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The Hindu & The Indian express

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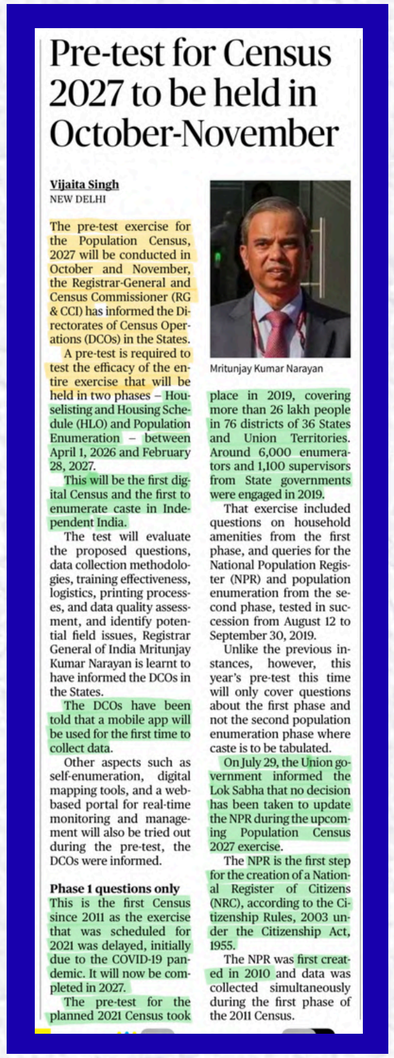


Pre-test for Census 2027 to be held in October-November

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The pre-test exercise for the Population Census, 2027 will be conducted in October and November, the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner (RG & CCI) has informed the Directorates of Census Operations (DCOs) in the States.

A pre-test is required to test the efficacy of the entire exercise that will be held in two phases – Houselisting and Housing Schedule (HLO) and Population Enumeration – between April 1, 2026 and February 28, 2027.

This will be the first digital Census and the first to enumerate caste in Independent India.

The test will evaluate the proposed questions, data collection methodologies, training effectiveness, logistics, printing processes, and data quality assessment, and identify potential field issues, Registrar General of India Mritunjay Kumar Narayan is learnt to have informed the DCOs in the States.

The DCOs have been told that a mobile app will be used for the first time to collect data.

Other aspects such as self-enumeration, digital mapping tools, and a web-based portal for real-time monitoring and management will also be tried out during the pre-test, the DCOs were informed.

Phase I questions only

This is the first Census since 2011 as the exercise that was scheduled for 2021 was delayed, initially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will now be completed in 2027.

The pre-test for the planned 2021 Census took

Mritunjay Kumar Narayan

place in 2019, covering more than 26 lakh people in 76 districts of 36 States and Union Territories. Around 6,000 enumerators and 1,100 supervisors from State governments were engaged in 2019.

That exercise included questions on household amenities from the first phase, and queries for the National Population Register (NPR) and population enumeration from the second phase, tested in succession from August 12 to September 30, 2019.

Unlike the previous instances, however, this year's pre-test this time will only cover questions about the first phase and not the second population enumeration phase where caste is to be tabulated.

On July 29, the Union government informed the Lok Sabha that no decision has been taken to update the NPR during the upcoming Population Census 2027 exercise.

The NPR is the first step for the creation of a National Register of Citizens (NRC), according to the Citizenship Rules, 2003 under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

The NPR was first created in 2010 and data was collected simultaneously during the first phase of the 2011 Census.

Pre-test for Census 2027 to be held in October-November

Source: The Hindu, Page 1

GS Paper II: Social Issues

Context

- Pre-test for Census 2027 will be conducted in Oct–Nov 2025 across states to check methodology, logistics, training, and data quality.
- This Census will be:
- First digital Census (mobile app, digital mapping, self-enumeration, real-time monitoring).
- First to enumerate caste in Independent India.

