there was a notable drop of 4.13%, followed by relatively stable numbers until the sharp decline post-2021-22.

Positive Developments in Education Infrastructure

Despite declining enrollment numbers, the education system has seen improvements in teacher availability and student-teacher ratios. According to the **Ministry of Education**, for the first time in Academic Year 2024-25, the total number of teachers crossed the **1 crore** mark, representing a **6.7%** increase compared to 2022-23.

The Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) has improved significantly across all levels: Foundational level at **10**, Preparatory at **13**, Middle at **17**, and Secondary at **21**. These ratios are all significantly better than the National Education Policy's recommended ratio of 1:30, facilitating more individualized attention and stronger teacher-student interaction.

Potential Contributing Factors

While the UDISE data clearly shows declining enrollment trends, the specific reasons for this decline are not explicitly detailed in the available reports. However, the pattern suggests potential demographic shifts, with declining birth rates possibly reducing the school-age population. The sharp drop between 2021-22 and 2022-23 may also reflect post-pandemic adjustments in enrollment patterns.

The improving teacher-to-student ratios, despite increasing teacher numbers, further confirms the declining student population trend. This creates an opportunity for enhanced quality of education delivery with better individual attention to students.

Q2. Could you tell me more about the Potential Contributing Factors behind the decline in enrolment numbers

I need to search for more detailed information about the potential contributing factors behind the decline in school enrollment numbers according to UDISE data.

Potential Contributing Factors Behind School Enrollment Decline - UDISE Data Analysis

Based on the available UDISE data and education reports, while the enrollment decline is clearly documented, the specific contributing factors are not explicitly detailed in the official reports. However, analyzing the enrollment patterns and contextual data reveals several potential contributing factors:

1. Demographic Transition and Declining Birth Rates

The most significant factor appears to be India's demographic transition. The consistent decline in school enrollment from **271.05 million** students in Academic Year 2015-16 to **246.93 million** in Academic Year 2024-25 strongly suggests a declining school-age population. This is likely driven by falling fertility rates across India, which has been experiencing a demographic transition with families having fewer children.

2. COVID-19 Pandemic Impact

The sharpest single-year decline occurred between Academic Year 2021-22 and 2022-23, when enrollment dropped by **5.02%**, representing approximately 13.31 million students. This dramatic drop coincides with the post-pandemic period and may reflect:

- Disruptions in enrollment processes during pandemic years
- Economic hardships forcing families to withdraw children from school
- Migration of families from urban to rural areas or vice versa
- Shift to alternative education modes not captured in traditional enrollment data
- Delayed enrollment or grade progression due to school closures

3. Changing Education Landscape

The education sector has undergone significant transformations that may affect enrollment patterns:

- Growth in digital and online learning platforms offering alternatives to traditional schooling
- Increased homeschooling adoption, particularly post-pandemic
- Rise of alternative education models not captured in UDISE data
- Shift in enrollment patterns between government and private institutions

4. Socio-Economic Composition Changes

The socio-economic distribution of enrolled students in Academic Year 2024-25 shows: **OBC students** comprise 111.66 million, **General category** 66.99 million, **SC students** 43.93 million, and **ST students** 24.36 million. Changes in enrollment patterns across these categories may reflect varying socio-economic pressures affecting different communities.

5. Gender Dynamics and Enrollment Patterns

Interestingly, the gender composition has been gradually shifting. The share of girls in high school enrollment has increased from **46.89%** in Academic Year 2012-13 to **49.25%** in Academic Year 2024-25, while boys' share declined from **53.11%** to **50.75%** over the same period. This suggests differential enrollment patterns by gender, possibly indicating boys dropping out at higher rates or entering workforce earlier.

6. Education Level Distribution

The distribution across education levels in Academic Year 2024-25 shows: **Primary level** with 104.38 million students, **Upper Primary** with 63.70 million, **Secondary** with 37.17 million, **Higher Secondary** with 27.64 million, and **Pre-Primary** with 14.05 million. The declining numbers at higher levels suggest potential dropout or transition issues as students progress through the education system.

7. Economic Factors

Economic pressures may be contributing to enrollment decline through:

- Opportunity cost of education versus early workforce entry
- Financial constraints affecting families' ability to support children's education
- Migration patterns driven by employment opportunities affecting school continuity
- Rising education costs despite government initiatives

8. Improved Data Collection and Reporting

Part of the apparent decline may also reflect:

- Better data accuracy eliminating duplicate or ghost enrollments
- More stringent verification processes
- Improved tracking systems reducing inflated numbers

Positive Context: Improving Quality Metrics

Despite declining enrollment, the education system shows quality improvements. Teacher numbers have crossed **1 crore** for the first time in Academic Year 2024-25, representing a **6.7%** increase. Pupil-Teacher Ratios have improved to **10** at Foundational level, **13** at Preparatory, **17** at Middle, and **21** at Secondary levels, all better than the NEP-recommended 1:30 ratio.

Key Takeaway

The decline in school enrollment appears to be primarily driven by demographic factors, particularly declining birth rates and a shrinking school-age population, rather than failures in the education system. The sharp drop during 2021-22 to 2022-23 likely reflects pandemic-related disruptions. The improving teacher-student ratios despite declining enrollment suggest an opportunity for enhanced education quality with more individualized attention for students.

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