



**Date: 01/06/2026**

## NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY – 6

### SYLLABUS:

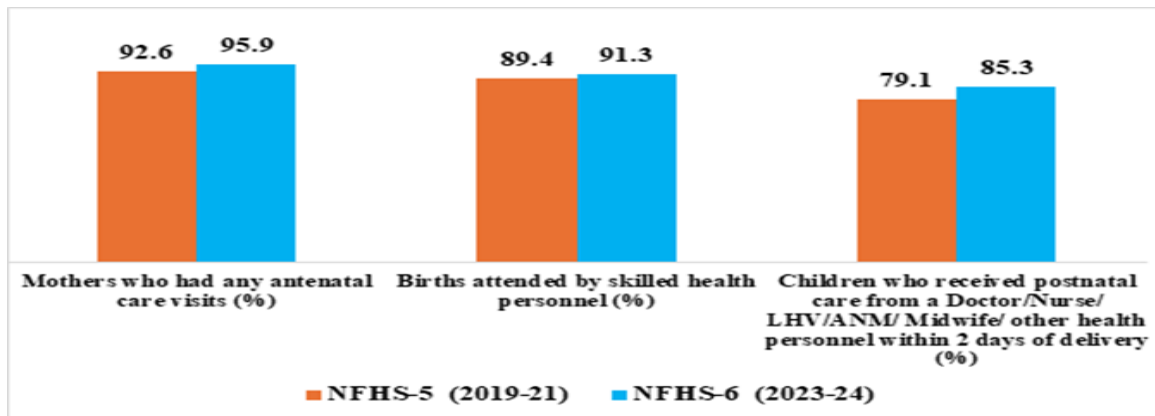
GS 2 > Social Justice > Health

### REFERENCE NEWS:

- Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) released the National Family Health Survey-6.
- The NFHS-6 was **conducted during 2023-24** by MoHFW with the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai as the nodal agency. Covering nearly **6.79 lakh households** across 715 districts, the survey provides vital evidence on population, health, nutrition and family welfare indicators and supports evidence-based planning and programme implementation up to the district level.

### KEY FINDINGS OF NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY-6:

- **Maternal Healthcare Improved:**
  - NFHS-6 shows strong improvement in maternal healthcare access and continuity of care.
  - **Antenatal care coverage** increased from **92.6% to 95.9%**.
  - Mothers receiving **ANC in the first trimester** increased from **70.0% to 76.2%**.
  - Mothers receiving **at least four ANC visits** increased from **58.5% to 65.2%**.
  - **Institutional deliveries** rose from **88.6% to 90.6%**.
  - Births attended by **skilled health personnel** increased from **89.4% to 91.3%**.
  - Postnatal care for newborns within two days of delivery improved from **79.1% to 85.3%**.



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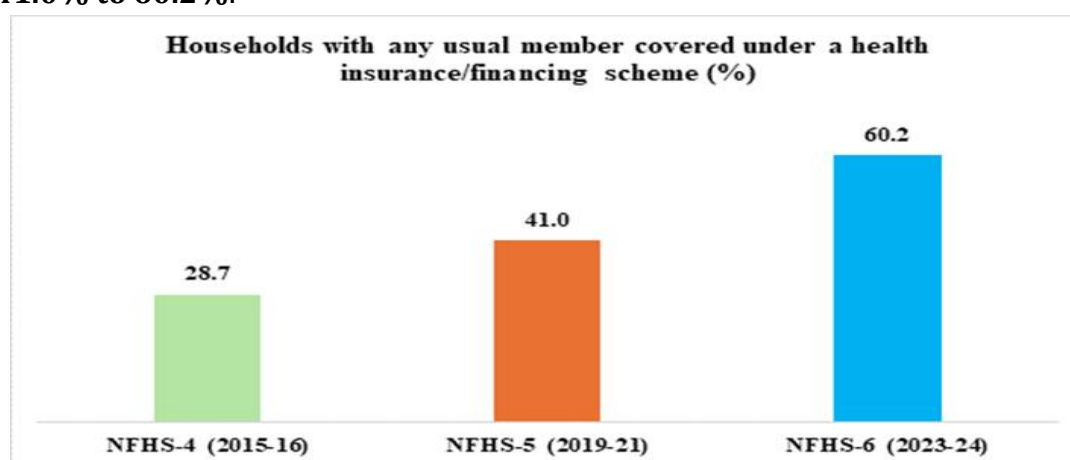
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- **Maternal Nutrition Showed Progress:**
  - Mothers consuming **iron-folic acid supplements for 100 days or more** increased from **44.1% to 54.9%**.
  - Mothers consuming supplements for **180 days or more** increased from **26.0% to 37.8%**.
- **Fertility and Family Planning Remain Stable:**
  - Family planning indicators show steady improvement.
  - India's **Total Fertility Rate remains at 2.0**.
  - **Contraceptive Prevalence Rate** increased from **66.7% to 69.1%**.
- **Health Insurance Coverage Expanded:**
  - NFHS-6 shows a major increase in financial protection for healthcare.
  - Household-level **health insurance or financing scheme coverage** increased from **41.0% to 60.2%**.



