



## DECLINE IN SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS – SOCIAL ISSUE

**NEWS:** Sharp fall in Madrasa and unrecognised school enrolments

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

#### Overall Decline in School Enrolments

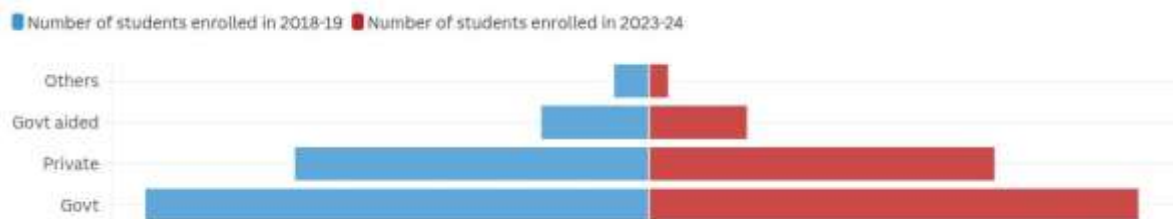
- **Key Statistics:**
  - The total number of students enrolled in Indian schools during 2023-24 declined by **1.22 crore** compared to the 2018-19 academic year.
  - This significant decline has been attributed to the introduction of Aadhaar numbers and unique student IDs to identify beneficiaries of educational schemes, which resulted in the elimination of **duplicate and ghost entries**.
- **Breakdown by School Type:**
  - **Government Schools:** Enrolments dropped from **13.1 crore in 2018-19** to **12.7 crore in 2023-24**, marking a decrease of **36 lakh students**.
  - **Government-Aided Schools:** The number of enrolled students fell from **2.7 crore** to **2.5 crore**, a decline of **24 lakh students**.
  - **Private Schools:** Enrolments declined from **9.2 crore** to **9 crore**, showing a reduction of **21 lakh students**.
  - **Other Schools (including unrecognised schools and Madrasas):** These schools saw the sharpest decline, with enrolments dropping from **90 lakh** to **49 lakh**, a significant decrease of over **40 lakh students**.

#### Disproportionate Impact on "Other Schools"

- **Representation in Total Enrolments:**
  - In both 2018-19 and 2023-24, "other schools," which include unrecognised schools and Madrasas, constituted only **2% to 4%** of total school enrolments.
  - However, these schools accounted for **33% of the total decline** in enrolments, indicating a disproportionately higher impact.
- **Percentage Decline by School Type:**
  - Enrolments in **government schools** declined by **2.8%**, while government-aided schools experienced a drop of **8.7%**.
  - In contrast, private schools witnessed a more modest decline of **2.3%**.



- The sharpest decline occurred in "other schools," where enrolments decreased by a staggering **44.8%**, underscoring the unique challenges faced by these institutions.



## Breakdown of Enrolments in "Other Schools"

- **Recognised Madrasas:**
  - Student enrolments in recognised Madrasas fell from **30 lakh in 2018-19** to **25 lakh in 2023-24**, marking a decline of **16%**.
  - Interestingly, despite this decline, the number of recognised Madrasa schools increased by **7%**, and the number of teachers working in these schools rose by **13%**. This suggests a potential mismatch between infrastructure growth and student demand.
- **Unrecognised Madrasas:**
  - The enrolments in unrecognised Madrasas dropped drastically from **6.1 lakh to 78,283**, reflecting an **87% decline**.
  - This steep reduction coincides with a significant decrease in the number of these schools and teachers, likely due to regulatory pressures and non-compliance with government standards.
- **Other Unrecognised Schools:**
  - Enrolments in other unrecognised schools declined from **53 lakh to 23.5 lakh**, a drop of **56%**.
  - This can be attributed to stricter enforcement of licensing requirements and the removal of duplicate and ghost student entries from official records.

## Key Observations and Questions Raised

- **Recognised Madrasas:**
  - Despite an increase in the number of schools and teachers, recognised Madrasas witnessed a **16% decline** in student enrolments.



- This discrepancy raises questions about whether the decline is due to a genuine reduction in the number of students or the elimination of duplicate and ghost entries during data sanitisation.
- **Unrecognised Madrasas and Schools:**
  - The steep drop in enrolments in unrecognised Madrasas (**87%**) and other unrecognised schools (**56%**) aligns with a significant reduction in the number of these institutions and their teachers.
  - This suggests that stricter regulatory oversight and the inability of these institutions to meet government licensing criteria have played a major role in their decline.
- **Role of Aadhaar and Unique IDs:**
  - The introduction of Aadhaar-linked unique student IDs has likely improved the accuracy of enrolment data by eliminating duplicate and ghost entries.
  - However, this process has disproportionately affected unrecognised schools and Madrasas, raising concerns about the potential exclusion of genuine students.

## Implications of the Findings

- **Policy and Regulation:**
  - The findings highlight the challenges of ensuring compliance and transparency in the education sector, particularly for unregulated institutions such as unrecognised schools and Madrasas.
  - Policymakers need to carefully balance the enforcement of regulations with the provision of support to schools serving marginalised communities.
- **Equity Concerns:**
  - The disproportionate impact on unrecognised schools and Madrasas raises concerns about the accessibility of education for economically and socially disadvantaged groups.
  - Further research is needed to determine whether these enrolment declines reflect genuine barriers to education or improved data accuracy.
- **Future Steps:**
  - It is crucial to investigate whether the drop in enrolments is primarily due to the removal of duplicate and ghost entries or an actual decrease in the number of students attending these schools.



- Special attention must be given to recognised Madrasas, where infrastructure and teacher numbers have increased, but student enrolments have dropped, to better understand the underlying factors.
- Measures must be implemented to ensure that students affected by the closure of unrecognised schools are transitioned into recognised schools or other formal education systems.

## Key Takeaways

- The decline of **1.22 crore enrolments** between 2018-19 and 2023-24 reflects a combination of improved data collection methods and actual reductions in student numbers, particularly in "other schools."
- Recognised Madrasas show conflicting trends, with increased infrastructure and teacher numbers but declining student enrolments.
- Unrecognised schools and Madrasas have faced the sharpest declines due to stricter regulations and the elimination of duplicate records, disproportionately impacting their enrolment numbers.
- Policymakers must ensure that efforts to regulate the education sector do not exclude genuine students, especially from marginalised communities, and address the systemic challenges faced by unrecognised institutions.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/data/sharp-fall-in-madrasa-and-unrecognised-school-enrolments/article69068328.ece>