

Literacy for All

India's Journey Towards Viksit Bharat

Mains: *PIB Analysis*

India's literacy journey has progressed significantly since Independence.

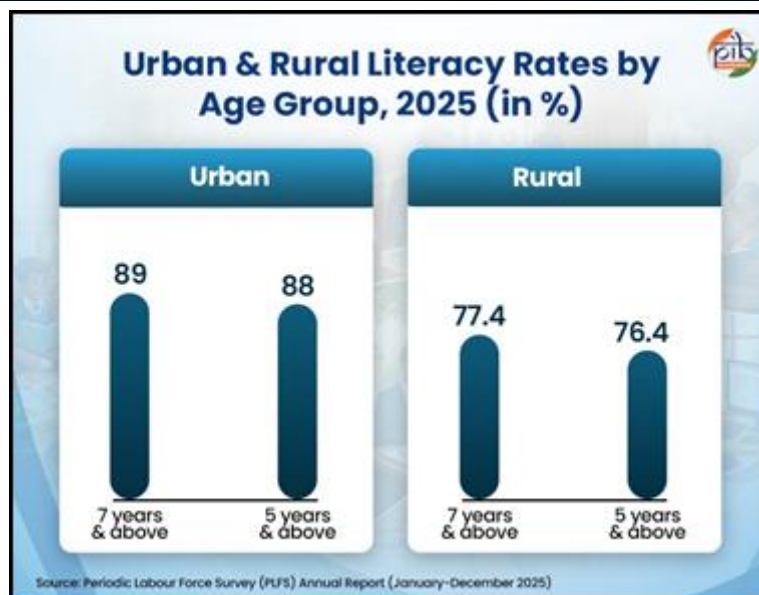
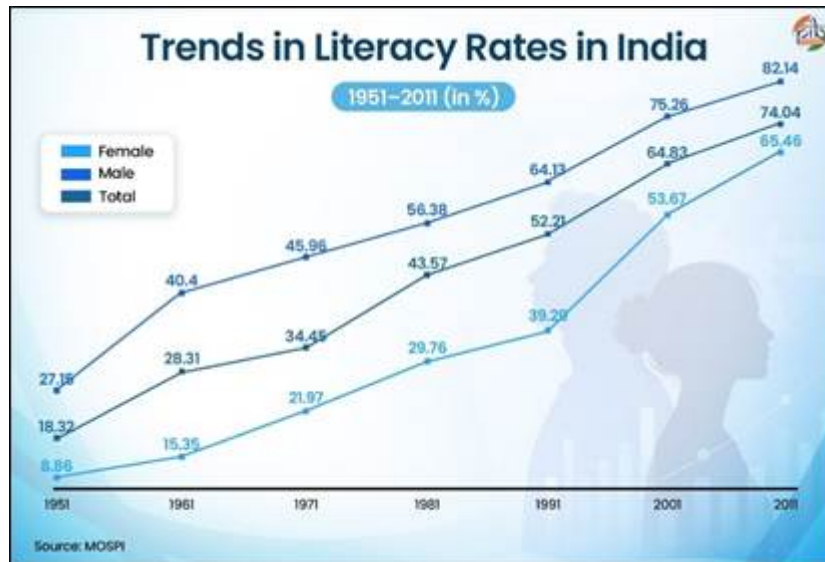
The **PLFS 2025** places India's overall literacy rate at **81.1%**, while initiatives such as **ULLAS**, **NIPUN Bharat** and **NEP 2020** seek to achieve universal literacy, foundational learning and lifelong education.

Understanding Literacy

- The **Department of School Education and Literacy** defines literacy as the ability to **read, write and compute with comprehension**, along with critical life skills such as **digital and financial literacy**.
- **95% literacy in a State/UT** is considered equivalent to full literacy.
- UNESCO views literacy as a fundamental right and a foundation for **equality, inclusion, employment and participation in society**.

India's Progress in Literacy

- India's literacy rate increased from **18.32% in 1951 to 74.04% in 2011**.
- Male literacy increased from **27.15% to 82.14%**, while female literacy rose from **8.86% to 65.46%**.
- Rural literacy increased from **12.10% to 67.8%**, while urban literacy reached **84.1%** in 2011.
- According to **PLFS 2025**, overall literacy reached **81.1%**.
- Literacy among persons aged 7 years and above was **89% in urban areas** and **77.4% in rural areas**, showing a continuing rural-urban gap.
- Gender disparities also remain, particularly in rural areas, where literacy among males was **84.8%** compared with **70.3%** among females.



