

# India's Human Development Index: Trends, Challenges and Policy Measures

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## 1. Introduction:

Before the 1990s, economic development was measured by the rate of growth of a country's national income (GDP). But after 1990, the criteria for measuring development changed. From 1990, the UNDP implemented a new approach to measuring development. This new approach was called the Human Development Index. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistic that measures a country's average achievements in three areas of human development. The present research article highlights the current Human Development Index of India, its comparison with selected countries of the world, the challenges created by the low HDI score, and the government's policy solutions to address them.

## 2. Objectives of the study:

The major and important objectives of the present study are as follows.

1. To study the concept of human development index (HDI).
2. To study the dimensions of HDI.
3. To highlight the global HDR
4. To focus the challenges of HDI of India.
5. Suggest policy measures to improve India's Human Development Index.

## 3. Research Methodology:

This research is study is totally based on secondary data sources. Secondary data collected from HDR reports, economic survey of India, books and related websites etc.

### • Major indices measuring Human Development:

Index	Measures	India's Performance
<b>Human Development Index</b>	• Measure used to quantify a country's achievement in 3 basic dimensions of human development - Long and healthy life, Knowledge, and a decent standard of living.	India has improved HDI rank with 134 in 2022
<b>Gender Inequality Index (GII)</b>	• The GII measures gender inequalities in 3 key dimensions — reproductive health,	• India has jumped 14 places to rank 108 in 2022, from 122 in 2021.

	empowerment and labour market.	
<b>Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MPI captures the multiple deprivations that people in developing countries face in their health, education and standard of living.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are more than 230 million people in Multidimensional poverty in 2021 in India.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Development Index (GDI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GDI measures disparities on the HDI by gender.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India shows low equality in HDI achievements between women and men with absolute deviation from gender parity of more than 10 %.</li> </ul>
<b>Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHDI contains two related measures of inequality—the IHDI and the overall loss in HDI due to inequality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India's rank declined by 6 places to 140<sup>th</sup> in IDHI.</li> </ul>
<b>Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It adjusts the HDI for planetary pressures in the Anthropocene to reflect a concern for intergenerational inequality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With 3% difference from HDI value, India ranks at 127<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Human Development Index (HDI):

Its statistical measure used to quantify a country's achievement in 3 basic dimensions of human development - Long and healthy life, Knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul-Haq. Haq worked with Indian Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to develop the HDR.

##### • How HDI value is calculated?

The Human Development Index (HDI) value is calculated by taking the geometric mean of three key dimensions: life expectancy, education level (measured by mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and per capita income, resulting in a single number between 0 and 1, where 1 represents the highest level of human development; essentially, it is a composite measure of a country's health, education, and standard of living.

#### 5. India's HDI Performance in Human Development Report (HDR) 2023-2024:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) released the Human Development Report (HDR) 2023-2024 titled "Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarised world". HDR Released by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annually since 1990. Objective of the report is examines major global challenges that affect human development and suggest recommendations.

