Vaccine Hesitancy:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has included ‘vaccine hesitancy’ as one of the 10 threats to global health for the year 2019.
- Vaccine hesitancy is defined as the “reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines”.
- It only appears to have grown more dangerous to public health.
- Vaccine hesitancy threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. Measles, for example, has seen a 30% increase in cases globally in 2018.
- Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease – it currently prevents 2-3 million deaths a year, and a further 1.5 million could be avoided if global coverage of vaccinations improved.
- Some of the reasons why people choose not to vaccinate are: Complacency, inconvenience in accessing vaccines, and lack of confidence are key reasons underlying hesitancy.

Reasons for Vaccine Hesitancy

- A 2018 report on vaccine confidence among the EU member states shows why vaccine coverage has not been increasing to offer protection even to those not vaccinated.
- It found younger people (18-34 years) and those with less education are less likely to agree that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe.
- Only 52% of respondents from 28 EU member states agree that vaccines are definitely effective in preventing diseases, while 33% felt they were probably effective. 48% of the respondents believed that vaccines cause serious side effects and 38% think vaccines actually cause the disease that they are supposed to protect against.
- Even in India, a 2018 study found low awareness to be the main reason why 45% of children missed different vaccinations in 121 Indian districts that have higher rates of unimmunised children. They had
apprehension about adverse effects, were reluctant to get immunised for reasons other than fear of adverse effects.

- Social media is playing a crucial role in spreading vaccine disinformation.