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## Generating Female Employment through Public Employment: **A Scoping Paper**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The employment generating potential of growth in India has been on the decline with unemployment and the lack of new job opportunities at their peak. According to the data put together by the State of Working India 2018, the relationship between growth and employment generation in India has weakened over time. While employment growth was around 2 per cent per annum in the 1970s and 1980s, it slowed down to 1 per cent or less in the 1990s and 2000s. In contrast, the GDP growth rate accelerated from around 3–4 per cent to 7 per cent during the same period.





The growth elasticity of employment, which was around 0.5 in the 1970s, reduced to 0.18 in the period 2009 to 2011, and 0.08 in the period 2011 to 2015 (ibid.) and was negative (-0.045) between 2012 and 2018.<sup>1</sup>

A related puzzle is that of declining female workforce participation rates in the country, despite increasing education levels as well as economic growth. A major concern for the direction and pace of economic growth is how work and labour force participation rates of women can be improved.<sup>2</sup> In this context, employment in the government, especially in public services delivery, is a potential area where jobs can be created. Even presently, employment in the government and public sector is significant among the low proportion of women who are employed outside agriculture.

An emphasis on creating work opportunities for women in public administration and frontline public services can also serve the dual purpose of providing universal access to quality public services and reviving demand in the economy. In addition, since many care activities are typically performed by women as unpaid work<sup>3</sup> within households, creating more such activities geared towards good quality public provision would enable a greater number of women to participate actively in remunerated employment. However, most of the women engaged in frontline public services currently are not permanent employees; they are paid honoraria or given task-based incentives (often below

minimum wages) rather than salaries, and work without social security benefits or job security.

In this context, the current study aims to estimate the impact of creating and regularising jobs for women within the system of public administration, especially in frontline public services delivery. It will consider questions on the activities and working conditions of women workers in frontline public services, estimate the number of such workers, and compare them with international estimates. The study will also assess whether there is gender stereotyping in certain public sector jobs. Information will be collected on the number of vacancies in these positions, from which the potential for employment generation for women and associated multiplier effects will be estimated. Additionally, the study will capture women's perceptions of the benefits and constraints of being employed in such jobs.

This scoping paper presents the current status of women employed in various levels by the government, based on data from the National Sample Survey (NSS), analysis of government reports, publications, and responses to queries raised using the Right to Information (RTI). This paper is also the basis for the design of the field survey and study.

It is important to note that there are serious issues related to defining and capturing women's 'work', as much of what women do in India is unpaid and often within the household.

<sup>1</sup>To calculate the employment elasticity for the period 2011–12 to 2017–18, GDP data from 'Press Note on First Revised Estimates of National Income, Consumption Expenditure, Saving and Capital Formation for 2017–18' is available at [http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/press\\_release/FRE%20of%20National%20Income%2C%20Consumption%20Expenditure%2C%20Saving%20and%20Capital%20Formation%20For%202017-18\\_0.pdf](http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/press_release/FRE%20of%20National%20Income%2C%20Consumption%20Expenditure%2C%20Saving%20and%20Capital%20Formation%20For%202017-18_0.pdf) and employment figures from 'India's Employment Crisis: Rising Education Levels and Falling Non-agricultural Job Growth' by Santosh Mehrotra and Jajati K. Parida (October 2019). Available at [https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mehrotra\\_Parida\\_India\\_Employment\\_Crisis.pdf](https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mehrotra_Parida_India_Employment_Crisis.pdf) (based on Periodic Labour Force Survey [PLFS], 2017–18). The methodology is based on 'RBI Working Paper Series No. 06 Estimating Employment Elasticity of Growth for the Indian Economy', by Sangita Misra and Anoop K Suresh. Available at <https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/Publications/PDFs/06WPSN240614.PDF>

<sup>2</sup>A McKinsey Global study in 2015 found that India could increase its GDP by 16 to 60 per cent by 2025 by simply enabling women to participate in the economy at par with men.

<sup>3</sup>A number of the job opportunities generated by expanding public services would be for women. Many important activities in which women are engaged are not even recognised as 'work' and remain unpaid.



It is therefore not considered 'work', resulting in a gross underestimation of women's contribution to the economy. The present paper uses the NSS definitions of employment which have these limitations. However, the study recognises that for the purpose of understanding women in public employment, this data may be a good place to start.

For the desk review conducted for this paper, 'public employment' includes those engaged in public sector enterprises, autonomous bodies and government/local bodies. It includes all employees, whether permanent or contractual or honorarium-based, and even those working without any written contract. Conceptually, public employment is used in the same sense as in the definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD), which includes "'producers of government services," that is, those who are employed by central and local bodies in administration, defense, health, education, social services (including social security schemes), and promotion of economic growth' (Alestalo et al., 1991). The NSS data covers 88 economic divisions (labelled 01–99) which include public administration (IAS, IPS, etc.) as well. The focus of the field work and the larger study however is on public employment at the frontline level, defined as being administratively at the block level and below.











## 2

# Background and Literature Review

The declining trend in India's female worker population rates (WPR) has been explained by factors on both the demand and supply side of labour. The dominant view seems to be that women have withdrawn from the labour force as a result of upward mobility of households and higher educational enrolment rates that have displaced women from the labour market (Das et al., 2015; Klasen and Pieters, 2015; Mehrotra and Sinha, 2017). However, the prevalent high rates of poverty and stagnant real wages of households suggest that this may not be the case.





It is also argued that bringing women into the labour force requires enhancing their skills and providing flexible employment opportunities (Mehrotra and Parida, 2017). Culture-based arguments also suggest that Indian women do not have the desire to work unless forced to due to economic conditions. It is social norms that generally dictate behaviour (The Economist, 2018). However, these explanations do not provide a holistic picture of the determinants of female employment in India. In fact, data reveals that female labour force participation rates (LFPR) vary widely between urban and rural areas. The NSS data also shows that LFPR of women in rural areas is much higher than that of women in urban areas. Although the gap between urban and rural areas has narrowed moderately over the past few decades, most of the convergence was driven by the fall in participation rates in rural areas (Das et al., 2015). This is a trend seen in the Asia Pacific region despite better outcomes of female education and lower fertility rates (International Labour Organization, 2019a). Higher levels of participation of women in education and migration have also been cited as explanations for the gender gap in the workforce (Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 4674), although this does not account for the high levels of unemployment among women in the economy. Instead, several studies have recognised that when provided decent opportunities for work, women would like to enter, or in some cases re-enter, the workforce (Raveendran et al., 2013; Chaudhary and Verick, 2014; Narayanan and Das, 2014).

Beyond low levels of participation in the labour market and the workforce, the bulk of women's work appears to be concentrated in a small number of fields such as education, textiles, health and social work. Given that roughly 82 per cent of all working women in India (principal status [PS] + subsidiary status [SS] category) (PLFS Report, 2018) are either self-employed or

casual workers, this translates to low-wage jobs on average.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, female participation in industries with the highest average wages (such as information and communications, and financial services) stands at a low 15 per cent (NSSO Employment Unemployment Survey Report 2011–12), and eight times more men work in high-skilled jobs than women (Global Gender Gap Report, 2017).

Despite government interventions to encourage women's diversified participation in the workforce and improve working conditions for women, fewer women are participating in the labour force and unemployment rates for women are also higher than ever—having reached 5.7 per cent in 2018. This effectively means that fewer women are willing to work, and those who are, are unable to find paid work. This could also tie back to the fact that 'willingness to work' itself is usually low when expectations of finding a job are low (Kapoor, 2019).

Based on an analysis of NSS data, Chaudhary and Verick (2014) find that of the total number of women who reported they were usually engaged in domestic duties, 34 per cent in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas reported their willingness to accept paid work. Among the women who were willing to accept paid work at their homes, about 95 per cent in both rural and urban areas preferred work on a regular basis. About 74 per cent in rural areas and about 70 per cent in urban areas preferred 'part-time' work on a regular basis, while 21 per cent in rural areas and 25 per cent in urban areas wanted regular 'full-time' work. These preferences are also evident in the large number of home-based workers among women, with 31 per cent of all women employed in non-agricultural work in 2011–12 being home-based (Raveendran et al., 2013). The experience of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), especially in those

<sup>4</sup> Despite the increase in casual wages over the past decade, there is still a large gap between the wages of casual and regular workers. In 2011–12, the overall average wage paid for casual work was still only 36 per cent of the compensation received by regular/salaried workers. The median wage for regular/salaried and casual workers in 2011–12 was ₹232 and ₹120, respectively; 41 per cent and 17 per cent lower than that of the mean average (India Wage Report, 2018).





states where it was well implemented, showed that there is no dearth of women's labour supply, with more than 50 per cent of the work under the employment guarantee schemes being done by women (Narayanan and Das,

2014). High women's participation in MGNREGA also suggests that women are willing to take up paid employment when wages are close to the legal minimum wage.

## Universal Basic Services and Female Employment

Given this background, it is clear that government policies have the potential to affect female LFPR in several ways. Policies directed towards lowering female fertility rates, enhancing maternity benefits, expanding public childcare services (Pignatti, 2016) and other social welfare policies positively affect the number of women who are able to participate in the labour market. On the contrary, it has been seen that in countries that have experienced privatisation of public service delivery, women's female labour force participation suffered. The cases of Estonia and Slovenia are particularly telling in this respect. At the outset of the transition from socialism, these two countries had an almost identical approach to maternity leave and public childcare. Later, their systems diverged. Estonia lengthened pregnancy and maternity leave, while Slovenia left them unchanged. However, in Estonia the number of childcare establishments shrank by 14 per cent and prices rose, while in Slovenia prices did not change and the number of establishments increased by 1 per cent. Over the late 1980s and early 1990s, Estonian women were much more likely to leave the labour market than Slovenian women. Consequently, after the first five years of transition, the employment share of Slovenian women had increased, while that of Estonian women had decreased. The decreased supply of childcare services also affected women's labour force participation on the demand side, together with the more general contraction in the education sector. As these sectors employed mainly women,

labour demand for women also contracted. The reduction in the number of jobs and in real wages in these sectors further contributed to the decline in female labour force participation. The impact of these changes was stronger on less-skilled women and increased their risk of poverty (Pignatti, 2016). In Sweden, women took up most new jobs when the country saw a rise in the welfare state led by the local public sector during the period 1963–93—local government employment of women increased almost fourfold while that of men only doubled (Rosen, 1996). Further, the average annual growth rate in female public employment was as high as 7–8 per cent in the 1970s, contributing to the increase in the share of women among public employees to two-thirds by 1985 (Alestalo et al., 1991). Other Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway) also had similar experiences. The feminisation of the labour market in these countries was led by the public sector, with women mainly engaged in welfare state activities.

In general, the unpaid care work burden that falls on women usually substitutes for absent public services. For instance, with inadequate public health facilities, women are affected not just by reduced access to healthcare services for themselves, but also by the increased burden of taking care of the sick (Ghosh, 2013; Kaul and Shrivastava, 2014). This provides an interesting insight into the role of public services delivery in encouraging female labour force participation and subsequently raising female employment.





Therefore, public investment in social care services—such as nurseries, day care centres, kindergartens, care centres for the elderly, disabled or sick—constitutes an inclusive growth policy. It creates employment opportunities for women involved in care work (most of these organisations hire a significantly large number of women) and also reduces the unpaid care work burden of those willing to participate in alternate sectors of the economy. This has been proven to be the case in Turkey where the lack of good quality and accessible social care services placed constraints on female labour supply and considerably weakened women's labour market attachment (Ilkcaracan et al., 2015). Research on public expenditure in social care services in the US, South Africa and Greece has explored the potential impact of investments in the social care service sector for short-run demands. The studies, from a gender perspective, compare the effects of increased investment in social care services on employment, income generation and poverty reduction, with the effects of a similar investment on physical infrastructure and construction (Antonopoulos and Kim, 2008; Antonopoulos et al., 2010, 2014). In the US, for instance, it was found that an investment of USD50 billion on home-based care of the elderly, of persons with long term illnesses and on childcare centres would create 1.2 million new jobs, directly and indirectly, of which 90 per cent would go to women. On the contrary, the same level of investment on capital infrastructure was estimated to generate 5,55,000 new jobs, directly and indirectly, of which 88 per cent would go to men. The study also shows that almost half the jobs created through an expansion of social care would go to households in the bottom 40 per cent, while two-thirds of the jobs created through spending on physical infrastructure would go to households in the middle and upper quintiles. Similarly, the study on South Africa finds that an investment of ZAR13.3 billion in home-based

health care and early childhood care services would generate 7,72,000 new jobs, with 60 per cent going to women; furthermore, the national growth rate would increase by 1.8 per cent, and growth would be pro-poor as the income of ultra-poor households would increase by 9.2 per cent, the income of poor households by 5.6 per cent, and the income of non-poor households by 1.3 per cent.

