

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO – ECONOMY

NEWS: India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) fell to 93 in 2019–21 from 97 in 2018–20, showing steady national progress in maternal health outcomes.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Definition and Scope of MMR

- **Definition by WHO:** Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births during a specific time period, irrespective of the duration or site of the pregnancy.
- **Scope of Measurement:** MMR includes deaths occurring during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days after the termination of pregnancy, which are due to complications from the pregnancy or its management.
- **Nature of Indicator:** It reflects only deaths from direct or indirect obstetric causes and excludes deaths from accidental or incidental causes.

Significance as a Health Indicator

- **Quality of Care Marker:** MMR is a crucial indicator used globally to assess the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of reproductive and maternal healthcare services.
- **Policy Relevance:** A high MMR points to systemic issues in antenatal, delivery, and postnatal care; while a declining MMR signals improvement in women's health services.

Recent MMR Trends in India

- **Steady Decline:** India's MMR has shown a consistent decline:
 - 103 deaths per 100,000 live births (2017–19),

- 97 (2018–20),
- 93 (2019–21).
- Data Source: These statistics are based on the Sample Registration System (SRS) reports, a comprehensive demographic survey conducted by the Registrar General of India.
- Implication: This reduction signifies progress in maternal healthcare delivery, particularly in terms of institutional births and antenatal coverage.

4. Vulnerability by Age Group

- Young Women Most Affected: The age group 20–29 years accounts for the highest number of maternal deaths, likely due to high fertility rates and reproductive activity in this age range.
- Second Most Affected: Women aged 30–34 years also show significant vulnerability, possibly due to increased risks associated with higher-order pregnancies or pre-existing conditions.

Definitions of Maternal Mortality Ratio and Rate

$$\text{MM Ratio} = \frac{\text{No. of MDs in 12 months} \times 100,000}{\text{No. of LBs in the same 12 months}}$$

$$\text{MM Rate} = \frac{\text{No. of MDs in 12 months} \times 100,000}{\text{Average No. of women in the reproductive age in the same 12 months}}$$

MDs = Maternal Deaths

LBs = Live Births

Regional Disparities in MMR

- High MMR States: The states with notably high maternal mortality ratios include:
 - Madhya Pradesh (175),
 - Assam (167),
 - Uttar Pradesh (151),
 - Odisha (135),
 - Chhattisgarh (132),
 - West Bengal (109),
 - Haryana (106).

- **Southern States Performance:** Southern states fare better; Karnataka reports the highest MMR in the region (63), still significantly lower than northern high-burden states.
- **Lowest MMR States:**
 - Kerala (20),
 - Maharashtra (38),
 - These states demonstrate strong public health systems and better maternal care services.

Global Perspective and Targets

- **UN SDG Target:** Under Sustainable Development Goal 3.1, the UN has set a target to reduce the global MMR to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030.
- **Current Global Burden:** In 2023, over 700 women died daily due to pregnancy-related causes, with about 90% of these deaths occurring in low- and lower-middle-income countries.
- **Need for Skilled Care:** WHO underscores that most maternal deaths are preventable through timely access to quality care by trained health professionals before, during, and after childbirth.

Key Government Schemes and Their Impact on MMR

Scheme	Objective	Impact on MMR
Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)	Provides conditional cash incentives to promote institutional deliveries, especially among poor and rural women.	Encouraged safe deliveries in health institutions, increasing the presence of skilled birth attendants and reducing maternal deaths.

Scheme	Objective	Impact on MMR
Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)	Offers free comprehensive antenatal check-ups to all pregnant women on the 9th of each month.	Helped in early detection and timely management of high-risk pregnancies, improving health outcomes.
LaQshya Scheme	Focuses on improving the quality of care in labour rooms and maternity operation theatres.	Targets high-delivery load facilities to reduce preventable maternal and neonatal deaths through enhanced service standards.
POSHAN Abhiyaan	Aims at improving nutritional outcomes among pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children.	Addresses nutritional deficiencies, a major indirect cause of maternal mortality, thus improving maternal health and survival.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- **Positive Trend:** India's MMR is steadily declining, reflecting improved institutional delivery rates, antenatal care, and health system strengthening.
- **Challenges Remain:** Persistent regional disparities, along with age-related vulnerabilities, continue to pose challenges to achieving universal maternal health equity.
- **Strategic Focus Needed:** To meet the SDG target by 2030, continued and targeted investments in maternal health infrastructure, nutrition, awareness, and skilled personnel are critical—especially in high-burden states.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/indias-latest-mmr-shows-a-declining-trend/article69553813.ece>