



NARRATIVE REVIEW ON MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH IN INDIA: A FIVE-YEAR PERSPECTIVE ALIGNING WITH THE WORLD HEALTH DAY 2025 THEME "HEALTHY BEGINNINGS, HOPEFUL FUTURES"

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INTRODUCTION:

Maternal and neonatal health (MNH) are critical indicators of a nation's overall health and development. Over the past five years, India has made significant strides in improving MNH outcomes. However, regional disparities and persistent challenges continue to affect progress. This review synthesizes recent research from 2020 to 2024, highlighting trends, state-wise statistics, interventions, and ongoing challenges in India's MNH landscape.

Trends In Maternal And Neonatal Mortality:

India has witnessed a substantial decline in maternal mortality over recent decades. A study by Meh et al. (2022) reported a reduction in the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 398 per 100,000 live births in 1997–1998 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016–2018, with an average annual decline of 6.3%. This decline is attributed to improved healthcare infrastructure, increased institutional deliveries, and targeted government initiatives. Despite this progress, significant regional disparities persist. For instance, from 2018 to 2020, Assam recorded the highest MMR at 195 per 100,000 live births, while Kerala reported the lowest at 19 per 100,000 live births (Statista, 2022).

Neonatal and infant mortality rates have also shown improvement. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted between 2019 and 2021, India's average Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) declined from 41 per 1,000 live births in 2015–16 to 35 per 1,000 live births. However, states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar reported higher IMRs of 50 and 47 per 1,000 live births, respectively, indicating the need for targeted interventions in these regions (IndiaSpend, 2021).

Recent Research and Interventions (2020–2024):

Recent studies have explored various factors influencing MNH outcomes in India:

- Quality Of Care:** Research emphasizes the need for enhancing the quality of maternal healthcare services. Meh et al. (2022) highlighted that despite increased institutional deliveries, the quality of care remains inconsistent, necessitating standardized protocols and training for healthcare providers.
- Community Health Workers:** The role of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) has been pivotal in promoting antenatal care and institutional deliveries, especially in rural areas. Their involvement has led to increased awareness and utilization of MNH services (Meh et al., 2022).
- Digital Health Initiatives:** The integration of digital health tools has facilitated better tracking of pregnancies and timely interventions, contributing to improved MNH indicators. However, accessibility and digital literacy remain challenges in certain regions (Meh et al., 2022).

Progress And Trends (2020–2024):

India has demonstrated a consistent decline in the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) over recent years. According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) data, the national MMR decreased from 130 per

100,000 live births in 2014–2016 to 97 in 2018–2020. This decline is attributed to enhanced healthcare infrastructure, increased institutional deliveries, and targeted government initiatives.

State-wise Distribution Of Maternal Mortality (as per 2024 statistics):

Disparities in MMR across Indian states are pronounced:

- Assam:** Recorded the highest MMR at 195 per 100,000 live births.
- Kerala:** Achieved the lowest MMR at 19 per 100,000 live births.
- Madhya Pradesh:** MMR of 173 per 100,000 live births.
- Uttar Pradesh:** MMR of 167 per 100,000 live births.
- Tamil Nadu:** Demonstrated a significant reduction, with MMR dropping from 52 per 100,000 live births in 2022–2023 to 39.4 in 2023–2024.

State-Wise Distribution of Infant Mortality (as per 2024 statistics):

While national-level Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) data for 2024 is pending release, state-specific reports indicate progress:

- Tamil Nadu:** Reduced IMR from 8.2 per 1,000 live births in 2022–2023 to 7.7 in 2023–2024.
- Mizoram:** Reported the lowest IMR at 3 per 1,000 live births.
- Madhya Pradesh:** Recorded the highest IMR at 43 per 1,000 live births.

Maternity Schemes In India:

Scheme	Key Benefits	Eligibility	Special Focus
PMMVY Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana	₹5,000 for first live birth	Pregnant women aged 19+ years (first child only)	Financial support, nutrition
JSY Janani Suraksha Yojana	₹1,000–₹1,400 cash incentive	BPL families, SC/ST women, 19+ years	Promoting institutional deliveries
Maternity Benefit Act	26 weeks paid maternity leave	Women employees in establishments with 10+ workers	Protecting employment rights
LaQshya Program	Quality care in labour rooms and OT	Public hospitals	Reducing maternal and neonatal mortality
NHM – JSSK Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram	Free delivery, drugs, transport, diet	All pregnant women at govt. facilities	Zero out-of-pocket expenses for deliveries
Ayushman Bharat - PMJAY	Hospitalization cover up to ₹5 lakh	Poor and vulnerable families	Maternal and newborn hospitalization

State Schemes Tamil Nadu: Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme Odisha: Mamata Scheme. Madhya Pradesh: Sambal Yojana for unorganized workers.	Varies (cash assistance)	State-specific eligible beneficiaries	Local needs-based support
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Challenges And Gaps:

Despite progress, several challenges persist:

- **Regional Disparities:** States like Assam and Uttar Pradesh continue to report high MMR and IMR, indicating uneven progress and the need for region-specific strategies (Statista, 2022; IndiaSpend, 2021).
- **Healthcare Accessibility:** Rural and tribal populations face barriers to accessing quality maternal and neonatal care, including infrastructural limitations and shortage of skilled healthcare providers (Meh et al., 2022).
- **Data Limitations:** Timely and comprehensive data collection remains a challenge, hindering effective policy formulation and implementation.

CONCLUSION:

India's advancements in maternal and neonatal health over the past five years are commendable. However, addressing state-wise disparities and focusing on quality care are imperative to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal targets. Continued investment in healthcare infrastructure, community-based interventions, and robust data systems will be crucial in sustaining and accelerating progress.

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