

# State of Special Educators in India

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A Data Narrative Compelling Urgent Action



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# Concerns Pertaining to Special Education Based on Data

- ❑ **Theme 1:** Low enrolment numbers of children with special needs (CWSN) in schools considered under UDISE+
- ❑ **Theme 2:** Inadequate laws and policies leading to low special educator availability in India
- ❑ **Theme 3:** Unhealthy pupil-teacher ratio
- ❑ **Theme 4:** Lack of appropriate working conditions and training for special educators.

This is despite laws and policies providing for primary education (until Grade VIII) as a fundamental right to all children so **“no child is left behind”**.



Theme 1:

Low enrolment numbers of children with special needs in schools considered under UDISE+

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# Low enrolment numbers of children with special needs in India

**34% enrolment rate of CWSN**

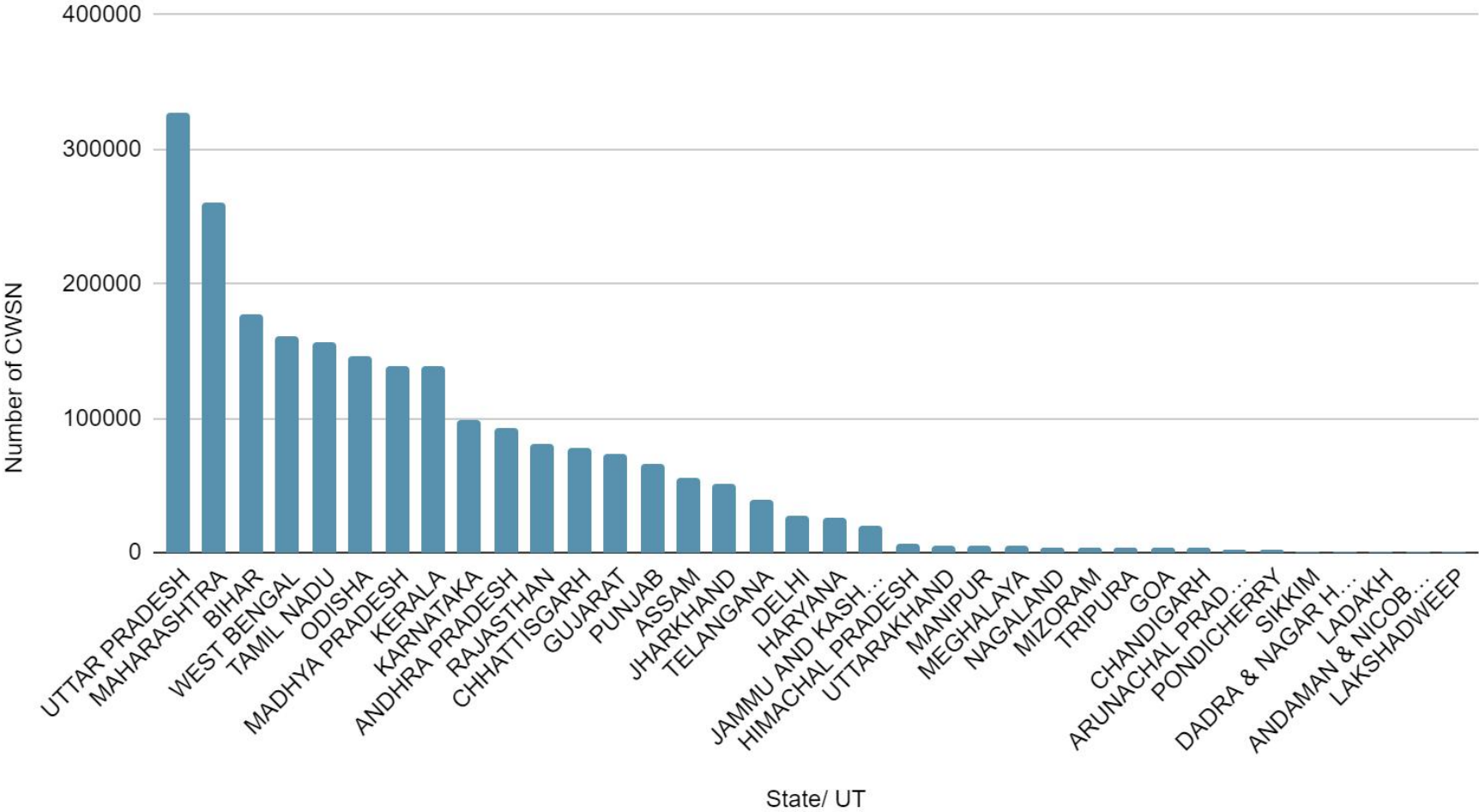
**Estimating number of children with special needs as per Census 2011**