- **Child Immunisation Strengthened:**
  - NFHS-6 shows significant progress towards universal immunisation.
  - Full vaccination coverage among children aged **12-23 months** increased from **83.8% to 87.1%**.
  - Children receiving **any vaccine** remained consistently above **96%**.
  - **95.6% of children received most vaccinations through public health facilities.**
  - **Rotavirus vaccination coverage** more than doubled from **36.4% to 85.4%**.
  - Second dose of measles-containing vaccine increased from **58.6% to 71.8%**.
- **Child Health Indicators Improved:**
  - NFHS-6 records improvement in some key child morbidity indicators.
  - Symptoms of **acute respiratory infection** among children declined from **2.8% to 1.9%**.
  - Prevalence of **severe diarrhoea** declined to **0.5%**.
- **Child Nutrition Improved, But Concerns Remain:**
  - NFHS-6 shows a positive trend in child nutrition, especially in stunting and severe wasting.
  - **95.6% of children under six months** were breastfed during the survey period.
  - Children breastfed within one hour of birth increased from **41.8% to 50.1%**.
  - **Stunting** among children under five declined from **35.5% to 29.3%**.
  - This reflects a **17% reduction in stunting**.
  - **Severe wasting** declined from **7.7% to 5.2%**.

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- This reflects a **32% reduction in severe wasting**.
- **Underweight prevalence** declined marginally from **32.1% to 31.8%**.
- Children aged **6–8 months** receiving solid or semi-solid food along with breastmilk increased from **45.9% to 59.5%**.
- **Women’s Digital and Financial Inclusion Improved:**
  - Women who had ever used the internet nearly doubled from **33.3% to 64.3%**.
  - Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use increased from **78.6% to 89.0%**.
  - Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use increased from **53.9% to 63.6%**.
- **Menstrual Hygiene Improved Marginally:**
  - Use of hygienic methods of menstrual protection among women aged **15–24 years** increased from **77.6% to 79.2%**.
- **Public Health System Gained Trust:**
  - A major finding of NFHS-6 is the continued importance of the public healthcare system.
  - **95.6% of children received most vaccinations through public health facilities.**
  - Institutional deliveries crossed **90%**.
  - ANC coverage reached **95.9%**.
  - Full immunisation increased to **87.1%**.
- **Major Schemes Reflected in NFHS-6 Gains:**
  - NFHS-6 improvements are linked to several flagship interventions:
    - **Maternal health:** JSY, JSSK, PMSMA, SUMAN, PMMVY 2.0.
    - **Newborn care:** Facility-Based New-born Care, Home-Based Newborn Care.
    - **Immunisation:** Universal Immunization Programme, U-WIN.
    - **Nutrition:** POSHAN Abhiyaan, Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0, ICDS, NRCs.
    - **Financial protection:** Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY.
    - **Women’s health:** Menstrual Hygiene Scheme, Janaushadhi Pariyojana.
    - **Family planning:** Mission Parivar Vikas.
- **Emerging Concerns Highlighted:**
  - Despite progress, NFHS-6 points to some continuing and emerging challenges.
  - Rising **non-communicable diseases**.
  - Lifestyle-related health risks.
  - Dual burden of **undernutrition and overweight/obesity**.
  - Slow reduction in underweight prevalence among children.
  - Need for greater focus on preventive healthcare and behavioural change.