Two Phases of Census 2027

1. Phase I – Houselisting and Housing Schedule (HLO)

- Purpose: Record houses, structures, and household amenities (water, sanitation, electricity, assets, etc.).
- Provides the sampling frame for the next phase.

2. Phase II – Population Enumeration

- Purpose: Collect individual demographic & socio-economic details – age, sex, education, occupation, migration, religion, caste, disability, etc.

National Population Register (NPR)

- Definition: A register of “usual residents” of India (staying in an area for ≥6 months or intending to stay ≥6 months).
- First created: 2010 during Census 2011.
- Purpose: NPR is the first step to creating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as per Citizenship Rules, 2003 under Citizenship Act, 1955.

Registrar General and Census Commissioner (RGI & CCI)

A senior civil servant (Addl. Secretary rank) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Registrar General of India (RGI):

- Permanent post, responsible for Census, Civil Registration System (births & deaths), and Sample Registration System.

Census Commissioner of India (CCI):

- Role assumed by the RGI during Census operations.
- Legal authority under Census Act, 1948 to plan, supervise, and publish Census data.
- Currently held by Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan.

Industrial growth recovers to four-month high of 3.5% on broad-based growth

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Industrial growth jumped to a four-month high of 3.5% in July 2025, driven by a broad-based recovery in the manufacturing, electricity, capital, and consumer goods sectors.

However, the Index of Industrial Production for July 2025, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Thursday, grew at a slower pace than the 5% growth seen in July 2024.

The manufacturing sector grew at a six-month high of 5.4% in July 2025, compared to 4.7% in July 2024. The electricity sector saw growth returning in July 2025 after two months of contraction.

It grew 0.6% in July 2025, compared to 7.9% in July last year.

The mining sector (-7.2%), however, continued to contract in July 2025, its fourth consecutive month of contraction.

According to Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda, the sector's relatively poor performance can be attributed to the monsoon as well as to subdued demand.

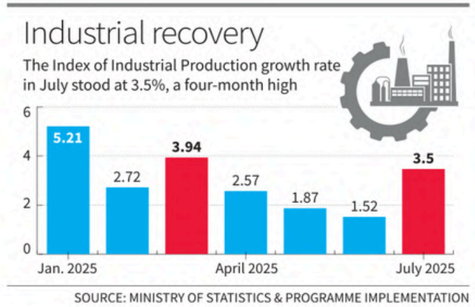
Capital goods sector

The capital goods sector grew by 5% in July, on top of an already high base of 11.7% in July 2024.

"Overall, the metals and machinery segments have done well, with basic metals, fabricated metals, and electric machinery registering double digit growth," he said.

"Non-metallic mineral products too registered an impressive growth of 9.5%. This is a positive sign for investment taking place in the economy."

The consumer durables sector grew at a seven-month high of 7.7% in July, while the consumer non-durables sector grew at an eight-month high of 0.5%.



SOURCE: MINISTRY OF STATISTICS & PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Industrial growth recovers to four-month high of 3.5% on broad-based growth

The Hindu, Page 4, GS3 – Economy

Context

Industrial growth rose to 3.5% in July 2025, the highest in four months, led by a broad-based recovery in manufacturing, electricity, capital goods, and consumer goods. Manufacturing grew by 5.4%, electricity bounced back after two months of contraction, while mining contracted by 7.2%. Capital goods grew by 5%, consumer durables by 7.7%, and non-durables by 0.5%.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

The IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term performance of industrial output in India.
It includes three major sectors: Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
The base year is 2011–12.

It is released every month by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
It serves as an important high-frequency economic indicator and is also used in GDP estimation.

Eight Core Industries :

These are the most important infrastructure industries, whose performance acts as a lead indicator for overall IIP.
They have a combined weight of 40.27% in the IIP.
Released by the Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
Published on a monthly basis, with lesser time lag compared to IIP.

