

## Child Health Status in India: A Rural Urban Differences

**Dr. Pinki\***

Associate Professor, Gaur Brahman Degree College, Rohtak, Haryana, India.

\*Corresponding Author: pinki.geo.08@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*India is a largest populated country and the population of age group 0 to 6 year is very large. Children of today are tomorrow citizen hence it is very necessary to provide better health care facilities to them. In India, the neonatal mortality rate is 24.9, infant mortality rate is 35.9 and under 5 mortality rate is 41.9 which is very high. There has been a lot of improvement since the NFHS4. In India, 35.5 percent children are stunted, 19.3 percent children are wasted and 32.1 percent fall in the category of underweight. The number of children affected with anaemia is 67.1 percent. This means that the health condition of children in India is not very good. This paper presents the health status of children in India. In particular, this paper presents the health status of children in rural India and rural-urban differences. Data collected by the National Family Health Survey 5 has been used to present the health status of children. 8 indicators have been used to present the child health status. Diagrams are used to show rural urban differences and state level differences.*

**Keywords:** Child, Health, Rural, Urban.

### Introduction

Children are the future of nation. Tomorrow they will play an important role in the development of the country. A healthy childhood is considered the basis for a better future. The health status of children in Indian society is diverse. Malnutrition, low weight etc. are major problems, especially in rural and poor areas. However, the government and other organizations are making significant efforts to improve the health of children, such as universal vaccination programs and child development schemes.

WHO has expressed serious concern in a report about the nutritional status of Indian children. WHO said that more than 77% of children aged 6 to 23 months in India are not getting adequate nutrition.

According to a study based on the data of National Family Health Survey 5, diet related problems are more prevalent in areas like UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. There has been some improvement as compared to the last survey (nfhs4), but there is still a need for improvement in this direction.

Health experts said that the survey found that cases of nutritional problems were more common among children born to uneducated families and living in rural areas. Lack of nutrients puts children at risk of anaemia, which can affect both physical and mental development. It is important to ensure that children get adequate nutrition. This is essential for keeping them healthy in the future. This paper presents the health and nutritional status of children in India on the basis of differences in rural and urban environments.

### Objectives

Health is the main indicator of any society to show the socio economic and cultural development. The main objectives of this paper are:

- To examine the spatial pattern of health status of children in India.
- To examine the children health status in rural India.
- To show the rural urban differences.

### Methodology

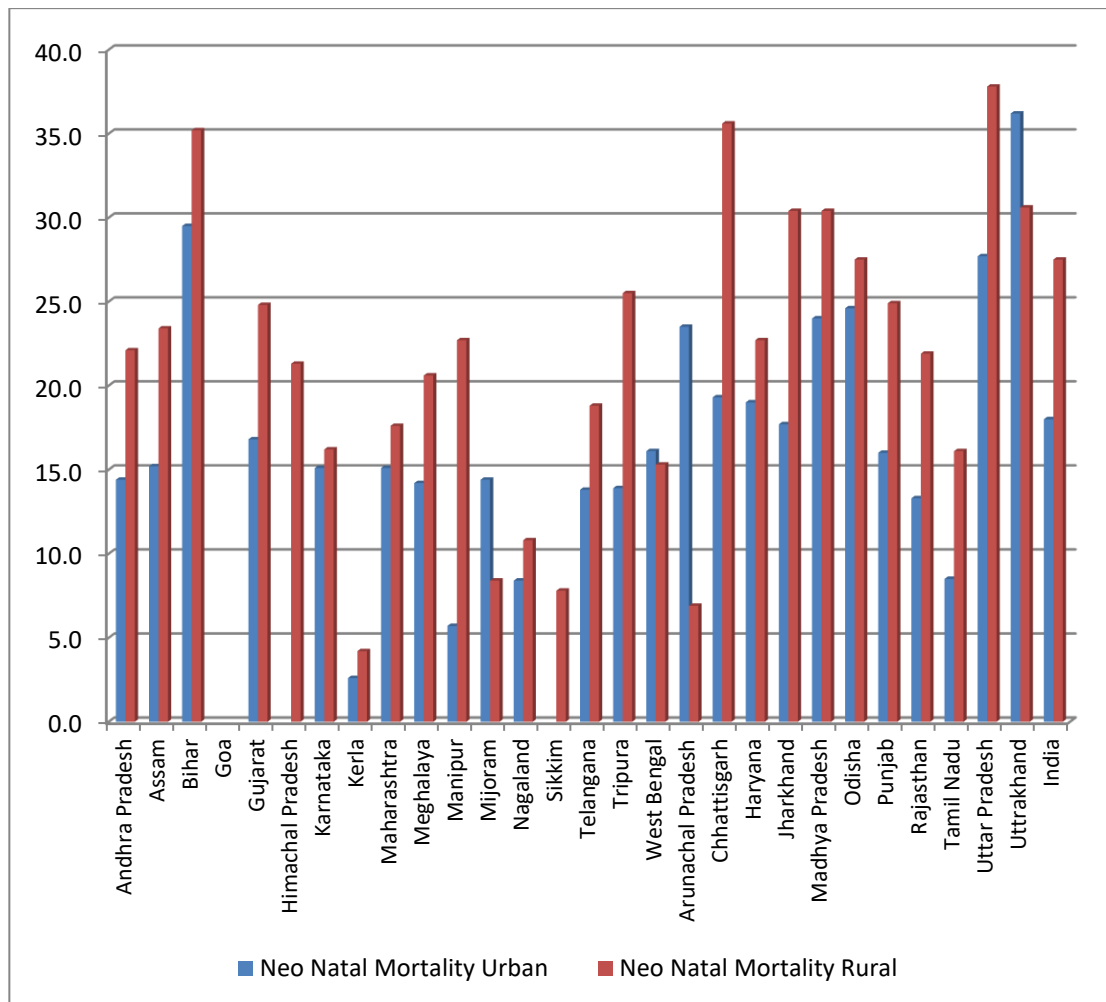
The present study is based on secondary sources of information collected from the National Family Health Survey 5. Diagrams and tables are used. The following indicators have been used to measure the health status of the children:

