

# India's Health Progress and Remaining Gaps: Lessons from the SRS 2021 Report

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The SRS 2021 report<sup>1</sup> was released by the Registrar General of India on 7th May 2025. This report gives a good overview of the health and population status in the country. It is based on data from about 7.27 million people from 7,595 sample locations. The findings show that India has made good improvement in health indicators. For example, Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has reduced from 130 to 93 per lakh live births between 2014 and 2021. Similarly, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has also dropped from 39 to 27 per 1,000 live births. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is now 2.0, which is considered replacement level.

However, even though these numbers are good, the progress is not same in all states. Some states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are still lagging behind, and Bihar still has a high TFR of 3.0. This shows that there are regional differences which need to be addressed. The report is useful for planning better health policies for future and for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

### Achievements in Health Indicators

The report shows that many states have done well. For example, Kerala (20), Maharashtra (38), Tamil Nadu (49), Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka and Telangana have already reached or even

gone below the SDG target of 70 for MMR. This means maternal health has improved a lot in these states. The IMR at national level has reduced to 27, and the Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) is now 19. Kerala's IMR of 8 and MMR of 20 shows how good their healthcare system is.

Even the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) has reduced from 21.8 to 19.5 per 1,000 people. States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are showing faster progress in this. These improvements happened mainly because of health programmes like the National Health Mission and Janani Suraksha Yojana, along with better access to health facilities, trained birth attendants and immunisation drives. But this progress is not equal everywhere, and some states are still behind.

### Gaps Between States Still Exist

While many states have shown good results, there are still major differences between regions. For example, Kerala has a TFR of 1.8, but Bihar and UP still have TFRs of 3.0 and 2.7. In terms of MMR also, UP (167) and Bihar (118) are much higher than national average. Similarly, states like Assam and Madhya Pradesh are also doing poorly when it comes to newborn health, with NMR above national average of 19.

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**Table 1: Summary Table of Key SRS 2021 Report Variables**

Indicator	National (2021)	Progress (2014-2021)	State Highlights
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	2.0	Stable at replacement level (2.1 in 2014)	Bihar (3.0), Uttar Pradesh (2.7) Lowest: Kerala (1.8), Tamil Nadu (1.8)
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)	93 per lakh live births	Declined from 130 (2014)	Uttar Pradesh (167), Bihar (118) Lowest: Kerala (20), Maharashtra (38)
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	27 per 1,000 live births	Declined from 39 (2014)	Madhya Pradesh (43), Uttar Pradesh (38) Kerala (8), Tamil Nadu (15)
Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR)	19 per 1,000 live births	Declined from 26 (2014)	Madhya Pradesh (31), Uttar Pradesh (29) Kerala (5), Tamil Nadu (9)
Crude Birth Rate (CBR)	19.5 per 1,000 population	Declined from 21.8 (2014)	Bihar (22.2), Uttar Pradesh (21.8) Tamil Nadu (13.6), Andhra Pradesh (14.4)
Crude Death Rate (CDR)	6.6 per 1,000 population	Slight decline from 7.0 (2014)	Assam (7.5), Madhya Pradesh (7.3) Kerala (5.7), Gujarat (5.8)

These differences are because of multiple reasons. In states like Bihar and UP, there is still lack of proper health infrastructure, shortage of trained doctors and nurses, and many people live in poverty. Also, in rural areas, many women cannot access emergency care during childbirth. On the other hand, Kerala has better literacy, more awareness and stronger health systems. In states like UP and Rajasthan, even the Crude Birth Rate is not reducing fast (only around 0.61% per year), which means more efforts are needed there.

### What Needs to be Done

The SRS 2021 report clearly points out what areas need focus. First, health systems should be strengthened in high-burden states. Mobile clinics and community health workers can help reach rural areas. Second, states like UP and Bihar need to improve family planning services. Third, policies should be made using data. This report has a lot of useful data about each state, which can help in targeting the resources properly.

Public awareness is also very important. People need to be informed about benefits of using health services. Tamil Nadu has done well by doing health campaigns and working with NGOs and local leaders.

Other states can also follow this method. Lastly, more focus is needed on bigger issues like poverty, women's education and gender equality. These social issues also affect health outcomes in the long term.

### Moving Towards SDG 2030

The SRS 2021 report shows that India is definitely improving in health, but more work is required to reduce the gaps between states. To reach the SDG targets like IMR below 12 and MMR below 70 by 2030, we must make sure that not only southern states but also northern and central states improve together. Policymakers should take this report seriously and make sure the progress reaches every corner of the country.

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