Sector-wise weights of 8 Core Industries in IIP:

Refinery Products – 28.04%

Electricity – 19.85%

Steel – 17.92%

Coal – 10.33%

Crude Oil – 8.98%

Natural Gas – 6.88%

Cement – 5.37%

Fertilizers – 2.63%

India's demographic dividend as a time bomb

Martin Whitehead

is a behavioural economist and former Partner, PwC

Amar Anand Singh

is currently Chief Investment Officer of Auroville Investment Management Limited and Founder of the Auro Group of Companies. He was Managing Director and part of the founding team at Tybourne Capital

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore once said, "Don't limit a child to your own learning, for she was born in another time." In the context of India's education system, this quote is particularly resonant today. India's education system is outdated. We are preparing students for jobs that are rapidly disappearing or evolving.

Meanwhile the future of work is being shaped by emerging technologies, led by Artificial Intelligence (AI), being the most disruptive of them all. AI is reshaping how we work and think, with our research suggesting that up to 70% of current jobs, globally, will be impacted, and up to 30% of tasks in many current jobs will get completely automated. A plethora of new jobs related to AI development and implementation are being created as we speak. This technological shift via AI is already changing the world and the job market, whereas the curriculum update cycle in our schools and colleges runs in three-year cycles. This is incremental at best, leading to many students being left behind if we do not up-skill, cross-skill and re-skill them.

India's 'demographic dividend' has long been touted as a key driver of the nation's future growth. With more than 800 million people below the age of 35, the country boasts of having one of the largest youth populations anywhere. This demographic 'asset', however, is increasingly under threat of becoming a 'liability', as the gap between education and real-world skills, and degrees and employability widens. If this gap is not addressed, India's demographic dividend could morph into a demographic time bomb – a paradox at scale.

The stark reality is that while India is producing millions of graduates every year, many of these graduates remain underemployed and are increasingly becoming unemployable. Despite popular belief, this is not merely a problem facing social science or non-STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students. Over the past decade, data show that 40%-50% of engineering graduates from Indian universities have not been placed in jobs, highlighting the worrying gap between academic education and industry requirements. More and more youngsters are going to college or university, yet employers report increasing difficulty in finding talent with the right skills. Belatedly, educators are acknowledging the problem, with 61% of higher education leaders today agreeing that curricula are not aligned with rapidly changing job market needs.

The mismatch begins in high school

As the AI revolution accelerates, India faces a deepening skills crisis. According to McKinsey, nearly seven out of every 10 Indian jobs are at risk from automation by 2030. This means a massive and unprecedented change could be affecting the nation in just the next five years. Of course, it is not all bad news. The World Economic Forum predicts that AI and other new tech will create 170 million new jobs by 2030. The problem is that in the same period, more than half of this number of newly created jobs (92 million) will be displaced. Consequently, skilling must become a critical national priority.

The challenge lies in how Indian youth are entering the workforce. A significant number are doing so with outdated or irrelevant skills. This misalignment begins in high school, where students are largely unaware of the multitude of career paths that exist. A Mindler Career Awareness Survey from 2022 revealed that 93% of Indian students between classes 8 to 12 are aware of only seven career options, most of which are traditional roles such as doctor, engineer, lawyer, or teacher. In contrast, the modern economy offers over 20,000 career paths. Surprisingly, a mere 7% of students report receiving formal career guidance during their schooling years. This lack of awareness leads to millions of our best and brightest, pursuing degrees that do not match their aptitudes or market needs. Do not take our word for it. According to the India Skills Report 2024, more than 65% of high school graduates pursue degrees that are not aligned with their interests or abilities. This alarming reality means that students emerge from their degrees ill-equipped for the rapidly changing job market, further exacerbating India's unemployment crisis.