- Neonatal mortality rate (NNMR)
- Infant mortality rate (IMR)
- Under-five mortality rate (U5MR)
- Children aged 12-23 months are fully vaccinated
- Children under 5 years who are stunted (height-for-age)
- Children under 5 years who are wasted (weight-for-height)
- Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age)
- Children aged 6-59 months who are anaemic

State	Neo Natal Mortality		Infant Mortality		Under Five Mortality		Fully Vaccination		Stunted		Wasted		UnderWeight		Anaemic	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
Andhra Pradesh	14.4	22.1	29.8	30.4	33.7	35.8	69.3	74.7	23.1	34.2	17.6	15.5	25.1	31.4	58.7	65.0
Assam	15.2	23.4	22.7	33.1	33.0	39.9	63.2	66.9	29.8	36.0	19.1	22.1	25.9	33.6	66.4	68.4
Bihar	29.5	35.2	43.1	47.3	50.0	57.4	66.7	71.7	36.8	43.9	21.6	23.1	35.8	41.8	67.9	69.7
Goa							77.9	88.1	24.3	28.2	17.7	21.5	22.5	26.6	53.3	53.1
Gujarat	16.8	24.8	24.1	35.5	26.7	44.2	77.0	75.9	32.4	43.0	22.4	26.7	33.3	43.5	77.6	81.2
Himachal Pradesh		21.3		27.1		30.9	94.1	88.5	27.0	31.3	16.2	17.6	24.6	25.6	58.2	55.0
Karnataka	15.1	16.2	21.4	27.8	24.5	32.5	80.0	86.5	32.2	37.2	18.5	20.1	29.4	34.9	62.8	67.1
Kerala	2.6	4.2	3.5	5.2	3.9	6.4	77.6	78.0	20.1	26.4	16.0	15.5	19.4	19.9	38.9	39.8
Maharashtra	15.1	17.6	22.6	27.7	28.2	27.9	71.7	74.7	34.9	35.5	23.0	27.3	33.3	38.0	66.3	70.7
Meghalaya	14.2	20.6	23.4	33.6	23.4	42.6	58.3	64.7	35.1	48.2	13.0	12.0	22.2	27.3	38.8	46.0
Manipur	5.7	22.7	12.2	31.1	17.1	36.2	75.1	65.9	20.1	25.1	9.8	10.0	12.9	13.5	44.0	42.2
Mizoram	14.4	8.4	20.6	22.0	21.8	26.2	69.6	75.2	25.5	31.9	8.3	11.2	9.3	15.8	42.8	49.6
Nagaland	8.4	10.8	17.0	25.8	22.5	36.8	68.9	53.7	27.1	34.7	21.7	18.2	24.5	27.7	46.4	41.4
Sikkim		7.8		17.8		17.8		83.2	15.1	26.6	13.2	13.9	9.0	14.9	57.8	57.7
Telangana	13.8	18.8	22.0	29.3	24.7	32.4	74.7	81.5	28.1	35.7	20.0	22.6	25.8	35.0	64.7	72.8
Tripura	13.9	25.5	23.2	41.8	24.4	49.0	82.4	65.5	27.1	33.9	17.1	18.6	16.4	28.3	57.3	66.5
WestBengal	16.1	15.3	21.0	22.4	23.0	26.2	83.6	89.3	32.1	34.4	20.2	20.4	28.7	33.5	63.0	71.3
Arunachal Pradesh	23.5	6.9	16.7	12.3	22.2	18.3	66.8	64.6	28.4	27.9	10.1	13.6	13.1	15.8	52.8	57.1
Chhattisgarh	19.3	35.6	26.2	48.7	28.9	55.8	77.3	80.4	30.0	35.7	18.9	18.9	25.8	32.7	71.1	66.2
Haryana	19.0	22.7	28.6	35.3	36.0	39.8	74.3	77.9	26.1	28.1	10.8	11.8	20.5	21.8	68.1	71.5
Jharkhand	17.7	30.4	22.2	41.1	27.3	49.2	67.8	75.1	26.8	42.3	23.0	22.3	30.0	41.8	65.5	67.9
Madhya Pradesh	24.0	30.4	33.9	43.5	38.2	52.5	76.5	77.3	30.1	37.3	19.9	18.7	28.6	34.2	72.5	72.7
Odisha	24.6	27.5	31.2	37.2	32.0	42.7	92.0	90.2	24.9	32.0	14.9	18.6	21.5	31.0	56.2	65.6
Punjab	16.0	24.9	20.1	32.4	24.1	37.5	73.2	77.9	25.7	23.9	11.7	10.0	17.9	16.4	71.0	71.1
Rajasthan	13.3	21.9	22.2	32.2	32.3	38.8	83.9	79.7	28.3	26.6	18.3	16.4	25.4	28.1	68.3	72.4
TamilNadu	8.5	16.1	14.9	21.7	17.3	26.4	86.4	91.7	22.2	27.2	13.9	15.2	20.0	23.5	53.7	60.4
Uttar Pradesh	27.7	37.8	42.0	52.6	49.7	62.5	67.2	70.2	33.0	41.3	18.7	17.0	28.2	33.1	65.3	67.7
Uttarakhand	36.2	30.6	38.3	39.5	46.2	45.3	82.0	80.2	24.3	28.2	17.4	11.3	21.0	20.9	63.8	56.6
India	18.0	27.5	26.6	38.4	31.5	45.7	75.5	76.8	30.1	37.3	18.5	19.5	27.3	33.8	64.2	68.3