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Total number of CWSN in 5-19 age group: **65,72,999 (approx. sixty five lakh seventy three thousand)**

Number of CWSN enrolled in schools: **22,40,356 (approx. twenty lakh forty thousand)**

# CWSN Enrolmement by State/UT (UDISE+ 2021-22)



Highest enrolment rates are seen in

1. Uttar Pradesh
2. Maharashtra
3. Bihar
4. West Bengal
5. Tamil Nadu



**Theme 2:**

**Inadequate laws and policies leading to  
low special educator availability in India**

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# The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2007

- No Legal Mandate on the required number of special educators until recently
- RTE mandates in its Schedule Norms and Standards for a School – Number of Teachers (a) and (b) – a PTR (Pupil-Teacher Ratio) of 1:30 for Grades I to V (Primary) and 1:35 for Grades VI to VIII (Upper Primary)

**Challenge: No such measures were taken until recently (2022) to mandate a PTR for children with special needs and special educators.**



# Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act 1992

**Special Teachers for Education and Training the handicapped** is one out of the 16 categories of rehabilitation personnel regulated by **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)** under the RCI Act 1992.

To be a special educator in India, one has to:

- Undertake study of a program for special education at **RCI approved institutions/ universities**
- Apply for registration in **Central Rehabilitation Register (CRR)**
- **Renew CRR registration** after the completion of 5 years (otherwise the registration certificates shall be considered invalid)
- Anyone found serving persons with disabilities without RCI registration is punishable with fine and imprisonment

**Challenge: Onerous registrations and renewals for special educators may be a disincentive.**

# National Education Policy 2020

- Recognizes **urgent need for additional special educators**
- Recommends **capacity improvement of subject/generalist teachers through secondary specializations** during or after pre-service teacher preparation
- Calls for **greater synergy between the course curriculum of National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and RCI** so that special educators can also take up subject teaching

**Challenge: There is no convergence between teacher education courses for mainstream teachers conducted by institutions recognised by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and education courses for special educators conducted by RCI**



# Recent amendments to existing laws and policies

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# PTR Norms were first spelt out by Supreme Court in the Rajneesh Pandey vs Union of India (2021)

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The number of Special Education Teachers in a particular disability should be determined based on the generally accepted pupil teacher ratio of **1:8** for children with Cerebral Palsy, visual impairment and hearing impairment, **1:5** for children with intellectual disability, ASD and Specific learning disabilities; and **1:2** for Deaf- Blind and a combination of two or more of the seven disabilities mentioned above.

”

# Legal mandate of PTR for children with disabilities in mainstream schools only after September 2022

Amendment to RTE (September 2022) mandated PTR based on CWSN students enrolled:

- PTR for primary level - **10:1**
- PTR for upper primary, secondary and higher secondary levels - **15:1**

# PTR Recommendations under Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme, 2023

Special School for children with hearing disability	PTR 1:8
Special School for children with visual impairment disability	PTR 1:8 (primary school) To 1:15 (normal)
Remediation Centre for children with specific learning disability	1:8
Special school for children with other disabilities	1:8
Additional requirement for children with profound/severe disabilities/high support needs group	1:4
Itinerant teachers for home-based rehabilitation	1:10

# Samagra Shiksha Scheme, 2018

Aligned with the NEP 2020 -to **ensure equitable access to quality education in an inclusive classroom** environment.