**Table No.1 Human Development Index Values / Ranking of Selected Countries (2023-24)**

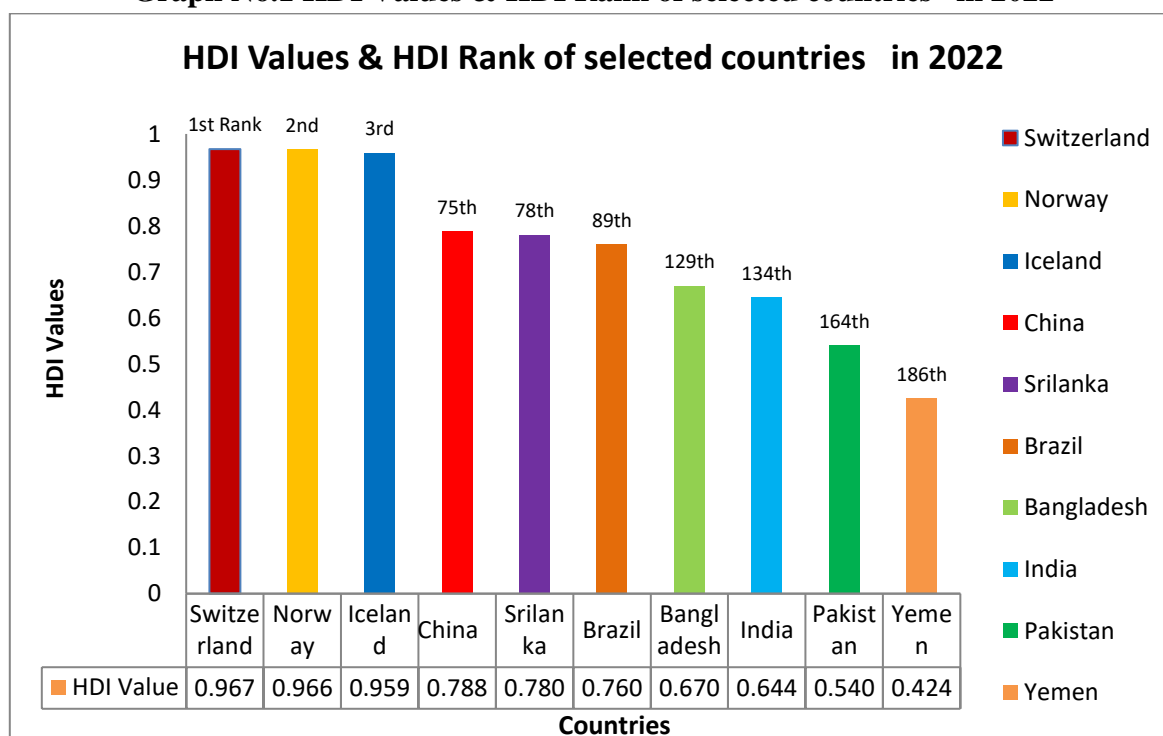
Rank	Country	1990	2000	2010	2020	2022	Category of HDI
1	Switzerland	0.850	0.885	0.940	0.885	0.967	Very High Human Development
2	Norway	0.845	0.914	0.938	0.963	0.966	Very High Human Development

3	Iceland	0.834	0.895	0.927	0.927	0.959	Very High Human Development
75	China	0.482	0.586	0.698	0.781	0.788	High Human Development
78	Srilanka	0.641	0.689	0.735	0.777	0.780	High Human Development
89	Brazil	0.620	0.668	0.722	0.758	0.760	High Human Development
129	Bangladesh	0.399	0.491	0.558	0.657	0.670	Medium Human Development
<b>134</b>	<b>India</b>	<b>0.434</b>	<b>0.490</b>	<b>0.572</b>	<b>0.638</b>	<b>0.644</b>	<b>Medium Human Development</b>
164	Pakistan	0.394	0.434	0.496	0.536	0.540	Low Human Development
186	Yemen	0.357	0.434	0.496	0.430	0.424	Low Human Development

**Source : Human Development Index Report (2023-24)**

Above Table No.1 indicated that selected countries status of Human Development Index according to HDR 2023-24. The above data shows the Human Development Index values and global rankings of countries from 1990 to 2022. Switzerland, which has a very high Human Development Group, ranks first out of 193 countries. China, Sri Lanka and Brazil are ranked 75, 78 and 89 respectively in the high human development group. However, Bangladesh -129 and India -134 appear to be in the medium human development group. Pakistan ranked 164 and Yemen ranked 186 with low human development group.

**Graph No.1 HDI Values & HDI Rank of selected countries in 2022**



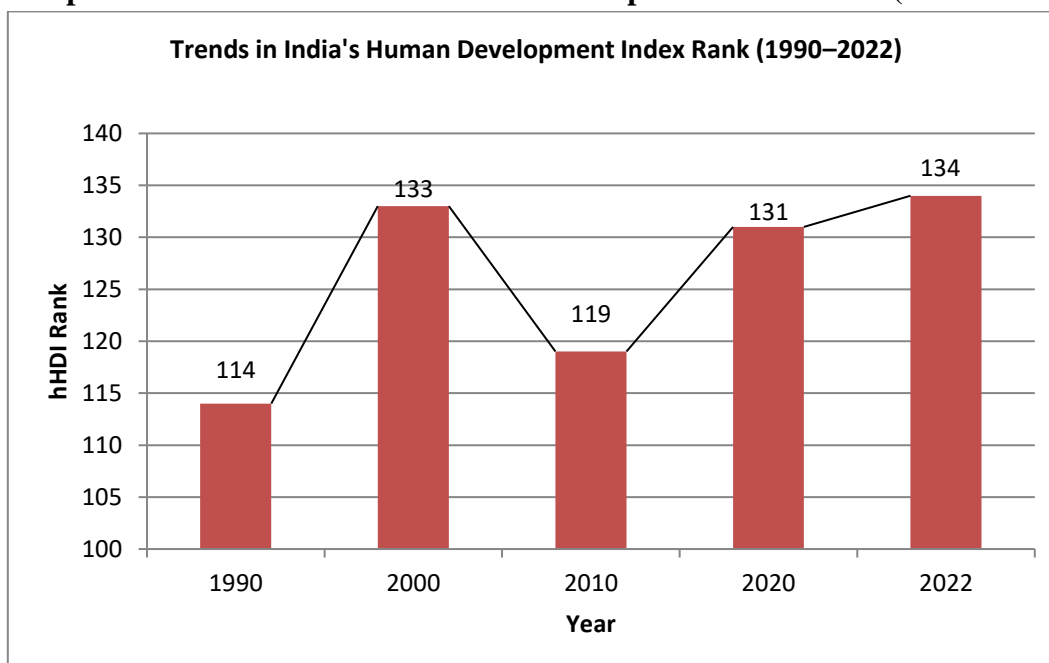
Graph No.1 depicted that HDI Values & HDI Rank of selected countries in 2022 according HDR 2023-24. The chart shows that India is ranked 134th out of 193 countries. On the other hand, Asian countries like China, Sri Lanka have achieved better HDI values and rankings than India. Not only this, Bangladesh also performs better than India with 129th position.