Digital tools, but analog mindsets

While most students in India now have access to some technology as smartphones have become much cheaper, and the government has also tried to roll out computer and AI labs, most schools still follow traditional, examination-centric curricula. There is limited focus on career exploration or the development of job-ready skills. As a result, students graduate with degrees but lack the practical experience required by employers. In fact, the Graduate Skills Index 2025 produced by Mercer-Mettl found that only 43% of Indian graduates are deemed job-ready. In our experience with interns and fresh graduates, this figure, if anything, underestimates the scale of the problem.

EdTech platforms primarily focus on test preparation and rote learning, rather than career discovery or skill development. Coursera, Udemy and other look-alikes have tried to address this problem, but the certificates obtained from these are becoming increasingly commoditised. School curricula remain disconnected from the evolving job market, leaving students unprepared for the challenges ahead. Only a few State boards and central bodies have introduced career readiness frameworks, and even fewer integrate emerging career pathways into their curricula.

The Indian government, to its credit, has launched several initiatives that are aimed at bridging the skills gap, the most prominent being the Skill India Mission, which aimed to train over 400 million individuals by 2022. Despite large-scale funding, the mission fell far short of this target. Multiple systemic issues have contributed to this failure: besides the Skill India Mission, an acronym soup of other policies has also been launched which includes the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PMYY), Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP), Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, and many others.

What India needs is a cohesive strategy that aligns education and skill development with industry demands. We have undertaken deep research and devised a platform for just that. We are in conversations with NITI Aayog, the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), and the Skill Ministry to translate this solution into reality. Collaboration between the government, private sector and educational institutions will be essential to create a robust ecosystem for skill development.

The decisive decade

India's ambition to emerge as a global digital powerhouse rests on its ability to integrate technology, education and employment into a coherent national framework. India's youth will either be equipped with the skills to thrive in an AI-driven world or be left behind. This is not just an education or employment crisis; it is a crisis where our entire social contract could come undone. The student civil disobedience during the Mandal Commission days in 1990 bear witness to the havoc that youth-led protests can create, escalating into violence, clashes with police, property destruction, and, in some cases, fatalities due to police firings. If India fails to act now, it risks creating a generation of highly literate, even educated but unemployable youth that can become a ticking time-bomb. The World Bank Economic Review has ably captured this paradox at scale in an article by Lant Pritchett, "Where Has All the Education Gone?". The ramifications of such a crisis are dire. The good news is that this is an entirely fixable problem. India must prepare its youth not for the jobs of yesterday, but for the careers of tomorrow. The clock is ticking and it is up to us to convert India's demographic dividend into an asset or a liability.

Ritu Kulshrestha supported the initial stages of the article, specifically with data content and drafting

India's demographic 'asset' – its large youth population – is in danger of becoming a 'liability' as the gap between education and real-world skills and degrees and employability grows wider

India's demographic dividend as a time bomb

The Hindu, Page 8, Editorial

GS2/3

Demographic dividend

A potential growth boost that arises when the share of working-age population is high relative to dependents—but it turns into a dividend only if people are educated, skilled and productively employed.

Context

The piece warns that India's much–touted youth bulge is at risk of becoming a liability. Rapid advances in AI are reshaping work while India's schooling and higher-education systems remain exam–centric and misaligned with labour–market needs. Without urgent skilling and career guidance reforms, the "dividend" could morph into a demographic time bomb.

Important data

AI impact: Research cited says up to 70% of current jobs globally will be impacted, and up to 30% of tasks in many current jobs could be fully automated.

WEF projection: 170 million new jobs by 2030 from AI and new tech, yet 92 million jobs could be displaced in the same period—making skilling a critical national priority.

Size of youth cohort: Over 800 million Indians are below 35.

Graduate employability gap: Over the past decade, 40%–50% of engineering graduates from Indian universities have not been placed in jobs; 65% of higher–education leaders agree curricula are not aligned with changing market needs.

School–to–work misalignment:

Mindler Career Awareness Survey 2022: 93% of students (Classes 8–12) know only seven career options, while the modern economy has over 20,000 career paths; only 7% received formal career guidance in school.