Special educators may be posted at the block or cluster level or as per the requirement and can operate in an **itinerant mode** covering a group of schools where children with special needs are enrolled.

In-service training programs for BRPs for CwSN/ Special Educators on areas of inclusive education, **cross-disability teaching and early identification** etc to be accorded priority.

Special Educators to be **recruited as per the terms and conditions of the respective States/UTs** Salary structure to be determined by the State norms for salaries no separate cadre of special educators sanctioned by the Centre. All special educators are the responsibility of the State

Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for special schools and special educators in general schools are to be **in compliance with Supreme Court judgement in the Rajneesh Pandey vs Union of India**



Theme 3:

Unhealthy pupil teacher ratio with respect  
to children with special needs

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Assuming a 100% enrolment rate of children with special needs, the estimated number of **special educators** required is:

- **6,57,300 (approx. six lakh fifty seven thousand)** assuming PTR of 10:1, and
- **4,38,200 (approx. four lakh thirty eight thousand)** assuming a PTR of 15:1

\*PTR is pupil-teacher ratio (i.e., 1 teacher for 10 pupils with disability or 1 teacher for 15 pupils with disability)

# How many Special Educators does India have?

**1,33,097**

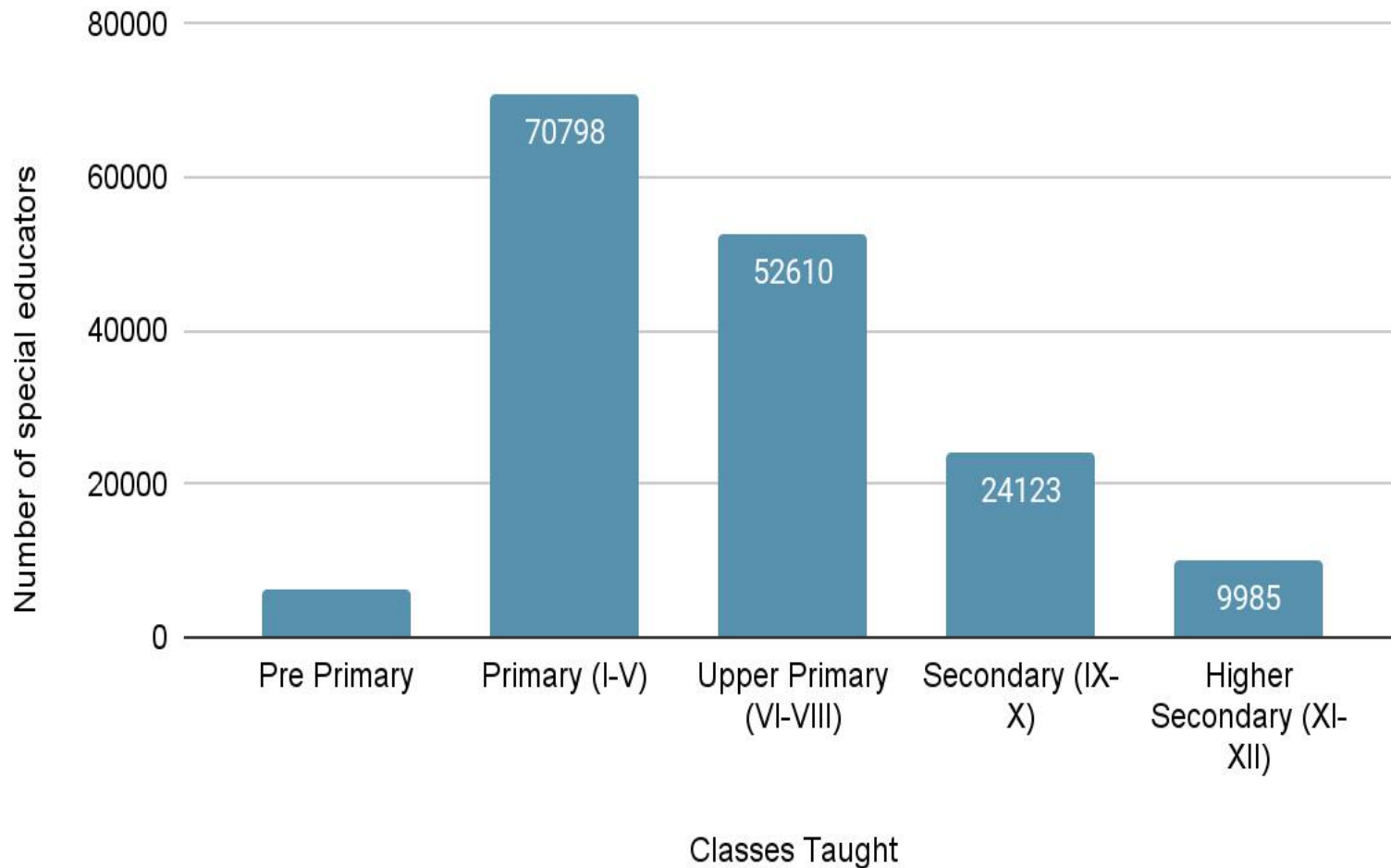
As per UDISE+ (2021-22)