Global literature also suggests that there is a direct correlation between women's employment in the public sector and women's overall labour market outcomes (Rosen, 1996; Gornick and Jacobs, 1998), although the studies focus on a limited number of countries. In fact, in some countries, women are over-represented in public sector jobs (in a large majority of OECD countries) compared to the corresponding share in total employment (Anghel et al., 2011). In almost all UNECE countries,<sup>5</sup> women make up the bulk of public sector employment (while a majority of those employed in the private sector are male), which was also linked to better labour market outcomes for women overall. On the contrary, in countries where men make up the majority in the public and private sectors (such as Albania, Azerbaijan, Greece and Serbia), the economies are characterised by low rates of female participation in the formal labour market—they are engaged in domestic duties or are employed in the informal sector in precarious conditions (UNECE, 2017). Public sector employment accounts for an average of about 20 per cent of total employment in most OECD economies, with this share being higher in Scandinavia (well above 30 per cent) and lower in Chile and Turkey (below 15 per cent) (Anghel et al., 2011). However, the share has declined globally over the last decade or so, especially in those countries where it was initially higher, like Scandinavia or Eastern Europe. Some economies, such as Chile, Greece and The Netherlands, exhibit more stable shares

<sup>5</sup> Members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) include countries of Europe, North America (Canada and United States), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and Western Asia (Israel).





or a slight increase over time. Interestingly, in countries like Canada and New Zealand, where the overall female share is close to 50 per cent, the over-representation of females in the public sector is also the largest—over 65 per cent in most cases. Further, this feature seems to be quite persistent over the period of analysis, despite a general increase in female labour market participation in most countries. This signals (a) the correlation between female employment in the public sector and total employment in the public sector; and (b) the

correlation between female employment in the public sector and female participation in the labour force.

There is limited research on the policy potential of social welfare programmes in India to generate paid employment for women within the government's own administrative setup. It provides a solid basis for creating work opportunities for women, linked to providing universal public services as well as reviving demand in the economy.

## Opportunities for Female Employment in Public Services in India

The public sector provides the largest number of formal or regular salaried jobs in the Indian economy. It is also a large employer of general-purpose graduates.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there has been an increased engagement of women workers in public service delivery in the recent period in India. The 2011–12 NSSO–EUS clearly shows that within rural non-agricultural employment, there has been a substantial increase of women workers in community/voluntary employment in non-trade services sectors, especially in education, health and sanitation. A rough estimate suggests that there are about 7 million women 'scheme' workers in the country in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), mid-day meals and the National Health Mission (NHM): 2.8 million anganwadi workers (AWWs) and helpers, 2.5 million mid-day meal cooks and helpers, and 0.8 million accredited social health activists (ASHAs).<sup>7</sup> Adding para-teachers, mates in MGNREGA, panchayat sevaks, auxiliary nurse midwife (ANMs etc., would increase the number. More recently, women have also been included as workers in schemes for the expansion of banking, financial inclusion and digitisation, and in agriculture (krishi sakhis, for example). Women are not only responsible for the actual delivery of services, but also for training

beneficiaries and creating awareness in the community around government programmes. This is why public workfare programmes in India have traditionally offered a unique opportunity for women to earn cash incomes in a context where, too often, the ability of women to work outside the home is severely constrained by social norms (Narayanan and Das, 2014). Existing scholarship suggests that women often participated overwhelmingly in these programmes, to the extent that some of them were even referred to as 'women's' programmes (Dev, 1995). Public works programmes have therefore been a subject of considerable interest from the perspective of gender (Quisumbing and Yohannes 2005). Public funds that provide safety nets could (and should) offer women equal access to risk-coping opportunities. This is particularly important if women are more vulnerable to income and other shocks because of the absence of insurance mechanisms (e.g., lack of assets to be used as collateral, ill health, shorter duration of paid employment). Second, public works schemes may provide poor women resources that would enable human capital investment, especially for children's education and nutrition, apart from improving women's bargaining power within the household (ibid.).

<sup>6</sup>The All India Survey of Higher Education indicates that of the 8 million students who graduate every year, only around 1 million receive professional degrees. The rest are graduates in the Arts, Science or Commerce streams, which often does not prepare them for work in the modern economy (State of Working India, 2019).

<sup>7</sup>Based on data available on the websites of the relevant ministries.





As a result, there is a strong case to be made for enhancing female participation in the formal labour market if the government chooses to extend the public sector, specifically through the universalisation of basic services, instead of the current trend of withdrawing from the economy. In fact, a recent working paper finds that a modest expansion of the current system—by filling vacancies and investing in infrastructure in the areas of health and education—can create more than 2 million jobs (Abraham et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the case could be made that enhancing female participation in public services would improve gender gaps (compared to the private sector) in terms of wage differentials. However, in India, even in the public sector, there appear to be significant divergences between the wages offered to men and women (Anghel et al., 2011). In the past decade, however, the sector has experienced a slowdown in recruitment and systematic reduction in public sector employment at a time when the supply of educated youth has increased. And, the demand for government jobs (categorised as secure employment) can even be assessed by the large number of applicants to even the lowest paid forms of public employment; the intense competition for public sector employment has also been accompanied with widespread protests against extending job reservations to middle-income communities such as Gujjars, Marathas, Patels and Jats.

To make matters worse, most public programmes (anganwadi services, ASHAs, etc.) in which women are engaged are not recognised as ‘work’, with the official

nomenclature itself placing them as ‘friends’ of the community who work on a voluntary basis and not as formal employees with contracts and social security benefits. Hence, women remain deprived of decent remuneration even when they are essential for the public service delivery mechanisms. They are mostly employed in activities at the frontline level of service delivery in the government—as shiksha mitras, swachhata doot, kisan mitra, bank mitra, tablet didis and so on. This is reflected in the conditions of work as well. Most of these women are not regular employees, are paid small amounts (sometimes significantly less than minimum wages), work with very little infrastructure support, have no social security, and no opportunities for upward mobility. Tamil Nadu and Kerala do better in terms of job remuneration for women workers. For example, mid-day meal workers in Tamil Nadu are paid ₹5,000 a month, and ₹7,500 a month in Kerala. On the other hand, they are paid ₹1,250 a month in Bihar and ₹1,500 a month in West Bengal.<sup>8</sup> Such engagements need to be regulated and brought under the government system of payments and remunerations, especially as they reflect the high potential for job creation for women in public service delivery mechanisms. Regularising the employment of AWWs, ASHAs, helpers (by definition, only women can be employed for these jobs) and other contractual employees in the public health and education system can create good jobs for another 3 million workers (Abraham et al., 2019). Based on an analysis of data on vacancies and staffing, Das writes about achieving the goal of good governance and effective institutions in India.

<sup>8</sup> Based on Annual Work Plan and Budget Documents (2016–17), available on the website <http://mdm.nic.in>





*According to him, In the Indian context, it can be argued that the shortage of staff, particularly in the regular cadres of state government departments responsible for social sectors such as education, health, water and sanitation, rural development and agriculture, among others, is one of the main factors affecting the coverage as well as quality of government interventions in these crucial sectors across many states (Das 2014: Page 2 )*

If provided, a number of these job opportunities would be for women, given that these are already sectors that are dominated by women. Apart from increasing women's employment by filling vacancies and setting up new facilities, universalising public provisioning contributes to increased female employment indirectly as well. With patriarchal family relations, an accessible public health and education system enhances the chances of a woman being educated and healthy, thereby increasing her chances of being employed. This may reflect in increased female WPR (Kaul and Shrivastava 2014). While most such women workers remain poorly paid and unrecognised, they form the backbone of public service delivery, especially in health and education. They form the critical link between the community and the government, ensuring that services reach the people. This is a crucial layer of employment which needs to be nurtured for effective provision of basic services. There are a large number of vacancies at this level, and India has one of the lowest ratios of health/education workers to the population in the world. It is obvious that employing more people in these sectors could have long term benefits in terms of improved human

development outcomes. The benefits are manifold and difficult to estimate.

In sum, research indicates that public job creation in social care provisioning has a strong impact on employment creation in the overall labour market, and also yields pro-poor income growth patterns. Along with the benefits to the community from the services provided, large- scale employment generation at this level can also have strong multiplier effects on output, contributing to the revival of rural demand in a stagnant economy. For instance, it has been found in some studies of MNREGA that multipliers can be as high as 4 in local rural areas (Hirway et al., 2009; Srikanthamurthy et al., 2016). The multiplier effects of creating employment opportunities for women in the delivery of public services need to be included in any cost-benefit analysis, along with the benefits in terms of health, education and other outcomes. Therefore, increased public provisioning of essential services will not only increase a woman's chances of joining the paid workforce, but also reduce the burden of unpaid work on women. This in turn could potentially improve the declining female WPR in India (Antonopoulos and Kim, 2011). In fact, they would contribute to the economy in two ways: by inducing greater dynamism and diversification of women's employment, along with higher incomes through positive multiplier effects. Further, they are much needed to address the human development gaps in the country, which are widening in the context of a highly unequal growth process (see Abraham, et al., 2019 for data).









3

## Women in Public Employment in India- Extent and Characteristics

(Based on data from NSS Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011–12 and NSS Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017–18).

### Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) and Work Participation Rates (WPR)

Before examining the details of public employment, we briefly present data of overall LFPR and WPR. The NSS data provides information on the number of individuals employed and unemployed through the use of activity status codes. Those engaged in economic activity and those making tangible efforts to seek work together constitute the labour force. The activity status is based on major time criterion or priority criterion. The major time criterion is used for the 'usual status' approach, which has the reference period of one year (365 days). This is further disaggregated by time, wherein the activity on which the person spent a relatively longer time is the 'usual principal activity'. The person in principal activity could have pursued an economic activity for a shorter time period (not less than 30 days) in that year. This activity status is the 'usual subsidiary activity' of the person.





Additionally, WPR ratio is defined as number of individuals employed, per thousand persons. The LFPR and WPR have been calculated for principal status (PS) and principal + subsidiary status (PS+SS).

Labour force participation rates in India have been significantly lower for females vis-à-vis males since the 1980s. In 2017–18, rural male

LFPR (PS) stood at 54.6 per cent, while for rural females (PS+SS) it was 16.1 per cent. This trend was similar in urban areas: 57 per cent for males versus 15.1 per cent for females (Table 1). However, there has been a greater decline in female labour force participation: female LFPR (PS+SS) reduced to 17.5 per cent in 2017–18 from 22.5 per cent in 2011–12. The drop was more profound in rural areas.

Table 1:  
Female LFPR (PS and PS+SS)  
by Sector (%)

	2011–12			2017–2018		
LFPR (PS)	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban
Male	54.7	56.0	55.0	54.6	56.8	55.2
Female	18.1	13.4	16.8	16.1	15.1	15.8
Persons	36.8	35.6	36.4	35.8	36.3	36.0
LFPR (PS+SS)						
Male	55.3	56.3	55.6	54.91	56.98	55.51
Female	25.3	15.5	22.5	18.18	15.87	17.50
Persons	40.62	36.73	39.5	36.99	36.79	36.93

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

Similar trends are seen in worker population ratios. Female WPR (PS and PS+SS) came down by 5.39 percentage points in 2017–18 from

2011–12. There was a slight increase in female WPR (PS) in urban areas, from 12.5 per cent in 2011–12 to 13.4 per cent in 2017–18.