### Neonatal Mortality Rate

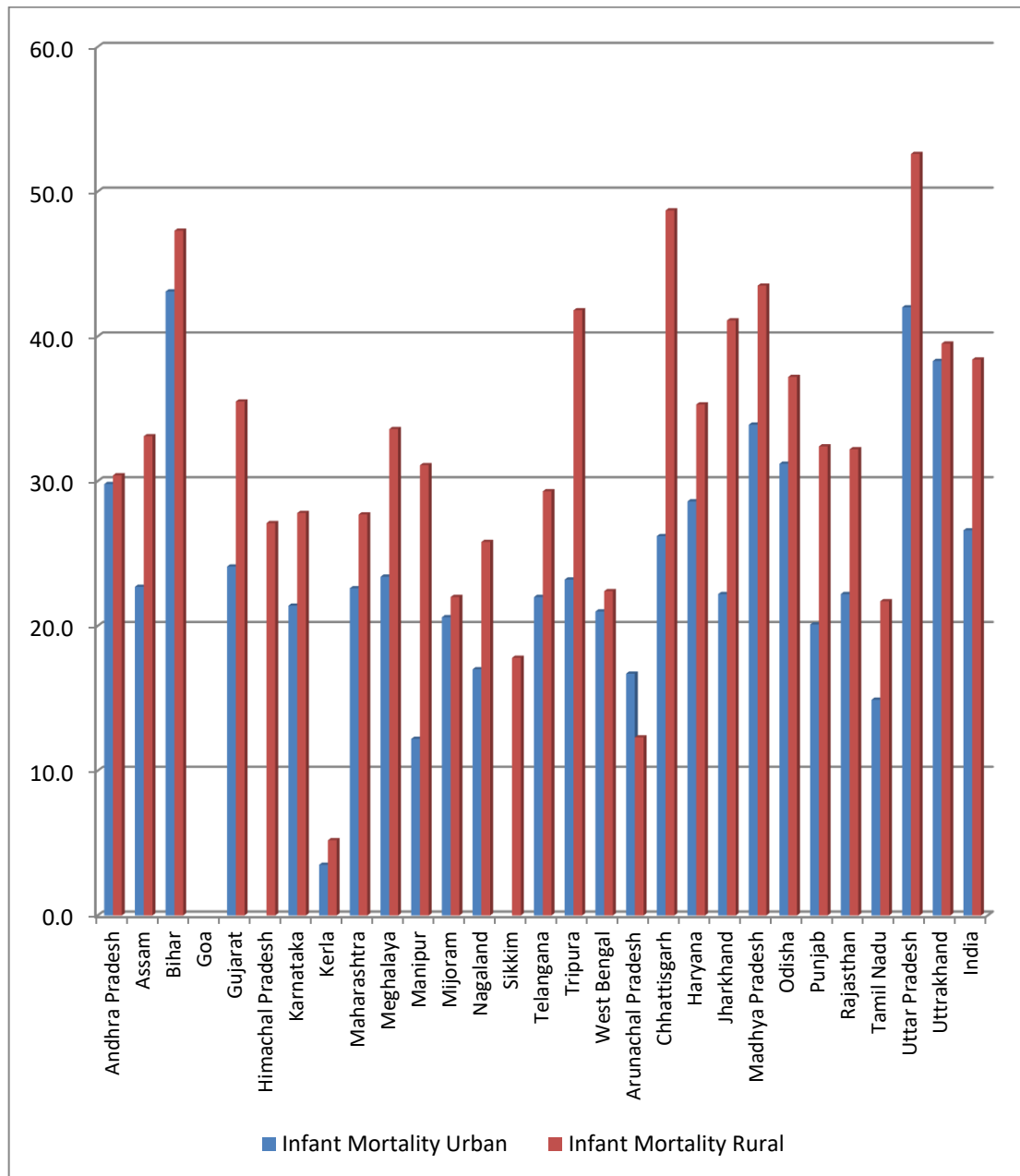
The main reason for neonatal mortality is the mother not getting the necessary nutrients during pregnancy, or any life-threatening disease during delivery. The minimal neonatal mortality rate in India is 24.9, while according to the National Family Health Survey 4, this figure was 29.5 percent. Based on the data, it can be said that the neonatal mortality rate in India has decreased significantly. This is the result of the efforts made by the government and other organizations, but still, this figure is quite high, and more efforts are needed to work on it. But if we compare the neonatal mortality rate at the rural and urban levels, then there is a huge difference it. In urban areas, it is 18, while in rural areas it is 27.5, which is a huge difference. If we compare the rural and urban differences at the state level, then the neonatal mortality rate in rural areas is 4.2 to 37.80 per 1000 live births.