India Skills Report 2024: More than 61% of high-school graduates pursue degrees not aligned with their interests or abilities.

McKinsey: Nearly 7 out of 10 Indian jobs are at risk from automation by 2030.

Mercer–Mettl Graduate Skills Index 2023: Only 43% of Indian graduates are job-ready.

Policy performance: Skill India Mission aimed to train over 400 million people by 2022 but fell far short of the target despite large funding. Related schemes listed include PMKVY, PMKK, JSS, PMYY, SANKALP, and the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme.

Flow

Problem statement: India is producing millions of graduates, yet many are under–employed or unemployable because classroom learning is examination–centric and decoupled from job–ready skills.

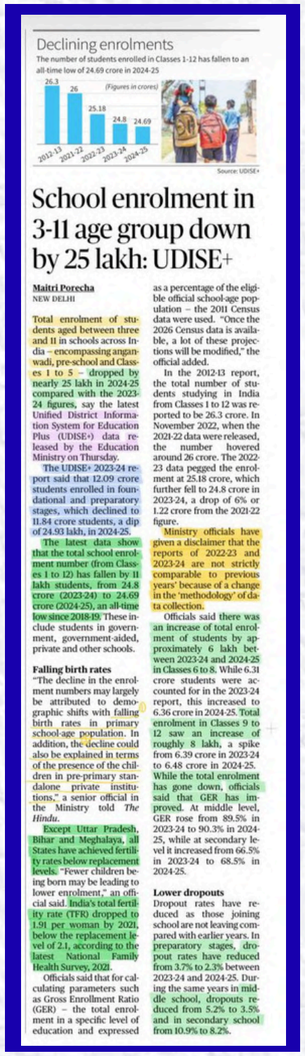
Where the mismatch begins: It starts in high school—students lack exposure to the spectrum of careers and receive minimal formal guidance, leading to poor degree choices.

Digital access ≠ job–ready skills: Despite smartphones, computer/AI labs and EdTech growth, most institutions still emphasize rote learning; certificates are commoditised and practical experience is scarce.

Policy gaps: Many initiatives exist but function as an acronym soup and have under–delivered on skilling outcomes.

What is needed: A cohesive national strategy aligning education, skilling and industry demand, with collaboration among government (including NITI Aayog and the Skill Ministry), AIU, private sector and educational institutions to build a robust skill ecosystem.

Why now: The coming decade is decisive. Without swift action, India risks a generation of literate but unemployable youth—a potential source of social unrest. With the right reforms, the youth bulge can still be converted from a liability into a true dividend.



Declining enrolments

The number of students enrolled in Classes 1-12 has fallen to an all-time low of 24.69 crore in 2024-25

Source: UDISE+

School enrolment in 3-11 age group down by 25 lakh: UDISE+

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Total enrolment of students aged between three and 11 in schools across India – encompassing anganwadi, pre-school and Classes 1 to 5 – dropped by nearly 25 lakh in 2024-25 compared with the 2023-24 figures, say the latest Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) data released by the Education Ministry on Thursday.

The UDISE+ 2023-24 report said that 12.09 crore students enrolled in foundational and preparatory stages, which declined to 11.84 crore students, a dip of 24.93 lakh, in 2024-25.

The latest data show that the total school enrolment number (from Classes 1 to 12) has fallen by 11 lakh students, from 24.8 crore (2023-24) to 24.69 crore (2024-25), an all-time low since 2018-19. These include students in government, government-aided, private and other schools.

Falling birth rates

"The decline in the enrolment numbers may largely be attributed to demographic shifts with falling birth rates in primary school-age population. In addition, the decline could also be explained in terms of the presence of the children in pre-primary standalone private institutions," a senior official in the Ministry told *The Hindu*.