**1,66,802**

As per Rehabilitation Council of India  
(RCI)\*

India does not have the number special educators needed to have all children with disabilities in school

## Number of Special Educators by Classes Taught (India)



- The number of special educators is highest in primary and sees a gradual decline
- The number of special educators in pre primary level is the least

**India does not have the number special educators needed to have all children with disabilities in school**

**How many Special Educators does India have?**

**1,33,097**

As per UDISE+ (2021-22)

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As per Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)\*

**The Gap: Number of Special Educators Available vs Number of Special Educators Required**

**At 10:1 PTR**

**India meets 20% of its requirement for special educators**

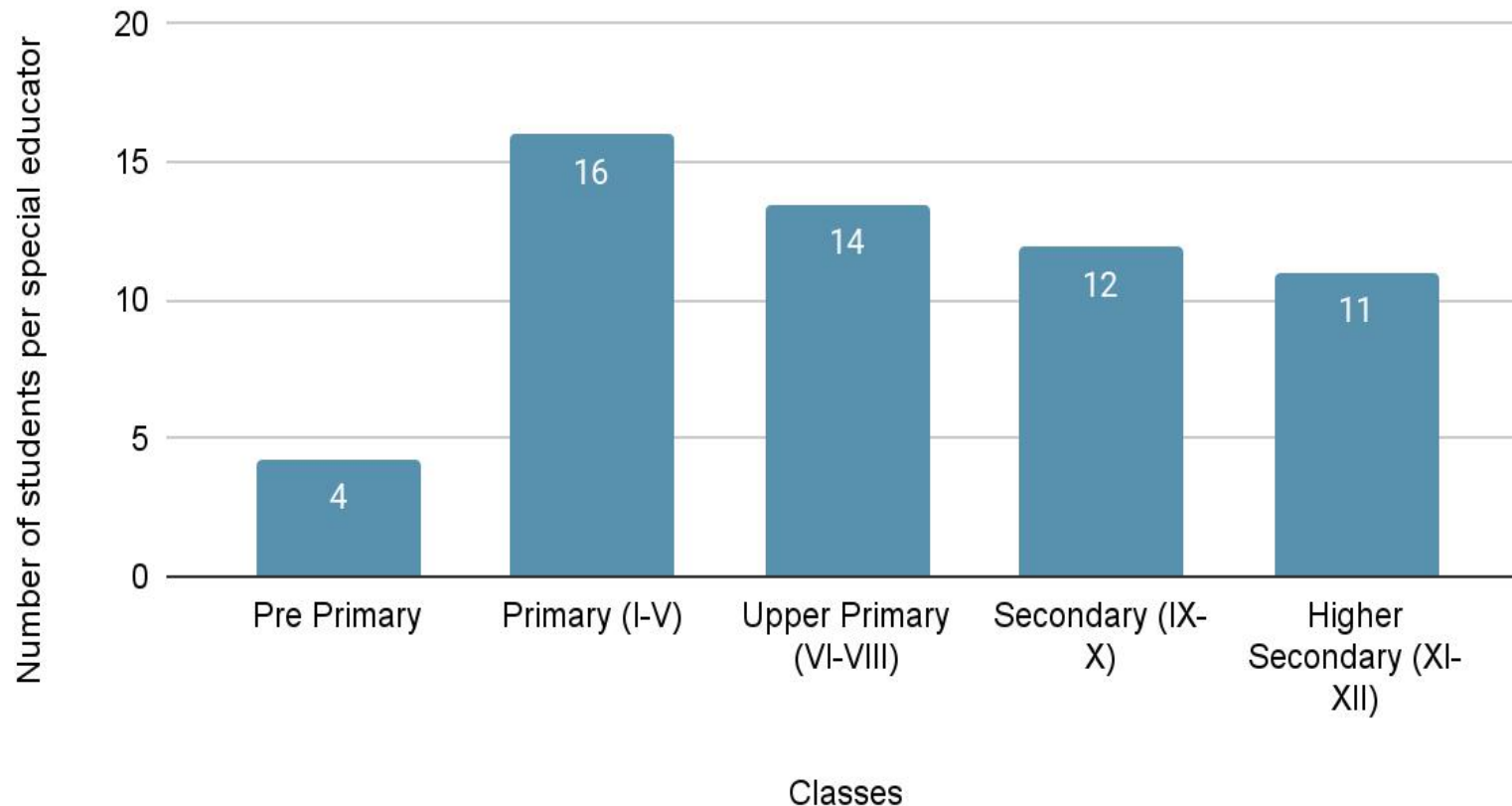
**At 15:1 PTR**

**India meets 30% of its requirement for special educators**

**India meets 25% of its requirement for special educators**

**India meets 38% of its requirement for special educators**

## Pupil