



## A STUDY ON EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela

Education is an important element of the growth and development of an economy. Education is the basic right for everyone. Realising the importance of education, this study discusses the status of women's education in India and the commendable strides made in increasing women's literacy rates through the initiatives taken by the government.

**KEYWORDS :** Education, Women education, literacy rate.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the most important tool for both men and women. Education is a tool which provides people with knowledge, skill, technique, information, enables them to know their rights and duties toward their family, society as well as nation. It expands vision and outlook to see the world. It develops the capabilities to fight against injustice, violence, corruption and many other bad elements in the society. Without education, one will not explore new ideas which means not able to develop the world because without ideas there is no creativity and without creativity, there is no development of the nation.

UNESCO data reveals that 50 million girls have been enrolled in school globally since 2015. Likewise, according to UNESCO Institute for statistics shows that there are 22.5 million girls in primary school, 14.6 million girls in lower secondary and 13 million girls in upper secondary education now than in 2025. Completion rate of girls increased from 86percent to 89percent in primary education, 74percent to 79percent in lower secondary education and 54percent to 61percent in upper secondary education. That means that 5 million girls are completing each level of education from primary to upper secondary education now than in 2015.

Education is a fundamental right of every Indian girl as per the Right to Education Act 2009. India is the second most populated country in the world with nearly 48.5percent of female population. India is also one of the fastest growing countries but our women literacy rate is far below the global standard because of the affecting factors like social discrimination, gender inequality etc.

## Objectives of the study

- To examine the women literacy rate in India and to know the factors affecting literacy rate in India.
- To know the government programmes to promote women's education in India.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on only secondary data. All the sources were collected from the journals, newspapers and internet.

## Women Literacy Rate in India

'When women are educated, their countries become stronger and prosperous' - Michelle Obama

Literacy rate is a key indicator of socio-economic progress of a country. Over the years, progress has been achieved by the country in raising literacy levels for both men and women in the country. The literacy rate for women in India have been rising. This is a positive sign and demonstrates a growing awareness of the importance of educating girls. However, few states in India having low level of literacy level due to the factors like gender discrimination, gender inequality.

The following tables explain the state-wise highest and lowest literacy rate in the year 2021-22.

**Table: 1 State-wise highest literacy rate (2021-22)**

	State	Male (%)	Female (%)	Average (%)
1	Assam	90.1	81.2	85.9
2	Delhi	94	82.4	89
3	Goa	93	82	87.4
4	Himachal Pradesh	93	81	87
5	Kerala	97.4	95.2	96.2
6	Mizoram	94	89.4	92
7	Maharashtra	91	78.4	85
8	Punjab	89	79	84
9	Tripura	92.18	83.15	88
10	Tamil Nadu	88	79	83
11	Uttarakhand	94.3	81	88

Source: Survey by National Statistical Office (NSO)

**Table: 2 State-wise lowest literacy rate**

SNo	State	Male (%)	Female (%)	Average (%)
1	Andhra Pradesh	73.4	59.5	66.4
2	Bihar	80	61	71
3	Chhattisgarh	85.4	69	77.3
4	Jharkhand	83	65	74.3
5	Jammu & Kashmir	86	68	77.3
6	Karnataka	83.4	71	77.2
7	Madhya Pradesh	81.2	66	74
8	Rajasthan	81	58	70
9	Telangana	81	65.1	73
10	Uttar Pradesh	82	63.4	73

Source: Survey by National Statistical Office (NSO)

From the above tables, explain state-wise highest and lowest literacy rates in India. Literacy rate is low in some of the states in India compared to other developed countries. There are several factors that influence poorer literacy rate in women as compared to men. The biggest and most crucial factors being inequality and sex-based discrimination. This discrimination pushes the girl child to either never be born (female infanticide) or the women to be predominantly pushed into household affairs.

According to AISHE, the total enrolment in higher education has increased to nearly 4.14crore in 2020-21 from 3.85crore in 2019-20. Since 2014-15, there has been an increase of around 72lakhs in the enrolment (21%).

Female enrolment has increased to 2.01 crore from 1.88crore in 2019-20. The percentage of female enrolment has increased from 45% in 2014-15 to around 49%in 2020-21. The following table shows the enrolment at UG level in major disciplines.