In rural India, Kerala has the lowest neonatal mortality rate, and Uttar Pradesh has the highest. In urban areas, this figure ranges from 5.7 to 36.2. Although if we look at the figures of rural and urban areas at the maximum and minimum levels, the difference is nominal. But, if we look at the rural and urban levels, the difference is very high in every state. The main reason for this is the lack of health facilities in rural areas, lack of availability of good nutrients, and of course, lack of awareness among women. Kerala is the only state in India where the minimum neonatal mortality rate is less than 10 in both urban and rural areas.

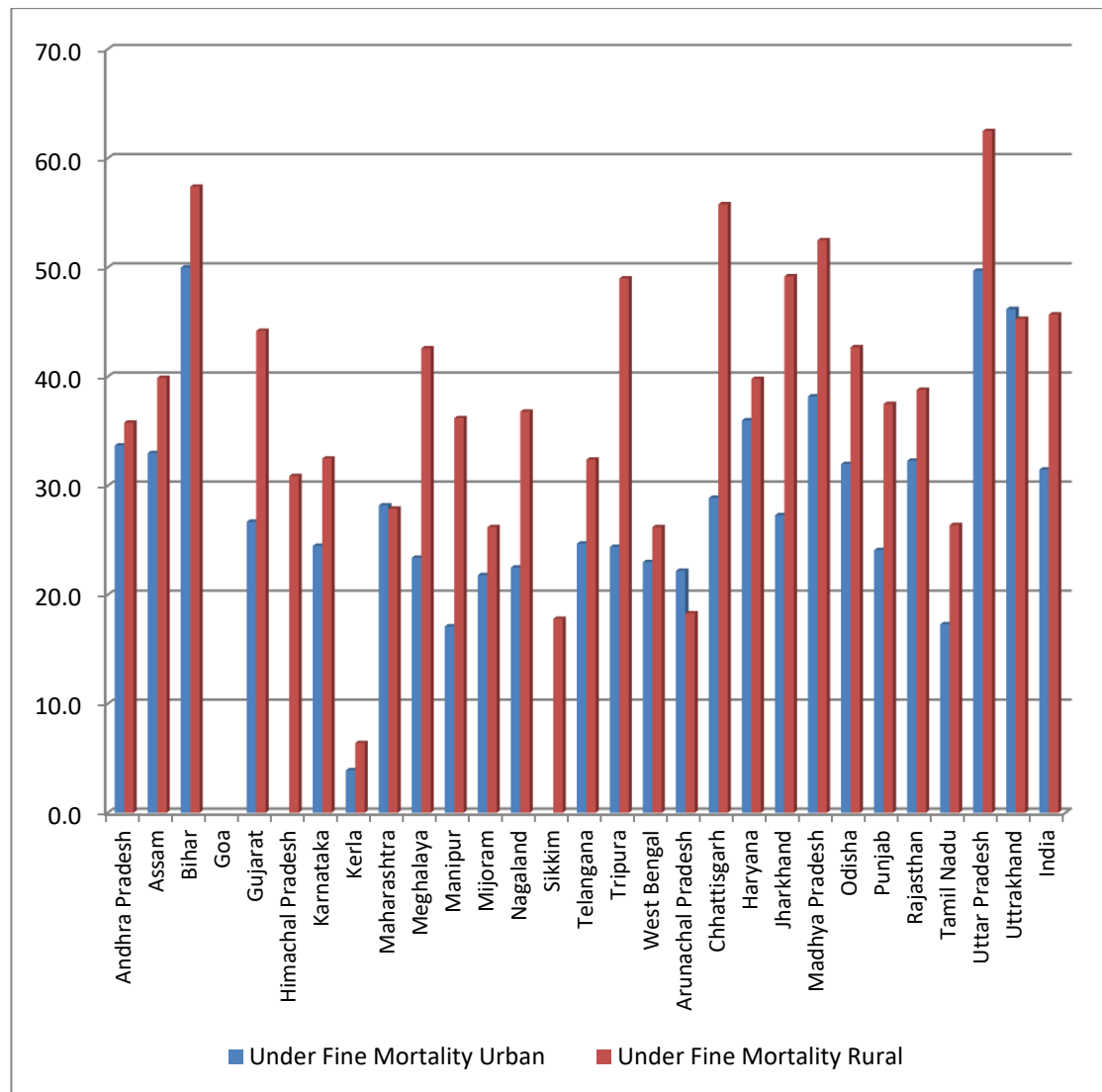
#### Infant Mortality Rate

Infant mortality rate means the number of deaths of children below 1 year of age per thousand live births. This rate is the main indicator of the quality and availability of health services in any area. A high infant mortality rate indicates poor health care, poverty, lack of nutrition, and other factors. To reduce the infant mortality rate, reaching better health services, improving nutrition, and promoting socio-economic development are important. Infant mortality rate in rural India is 38.4, which is high. At the state level, this figure is 5.2 to 52.6. The lowest infant mortality rate is recorded in Kerala, and the highest in Uttar