**Table No.2 Trends in India's Human Development Index Rank (1990–2022)**

Year	HDI Value	HDI Rank
1990	0.434	114
2000	0.490	133
2010	0.572	119
2020	0.638	131
2022	0.644	134

Source : Human Development Index Report (2023-24)

**Graph No.2 Trends in India's Human Development Index Rank ( 1990–2022)**



Above Table No. 2 and Graph No.2 indicated that trends in India's Human Development Index value and rank during the period of 1990 to 2022. If we consider the HDI value and rank of India, it can be seen that the HDI value has increased from 0.434 to 0.644 between 1990 and 2022. However, the HDI number has fallen from 114 to 134. Above bar diagram shows that how the up and downs in ranks has been occurred as far as India is concerned. Further it indicates that as your rank increases, your human development decreases. It means that India has still failing to provide good education, health and per capita income to the people of the country. Therefore India's HDI rank is fallen at 134<sup>th</sup> position.

## 6. Challenges contributing to India's low HDI:

- **Gender Inequality:** Discrimination against women in education, employment, and healthcare significantly hinders India's human development.
- **Low Literacy Rates:** India, especially in rural areas, has unequal access to quality education and low literacy rates.
- **Poor Health Infrastructure:** Maternal and child mortality rates are high due to the lack of adequate health facilities and trained medical professionals.

- **Malnutrition:** Malnutrition, especially prevalent among children and pregnant women, affects cognitive development and overall health.
- **Economic Inequality:** Large income disparities between different social groups and regions limit opportunities for marginalized communities. As a result, India's HDI value and rank decline.
- **Caste-based Discrimination:** Caste-based social hierarchies in India continue to limit educational and employment opportunities.
- **Rural-Urban Divide:** The significant gap between urban and rural development limits progress in rural areas of India.
- **Poor Sanitation and Hygiene:** Lack of clean water and sanitation facilities leads to health problems.

## 7. Measures to address these challenges:

- **Focus on Girl Child Education:** Policies should be implemented to promote girls' education and address the practice of early child marriage. In 2022, India's public expenditure on education was 4.12% of its GDP. The National Education Policy recommends that India spend at least 6% of its GDP on education.
- **Strengthening Healthcare System:** There is a need to increase public spending on healthcare infrastructure and provide affordable healthcare, especially in rural areas. In 2023-24, India's public expenditure on health was 1.9% of the country's GDP. It should be increased up to 3% of the GDP.
- **Nutritional Programs:** Food security programs should be implemented more effectively to address malnutrition through improved dietary practices and supplementary feeding.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:** Provide vocational training to enhance employability and income generation opportunities.
- **Social Welfare Schemes:** Government should implement social safety nets to support vulnerable populations, including targeted programs for marginalized communities.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Promoting participatory decision-making and addressing regional disparities through targeted development programs.
- **Improve Data Collection and Monitoring:** Data collection systems need to be enhanced to accurately assess development needs and track progress on key indicators.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** It is necessary to creating awareness about the importance of education, health and gender equality to bring about behavioural change.

## 8. Conclusion:

Although India has increased its HDI value between 1990 and 2022, the index has continued to decline rather than improve. This is a serious matter and the government needs to pay priority attention to it. In this regard, it is extremely important to make direct efforts to increase the public expenditure on education, health and per capita income of the people of the country. By addressing these challenges through comprehensive and targeted interventions, India can significantly improve its Human Development Index and achieve higher human development goals by achieving greater social and economic development for its citizens.



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