

## Maternal Mortality in India

*Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Health*

### Why in News?

A Lancet study (2026) highlights India's challenge in meeting the SDG target of reducing Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR).

- **Definition** - Maternal mortality is the death of a woman during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days of termination, resulting from pregnancy-related causes.
- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** - It is the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births during a given period.
- **SDG Target** - Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to below 70 deaths per 1 lakh live births by 2030.
- **India's Trend**
- **MMR Progress** - MMR fell from 508 in 1990 to 116 in 2023 (Lancet estimate); India recorded 24,700 maternal deaths in 2023.
- **Sample Registration System (SRS) 2021-23** - Reports a lower MMR of 88 per 100,000 live births, showing variation between datasets.
- **Causes** - Haemorrhage & Hypertensive disorders (40% of deaths), Covid 19 setback (2020-21) disrupted healthcare services, data discrepancies & wide demographic diversity.
- **State-Level Challenges**
  - Assam - MMR dropped from 215 to 110 (2015-2023).
  - Uttar Pradesh - MMR fell from 197 to 141, but is still above the national average.
  - Whereas the southern states are closer to achieving the SDG target.
  - National average pulled down by high burden states.
- **Targeted action to reduce MMR** - By strengthening primary healthcare systems, with a focus on maternal and child health.
- When child mortality declines, fertility rates tend to decrease as well - lower fertility, in turn, contributes to a reduction in maternal mortality.
- **Global Context** - 100 countries have already met the SDG target of below-70 MMR by 2023.
- India is in the 100-140 range, along with Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and DRC.
- **Top improver** - Despite challenges, India has been among the top improvers since 1990, alongside Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Morocco, Nepal, and Rwanda.
- **Comparisons caution** - India's large birth numbers (23.22 million in 2023) make direct comparison with smaller countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (565 per lakh) or Nigeria.

*India ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> globally in maternal deaths, recording between 19,000 and 24,700 deaths annually, which represents about 10% of the worldwide total. (Nigeria holds the highest share.)*

## **References**

1. [Indian Express | MMR](#)
2. [Sansad | MMR](#)
3. [World Population Review | MMR](#)