Table 2:  
Female WPR (PS and PS+SS)  
by Sector (%)

	2011-12			2017-2018		
WPR (PS)	Rural	Urban	Rural +Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural +Urban
Male	53.5	54.2	53.7	51.3	52.7	51.7
Female	17.6	12.5	16.1	15.4	13.4	14.8
Persons	36	34.2	35.4	33.8	33.4	33.6
WPR(PS+SS)						
Male	54.3	54.6	54.4	51.7	53.0	52.1
Female	24.8	14.7	21.9	17.5	14.2	16.5
Persons	39.9	35.5	38.6	35.0	33.9	34.7

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011-12 and 2017-18.

Further, a state-wise analysis for 2017-18 shows female LFPR (PS) to be the lowest in Bihar at 2.73 per cent, followed by Uttar Pradesh (6.65), Jammu & Kashmir (8.29) and Jharkhand (8.68). The Map in Annexure I presents state-wise female LFPR for 2017-18. The northern belt presents lower participation rates than the all

India average. Major states in the northern and central regions have lower female LFPR than the national average. Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir show a slight rise when subsidiary status is also taken into account.

## Category of Employment

The NSS data also allows us to classify employed workers by category of employment, i.e. self-employment, regular salaried work and casual work. The majority of workers are self-employed (both male and female). In 2017-18, 52 per cent males and 49 per cent females were self-employed in principal category status.

The percentage of self-employed workers in principal status increased for males by 1.7 per cent (between 2011-12 and 2017-18), while for females it declined by 1 per cent from 49.7 per cent in 2011-12 to 48.8 per cent in 2017-18. The figures are similar for workers in principal and subsidiary status.





Table 3: Workers by Category of Employment (PS + SS) (%)

	Workers (PS) by category of employment 2011–12			Workers (PS) by category of employment 2017–18			Workers (PS+SS) by category of employment 2011–12			Workers (PS+SS) by category of employment 2017–18		
	Self-Employed (all categories)	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour (all work)	Self-Employed (all categories)	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour (all work)	Self-Employed (all categories)	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour (all work)	Self-Employed (all categories)	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour (all work)
Rural India	54.0	9.6	36.5	57.0	13.6	29.5	55.9	8.7	35.4	57.8	13.1	29.1
Male	54.1	10.2	35.7	57.6	14.1	28.4	54.5	10.0	35.5	57.8	14.0	28.2
Female	53.5	7.6	38.9	54.8	11.9	33.3	59.3	5.6	35.1	57.7	10.5	31.8
Urban India	40.7	44.5	14.8	37.8	47.5	14.7	42.0	43.3	14.8	38.3	47.0	14.7
Male	41.6	43.6	14.9	39.1	45.8	15.1	41.7	43.4	14.9	39.2	45.7	15.1
Female	36.8	48.7	14.6	32.2	54.7	13.1	42.8	42.8	14.4	34.7	52.1	13.1
(R+U) India	50.3	19.3	30.5	51.4	23.5	25.2	52.2	17.9	29.9	52.2	22.8	25.0
Male	50.4	20.0	29.6	52.1	23.5	24.4	50.7	19.8	29.4	52.3	23.4	24.3
Female	49.8	16.7	33.6	48.8	23.3	33.7	56.1	12.7	31.2	51.9	21.0	27.0

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





Regular salaried employment (receiving wages on a regular basis) among female workers (PS) as a proportion of total employment for women increased by 7 percentage points between 2011–12 and 2017–18. This rise was higher in urban areas (6 percentage points) than in rural areas (4.3 percentage points). Similarly,

for female workers in principal and subsidiary status, the share of regular salaried workers increased by 8.4 percentage points in the six-year period. However, it must be remembered that this is in the context of overall declining employment.

## Public Employment

In order to study workers in the government sector, data was classified by enterprise type. The NSSO collects information on the characteristics of enterprises and conditions/terms of employment for workers employed in the non-agricultural sector and in part of the agricultural sector for example, proprietorship, private limited company, government sector, employer's household. The present study focuses on direct employment by the government and does not include public sector enterprises. However, for the purposes of the scoping paper, analysis based on NSS data on public sector enterprises has been included. This is because the data collected as part of the EUS in 2011–12 clubbed government and public sector enterprises as one category,<sup>9</sup> whereas in PLFS this was not the case. Autonomous bodies have also been included since many important projects of the government that employ women or whose main objective is women's empowerment are functioning in 'mission mode', often through an autonomous institution set up for this purpose (for example, Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty [SERP] in Andhra Pradesh).

The proportion of females in the government sector, among all female workers (PS), has increased over the years. Although the proportion of males in the government

sector is lower (and more so in other types of enterprises), a gender composition analysis of workers in the government sector (proportion of males and females among all government workers) reveals that more than 70 per cent workers in the sector are men. This has not changed much since 2011–12 and is the same across regions (rural, urban).

Among females, 20.2 per cent of workers in principal status were employed in the government sector in 2017–18 (and the rest in other types of enterprises), a rise from 16.8 per cent in 2011–12. In 2011–12 and 2017–18, a region-wise comparison reveals that a higher share of females in the government sector were in rural areas vis-à-vis urban areas. This was consistent across years, as also for all types of workers (PS and PS+SS). As can be seen in Table 4, if we consider the usual status (PS+SS), according to PLFS data, 27 per cent of all non-agricultural female workers in rural areas were employed by the government. This declined slightly from 29 per cent in 2011–12. This is possibly accounted for by a decline in MGNREGA and other public works (as seen below), because if we look at only principal status, the proportion of rural female workers in government employment increased from 18 per cent to 23 per cent between 2011–12 and 2017–18, respectively.

<sup>9</sup>For 2017–18, where the data for public sector enterprises (PSE) is available, it is seen that this is not significant and will not make a difference to this macro level analysis. In rural areas, 0.3 per cent of usual status women workers and 0.5 per cent of male workers are in PSEs. In urban areas, it is slightly higher at 1.6 per cent for men and 1.5 per cent for women.





**Table 4:**  
Share of Workers (PS and PS+SS)  
in the Government/Public Sector  
(AGEGC and Non-agriculture,  
excluding Agriculture)

	2011-12			2017-2018		
Workers (PS)	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Male	9.6	12.4	11.0	9.7	11.7	10.6
Female	17.9	15.6	16.8	22.6	17.8	20.2
Male to Female Ratio	2.4	3.9	3.0	2.1	2.8	2.4
<b>Workers (PS+SS)</b>						
Male	14.8	12.3	13.7	11.0	11.6	11.3
Female	29.3	13.6	24.0	27.0	17.0	22.6
Male to Female Ratio	1.4	3.8	1.8	1.6	2.7	2.0

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011-12 and 2017-18.

In terms of absolute numbers (Table 5), it is estimated that taking usual status into consideration, about 4 crore workers worked for the government/public sector in 2011-12, and went down to around 3 crore in 2017-18. Among women workers, the decline was from 1.5 crore to 1 crore. However, if we look at principal status alone, the number of women workers in rural areas increased from about 36

lakh to 44 lakh, and in urban areas from 27 lakh to 24 lakh. A further break up of female workers in PS and PS+SS by regular, self-employed or casual work does indeed show that the largest decline in absolute terms in the number of workers in the government sector was in casual work (including public works and other works). In fact, there was an increase in the number of regular workers.

**Table 5:**  
Estimated Number of  
Workers (PS and PS+SS)  
in the Government/Public  
Sector

In lakh	2011-12		2017-2018	
	PS	PS+SS	PS	PS+SS
Rural	122.3	278.7	138.1	183.4
Male	86.7	160.3	93.9	113.9
Female	35.7	118.4	44.2	69.5
Urban	132.1	132.7	129.0	129.7
Male	104.9	105.1	94.6	94.8
Female	27.2	27.6	34.4	34.8
(R+U)	254.5	411.4	267.1	313.1
Male	191.5	265.4	188.5	208.7
Female	62.9	145.9	78.5	104.3

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011-12 and 2017-18.





The ratio of male to female workers in principal status in government/public sector also improved overall (reduced ratio means improvement) in 2017–18, signifying the increased presence of women workers in the government sector (Table 4).

A state-wise break up of the proportion of females among all government workers shows

that among major states, Bihar has the lowest percentage of females (in PS as well as PS+SS) at 13.9 per cent (the remaining 86.1 per cent are men), followed by Haryana at 20 per cent. In 2011–12 as well, Bihar and Jharkhand had the lowest proportion of females (vis-à-vis men) among all government workers (see Maps in Annexure I for states that are above and below the national average).

Table 6:  
Distribution of Employment in Government  
by Category, PLFS 2017–18

% workers in each category (among workers in government/public sector)	PS			PS + SS*		
	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour: public works	Casual labour: other types of work	Regular salaried/ wage employee	Casual labour: public works	Casual labour: other types of work
Rural Male	84.5	7.8	7.7	69.7	6.8	11.0
Rural Female	76.0	19.2	4.8	48.4	22.1	16.7
Urban Male	96.2	1.4	2.5	96.0	1.3	2.5
Urban Female	95.5	3.9	0.6	94.3	4.7	1.0
R + U Male	90.3	4.6	5.1	81.7	4.3	7.2
R + U Female	84.5	12.5	3.0	63.7	16.3	11.4

\* Note: In the PS+SS category, a small percentage of workers were in the self-employed category, which is not shown in this Table. Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





Further disaggregation among government sector workers by category of employment indicates a rise in regular salaried employees over time. In rural India, 76 per cent of female government workers were regular salaried employees (66 per cent in 2011–12), while in urban India, the proportion was 95 per cent (97 per cent in 2011–12).<sup>10</sup> The percentage of regular salaried among government workers was higher for men (90.3 in 2017–18) vis-à-

vis women (84.5), and the pattern remained unchanged since 2011–12. This probably accounts for the women employed in jobs where there is work throughout the year (ASHAs, mid-day meal cooks, etc.), but the payment is not in the form of a regular salary. Taking PS and SS together in rural areas, the proportion of regular salaried workers is much lower, and casual labour is a significant proportion.

## Industrial Composition of Female Workers in the Government Sector (Non-agriculture and AGEHC Sector)

The rising number of women in the government sector calls for an exploration of the industries in which they are employed. The National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008 at 2-digit level comprises 99 divisions (or industrial classifications).

Probing the industrial composition at 2-digit level reveals that education (85); civil engineering (42); public administration and

defence (compulsory social security) (84); human health activities (86); and social work activities without accommodation (88) are the top five industrial categories in which female government workers (PS) are involved. This has remained unchanged since 2011–12; these sectors together constituted 85.7 per cent of female government workers in 2011–12 and 84 per cent in 2017–18.

Table 7:  
Percentage of Female  
Government Workers (PS)  
by Industrial Category (Top 5. %)

NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers	2011-12	2017-18
Education	44.3	46.7
Civil Engineering	17.8	13.6
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	13.4	11.2
Human health activities	6.9	9.4
Social work activities without accommodation	3.3	3.3
Female		27.0
Male to Female Ratio		1.6

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

<sup>10</sup> The remaining being casual workers





An analysis by category of employment in these industries shows that 92 per cent (91 per cent in 2011–12) of female workers in civil engineering were working as casual labour in public works. In the other four industries, more than 95 per cent were employed as regular salaried workers.

Further, looking at workers in regular salaried work within the government sector (Table 8), it is seen that 83 per cent (84.3 per cent in 2011–12) of the workers were engaged in only four of the five industries (leaving out civil engineering).

**Table 8:**  
**Percentage of Regular Salaried Female Government Workers (PS) by Industrial Category (Top 5, %)**

It is clear that most women in government are employed in the education sector. Among regular employees, public administration and health are also important sectors. In the field work for the present study, special attention will be paid to these sectors.

NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers in Regular Salaried Work	2011-12	2017-18
Education	55.4	55.2
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	16.5	12.7
Human health activities	8.3	10.9
Social work activities without accommodation	4.1	3.9
Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	3.3	2.9

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18

## Occupational Composition of Female Workers in the Government Sector (Non-agriculture and AGE GC Sector)

The occupation type of employed individuals in NSS data is categorised by using 3-digit classification of National Classification of Occupations, 2004. Female government workers in principal status are employed mainly as 'technicians and associate professionals', which includes teachers, administrative associates, police inspectors, social work associates, etc. This share increased from 31 per cent in 2011–12 to 37 per cent in 2017–18. This is followed by 'elementary occupations' (19 per cent), which primarily comprise garbage collectors,

agricultural and fishery labourers, and mining and construction labourers. In urban areas, 'professionals' is the second major category of occupation for these women and employs about a quarter of female government workers (PS and PS+SS). However, once subsidiary status is also taken into account, 30 per cent of female government workers are employed in elementary occupations. In rural areas, engagement in elementary occupations stood at 39 per cent.





## Terms of Employment

To ascertain the employment conditions of workers, NSS data provides information on four aspects (three in PLFS): type of job contract provided to them; availability of paid leave; method of payment of the remuneration; and social security benefits associated with the work. It allows identification of the level of informal

employment among those employed. This information is ascertained for all workers in usual status. A comparison between male and female workers' terms of employment does not show much variance by gender. Work conditions of all female workers, and among those in the government sector, are examined next.

## Type of Job Contract

For workers in principal status, about 75 per cent female workers do not have a written contract. In urban areas, it worsened by 5 percentage points between 2011–12 and 2017–18. Merely 18 per cent of female workers have written contracts of more than three years (which presents some job security), and in proportion has remained unchanged since 2011–12. Taking subsidiary status into account, longer duration contracts are available to only 16 per cent of the workers.

The scenario improves in the case of government sector workers where 55 per cent of female workers have a written contract. However, over the six-year period, female government workers with longer duration contracts came down (by 3 percentage points), especially in urban areas (Table 9).

Table 9:  
Female Workers in  
Government (PS)—Type of Job  
Contract

	2011-12			
	No written contract	Written: 1 year or less	Written: 1-3 years	Written: more than 3 years
Rural	51.18	11.05	1.55	36.22
Urban	31.5	4.25	2.12	62.13
Rural+ Urban	42.66	8.11	1.8	47.44
	2017-18			
	No written contract	Written: 1 year or less	Written: 1-3 years	Written: more than 3 years
Rural	47.11	8.71	3.75	40.43
Urban	41.06	5.12	3.48	50.34
Rural+ Urban	44.46	7.14	3.63	44.77

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





Since government workers includes those engaged in casual labour who tend to not have written contracts, even for shorter durations (more than 70 per cent did not have a written contract in 2017–18), further disaggregation by category of employment was done. It reveals that even among regular salaried government

workers, only 50 per cent (59 in 2011–12) had written contracts of more than three years, and 39 per cent (34 in 2011–12) had no written contracts in 2017–18. There was no variation by region (rural/urban) or when subsidiary status was also taken into consideration.

## Paid Leave Provision

More than two-thirds of female workers are not eligible for paid leave, with conditions worsening when workers in subsidiary status are also added. Among those in the government sector, more than 60 per cent had provision for paid leave (down by 3 percentage points from 2011–12). But with subsidiary workers added, paid leave was available only to 47 per cent (up from 28 per cent in 2011–12).

A region-wise exploration shows that the provision of paid leave for those in the

government sector is better in urban areas (76 per cent) vis-à-vis rural areas (51 per cent). However, this provision has come down by 10 percentage points since 2011–12, both for PS and PS+SS government workers in urban areas. A further break up by category of employment reveals that, as expected, casual workers (public works and other works) are not eligible for any paid leave. There has been a decline in the provision of leave to regular salaried workers since 2011–12 (Table 10).

Table 10:  
Paid Leave Provision among  
Regular Salaried Female  
Government Workers

	Eligible for Paid Leave (PS)	
	2011-12	2017-18
Rural	73.9	
Urban	88.6	
Rural+ Urban	81.7	
	Eligible (PS+SS)	
Rural	72.3	67.6
Urban	87.8	79.8
Rural+ Urban	80.5	73.6

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





## Social Security Benefits

The NSSO collects information on the availability of social security benefits like Provident Fund/pension; gratuity; health care and maternity benefits; and various combinations of these three.<sup>11</sup> The provision of social security benefits resonates with the other terms mentioned above. In 2017–18, 63 per cent among workers in principal status and 67 per cent among workers in principal and subsidiary status were not eligible for any social security benefit. There has been an improvement since 2011–12, at which time these figures were 70 and 79 per cent, respectively. Rural areas have a higher proportion of female workers without any social security than those in urban areas (in 2011–12 as well).

The situation of those in the government sector is better—52 per cent of female government workers have some sort of social security provision. For urban areas, the coverage extends to more than 70 per cent workers. However, it is equally relevant to note that when

workers in subsidiary status are also taken into the analysis, only 40 per cent (24 in 2011–12) have any social security benefit. Further, in rural areas it covers only 24 per cent of female government workers, while in urban areas it is more than 70 per cent (similar to that of PS workers).

For female government workers by category of employment, it is surprising to note that even regular salaried workers lack provision of social security benefits—31 per cent in 2017–18.<sup>12</sup> In rural areas, it is even more bleak with no social security for 43 per cent of regular salaried government workers. For those working in principal and subsidiary status, the picture is similar. For casual workers, close to 95 per cent workers do not have any social security benefit (in 2011–12 as well as in 2017–18).

A similar analysis of all of these indicators forms the basis of the comparison between Bihar and Telangana, the states selected for this study. This is presented in Annexure II.

## Summarising the Findings from NSS Data

This analysis of NSS data shows that the government sector is a significant employer in India. In rural areas, 29 per cent of women and 10 per cent men workers outside of agriculture are employed in the public sector. In urban areas, the corresponding figures are 17 per cent for women and 12 per cent for men. It is also seen that although there are much fewer women workers, the government sector is a major source of employment for women. Further, in the period between 2011–12 and 2017–18, there was an expansion of women's employment in the government sector (in PS). This might be a reflection of more women being employed in various initiatives of the government in the

health and education sectors, which have traditionally been sectors where women are more likely to work. At the same time, it is also seen that if we include the subsidiary status workers, there is actually a decline in the employment provided by the government for both men and women. This most likely is a result of the slowdown in the government's public works programmes.

Further disaggregation of the data shows that among government workers, there was a slight improvement in the ratio of males to females, with fewer males to each female being employed in the government sector in

<sup>11</sup> The NSSO survey does not distinguish between employer-provided and other social security, so these could include beneficiaries of some 'universal' schemes.

<sup>12</sup> It was not possible to derive a pattern regarding who these workers are from the NSS data. There are 1,165 persons in this study sample, and they are engaged in all kinds of occupations. It will be further explored in the field study.





2017–18 as compared to 2011–12. However, it is also the case that even among government sector employment, men are more likely to be employed as regular salaried workers than women. While a large proportion of women are also employed as regular salaried workers, a significant share of them are employed as casual workers as well. In terms of occupational categories too, women tend to be concentrated in low-skill occupations compared to men.

The terms of employment in the government sector are definitely better when compared

with other means of employment. A higher proportion of women workers in government have written contracts, some security of tenure, access to paid leave and social security benefits compared to the private or non-government sector. However, it is also the case that the extent of coverage of these benefits (although better than the private sector) is still limited with many government jobs not even having written contracts.





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4

## Sector-wise Data on Employment in Government

While the analysis of NSS data reveals the concentration of women in certain areas of the economy—such as education, health and public administration—the scoping exercise sought to provide some insight into the presence of female workers in sectors that have a strong government presence. This was done to gauge the presence of women within the existing public administration setup and frontline public services delivery, with the aim of mapping interventions that the government introduced to encourage the participation of women in the workforce.





## Government Initiatives to Encourage Women's Employment

The Central Government has undertaken several initiatives to improve women's participation in the labour force in the form of workplace benefits to encourage women to work. There are a number of protective provisions that have been incorporated in various labour laws in order to create a congenial and safe work environment for women child workers—care centres, time-off for feeding children, enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, mandatory provision of a crèche facility for children aged 6 months to 6 years in establishments with 50 or more employees, and providing women workers in night shifts adequate safety measures (Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 4674).

The Constitution enshrines the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, which mandates the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work or work of similar nature without any discrimination. Further, under the provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the wages fixed by the appropriate government are equally applicable to both male and female workers without gender discrimination (Parliamentary Question No. 3555).

Beyond measures to safeguard and improve working conditions for women, initiatives to further female participation in the workforce also include legislative frameworks to safeguard female employment through reservations and incentivisation schemes. The state governments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra,

Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have reservation schemes for women in government service (ranging from 30 per cent to 33 per cent). In addition, the Ministry for Home Affairs has mandated that there must be a 33 per cent quota for women in the national and state police forces (constables). Although the reservations applied only from the years in which they were introduced, there appears to be a significant gap in the number of men and women in various sectors; there is also a divergence between the number of sanctioned and occupied posts for women. To take the example of female employment in the constable rank of the police force, women constitute only 7.3 per cent of the total police force. It remains to be seen whether the shortfall between the number of existing positions for women and the actual number of women in the public sector is the result of a gap in demand and supply for recruits, or whether it is determined by other factors.

However, this analysis aims to only explore whether government norms aimed at encouraging female employment substantially raise women's participation in the public sector and subsequently create multiplier effects. This departs from the more traditional and widely available literature on predictable determinants of female labour force participation such as levels of education, household income and fertility rates.





## Women in Frontline Services and Indian Public Administration

Education, health and public administration are the areas within the government where women are largely present. Field reports and policy analysis show that many government programmes put women at the centre in these sectors, especially as service providers, sometimes on a voluntary basis. In order to further understand where women work within the government and what their service conditions are, an analysis has been made using gender disaggregated data from different ministries/departments of the Government of India. Where possible, an attempt has been made to also look at the extent of vacancies against sanctioned posts to get an idea of the potential for expansion of employment opportunities within the government.

Before discussing the mapping and field survey in the selected states, the desk review explored various sectors in order to analyse the presence of women in the concerned sector, and to review legislation aimed at enhancing female employment in that sector. This was done to get a better sense of the nature of the jobs as well as the current presence of women in different jobs.

We also identify a number of segments within the public sector that either have quota provisions for female employment or employ a large number of women as volunteers. This includes public services such as AWWs and helpers geared towards providing nutrition to children under the age of 6 years and pregnant women; ASHAs responsible for immunising children in neighbourhoods; bank sakhis who provide a wide range of financial services to

their communities; police constables, of whom 33 per cent are constitutionally required to be women; women working in the railways and bus transportation of states. As part of the scoping exercise, these sectors were narrowed down on the basis of the terms of employment under which women work. Of interest was also the fact that women fell in the category of temporary or volunteer workers who received honoraria on the basis of the time put in. The exercise also suggested that most public services attract female workers, despite the fact that a major part of their salary is variable and based on incentives.

Field reports, policies and social welfare programmes of governments which employ women as service providers (sometimes on a voluntary basis) are explored in order to understand where women work within the government. We also aim to provide an insight into the terms under which women are employed in the government using gender disaggregated data from different ministries/departments of the Government of India. Where possible, an attempt has been made to look at the extent of vacancies against sanctioned posts to get an idea of the potential for expansion of employment opportunities within the government. The sectors chosen included those traditionally considered female-centric, and those in which the government has a significant presence, such as education and health, as well as newer areas such as banking and police. We present some of the data for all India, and the states of Bihar and Telangana.





## Anganwadi Services

The Anganwadi Services Scheme under the umbrella of the ICDS, is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India (Ministry of Women and Child Development), and represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2017). It was introduced in response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on the one hand, and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other. The beneficiaries under this scheme are children in the age group 0 to 6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. As a result, most of the individuals employed in service delivery under this scheme are women. The scheme includes state-sponsored supplementary nutrition (SNP); pre-school non-formal education; nutrition and health education; immunisation; health check-up; and referral services. For most states (aside from the north eastern and Himalayan states as well as union territories), costs are shared 50:50 between the Centre and states on the basis of norms set by the Centre.