Except Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Meghalaya, all States have achieved fertility rates below replacement levels. "Fewer children being born may be leading to lower enrolment," an official said. India's total fertility rate (TFR) dropped to 1.91 per woman by 2021, below the replacement level of 2.1, according to the latest National Family Health Survey, 2021.

Officials said that for calculating parameters such as Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) – the total enrolment in a specific level of education and expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population – the 2011 Census data were used. "Once the 2026 Census data is available, a lot of these projections will be modified," the official added.

In the 2012-13 report, the total number of students studying in India from Classes 1 to 12 was reported to be 26.3 crore. In November 2022, when the 2021-22 data were released, the number hovered around 26 crore. The 2022-23 data pegged the enrolment at 25.18 crore, which further fell to 24.8 crore in 2023-24, a drop of 6% or 1.22 crore from the 2021-22 figure.

Ministry officials have given a disclaimer that the reports of 2022-23 and 2023-24 are not strictly comparable to previous years' because of a change in the 'methodology' of data collection.

Officials said there was an increase of total enrolment of students by approximately 6 lakh between 2023-24 and 2024-25 in Classes 6 to 8. While 6.31 crore students were accounted for in the 2023-24 report, this increased to 6.36 crore in 2024-25. Total enrolment in Classes 9 to 12 saw an increase of roughly 8 lakh, a spike from 6.39 crore in 2023-24 to 6.48 crore in 2024-25. While the total enrolment has gone down, officials said that GER has improved. At middle level, GER rose from 89.5% in 2023-24 to 90.3% in 2024-25, while at secondary level it increased from 66.5% in 2023-24 to 68.5% in 2024-25.

Lower dropouts

Dropout rates have reduced as those joining school are not leaving compared with earlier years. In preparatory stages, dropout rates have reduced from 3.7% to 2.3% between 2023-24 and 2024-25. During the same years in middle school, dropouts reduced from 5.2% to 3.5% and in secondary school from 10.9% to 8.2%.

School enrolment in 3–11 age group down by 25 lakh: UDISE+

The Hindu, Page 6, GS-2 — Social Issues

Key terms

Total Fertility Rate (TFR): The average number of children a woman would have over her lifetime given current age-specific fertility rates.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER): Total enrolment in a given level of education (regardless of age) expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population for that level.

Dropout rate: The proportion of students who leave a level of education without completing it, usually expressed as a percentage of the cohort enrolled at the start of that level.

Context

The Education Ministry's UDISE+ data for 2024–25 shows a continuing decline in overall school enrolment (Classes 1–12), with a pronounced fall in the 3–11 (foundational and preparatory) age cohort — raising concerns about falling birth rates, pre-primary shifts to private standalone centres, and future school-age population trends.

Important Data – UDISE+ 2024–25

Overall enrolment (Classes 1–12):
Fell to 24.69 crore in 2024–25 – the lowest since 2018–19.
Foundational & Preparatory (Age 3–11):

Enrolment dropped from 12.09 crore (2023–24) to 11.84 crore (2024–25).
Decline of ≈25 lakh students.

Shifts within higher levels:
Classes 6–8: Increased from 6.31 crore to 6.36 crore (+6 lakh).
Classes 9–12: Increased from 6.39 crore

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER):
Middle level: 89.5% → 90.3%.
Secondary level: 66.5% → 68.5%.

Dropout rates:
Preparatory: 3.7% → 2.3%.
Middle school: 5.2% → 3.5%.
Secondary school: 10.9% → 8.2%.

Demographic factors:

India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR): 1.91 (2021), below replacement level of 2.1 (NFHS–2021).
All states except Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Meghalaya are now below replacement fertility.
Falling fertility and migration to standalone private pre-schools cited as main causes of early-age enrolment decline.

Methodology note:

Projections currently based on 2011 Census data.
Reports of 2022–23 and 2023–24 not strictly comparable due to changes in data collection.
2026 Census will recalibrate enrolment and GER figures.
Source: UDISE+, Ministry of Education.