Pradesh. If Kerala is considered an exception, then only in two states, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, is the infant mortality rate less than 20. In every other state, the infant mortality rate in rural environments is more than 20, and, in many states, it is more than 30. If the rural-urban context is compared, then the condition of urban areas in every state and India is much better than that of rural areas.



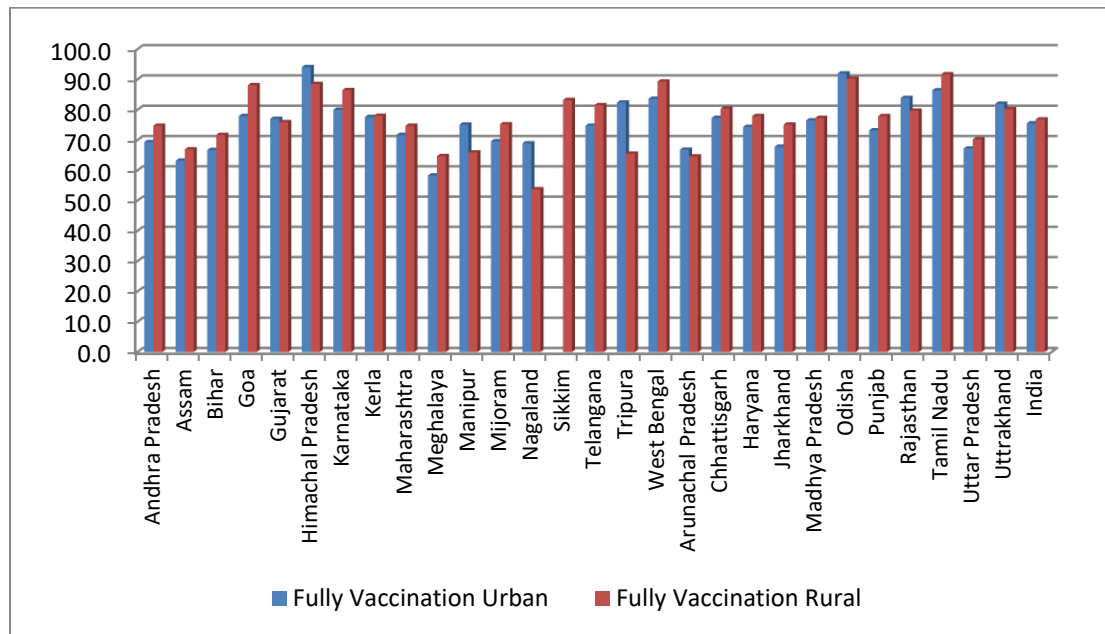
### Child mortality rate

Child mortality rate means the death of children below 5 years of age. Child mortality rate expressed per thousand living births indicates the mortality rate between birth to 5 years of age. Reducing the mortality rate is also a major goal in the development agenda of the United Nations. The main causes of child mortality are premature birth, pneumonia, neonatal malaria, and malnutrition. Child mortality rate in rural India is 45.7 per thousand, which is very high. Except Kerala and Sikkim, it is not less than 20 in any state. In rural areas, the highest child mortality rate of 62.5 is found in Uttar Pradesh. In 10 states, including Uttar Pradesh, this figure is more than 40 per thousand. This is a matter of concern. Although the condition of urban areas is better than that of rural areas. There is a lot of need for improvement there.