This scheme envisages AWWs and helpers as honorary workers from the local community

who come forward to render their services, on a part-time basis, in the area of child care and development. They are paid monthly honoraria as decided by the government from time to time. By definition, all these workers are women. There are about 14 lakh anganwadi centres in the country; therefore, if all vacancies are filled, it would mean jobs for 28 lakh women as AWWs and helpers. There is also scope for expansion as many have recommended there be an additional worker in each centre, so that one could focus exclusively on pre-school education and the other on health and nutrition for the under-3 age group, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls.

The Government of India has recently enhanced the honoraria of AWWs at main anganwadi centres (AWCs) from ₹3,000 to ₹4,500 per month; AWWs at mini-AWCs from ₹2,250 to ₹3,500 per month; and anganwadi helpers (AWHs) from ₹1,500 to ₹2,250 per month. A performance linked incentive of ₹250 per month to AWHs, effective 1 October 2018, was also introduced. The AWWs are paid ₹500 per month under POSHAN Abhiyaan for using ICDS-CAS.

Table 11:  
Vacancy Rates in Anganwadi  
Centres (2018–19)

Location	Vacancy rate among anganwadi workers	Vacancy rate among anganwadi helpers
All India	6.9%	7.6%
Bihar	17%	19.2%
Telangana	13.8%	7.3%

Source: Calculated using data on sanctioned and in-position anganwadis from response to unstarred Lok Sabha Question No. 3305.





The anganwadi scheme is a prime example of the potential for increasing female employment through the extension of public services as mandated by the Supreme Court and the National Food Security Act, 2013. In fact, by regularising the jobs of AWWs, the government could enhance the quality of work advanced to women while improving the nutritional status of children in the country.

The supervisory roles in anganwadi services are played by sector supervisors and child

development project officers (CDPOs). Although the data for vacancies at this level was not available at the all India level, earlier studies have shown that at least till a few years ago, over 30 per cent of these posts were vacant across the country. The CDPOs are often given additional responsibilities as child protection officers, as also other statutory roles under legislations for the protection of women. Most of these positions are held by women, and this is another area where there is tremendous scope for expansion.

## Education

The education sector (teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, colleges and universities) falls under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. It is a sector with a significant female presence in the total workforce, although the majority of

workers are men. This occupation provides the stability and flexibility that allows women to take part in household unpaid care work without any obstacles, and is relatively better paying than other jobs available for women.

*Table 12:*  
**Percentage of Female Workers  
in the Education Sector (%)**

Location	Elementary education (2016-17)	Higher education (2018-19)
All India	48.3	42.3
Bihar	35.6	21
Telangana	50.5	39.4

Source: AISHE survey and Elementary Education in India Analytical Report 2017.

On an all India basis, women constitute 48.3 per cent of the total elementary education teaching workforce, with many states (such as Delhi, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Sikkim) exceeding 50 per cent (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education. 2018). Within the higher education category, the majority of women

were employed as assistant professors (49.7 per cent of total number of females in the sector), followed by lecturers (17.1 per cent), associate professors (8.8 per cent) and tutors (7.1 per cent). On an all India basis, very few women held positions of principals (1.7 per cent), pro-vice chancellors (0.003 per cent), directors (0.1 per cent) or vice chancellors (0.008 per cent). In fact, women accounted for only 8 per





cent of vice chancellors: in Bihar one out of 20 vice chancellors of universities was a woman, and in Telangana one woman out of 15 vice chancellors.<sup>13</sup>

There are differing norms prescribed for optimal learning outcomes as per pupil teacher ratios across the world, either in the form of a legal instrument with mandatory compliance, or as a target or goal. In India, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2010) provides a maximum pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 for grades 1 to 5, and 35:1 for grades 6 to 8 at the elementary level, with specialist teachers for science, mathematics, languages and social studies, and a head teacher for any school with

more than 100 students. These are significantly less demanding norms than elsewhere in the world. For example, in Finland, the Ministry for Education and Culture recommends 20 to 25 pupils per class for grades 1 to 6; in Serbia, class size is a maximum of 25 pupils; and in France, the average class size is 22.7 pupils. The Republic of Korea aims to bring its pupil teacher ratio down to the OECD average by 2020, and in Qatar, the goal is to reach a pupil teacher ratio of 13–15:1. However, despite existing national norms, state-sponsored schools and universities have a large number of vacancies across different regions.

Table 13:  
Vacancies in Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

State	Secondary			Higher Secondary			Total Vacant
	Sanctioned	In position	Vacant (A)	Sanctioned	In position	Vacant (B)	Total Vacant
Bihar	48,531	31,365	17,166	28,160	11,418	16,742	33,908
Telangana	22,604	19,892	2,712	5,984	5,984	0	2,712
Total	5,97,906	4,68,540	1,29,366	3,16,865	2,32,623	84,242	2,13,608

Source: Response to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1374.

Based on the existing norms in India (Table 13), there are many vacancies which, if filled, could create several jobs across the country, especially

for women, and at the same time contribute to increasing the quality of education provided to children in government schools.

<sup>13</sup> Source: AISHE survey





## Police Force

India has one of the most under-staffed police forces in the world. The United Nations recommended ratio of police to citizens is 222:100,000. India's ratio stands at 138. The government has stated that there are no universal standards to assess the 'optimal level of police force in a country'. However, in order to increase female presence in the sector, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued advisories to all state governments to increase the representation of women to 33 per cent of the total strength of police personnel in the states. State governments have also been requested to create additional posts of women constables/sub-inspectors by converting the vacant posts of male constables. The government intends to have at least three women sub-inspectors

and 10 women police constables in each police station. In reality, all India female employment in the police force accounts for only 8.7 per cent of the total police force, while overall vacancy is 22.2 per cent; 71.8 per cent of the women on the force are constables, and 17.6 per cent are head constables.

While 33 per cent of positions in the rank of constable are reserved for women in the Central Reserve Police Force and the Central Industrial Security Force, 15 per cent are reserved in the Border Security Force, the Sashastra Seema Bal and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. As the local police force comes under the state government, it is expected to fall in line and work towards increasing the number of women recruits.

Table 14:  
Rank-wise Percentage of  
Women Police in India  
(as on 1 January 2017)

	Number	Percentage against total number
Constable	100583	71.75
Head Constable	24709	17.63
Asst. Sub Inspector	3838	2.74
Sub-inspector	7482	5.34
Inspector	2372	1.69
ASP/Dy. SP/Asst. COM	641	0.46
Addl. SP/Dy. COM	189	0.13
AIGP/SSP/SP/COM	274	0.20
DIG	27	0.02
IGP	41	0.03
Add DG	18	0.01
DGP/Spl DG/ADGP	10	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>140184</b>	

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Data on Police Organisations (as on 1 January 2017).<sup>\*</sup>





The Mahila Police Volunteer (MPV) Scheme comes under the Ministry of Women and Child Development as well as the Ministry of Home Affairs. The MPVs act as the link between the police and the community to help women in distress. Their broad mandate is to report incidences of violence against women—

domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment, and violence faced by women in public spaces. They will act as a role model for the community. An MPV is an honorary position and further details are not available at the central level.

Table 15:  
Status of Police Personnel vis-à-vis  
Sanctioned Strength (as on 1 January  
2018)

States/UTs	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength	Vacancy/ Surplus
Bihar	1,28,286	77,995	50,291
Telangana	76,407	46,062	30,345
All India (Total)	23,79,728	18,51,332	5,28,396

Sources: Ministry of Home Affairs Data on Police Organisations (as on 1 January 2017).

As mentioned, the police force in India is highly under-staffed; the sanctioned strength of the police across states was around 2.8 million in 2017 (the year with the latest available data), but only 1.9 million police officers were employed (a 30 per cent vacancy rate). Furthermore, the promotional structure within the police system is not conducive and a large majority of constables retire without even one rank promotion in their entire career. Transfers are too frequent, ad-hoc and arbitrary in nature, and are mostly a means

of punishment and harassment, sometimes due to the influence of local politicians.

This is another sector that could benefit from enhanced female participation in the labour market, specifically in a formal set up. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the low presence of women in the sector can also be attributed to low turnout for recruitment, which is tied to cultural norms that prohibit women from joining the sector.

Health

One of the key components of the National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) was to appoint ASHAs. They are local women who are able to provide primary care and act as a link between the community and the health system. It is envisaged that as ASHAs are community health volunteers, they are only entitled to task/ activity-based incentives and not a monthly salary. It is widely recognised that ASHAs played a crucial role in expanding institutional

deliveries, immunisation and so on. Over time, ASHAs have also been burdened with a number of additional tasks relating to communicable as well as non-communicable diseases. There are about 10 lakh ASHAs in the country, with some vacancies. The data on ASHA facilitators was not available at the national level; this information will be collected at the state level and also through RTIs.





**Table 16:**  
**ASHAs and Supervisory Staff under National Rural Health Mission**

Designation	Norms		In-position		Vacancies	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
ASHA NRHM	n.a.	9,48,266	n.a.	9,05,047	n.a.	43,219
ASHA NUHM	n.a.	74,395	n.a.	65,629	n.a.	8,766
ASHA Facilitator	One for every ASHA		Information not available		Information not available	

Source: Website of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)

At the level of the sub-centre and the primary health centres as well, there are a large number of workers who are critical for the provision of health care services. As seen in Table 17, there are vacancies in these positions as well in comparison with the sanctioned posts. There

is much more information available in relation to the nature of jobs, para-health workers, etc., which will throw further light on the opportunities for, and the current presence of, women in health care provision, which will be explored in the study.

**Table 17:**  
**Vacancies at the Primary Health Centre Level**

State/UT	ANM (sub-centres & PHCs)	Health Worker (M)	Health Assistant (F)	Health Assistant (M)	Medical Officer (PHC)
Bihar		891	755	437	292
Telangana	1,317	1,260	167	0	188
All India/ Total	27,964	37,648	6,209	11,479	8,572

Source: Rural Health Statistics, MoHFW.

## Rural Development

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment for rural households, many of which are engaged in agricultural activities that are mainly seasonal. It provides a rights-based approach to employment and guarantees 100 days of work to those who apply for registration. According to the Economic Survey (2018), 54 per cent of the work supplied was given to women, a trend that has been observed since 2013–14. The scheme has achieved some success in targeting women, in part because it provides them employment close to home. According to the norms of the scheme, work is

to be made available to anyone who demands it within 15 days of receiving an application to work, failing which the state government is liable to pay an unemployment allowance. In its design, MGNREGA perhaps goes farther than most public works programmes in its overt aspirations for women (Holmes et al. 2010; Khera and Nayak 2009; Sudarshan et al. 2011) as it prescribes that at least a third of all workers be women, and provides for equal wages for men and women. The operational guidelines too incorporate measures sensitive to gender-related issues (Holmes et al. 2010).





**Table 18:**  
**Percentage of Female**  
**Persondays (2018–19,%)**

Location	Female workers as a percentage of persondays
All India	54.6
Bihar	51.8 (52.3% of the total workers are female)
Telangana	62.8 (60.8% of the total workers are female)

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, MGNREGA Management Information System.

Apart from the workers employed under the scheme, the rural development programme also has a large supporting staff network that is employed at the state, district and block levels. Although the supporting staff may be arranged differently depending on the state, the basic structure of the scheme is largely the same. The administrative staff at the state level is employed as contractual as well regular staff—in most cases, a member of the staff is hired on the basis of the contractual scale and is then converted to the regular scale. There are a large number of gram rojgar sewaks, either men or women, for instance, who are located at the village level. Such gender disaggregated data are not available at the national level.