**Table: 3 Enrolment at UG level in major disciplines / subjects (2021)**

SNo	Discipline	Male	Female
1	Arts	49,88,246	54,17,424
2	Science	23,12,602	25,05,224
3	Commerce	22,27,036	20,96,418
4	Engineering & Technology	26,17,155	10,69,136
5	Education	6,08,888	10,40,305
6	Medical science	6,32,069	8,94,178
7	Social Science	5,48,423	5,57,689
8	IT and Computer	5,33,445	3,44,492
9	Management	5,16,273	2,98,594
10	Law	3,16,115	1,61,897
11	Others	6,69,319	6,92,057
	Total	1,59,69,571	1,50,77,414

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education Report, Ministry of Education.

The above table explains the enrolment at UG level in major disciplines of both male and female. Enrolment of female is higher than the male in the disciplines like arts, science, education, medical and social sciences. In education disciplines, females are more attracted towards the profession of teaching than males especially at primary level. Female enrolment lags behind that of male enrolment particularly in commerce, engineering, IT, Management and Law.

### Government programmes for promoting women's education in India

#### Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

This program was introduced in 2001 and is one of the biggest projects in India. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship program for the children to get Universal Elementary Education (UEE). This program covers the entire country and works in partnership with local and state governments. SSA is mainly useful for children between the ages of 6 to 14. It aims to universalize education and improves its quality by time-bound implementation strategy and context-specific planning. It includes children from all social classes.

#### National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Education (NPEGEL)

The NPEGEL program has been initiated by the Government of India to reach girls, especially the girls that are not enrolled in a school. The program was started in July 2003 and this program is a significant component of the SSA. The program provides extra support for improving the education of girls. Some objectives that come under this scheme are the development of learning materials that are gender-sensitive, gender-sensitization of teachers, provisions like stationary, uniforms, and workbooks. The main focus of this program is to break gender stereotypes and to make sure girls get a good education at the elementary level.

#### Midday Meal Scheme

It is also known as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, this plan was launched in 1995 to provide mid-day meals to children studying in primary class. The main objective of creating this scheme was to eliminate classroom hunger of children and to increase attendance and enrolment of children at schools.

This scheme also aims to improve the interaction between children of all castes and religions. It also addresses the issue of inadequate and improper nutrition among children. Women are also socially empowered since the scheme creates employment opportunities. Thus, this scheme can help in developing children emotionally and socially.

#### Right to Education (RTE) Act

The Right to Education (RTE) Act was enacted in 2009, and this Act made education for every child between 6 and 14 years a fundamental right. It also set the basic norms that must be followed by every elementary school in the country. Thus, children got the right to receive free elementary education. This means that no child has to pay any kind of charges or fee to complete education up to elementary level.

The RTE act also aims at the development of a curriculum that makes sure the child receives the benefit of all-round development, building their knowledge, talent, and potential. The Right to Education Act has made it compulsory to reserve 25 per cent in private schools for children from economically weaker families.

#### Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

This scheme initiated in 2015 is one of the most famous central government schemes for girl education. The main aim of this government scheme was initially to protect girl children from female foeticide and infanticide and later, provide assistance for their education. Other objectives of the plan include stopping the practice of gender-determination tests and discrimination against girl children. The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme ensures the protection of girls and their survival and makes sure that girls participate in educational activities alongside boys. This scheme thus spreads the awareness that girl children are not a burden.

#### Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya

Launched in 2004, the KGBV scheme aims at setting up residential schools for girls belonging to minority communities at the upper primary level. This scheme is mainly implemented in the parts of the country where girls aren't enrolled in school.

This scheme provides reservation of 25% to girls from families below the poverty line and the rest 75% to the girls belonging to ST, SC, OBC, and other minority communities. The main idea behind this scheme is that by setting up residential schools, girls from disadvantaged groups of the society can access quality education.

#### CONCLUSION

Women's education is commendable progress in India. The trajectory towards complete gender equality in education is on progress. In recent years, the government has taken many initiatives to promote women's education such as schools for girls, quality education with scholarships. No doubt, these efforts have resulted in significant improvements in literacy level. Despite, few challenges like early marriage, discrimination, domestic responsibilities and safety concerns often compel girls to dropout of school. Hence, the society requires sustained efforts, awareness campaigns and targeted interventions to overcome these challenges.

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