

2. Civil Registration System

The Registrar General of India (RGI) released the “Vital Statistics of India Based on the Civil Registration System (CRS)”, highlighting key demographic trends, a decline in births, a marginal rise in deaths, and regional variations in sex ratio at birth and registration levels.

About the Civil Registration System (CRS)

Definition and Purpose – The Civil Registration System (CRS) is a nationwide mechanism for the continuous, permanent, and compulsory recording of vital events – primarily births, deaths, and stillbirths – that occur in India.

Legal Framework – CRS operates under the Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969, which legally mandates reporting and registration of every birth and death to the designated Registrar of the local area where the event occurs.

Coverage and Administration – The system is jointly administered by the Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and by State Governments through local registrars.

Scope – CRS does not cover the registration of marriages or divorces, which are governed by separate personal and state laws.

Data Importance – CRS data serves as the foundation for vital statistics, providing evidence for population estimation, health policy design, maternal and child health monitoring, and SDG progress assessment (especially SDG 3 on health and SDG 5 on gender equality).

Key Findings of the CRS 2023 Report

1. Birth Registration

Total Births Registered – In 2023, 2.52 crore births were registered across India – a decline of about 2.32 lakh compared to 2022 (which had 2.54 crore registrations).

Coverage Rate – The overall birth registration rate stood at 98.4%, indicating near-universal coverage under CRS – a major administrative achievement reflecting improved awareness and digital reporting systems.

Institutional Births – Around 74.7% of total registered births were institutional births, i.e., occurring in hospitals, maternity homes, or healthcare facilities. This marks a significant indicator of healthcare access and maternal safety, aligning with the goals of the National Health Mission (NHM).

2. Death Registration

Total Deaths Registered – A total of 86.6 lakh deaths were registered in 2023, marking a marginal increase from 86.5 lakh in 2022.

Trend Analysis – A sharp rise was observed in 2021, when deaths rose to 102.2 lakh, an increase of nearly 21 lakhs from 2020 – attributed mainly to the second wave of COVID-19. Post-pandemic, registration levels have stabilised, indicating system recovery and improved data consistency.

Registration Rate – The death registration coverage remains high, reflecting better integration between health institutions, local registrars, and digital record systems.

3. Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)

Definition – Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) represents the number of female births per 1,000 male births, serving as a critical indicator of gender equity and child survival.

National Trend – The all-India SRB remains below the natural level (952–975), suggesting persistent gender bias and sex-selective practices in several regions.

States with Lowest SRB (2023) –

1. **Jharkhand (899)**
2. **Bihar (900)**
3. **Telangana (906)**
4. **Maharashtra (909)**
5. **Gujarat (910)**
6. **Haryana (911)**

7. Mizoram (911)

States with Highest SRB (2023) -

1. Arunachal Pradesh (1,085)
2. Nagaland (1,007)
3. Goa (973)
4. Tripura (972)
5. Kerala (967)

Pattern Observation - Bihar continues to record the lowest SRB since 2020, reflecting a deep-rooted gender imbalance that persists despite awareness drives. States with high SRB (like Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland) generally show less gender bias and stronger community-level social balance.

4. Timeliness of Birth Registration

Definition - Timely registration means the recording of a birth within 21 days of its occurrence, as per the RBD Act, 1969.

High-performing States/UTs - 11 States/UTs achieved more than 90% timely registration, including - Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Goa, Punjab, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Delhi, Puducherry, and Chandigarh.

Moderate-performing States (80–90%) - 5 States - Odisha, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh - reported moderate levels of timeliness.

Lagging States (50–80%) - 14 States continue to face administrative or logistical delays, often due to low digital penetration or rural outreach gaps.

Missing Data - Sikkim did not submit data for 2023, and hence, was excluded from the report.

Structural and Administrative Insights

Improved Data Digitisation - The increased use of CRS digital portals and e-registration systems has helped standardise reporting timelines across states.

Integration with Other Databases - CRS data now increasingly interfaces with Aadhaar, health management information systems (HMIS), and Sample Registration System (SRS) to improve verification and avoid duplication.

Regional Disparities - Southern and western states exhibit better registration coverage and timeliness, while some northern and northeastern regions lag behind in consistency.

Significance of CRS Data

Policy Planning - CRS data serves as a reliable source for tracking fertility, mortality, and gender trends, enabling better policy design in health, education, and social welfare.

Monitoring SDGs - CRS supports measurement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially -

1. **SDG 3** - Good Health and Well-being (by recording maternal and infant mortality trends)
2. **SDG 5** - Gender Equality (through SRB data)
3. **SDG 10** - Reduced Inequalities (through regional demographic insights)

Governance and Transparency - Improved registration rates indicate stronger governance, citizen inclusion, and service delivery efficiency at the grassroots level.

Challenges and Way Forward

Persistent Gender Bias - States with low SRB require targeted interventions such as expansion of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, stricter enforcement of the PCPNDT Act, and behavioural change communication campaigns.

Rural Registration Gaps - Some rural and tribal areas still face low awareness and logistical hurdles, demanding mobile registration units and local language outreach.

Data Integration - Continued focus on real-time digital registration, data interoperability, and linking with national databases is essential for accuracy.

Capacity Building - Training of local registrars and health workers remains crucial to ensure timely and error-free reporting.

Conclusion

The CRS 2023 Report highlights remarkable progress toward universal registration of births and deaths in India, with nearly 98.4% birth coverage and stabilised death registration post-COVID-19. However, regional disparities in timely registration and sex ratio imbalances underline the need for continued policy attention. Strengthening CRS infrastructure and public awareness can further improve India's vital statistics reliability, contributing to evidence-based governance and social equity.

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/2023-saw-decline-in-registered-births-and-increase-in-registered-deaths-says-govt-report/article70159042.ece# - ~ - text=There%2>