Right to Information responses from different states suggest that female engagement in these activities varies across states. In the Masalia block, Dumka district, Jharkhand, there are no female technical support staff under the MGNREGA scheme. In Goa, women constitute 100 per cent of all accountants, roughly 68 per cent of all gram rojgar sewaks, 50 per cent of all programme officers, and 22 per cent of all assistant engineers. On the contrary, there is only one woman working as a technical assistant (out of nine) in the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, and only one female computer assistant (out of eight) in Saraikela, Jharkhand. Given the available data, it appears that women are concentrated in particular areas of work even within the MGNREGA supervisory structure—namely, gram rojgar sewaks and accountants

(although more information is required in order to make this claim with certainty).

The rates of remuneration offered to individuals depend on various factors, such as the years of experience in a designation and the pay scale they are eligible for. For instance, a gram rojgar sewak in Himachal Pradesh, with less than five years' experience, is hired by a BPO and receives a fixed remuneration of ₹5,000 to ₹6,800 per month. After completing five years, the individual becomes eligible for the regular scale of ₹ 5,910 to ₹20,000, along with a grade pay of ₹1,900. Furthermore, on completing another two years, the pay rises according to state-mandated scales. Technical assistants—like computer operators, accountants and engineers—are eligible for the regular pay scale following three years of service, and the appointing authority at the state level is a project director or a block development officer. The termination clauses under this category of work require a one-month notice period. Travel requirements on the job are financed using MGNREGA contingency funds. Meanwhile, staff members on a regular pay scale are eligible for a few casual leaves, medical leaves, and restricted and gazetted holidays. Female employees are eligible for state-mandated maternity leave. However, support staff members under MGNREGA are not eligible for medical reimbursements. These are the terms of employment for higher paying positions such as junior accountants as well.





## Krishi Sakhis and Pashu Sakhis

Agriculture and animal husbandry are two more areas in which the government seeks to engage women as community resource persons (CRPs). This is done as part of the Central National Rural Livelihoods Mission through the positions of krishi sakhis (agriculture CRP) and pashu sakhis (livestock CRP). In this community-based approach, the emphasis lies in capacity-building. Women are given technical training and technical support in a bid to generate demand for inputs, and, in turn, support livestock farmers. Women who are eligible for these roles have to pass Standard VIII on a voluntary basis. Krishi sakhis and pashu sakhis conduct Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Pashu Pathshalas (PPS) to demonstrate good practices to mahila kisans and follow up on their adoption.<sup>14</sup>

According to latest government reports, there are 24,963 and 18,822 pashu sakhis trained in 16 states, including Maharashtra, Assam, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh (Year End Review of Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana—National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Ministry of Rural Development).<sup>15</sup> In Maharashtra, for instance, the programme was rolled out as a partnership initiative between the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission (MSRLM), Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) and The Goat Trust, which promoted the alternative community-based extension approach in Gondia, a primarily tribal district in Maharashtra. NRPs (National Resource Persons) are deployed to monitor the CRP training programmes conducted by SRPs and provide necessary feedback to improve the pedagogy.

## Panchayati Raj Institutions

The elections to panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) are held under the states' / union territories' respective Panchayati Raj Acts. Therefore, the representation of women in panchayats depends on the reservation policy of the concerned state/union territory, the number of women elected, etc. There are 10,61,000 women in PRIs. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provides for reservation of not less than one-third seats for women at each tier of the panchayat. Twenty states, namely Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, have made provisions for reservation of 50 per cent of total seats for women in panchayats at all levels in their respective state Panchayati Raj Acts. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has also been focusing on capacity-building of elected women representatives of panchayats through its schemes.

For the present survey, elected representatives are not included. However, there are different staff who are appointed at the gram panchayat level, data for which is not available in a consolidated manner. Each district and corresponding block has a team of workers employed as technical staff, such as monitoring officers, engineers, collectors and operators. This also includes a team of sanitary workers and gardeners employed and given honoraria. Although gender disaggregated data is not available at the all India level, RTIs to different blocks have shown that female employment in these categories is limited. For instance, in the Thirumalairyanpattinam commune panchayats in Pondicherry, there are only seven female workers out of a total of 31 (roughly 23 per cent). Similarly, in Kottucherry commune panchayat in Pondicherry, there are only six female workers out of 37 (roughly 16 per cent). Manipur has a total of 119 women in a team of 422 workers (28.2 per cent). Given the limited available data, it appears

<sup>14</sup> <http://vikaspedia.in/agriculture/best-practices/extension-practices/pashu-sakhi-an-alternative-livestock-extension-approach> and <http://www.rajeevika.rajasthan.gov.in/livelihoods-promotion.php>

<sup>15</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseSelfFramePage.aspx?PRID=1558460>





that women are employed as sanitary workers, data entry operators, work inspectors and office managers. Interestingly, there are also instances of women employed as day watchmen (Kottucherry) and gardeners (Kottucherry and Thirumalairyanpattinam).

The terms of employment under these categories are varied on the basis of tenure

and number of years of service. This essentially implies that workers are initially hired on a contractual basis, following which they are converted to regular workers. However, the pay structure for both categories does not increase significantly after years of service, and neither are the benefits accruing to the workers increased in terms of insurance eligibility and paid leave provisions.

## Bank Sakhis<sup>16</sup>

Owing to the proliferation of self-help groups (SHGs) in rural India—particularly in the application of microfinance—there has been a consistent growth in demand for SHG–Bank linkages. Rural bank branches of national commercial banks have limited staff presence away from cities, which makes it difficult for them to provide support to SHGs. As a result, SHG members are required to wait for long hours and make multiple visits to carry out even the smallest of transactions. In this scenario, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) introduced the position of bank sakhi, who has basic knowledge of banking transactions and acts as the link between SHG members and banks. The success of bank sakhis in parts of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Odisha and Tamil Nadu prompted the Centre to encourage SRLMs to adopt the bank sakhi model across the country. Under this directive, all states are required to facilitate identification, training and placement at all bank branches—a core strategy for achieving financial inclusion in the country.

The profile of bank sakhis necessarily makes it a role for women in the community, particularly members of SHGs, from within the service area of the bank. Male members are chosen temporarily, and only if women are not available for the post. It also requires the candidate to have attained at least primary educational qualifications, and those who have basic reading, writing and numeracy skills are given

preference. This is because the job description requires them to comprehend and explain basic banking procedures—such as opening of SHG bank accounts, credit and debit transactions of SHGs, and SHG credit linkage protocols.

Bank sakhis serve a crucial role in bridging the gap between SHGs and public sector banks. As part of their responsibilities, they are to remain in the bank branch on all working days during business hours. They also participate in SHG/VO/CBRB meetings and facilitate recovery of bank loans. However, despite their role in the rural financial apparatus, bank sakhis are paid honoraria and not salaries—at least for the first 12 months of service. The payments for services are conditional, as they are made by Cluster Level Federation (a panchayat-level collective) on the basis of ‘satisfactory completion’ of their duties. This essentially means that bank sakhis are treated as volunteer workers in the public sector. Given that they facilitate financial inclusion in rural areas, which is an important aspect of NRLM, there is a case for regularising such positions as part of the public sector—and to extend the same benefits accruing to public servants. This would provide an opportunity for the proper implementation of NRLM, while ensuring accountability by incentivising individuals to perform their responsibilities. It would also ensure consistency and continuation in the services provided by bank sakhis in the rural community.

<sup>16</sup> Data on the absolute number of bank sakhis and the honoraria paid to them has not been made available yet.





## Central Railways<sup>17</sup>

Data from RTIs to the Central Railways shows that women make up only 5.7 per cent of the total workforce. Within this composition, the top designations occupied by female workers are (in order): cleaning workers, khalasi workers (all-round helpers), senior workers (supervisors of

all-round helpers), officer superintendents, junior clerks, nursing superintendents, commercial supervisors and track maintenance workers. On the other hand, there are very few women in high-skilled positions such as accountants, engineers and inspectors.

Table 19:  
Women in Indian Railways

Services	On roll Gr.'A' officers	No. of women officers
Indian Railways Personnel Service (IRPS)	376	73
Indian Railways Accounts Service (IRAS)	537	130
Indian Railways Service of Electrical Engineers (IRSEE)	1146	41
Indian Railways Service of Signal Engineers (IRSSE)	788	49
Indian Railways Services of Engineers (IRSE)	1455	36
Indian Railways Stores Service (IRSS)	565	21
Indian Railways Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME)	1379	13
Indian Railways Traffic Services (IRTS)	761	90
Indian Railways Medical Service (IRMS)	2350	634
Railway Protection Force (RPF)	496	16
Total	9853	1103

for Question No. 2916.

Although there is no data available on the salary bands for these designations, it can be clearly seen that there is a serious and consistent under-representation of women in the railways. However, data on vacancies shows that women could easily occupy multiple positions in the force. In 2018, recruitment for the post of RPF constables (8,169 posts) and sub-inspectors

(1,120 posts) was notified. In this recruitment drive, 4,216 posts in constable category and 301 posts in sub-inspector category were specifically notified for women. With this induction, the percentage of women in the RPF is likely to increase from 3 per cent to 9 per cent.

<sup>17</sup> Information on the terms of employment and salaries has not been forthcoming. Data on vacancies is available according to the post.





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*Table 20:*  
**Distribution of Women in Indian Railways**

S.No.	Service	Gr.'A' & 'B'	Gr.'C'	Gr.'D'
1	Administration	191	7468	1139
2	Accounts	169	2866	739
3	Engineering	44	10079	5113
4	Signal & Telecommunications	67	3389	963
5	Transportation	41	4618	2142
6	Commercial	37	8167	1722
7	Mechanical Engineering	41	11265	2339
8	Stores	46	1878	496
9	Electrical	33	5622	1417
10	Medical	634	9260	1766
11	Railway Protection Force*	6	1608	499
12	Railway Board & other Railway Offices	276	288	72
	Total	1585	66508	18407

Source: Response to Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2916.

Around 3,650 women candidates have been given employment in the Indian Railways in technical categories in the last three years. Against notifications issued for various technical posts, a total of 2,79,60,224 applications were received, out of which 46,76,928 (16.7 per cent) were from women (Lok Sabha Unstarred

Question No. 662). In order to attract more female workers in the railways, the application fee collected from women candidates is refunded to those who appear in the examination. In the case of widows, divorced women and women judicially separated from their husbands, and who have not remarried, the

<sup>18</sup> Lok Sabha unstarred question no. 2916 to be answered on 10.07.2019 Women employees in Railways 2916. Shri Harish Dwivedi





upper age limit is relaxed up to the age of 35 years. In addition, relaxed qualifying standards for the Physical Efficiency Test (PET) for women candidates in Level-1 categories are applied.

Therefore, in the case of the railways too, there are a number of potential job opportunities, and

it is claimed that special efforts are being made to include more women. Further investigation is required to understand what the barriers and enablers are for women being included in these jobs.

## **Key Lessons from the Sector-wise Analysis of Women in Public Services and Administration**

The preliminary scoping paper on female employment in frontline public services delivery and public administration shows a clear concentration around the same sectors as found in the NSS analysis. The analysis of government schemes suggests that the government recognises the role of women in care work and employs them in these sectors on a priority basis. However, it is also troubling to note that women employed in implementing the government's schemes—aimed at improving the country's human development indicators—are employed as honorary workers. This results in lack of job security and steady payment, since most of the income structures are designed as task-based incentives. This is particularly worrying given that this also de-recognises women as positive contributors to the economy. To make matters worse, most of these women-centric schemes are monitored and executed by men in supervisory roles.

On the other hand, the government's initiatives to encourage women's participation in non-traditional sectors such as the police force comes with its own set of problems. Women are heavily concentrated at junior levels and constabulary positions, while senior officials continue to be men. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the police force does not have the necessary infrastructure to support women's entry into the sector. Similar barriers appear to be present in the case of the central railways as well.

In sum, the sectoral analysis also provides a strong case for a more comprehensive mapping of the public administration and services delivery machinery, along with more exhaustive interviews with women across different levels of the bureaucracy.