### POSITIVE TRENDS IN NFHS-6:

- **Strengthening of public health delivery:**
  - A major positive is the continued centrality of public health facilities in essential service delivery. This reflects improved last-mile reach through ASHAs, ANMs, Anganwadi workers, PHCs and digital systems such as U-WIN.
  - For instance, **95.6% of children received most vaccinations through public health facilities.**

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- This indicates strong community reliance on government health infrastructure for preventive healthcare.
- **Safe motherhood becoming more mainstream:**
  - NFHS-6 reflects progress in the continuum of maternal care, **from antenatal care to institutional delivery and postnatal support**. This suggests that maternal health is being addressed **not only at the point of childbirth** but throughout pregnancy and early newborn care.
  - For instance, **ANC coverage rose to 95.9%, Institutional deliveries rose to 90.6%**. This is important for reducing maternal and neonatal risks.
- **Immunisation system becoming more reliable:**
  - The improvement in full immunisation and rotavirus vaccination shows better vaccine delivery, cold-chain management, frontline mobilisation and follow-up.
    - **Full immunisation:** 83.8% → 87.1%
    - **Rotavirus coverage:** 36.4% → 85.4%
  - This shows that India's immunisation system is improving not just in reach but also in completeness.
- **Nutrition outcomes show structural improvement:**
  - The **decline in stunting and severe wasting** is one of the most significant positives. Stunting reflects long-term nutritional deprivation, while wasting reflects acute nutritional stress. Improvement in both suggests that nutrition interventions are beginning to produce deeper health outcomes.
    - **Stunting:** 35.5% → 29.3%
    - **Severe wasting:** 7.7% → 5.2%
  - This reflects the contribution of POSHAN Abhiyaan, POSHAN 2.0, ICDS and maternal-child health interventions.
- **Financial protection in healthcare has expanded:**
  - India has historically faced high out-of-pocket expenditure in healthcare. The rise in health insurance or financing coverage is therefore a major step towards universal health coverage.
  - **Health insurance/financing scheme coverage:** 41.0% → 60.2%
  - This reflects the growing reach of schemes such as **Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY**.
- **Women's empowerment is becoming multi-dimensional"**
  - NFHS-6 shows that women's empowerment is improving through digital and financial inclusion. This matters because **women's access to banking, mobile phones and internet** improves welfare access, health awareness, digital payments and household decision-making.
    - **Women's internet use:** 33.3% → 64.3%
    - **Women using their own bank/savings account:** 78.6% → 89.0%
  - Thus, women's empowerment is increasingly linked with both social and digital inclusion.
- **Governance convergence is showing results:**

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- The gains in maternal health, immunisation, nutrition, insurance and women's inclusion suggest that progress is not due to a single scheme. It reflects convergence between health, nutrition, financial inclusion and digital governance.
- Important schemes reflected in these gains include:
  - Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK), Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana 2.0 (PMMVY 2.0). Universal Immunization Programme and U-WIN
  - POSHAN Abhiyaan, POSHAN 2.0 and ICDS
  - Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY
  - Mission Parivar Vikas

### **CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES:**

- **Persistent Malnutrition:**
  - Although stunting and severe wasting declined, **underweight prevalence declined only marginally from 32.1% to 31.8%**.
  - This shows that child nutrition remains a major challenge.
  - Malnutrition continues to require sustained interventions beyond health services, including sanitation, food diversity, maternal education and income support.
- **Uneven Quality of Healthcare:**
  - Coverage indicators have improved, but quality of care remains a concern.
  - More ANC visits or institutional deliveries do not automatically ensure high-quality diagnosis, counselling, referral and emergency care.
  - The next challenge is to move from **coverage to quality**.
- **Dual Burden of Nutrition:**
  - NFHS-6 flags the emerging challenge of the dual burden of **undernutrition and rising overweight/obesity**.
  - This means India must deal with both child malnutrition and lifestyle-related adult health risks at the same time.
- **Rising Non-Communicable Diseases:**
  - The survey highlights rising **non-communicable diseases and lifestyle-related risks**.
  - This requires stronger preventive healthcare, screening, behavioural change and nutrition awareness.
- **Slow Progress in Some Behavioural Indicators:**
  - Early breastfeeding improved from **41.8% to 50.1%**, but nearly half of children are still not breastfed within one hour of birth.
  - Menstrual hygiene improved only slightly from **77.6% to 79.2%**.
  - These indicators show the need for deeper behavioural and social change.
- **Regional and District-Level Gaps:**
  - Since NFHS-6 provides district-level data, it is likely to reveal wide inter-state and intra-state differences.
  - National averages may hide poor performance in specific districts, tribal areas, aspirational districts and urban slums.