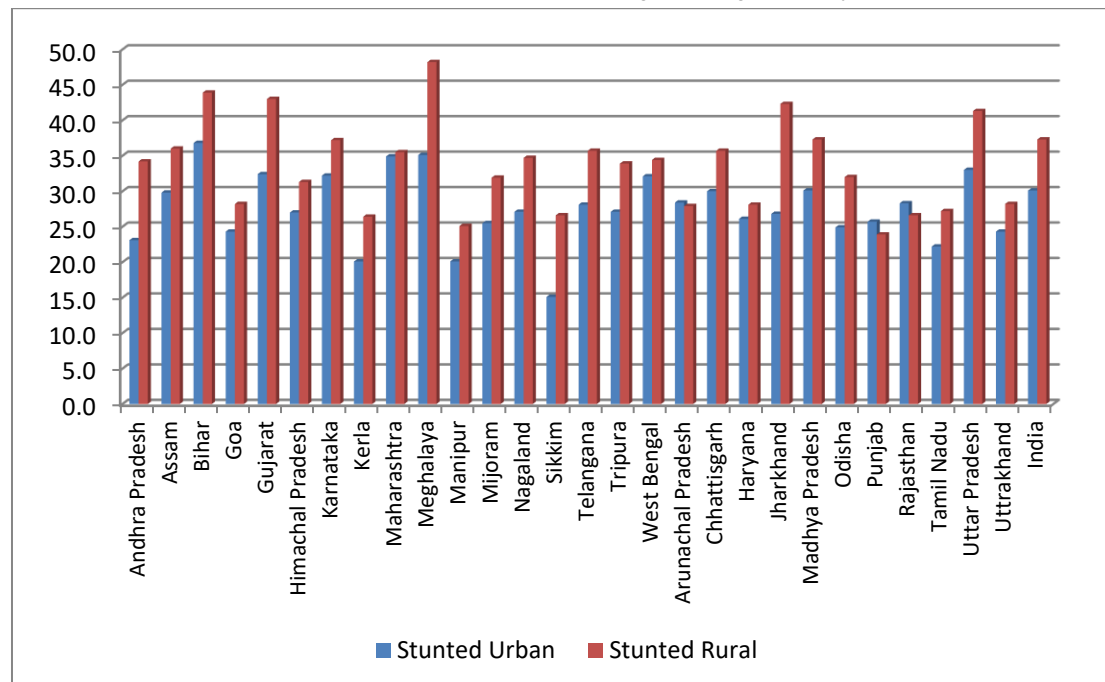
### Children Age 12-23 Months Fully Vaccinated

India is a part of the Universal Immunization and Reproductive and Child Health Program under the National Health Mission. It is one of the largest public programs in the world, under which all pregnant women and children are provided free vaccination. The status of vaccination in India is quite good. At the level of each state, more than 60% of children come under the coverage by vaccination, and the government is taking necessary steps for it. Special arrangements have been made for these facilities in rural and urban areas. According to the National Family Health Survey 5, this facility is provided free of cost in rural India. In rural India, 76.8 percent of children benefit from the coverage of the vaccination scheme. In Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand, it is more than 80 percent, whereas in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, it is more than 90 percent. However, like other indicators of child health, there is also a difference between rural and urban. The situation in urban areas is better, but there are some states where the situation is much better in rural areas than in urban areas. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, and Karnataka.