Teacher Ratio for Special Educators by Class Taught (India)

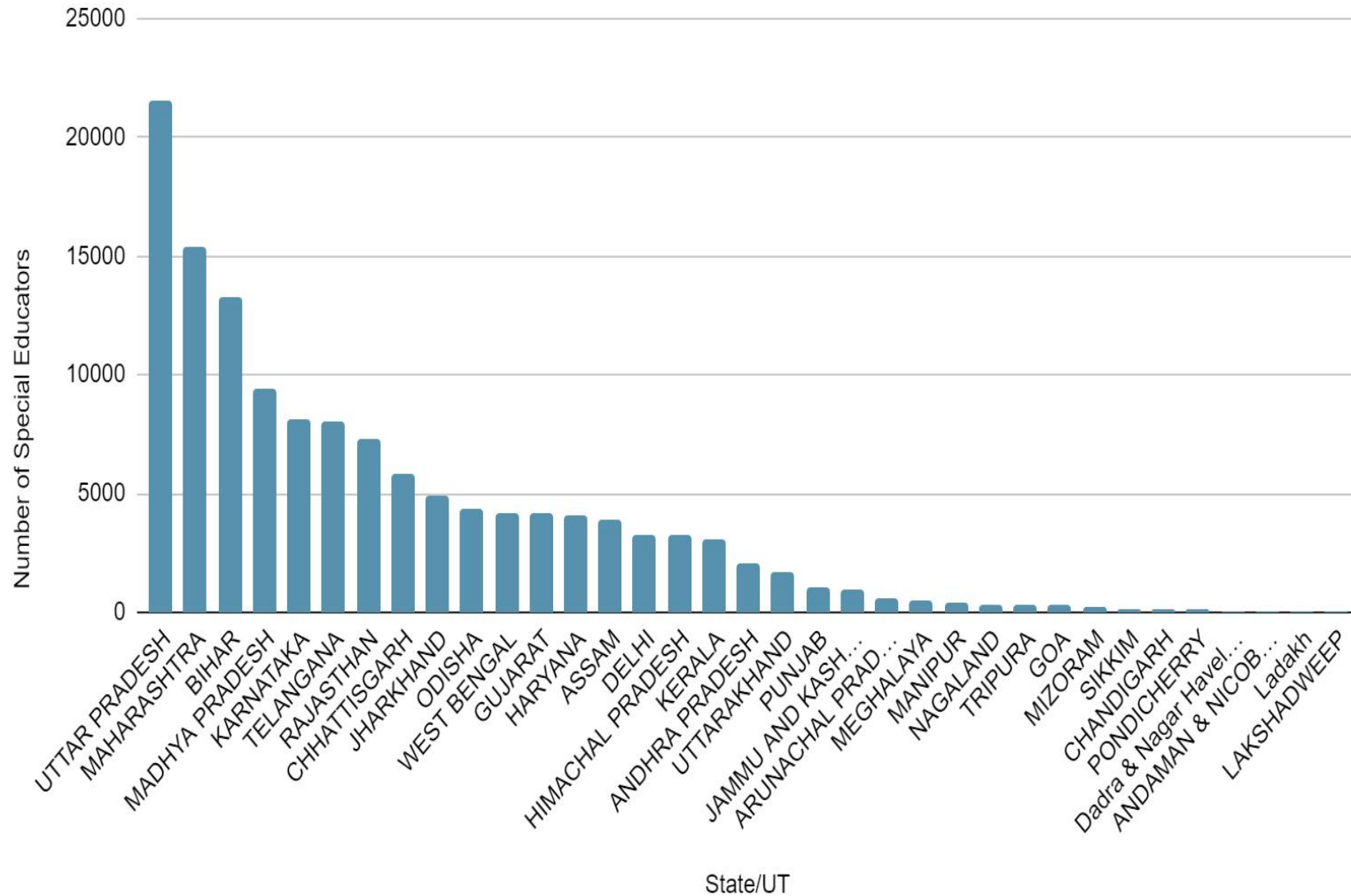


For existing aggregate enrolments:

- The PTR of 4:1 for pre primary paints a positive picture
- Even for upper primary, secondary and higher secondary, the PTR fulfils the requirement of 15:1
- Only in the case of primary classes, the PTR norm of 10:1 is not met

Note: The state-wise PTRs might vary from the aggregate PTR (some states do better than other states depending on the distribution of special educators in the states – see following slides)