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## WAY FORWARD:

- **Move from Coverage to Quality:**
  - Improve quality of ANC, institutional delivery, postnatal care and immunisation services.
  - Strengthen referral systems, emergency obstetric care and newborn care facilities. Use quality audits and district-level monitoring to identify service gaps.
- **Strengthen Nutrition-Sensitive Governance:**
  - Link POSHAN Abhiyaan with sanitation, drinking water, food security, maternal education and livelihood programmes.
  - Focus on diet diversity, complementary feeding and growth monitoring. Give special attention to underweight children, where progress has been slow.
- **Deepen Last-Mile Delivery:**
  - Strengthen ASHA, Anganwadi and ANM coordination.
  - Use district-level NFHS data for micro-planning. Prioritise high-burden districts and vulnerable groups.
- **Focus on Preventive Healthcare:**
  - Expand screening for diabetes, hypertension, cancers and lifestyle diseases.
  - Promote healthy diet, physical activity and tobacco/alcohol reduction. Strengthen Health and Wellness Centres as the first point of preventive care.
- **Improve Women-Centric Interventions:**
  - Improve access to mobile phones, internet and bank accounts for women. Expand menstrual hygiene awareness and affordable sanitary products.
  - Use women's self-help groups for health, nutrition and financial literacy campaigns.
- **Strengthen Digital Health Systems:**
  - Scale up platforms like **U-WIN** for immunisation tracking.
  - Use digital dashboards for nutrition, maternal health and high-risk pregnancy monitoring.
  - Ensure data privacy and digital inclusion while expanding health-tech systems.
- **Reduce Regional Inequality:**
  - Use NFHS-6 district-level data to prepare targeted state and district action plans.
  - Focus on aspirational districts, tribal belts, remote regions and urban poor settlements. Shift from one-size-fits-all schemes to localised interventions.

## CONCLUSION:

- NFHS-6 reflects India's steady progress in health, nutrition and women's empowerment. The next priority should be improving quality, equity and preventive healthcare to sustain these gains.

## PRACTICE QUESTION:

**Q. "NFHS-6 reflects India's progress in health and social development, but also reveals persistent structural challenges". Discuss. (10 marks, 150 words)**

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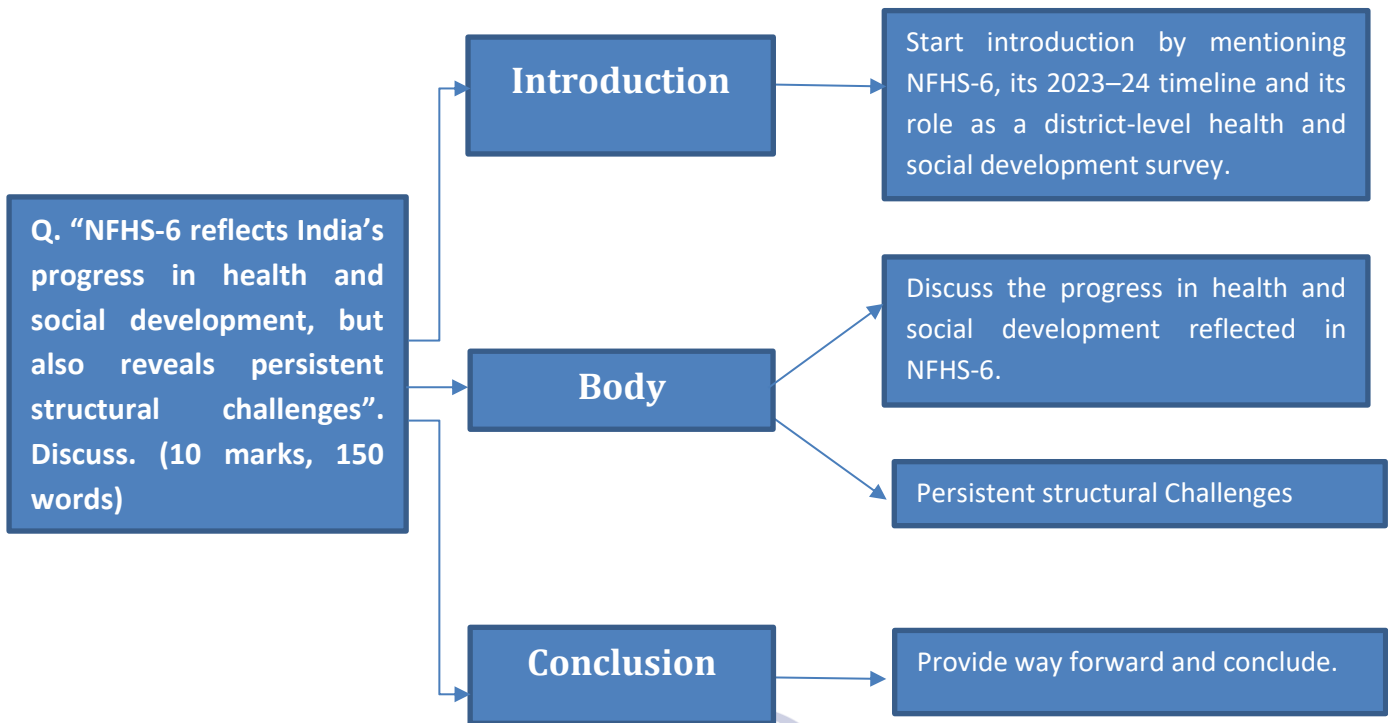
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**APPROACH:****MODEL ANSWER:**

The **National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6)**, conducted during **2023–24**, covered nearly **6.79 lakh households across 715 districts**. It provides district-level evidence on health, nutrition, family welfare and social development indicators.