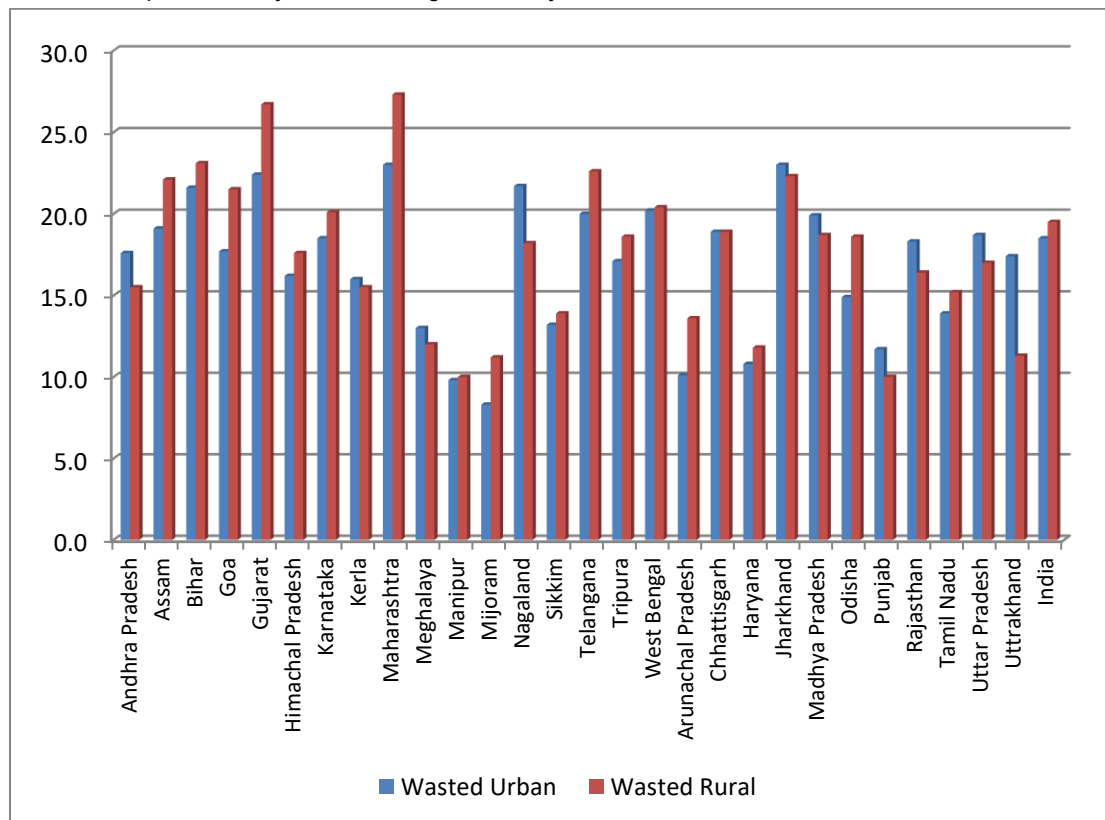
### Stunted children

35.5 percent of children born in India fall in the category of stunted children, that is, their height is less than expected compared to their age group; the main reason for this is a lack of nutrition. The situation of rural India is worse than urban India. There are 37.3 percent of children in rural India. If we look at the situation of rural India at the state level, this figure ranges from 25 percent to 43.2 percent. As per the state, the situation of Manipur is the best. The situation of Bihar is the worst at the national level. The situation at the state level is also the same, that is, the urban areas in the states are performing better than the rural areas. Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh are such states where more than 40 percent of children are stunted, and the rural-urban gap is huge in every state.



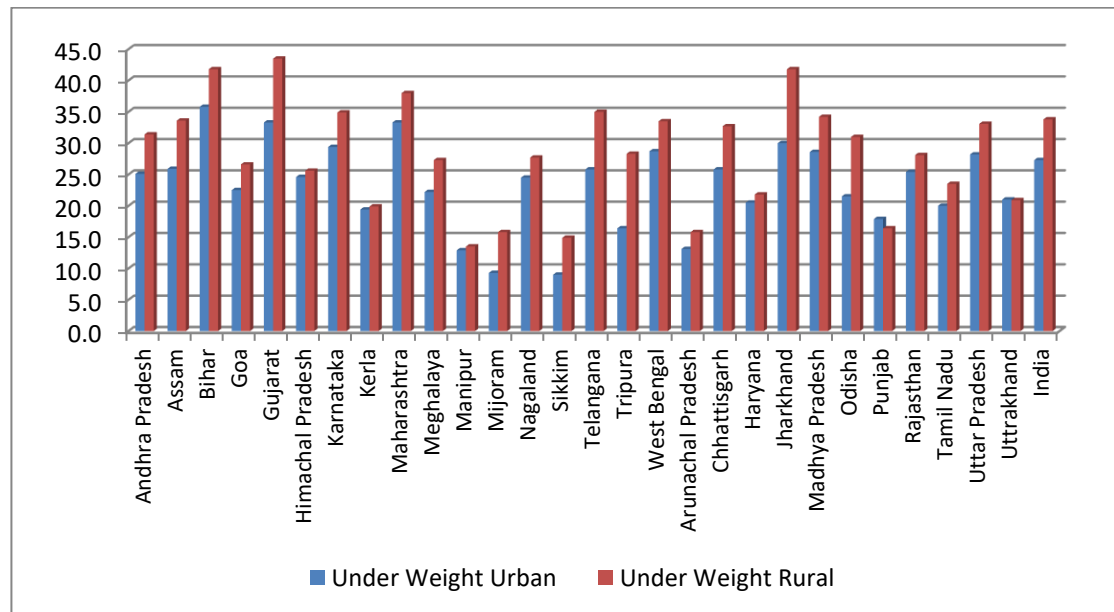
### Wasted children

Child wasting, also known as acute malnutrition, refers to a child who is too thin for their height, often due to recent weight loss or failure to gain weight. It's a serious condition that increases the risk of death, but treatment is possible. Wasting is the most visible and life-threatening form of malnutrition, causing weakened immune systems and vulnerability to disease. In India, 19.3 percent of children fall in this category, whereas according to the National Family Health Survey 4, this figure was 21 percent. In rural India, the number of children falling in this category is 19.5%, and in urban areas it is 18.5 percent i.e., there is no significant difference in the number of wasted children in urban and rural areas in India. At the state level, difference is found between urban and rural areas, but the difference is very less as compared to other child health indicators. In rural India, at the state level, the least wasted children are found in Manipur and Punjab, and the highest in Gujarat.