5

## Conclusion and Way Forward for the Study

This scoping paper attempted to look at literature and secondary data to undertake an analysis of a few sectors in order to get an idea of the current status of female employment in government in India. The literature clearly shows that there are a number of benefits to enhancing opportunities for women workers in public employment. There is a correlation between female employment in the public sector and female participation in the labour force. Public employment has the potential to narrow the gender wage gap, and there is some evidence to show that women are more willing to take up jobs when the government is the employer, even if the working conditions are not particularly desirable.







There could be a number of reasons for this: the status associated with being in a government job, the acceptance and support of other family members if the woman is working for the government, some predictability of wages, the possibility of social security, and other kinds of support like fixed timings. The preliminary field work conducted as part of this study vindicates these factors. It is also seen that young women aspire for a government job. The sense of security and safety associated with 'government employment' also makes this sector attractive to women. In a way this is also driven by social norms characterising the 'suitability' of a job meant to be performed by women. Further, the creation of new jobs and filling of vacant posts in the government, especially in provision of public services such as health, nutrition, education and sanitation, has the potential to improve human development outcomes. It will also have a positive impact on the rural economy by enhancing consumption demand as a result of increased incomes of women/men who are employed in these positions.

The analysis of NSS data shows that public sector employment is a significant component of women's employment, especially in rural areas. However, as seen from the analysis of a few sectors in this paper, there are a number of issues related to payments and job security that need to be addressed. Further, there is a tendency for gender stereotyping in the positions women are given, even within public employment; there are more women nurses, health activists and teachers, and fewer police constables, engineers, accountants and transport workers.

However, our interest in female employment in the public sector goes beyond the number of women working in each sector. The study aims to dive into the existing designations in the different branches of social care services in the government sector to ascertain the

type of work given to women. This is because, even within the machinery of public sector employment, different categories of workers are entitled to different benefits and allowances. Barring the differences in remuneration, there are significant differences in the nature and terms of employment. Furthermore, women occupy a large number of voluntary positions created by the government to act as a link between state institutions and the communities in which they live. This is passed off as work for their own communities. Yet, the requirement for community engagement is essential to achieving the government's developmental agenda, and in that, their work—which often mirrors regular working hours and responsibilities—is not recognised as value-creating occupations. Some of these volunteer-based programmes do not even have written contracts or benefits such as health insurance and pension funds.

**Based on this scoping exercise, the study focuses on four categories of workers employed in the public sector:**

- Government servants
- Contract workers
- Para-workers/volunteers/honorary staff
- Those who are not paid at all (SHG women participating in government functions) or those who are casual workers

A mapping of all such workers at the block level and below is necessary to even estimate how many such workers are involved in various government programmes. The scoping has clearly shown that such data is not available in any consolidated fashion either with the union or state governments. Such a mapping would help form the base from which to arrive at an estimate of the current extent of women's employment (assuming also that the NSS is not capturing many of the tasks that women are performing for the government which are





part-time, unpaid or under-paid), identifying gaps and potential jobs, and understanding the nature of the jobs and working conditions. A sample of these workers will be included as respondents in the field survey.

The study also aims to estimate the multiplier effects of regularising casual and volunteer-based workers and offering them benefits

similar to regular workers against the cost of doing so. It would provide the basis for policy prescriptions that recognise the fact that spending on social care work and female employment has the intended effect of invigorating rural and urban consumption, and subsequently, India's GDP.



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# ANNEXURE 1

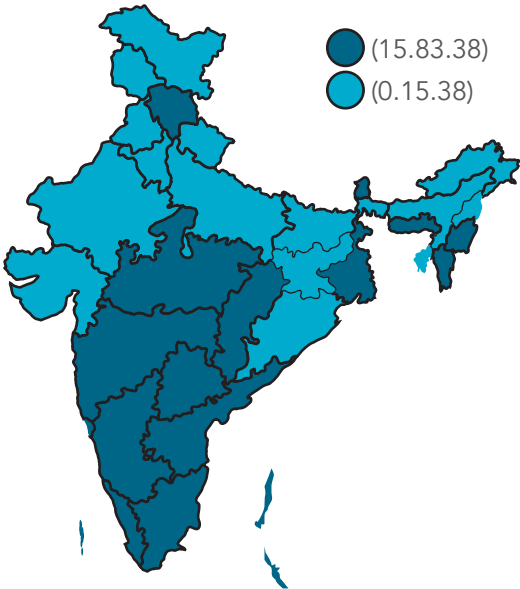
**Maps with national average  
as comparison point**



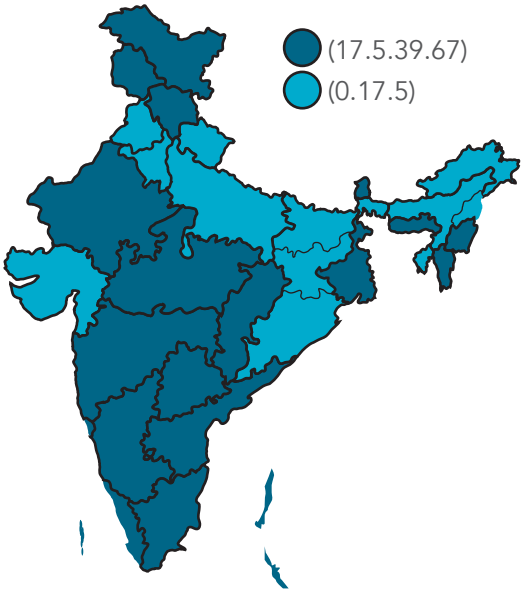




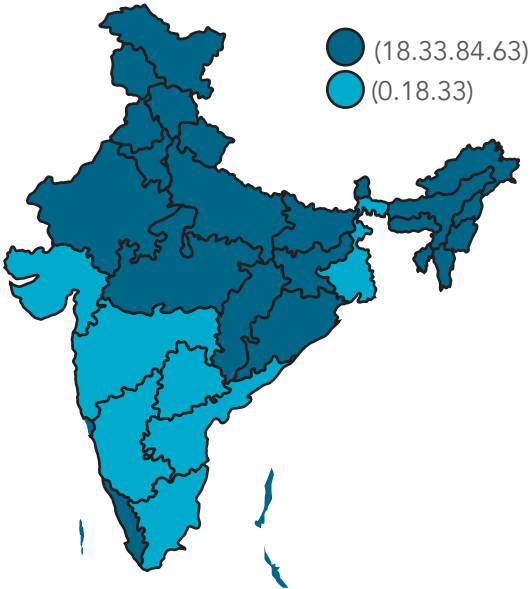
FLPFP-PS 2017-18



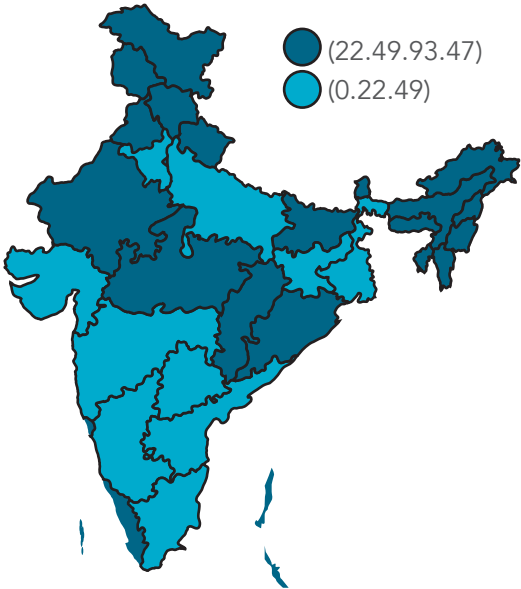
FLPFP-PS+PSS 2017-18



Female Govt. Workers  
(ps) non- agriculture2011-12



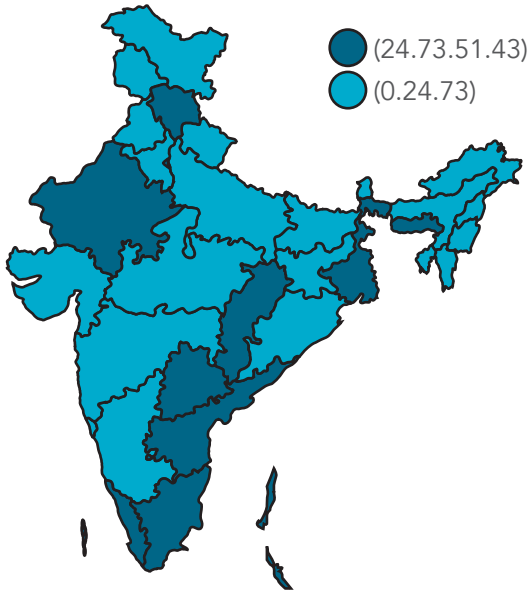
Female Govt. Workers  
(ps) non- agriculture2017-18





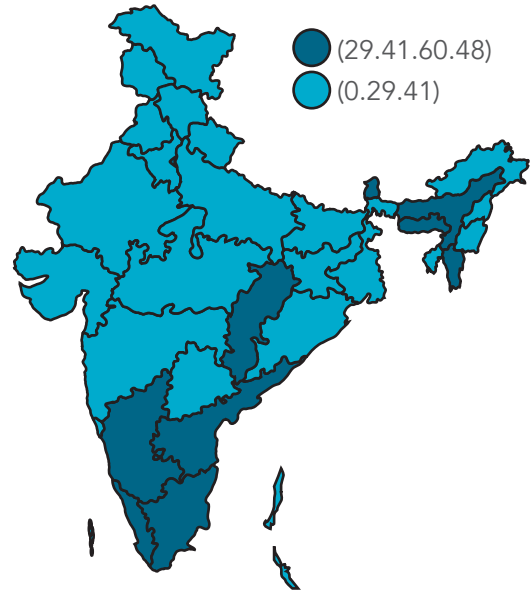


**Females(%) among  
Govt. Workers 2011-12**

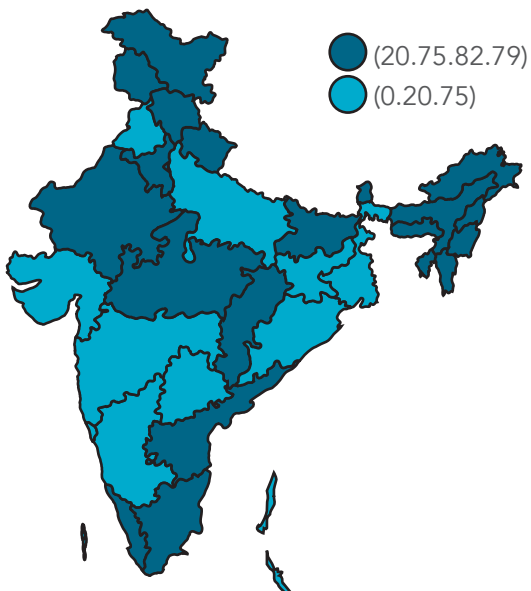


Principal Status (PS)

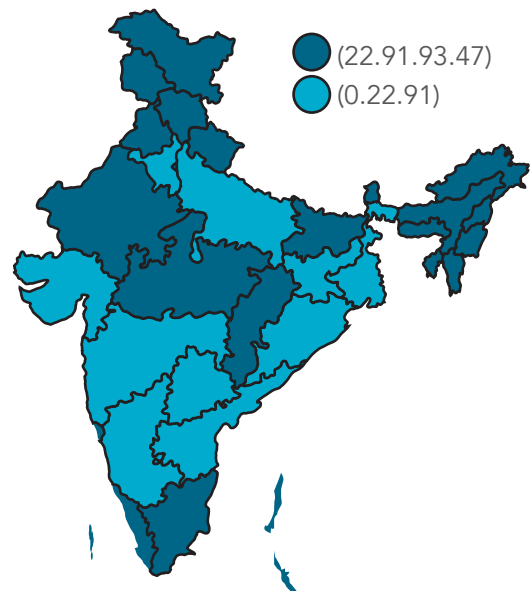
**Females(%) among  
Govt. Workers 2017-18**



**Female Govt. Workers  
(ps+pss) non- agriculture2011-12**



**Female Govt. Workers  
(ps+pss) non- agriculture2011-12**









A photograph of a group of women, likely in India, wearing teal sarees with a paisley pattern. Some women are holding children. In the background, several hands are raised in the air, suggesting a public gathering or protest. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue rectangle containing text.

