

## LETTER TO EDITOR

**What does the NFHS Fact sheet speak on the current status of Anaemia among 6- 59-Month-old children in India?**Neha Sahrawat<sup>1</sup>, Avinash Kaur Sodhi<sup>2</sup>, Sidharth Sekhar Mishra<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>Research Officer, International Institute of Health Management Research, New Delhi; <sup>2</sup>Student, International Institute of Health Management Research, New Delhi; <sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, International Institute of Health Management Research, New Delhi

<a href="#">Abstract</a>	<a href="#">Introduction</a>	<a href="#">Methodology</a>	<a href="#">Results</a>	<a href="#">Conclusion</a>	<a href="#">References</a>	<a href="#">Citation</a>	<a href="#">Tables / Figures</a>
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Sir

The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that percentage of children under the age of five and 40 % of pregnant women in World are anaemic. Anemia is a disease that influence 1.62 billion people globally, An estimated 56 trillion pregnant women, 293 million preschool-aged children and 468 million non-pregnant women. (1) Anemia is a serious global public health concern that adversely impact children and pregnant women. India has the highest rate of child anaemia among developing countries. National Iron+ Initiative (NIPI) programme, which included iron and folic acid supplementation for all age groups was established by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in 2011. in order to build Anemia Mukht Bharat Strategy. To gain the most up-to-date country wide picture of child anaemia in India we used the data of 6 to 59 months old children from the fifth cycle of the National Family Health Survey conducted in 2019–21. (2) (3)

The following study is based on secondary data from the NFHS-5, which was performed in India in the years 2019–21 and encompassed 22 states and UTs, as well as 707 districts.

The study found that in India in 2019– 21, 67.1% of children of specified age 6-59 months were anaemic, an increase of 8.5% points since the NFHS-4 study conducted in 2015–16 i.e., 67.1% and as compared with NFHS-4 (58.6%), despite of the significant increase in the consumption of iron-folic acid (IFA) tablets under INIPI. The data show that the number was higher in rural India (68.3 percent) compared to urban India (64.2 percent).

None of the states in NFHS- 5 have less than 25% anemic children. The states with an anemia rate over 70% were Madhya Pradesh (72.7%), Gujrat (79.7%), Daman and Diu (75.8%), Haryana (70.4%), Jammu and Kashmir (72.7%), Punjab (71.1%), Rajasthan (71.5%), Telangana (70%). A decrease in anemia among children was recorded in the states of Uttarakhand by 1%, Jharkhand by 2%, Meghalaya by 3%. In the UTs of Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Daman & Diu, and by 18%, 10%, 9% and 6% respectively.

Unfortunately, recent Economic development and the national anaemia control programme have not resulted in a significant reduction in anaemia prevalence in India. With the launch of the Anaemia- free Bharat campaign in 2019, it was expected that anemia burden to reduce. But the incidence has risen. There is a need to redesign the policy. The adoption and scaling up of the IFA Supplementation programme, as well as the management of all kinds (mild, moderate, and severe) of IDA, would be the critical steps towards iron deficiency and IDA in this setting, where changing food habit is tough.

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