Improving School and Higher Education

School Education

According to **UDISE+ 2025-26**:

- More than **24.72 crore students** were enrolled in schools.
- GER stood at **91.7% at the Preparatory stage, 89.6% at the Middle stage and 71.7% at the Secondary stage.**
- Secondary-level dropout remained relatively higher at **7%.**
- Transition from Middle to Secondary stage was **88.3%**, highlighting the need to strengthen retention at higher school levels.

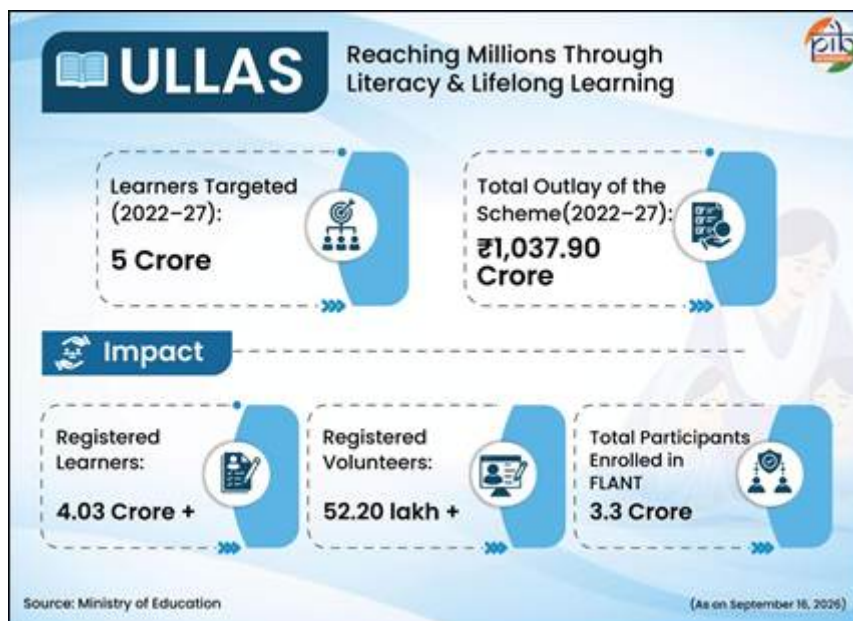
Higher Education

- Enrolment increased from **3.42 crore in 2014-15 to 4.50 crore in 2023-24.**
- Higher education GER increased from **23.7% to 30%.**
- The expansion of participation among women and disadvantaged groups supports the **NEP 2020 target of 50% higher education GER by 2035.**

Key Government Initiatives

ULLAS - New India Literacy Programme

- Targets **adult learners aged 15 years and above** who missed formal schooling.
- Provides **functional literacy, numeracy, digital and financial literacy and lifelong learning**.
- Promotes **Janbhagidari, volunteerism and “Jan Jan Saakshar”**.
- Targets **5 crore learners during 2022-27**, with an outlay of **₹1,037.90 crore**.
- Over **4.03 crore learners** and **52.20 lakh volunteers** are registered.
- **10 States/UTs** declared themselves fully literate between 2024 and 2026.



NIPUN Bharat

- Launched in **2021** under Samagra Shiksha.
- Focuses on **foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)** for children aged **3-8 years**.
- Seeks to ensure foundational skills by **Grade 2**.

Other Supporting Initiatives

- **Samagra Shiksha** - equitable and quality school education.
- **PM SHRI** - development of more than **14,500 exemplar schools**.
- **PM e-VIDYA** - multi-mode digital and on-air education.
- **PM POSHAN** - nutritional support for **11.20 crore students**, improving school participation.

Literacy and Viksit Bharat

- Literacy contributes to **SDG 4** by promoting inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning.
- It also strengthens **women's empowerment, employability, productivity, innovation and social inclusion**. Digital, financial and vocational literacy can improve participation in the modern economy and support emerging **green jobs and sustainable development**.

Way Forward

- **Bridge regional and gender gaps** through targeted interventions.
- Strengthen **foundational learning and teacher capacity**.
- Improve retention, particularly at the **secondary level**.
- Expand **digital, financial and functional literacy** among adults.
- Strengthen community participation and lifelong learning.
- Ensure that literacy translates into **skills, livelihoods, empowerment and meaningful participation**.

Reference

[PIB](#)