NFHS-6 shows clear progress in maternal health, child immunisation, nutrition, financial protection and women's empowerment. However, it also reveals continuing challenges in malnutrition, quality of healthcare, behavioural change and regional inequalities.

**Progress Reflected in NFHS-6:**

**1. Strengthening of public health delivery:** A major positive is the continued role of public health facilities in essential service delivery. **95.6% of children received most vaccinations through public health facilities**, showing strong public reliance on government health infrastructure.

**2. Safe motherhood becoming mainstream:** Maternal healthcare has improved across the continuum of care. **ANC coverage increased from 92.6% to 95.9%**, while **institutional deliveries rose from 88.6% to 90.6%**. This reflects better access to pregnancy care, safe delivery and newborn support.

**3. Immunisation system improving:** India's immunisation system is improving in both reach and completeness. **Full immunisation increased from 83.8% to 87.1%**, while **rotavirus vaccination rose from 36.4% to 85.4%**. This indicates better vaccine delivery, cold-chain management and frontline mobilisation.

**4. Nutrition outcomes improving:** Child nutrition has shown important gains. **Stunting declined from 35.5% to 29.3%**, while **severe wasting declined from 7.7% to 5.2%**. This reflects the impact of nutrition and maternal-child health interventions such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, POSHAN 2.0 and ICDS.

**5. Financial protection expanded:** Health insurance or financing scheme coverage increased from **41.0% to 60.2%**. This is significant for reducing out-of-pocket expenditure and moving towards universal health coverage.

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**6. Women's empowerment improved:** Women's digital and financial inclusion has improved. **Women's internet use increased from 33.3% to 64.3%**, while women using their own bank or savings account increased from **78.6% to 89.0%**. This strengthens welfare access, health awareness and household decision-making.

#### **Persistent Structural Challenges:**

**1. Malnutrition remains serious:** Although stunting and wasting declined, **underweight prevalence declined only marginally from 32.1% to 31.8%**. This shows that malnutrition remains linked with poverty, poor diet diversity, sanitation gaps and maternal education.

**2. Coverage does not ensure quality:** Higher ANC coverage or institutional deliveries do not automatically guarantee quality care. India still needs better diagnosis, counselling, emergency obstetric care, referral systems and newborn care.

**3. Dual burden of nutrition:** NFHS-6 highlights the challenge of both undernutrition and rising overweight/obesity. This requires balanced nutrition strategies, not calorie-focused interventions alone.

**4. Rising non-communicable diseases:** The survey flags rising non-communicable diseases and lifestyle risks. India must strengthen screening and prevention for diabetes, hypertension, cancers and obesity.

**5. Behavioural change remains slow:** Early breastfeeding improved, but only to **50.1%**, while menstrual hygiene improved marginally from **77.6% to 79.2%**. This shows the need for deeper community awareness and behaviour change.

**6. Regional inequalities persist:** National averages may hide poor outcomes in tribal areas, aspirational districts, urban slums and remote regions. Hence, district-level NFHS data must guide localised planning.

#### **Way Forward:**

- **Move from coverage to quality** through better ANC, institutional delivery, postnatal care, referral and emergency care.
- **Strengthen nutrition-sensitive governance** by linking POSHAN with sanitation, drinking water, food security and maternal education.
- **Target high-burden districts** using NFHS-6 district-level data.
- **Strengthen preventive healthcare** through Health and Wellness Centres for NCD screening and lifestyle counselling.
- **Improve behavioural change campaigns** on breastfeeding, menstrual hygiene, diet diversity and child feeding practices.
- **Deepen women-centric interventions** by improving access to mobile phones, internet, banking and menstrual hygiene products.
- **Use digital health systems carefully**, including U-WIN and health dashboards, while ensuring inclusion and data privacy.

NFHS-6 shows India's steady progress in health, nutrition, financial protection and women's empowerment. The next priority should be improving **quality, equity and preventive healthcare** to sustain these gain

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