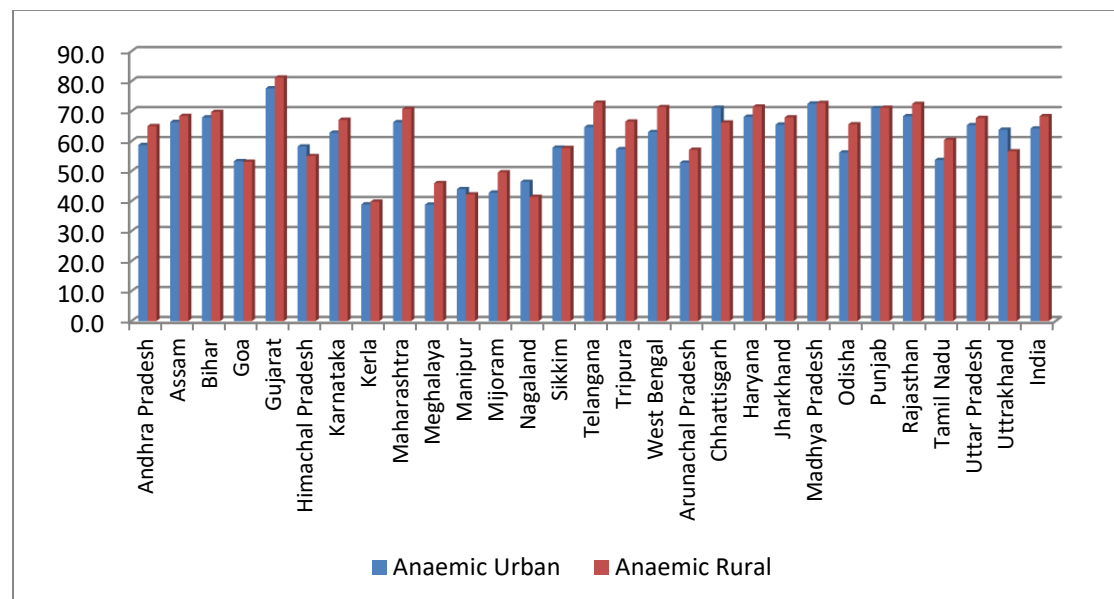
### Underweight children

"Underweight in children, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), refers to a child's weight-for-age being less than two standard deviations below the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards. This means the child is significantly lighter for their age than the average child of the same age. Underweight can indicate both acute and chronic malnutrition, impacting a child's physical and cognitive development." (google.com) In India, 32.1 percent of children are under lying underweight category; this is due to a lack of nutrition, hygiene, and some other reasons during pregnancy, when we differentiate this data among urban and rural India. It is shown that in rural India, 33.8 percent of children are found in the overweight category, and in urban areas, 27.3 percent of children lie in this category. In rural India at the state level, the percentage of underweight children lies between 13.5 percent to 43.5 percent. The lowest underweight children were found in Manipur, and the highest was found in Himachal Pradesh. Out of 28 states, only 6 States have below 20 percent underweight children in rural India. These states are Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, and Punjab. It is very surprising that out of six states, four states fall in the underdeveloped category, three states, including Bihar, Gujarat, and Jharkhand, have more than 40 percent underweight children.



#### Children age 6-59 months who are anaemic

Anaemia is a serious deficiency among females and children in India. Anaemia in children occurs when a child has fewer red blood cells than normal, or their red blood cells don't have enough haemoglobin. It can have various causes. In India, 67.1 percent of children are found to be Anaemic. It is a very serious matter of concern because children lack energy and work efficiency. In rural India, 63.4 percent of children are Anaemic, and in urban areas it is 64.2 percent. At the state level, it is found between 39.8 percent to 81.2 percent. Lowest found in Kerala and highest found in Gujarat, it is very shameful to develop a state like Gujarat. Only five states named Kerala, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland, have a smaller number of anaemic affected children. Four states in the Northeastern area are in a very good position. Eight states in India have found above 70 percent anaemic children. Large differences were found in rural-urban areas. All the states with having large number of anaemic children are found in rural areas.





### Conclusion

As per the above discussion, it is found that the health status of children in India is very poor, and also wide range of disparity is found at the state level. Some facts based on the data are very surprising, such as the health condition of children in a developed state like Gujarat is very bad, whereas the situation is much better in the eastern states. The difference between rural and urban areas is very high in terms of child health, and there are many health-related problems of children in rural areas. Today's children are the future of the country tomorrow. If we do not solve their health-related problems today, the future of the country cannot be bright. India is a country of villages. We will have to start the improvement from the rural area so that improvements can be made at the ground level. India's condition is worse in the eight indicators used to display children's health, and if we talk about children suffering from anaemia, then the figure is very high. The national and state governments will have to work together to improve this situation so that children can get health benefits.

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