## Number of Special Educators by State/UT (UDISE+ 2021-22)

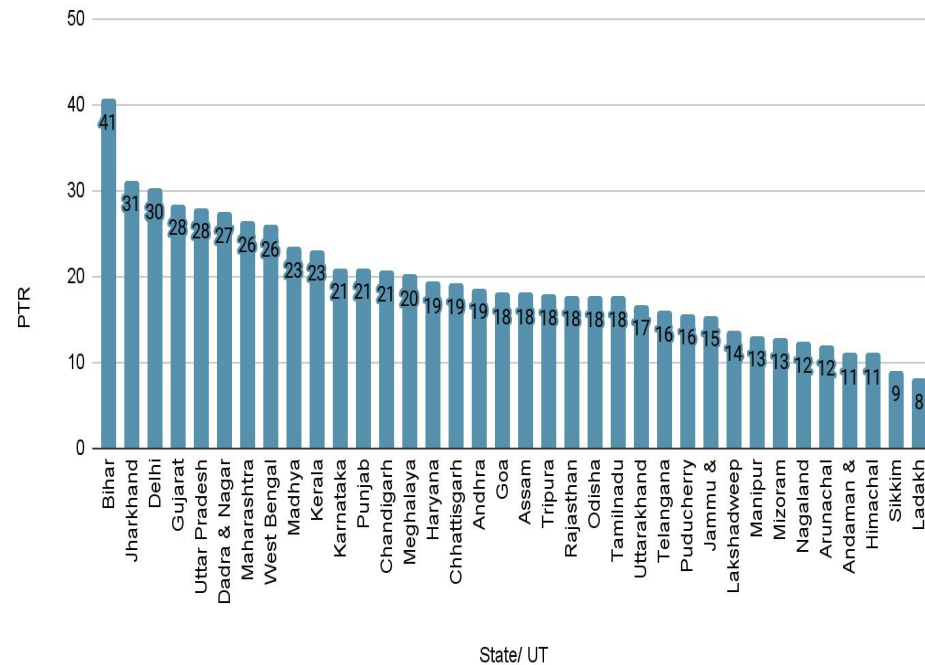


~65% special educators are concentrated in 5 states: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka

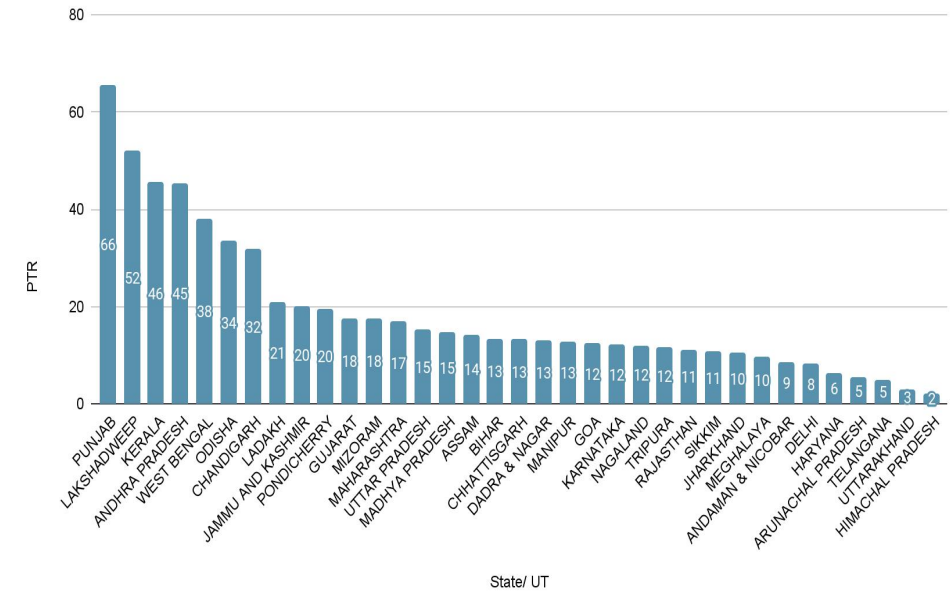
This does not match with the five states with highest enrolment of CWSN - Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu

# Comparison of PTRs for general teachers and PTR for special educators by state

Pupil Teacher Ratio- General Teachers (UDISE+ 2021-22)



Pupil Teacher Ratio-Special Educators (UDISE+ 2021-22)



In the case of general teachers, for primary and upper primary, the PTR should be 30:1 and for higher grades, PTR should be 35:1

In all states apart from Bihar, the PTR for general teachers meets the norms

**However, the PTR for special educators is below the PTR norm for several states**

# Pupil Teacher Ratio as per UDISE+ 2021-22

- In 13 out of 36 states/UTs, the Pupil-Teacher ratio is lower than 15:1, indicating a need for action to close the gaps.
- Only 9 states have achieved a PTR of 10:1 namely
- In the UDISE+ data for 2021-22, there is no data disaggregation of teachers having diploma and those with a degree in special education.

UDISE+ includes special schools in its ambit. In the 2021-22 database, there are 3811 special schools. Thus, a majority of the special educators might be placed in these special schools, and not serving the inclusive schools.





Theme 4:

Lack of appropriate working conditions and  
training for special educators

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# 1. Lack of lucrative job opportunities and low pay

***the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2018/19, highlights that 73% of special educators working in the private sector have no contract and draw an average monthly salary of ₹3,148.***

“

Most special education teachers that work at our school work on a contract basis," said a special educator who works at a government school. While regular teachers are paid more than Rs 50,000, special educators are paid around Rs 15,000 – Rs 20,000 only, he added. "There is no job security. Only when there is security, we can concentrate on our profession,  
- he said

”

“

I give my all but don't get enough. I cannot sustain my own children.  
-(Resource Person, rural Haryana)

”

The government had appointed 632 special educators for children at the block-level way back in 2012. However, there has been no such appointment at the school level to date in spite of the fact that around 82,000 differently-abled students have enrolled in 64,000 primary, upper primary and secondary schools. (members of Odisha Special Educator Federation for Divyang (OSEFD)).

Telangana has sanctioned about 1523 posts for special educators in government schools but hiring is nowhere in sight say *special educators*.

- Source: <https://thesoftcopy.in/2022/02/22/more-work-and-low-pay-special-educators-face-uncertain-future/>
- <https://vidhilegalpolicy.in/research/how-can-children-with-disabilities-be-meaningfully-included-in-indias-education-framework/>
- <https://www.barandbench.com/columns/special-educators-framework-inclusion-education>
- <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2022/Sep/05/odisha-state-delays-appointment-of-special-educators-for-differently-abled-kids-2495061.html>
- [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/106553542.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/106553542.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

## 2. Itinerant model of employment and high workload

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Starting with surveys and finding children with disabilities to enrolling them to schools, helping them get medical certificates and enrolling them for scholarships, there is ample work every month. Education takes a back seat. Even though we want to mentor the children, we do not get time to do so,  
**-said a special educator**

“

“

There is a lot of work as there are only four special education teachers that work on a contract basis, per taluk in Bangalore and each taluk has minimum 350 special children  
**-said a special educator**

”

“

We have been making this demand that there should be a special educator in every school. The resource persons appointed in general schools in the State at present are overworked and, hence, do not serve the purpose  
**-says a special educator**

”

- Source: <https://thesoftcopy.in/2022/02/22/more-work-and-low-pay-special-educators-face-uncertain-future/>
- [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/104118032.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/104118032.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/special-educators-in-schools-kerala-among-states-that-fail-to-follow-sc-order/article67454357.ece>

### **3. Lack of cross-disability training resulting in :**

Lack of high quality special education courses and training resources

Poor awareness of National Curricular Framework

### **4. Complicated re-registration processes with RCI every 5 years with penal consequences for non-compliance unlike mainstream teachers**

- Source: <https://thesoftcopy.in/2022/02/22/more-work-and-low-pay-special-educators-face-uncertain-future/>
- [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/104118032.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/104118032.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/special-educators-in-schools-kerala-among-states-that-fail-to-follow-sc-order/article67454357.ece>



## An Urgent Call to Action

Need for disability-wise disaggregated data on children's enrolment, data split of special educators in mainstream versus special schools, and diploma and degree-wise disaggregated spread of special educators to allow a more nuanced understanding of the problem and its response.

Public & Private education systems must recruit qualified/trained special educators to meet the new PTR requirements and provide better working conditions to facilitate the entry and retention of special educators within the schools.


Less punitive measures for a special educator to hold their certifications and provision of alternate opportunities for re-training and updating skills.

Civil Society actors and the Government must play a key role in filling the gap between the demand and supply of special educators and special education resources.

Convergence at the level ministries – Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Justice and Welfare and Ministry of Women and Child Development is necessary to have coordinated efforts through the Rehabilitation Council of India, National Commission of Teacher Education, Integrated Child Development Services (Anganwadis) .

Parent groups of CWSN must enforce their child's rights to equitable education opportunities, before the Chief Commission and State Commission for persons with disabilities.

**Pacta is a social sector exclusive law firm and policy think tank bridging gaps in law and policy implementation through rigorous research.**

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