## State Level Analysis- Telangana and Bihar

## ANNEXURE 2





The trends and analysis discussed here represent the status at the all India level. In our exercise, we have made an in-depth study of two states for the same indicators. As mentioned before, Bihar presented the lowest female LFPR and WPR at 2.73 per cent and 2.65

per cent, respectively, in 2017–18. In Telangana, on the other hand, female LFPR stood at 25.85 per cent, which is higher than the national average, and WPR stood at 23.98 per cent in 2017–18.

**Table A1:**  
**Female LFPR and WPR for**  
**Bihar and Telangana**

Over the six-year period, female LFPR (PS) has come down in Bihar (by 0.97 percentage points), as well as in Telangana (by 8.14 percentage points). This is in line with the national trend.

	2011–12			2017-2018		
Bihar	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
LFPR(PS)	3.70	3.70	3.70	2.57	4.33	2.73
LFPR(PS+SS)	5.77	5.36	5.74	2.59	4.47	2.76
WPR(PS)	3.23	2.77	3.19	2.51	4.06	2.65
Telangana	2011–12			2017-2018		
LFPR(PS)	46.56	15.88	33.99	31.16	18.14	25.85
LFPR(PS+SS)	47.26	15.88	34.41	31.51	18.21	26.09
WPR(PS)	46.22	14.86	33.38	29.58	15.85	23.98
WPR(PS+SS)	46.93	14.86	33.80	29.93	15.92	24.22

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

## Category of Employment

Classification by category of workers shows that 56 per cent males and 33 per cent females in Bihar are in the self-employed (PS) category. Regular salaried employment is higher among females vis-à-vis males (33 per cent versus 12 per cent, respectively). Self-employment among females has gone down in Bihar since 2011–12, and regular salaried employment and casual labour has increased. Urban areas have a higher

share of women in regular salaried work. The scenario is similar for PS+SS workers.

Telangana presents an alternate picture, with a rise in self-employed since 2011–12, and more females self-employed than men. Regular salaried work is available to only 28 per cent of workers (PS); while 32 per cent males have regular employment, only 18 per cent females have regular work.

## Type of Enterprise

Classification by type of enterprise in Bihar reveals that the share of women workers in the government sector has increased over the six-year period, and the rise is consistent across rural and urban areas. Forty per cent of

female workers in Bihar work in government enterprises. The male to female ratio of government sector workers has improved over the years, signifying a rise in female employment in government jobs.





A gender decomposition of workers in the government sector reinforces the national trend of a higher percentage of men vis-à-vis women in the government sector. In Bihar, 86 per cent of workers in the government sector are men (89 per cent in 2011–12), while in Telangana the figure is 76 per cent men (unchanged since 2011–12).

The proportion of government enterprise workers among all female workers is poorer in Telangana, at 10 per cent in 2017–18—a drop from 11.5 per cent in 2011–12. The male to female ratio of workers (PS and PS+SS) in the government sector has also gone up since 2011–12, signifying a decreased proportion of women in this sector.

Table A2:  
Share of Workers (PS and PS+SS) in the Government/ Public Sector, Bihar and Telangana (%)

BIHAR	2011–12			2017–18		
Workers(PS)	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Male	10.65	11.26	10.79	9.91	17.65	11.04
Female	22.94	29.58	24.47	37.72	43.13	39.28
Male to female ratio	9.041	6.925	8.450	6.985	4.532	6.207
Workers(PS+SS)						
Male	11.28	10.96	11.22	9.98	17.61	11.07
Female	17.07	20.97	17.76	37.58	41.69	38.8
Male to female ratio	6.850	6.602	6.798	7.059	4.532	6.257
TELANGANA						
Workers(PS)	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Male	6.63	15.92	12.82	10.42	11.23	10.93
Female	7.07	15.85	11.51	9.6	10.23	9.92
Male to female ratio	1.862	3.911	3.288	2.495	4.051	3.309
Workers(PS+SS)						
Male	23.65	15.9	18.91	13.18	11.23	11.98
Female	43.57	15.85	33.74	14.62	10.16	12.43
Male to female ratio	0.739	3.911	1.267	2.010	4.058	2.831





- Disaggregation of government workers by category of employment shows that in rural Bihar, all female government workers (PS) are engaged as regular salaried employees, while in urban Bihar about 5 per cent are engaged as casual labour in public works.
- In Telangana, 87 per cent are in regular salaried work, and the rest work as casual labour. Thus, the presence of females with regular salaried

employment in the government sector is greater in Bihar vis-à-vis Telangana; these have remained unchanged since 2011–12 in both states.

- A male to female comparison shows that 97 per cent of males in the government sector in Telangana (PS) are in regular salaried work, while the corresponding figure in Bihar for males is 60 per cent.

Table A3:

**Workers (PS) by Category of Employment in the Government Sector, Bihar**

Workers (PS) in public sector Category of employment	2011–12				2017–18		
	Gender	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Regular salaried/ wage employee	Male	3,69,100	1,85,704	5,54,804	5,85,971	2,10,558	7,96,529
	Female	76,427	29,690	1,06,117	1,45,061	64,438	2,09,499
Casual labour: public works	Male	2,37,695	17,468	2,55,163	1,30,808	27,633	1,58,441
	Female	0	0	0	0	3,000	3,000
Casual labour: other types of work	Male	86,232	2,425	88,657	2,96,483	67,453	3,63,936
	Female	227	0	227	0	0	0

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





Table A4:  
Workers (PS+SS) by Category of Employment in the Government Sector, Bihar

Workers (PS+SS) in public sector Category of employment	2011–12				2017–18		
	Gender	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Self-employed: own account worker	Male	10,126	0	10,126	10,680	0	10,680
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-employed: employer	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-employed: helper (unpaid family worker)	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Female	10126	0	227	0	0	0
Regular salaried/ wage employee	Male	3,69,100	1,85,704	5,54,804	5,85,971	2,10,558	7,96,529
	Female	76,427	29,690	1,06,117	1,45,061	64,438	2,09,499
Casual labour: public works	Male	2,49,766	17,468	2,67,234	1,30,808	27,633	1,58,441
	Female	26,145	1,451	27,596	0	3000	3,000
Casual labour: other types of work	Male	1,84,325	2,425	1,86,750	2,96,483	67,453	3,63,936
	Female	6,043	0	6,043	0	0	0

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.





Table A5:  
Workers (PS) by Category of Employment in the Government Sector, Telangana

Workers (PS) in public sector Category of employment	2011–12				2017–18		
	Gender	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Regular salaried/ wage employee	Male	1,08,841	5,905,41	6,99,382	2,02,018	3,75,067	5,77,085
	Female	56,806	1,39,783	1,96,589	71,986	83,816	1,55,802
Casual labour: public works	Male	960	14,329	15,289	1,898	3,024	4,922
	Female	11,615	180	11,795	13,356	8,272	21,628
Casual labour: other types of work	Male	17,646	7,284	24,930	9,016	1,658	10,674
	Female	0	16548	16548	0	1,658	1,658

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

Table A6:  
Workers (PS+SS) by Category of Employment in the Government Sector, Telangana

Workers (PS+SS) in public sector Category of employment	2011–12				2017–18		
	Gender	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
Self- employed: own account worker	Male	1,86,890	0	1,86,890	41,950	0	41,950
	Female	21,038	0	21,038	0	0	0
Self- employed: employer	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0





Self-employed: helper (unpaid family worker)	Male	10,009	0	10,009	0	0	0
	Female	2,35,934	0	2,35,934	16,703	0	16,703
Regular salaried/ wage employee	Male	1,08,841	5,90,541	6,99,382	2,02,018	3,75,067	5,77,085
	Female	69,763	1,39,783	2,09,546	71,986	83,816	1,55,802
Casual labour: public works	Male	2,771	14,329	17,100	4,403	3,024	7,427
	Female	35,068	180	35,248	16,674	8,272	24,946
Casual labour: other types of work	Male	2,70,238	7,284	2,77,522	33,320	2,352	35,672
	Female	4,20,928	16,548	4,37,476	34,803	1,658	36,461

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

## Industrial Break up of Female Workers in Government Sector (Non-agriculture and AGEGC Sector)

We also looked at industries which employ female workers in the government sector. In Bihar, only eight industries in the government sector have a female workforce. Education, public administration and health were the top three industries in 2011–12 as well as 2017–18; 87 per cent of female government workers were engaged in the education sector in 2011–12, which increased to 88.38 per cent in 2017–18.

Additionally, in 2017–18 civil engineering (42) and construction (41) emerged as two new industries employing female government workers. Civil engineering includes construction of streets, roads, railway bridges, pipelines, dams, etc., while construction refers to the construction of buildings.

Table A7:  
Female Government Workers (PS) in all Industries (8), Bihar (Absolute Values)

NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers , 2011–12		NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers , 2017–18	
Education	92,721	Education	187,821
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	8,172	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	10,168
Human health activities	3,373	Human health activities	3,599





Office administrative, office support and other business support activities	863	Civil engineering	3,000
Residential care activities	450	Services to buildings and landscape activities	3,000
Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	282	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	2,437
Other personal service activities	256	Construction of buildings	1,935
Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities	227	Publishing activities	539

\*Total eight industries in 2011–12 and 2017–18. Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

In Telangana, 14 industries employed female government workers (a rise from 11 in 2011–12). Public administration (84) and education (85) were the top two industries where females were engaged in the government sector (44

and 27 per cent, respectively) in 2011–12. They remained the highest employer in 2017–18 (together 52 per cent), and additionally, civil engineering employing 12 per cent.

**Table A8:**  
**Female Government Workers (PS) in Top 10 Industries, Telangana (Absolute Values)**

NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers, 2011–12		NIC 2-Digit Industry of Female Government Workers, 2017–18	
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	98802	Education	73,886
Education	60359	Civil engineering	21,628
Land transport and transport via pipelines	18666	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	19,793





Civil engineering	14320	Human health activities	13,993
Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	10935	Residential care activities	12,692
Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	9233	Accommodation	11,618
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	5391	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	7,124
Human health activities	4846	Legal and accounting activities	6,224
Legal and accounting activities	1418	Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	3,934
Postal and courier activities	723	Sewerage	3,035

\*Top 10 (out of total 11) of 2011–12 comprise 99 per cent of workers. Top 10 (out of total 14) of 2017–18 comprise 97 per cent of workers. Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011–12 and 2017–18.

Today, the industrial composition of female workers in regular salaried work does not include civil engineering in either state. Education employs 90 per cent of regular female workers (PS) in Bihar and 47 per

cent in Telangana. This is followed by public administration which engages 5 per cent and 12 per cent in Bihar and Telangana, respectively.





**Table A9:**  
**Female Workers (PS)**  
**in Government/Public**  
**Sector —Disaggregated**  
**by NIC 2- digit Industry**  
**(Top 10) and Category of**  
**Employment; 2017–18**  
**(Absolute Values)**

Industry of Female Government Workers in Regular Salaried Work, Bihar		Industry of Female Government Workers in Regular Salaried Work, Telangana	
Education	187,821	Education	73,886
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	10,168	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	19,793
Human health activities	3,599	Human health activities	13,993
Services to buildings and landscape activities	3,000	Residential care activities	12,692
Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	2,437	Accommodation	11,618
Construction of buildings	1,935	Financial service activities, except insurance and pension funding	7,124
Publishing activities	539	Legal and accounting activities	6,224
*Total seven industries in Bihar employ 209,499 regular female workers, and 12 industries in Telangana employ 155,802 regular female workers.		Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	3,934
		Sewerage	3,035
		Telecommunications	2,025
		Waste collection, treatment and disposal activities; materials recovery	1,213

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2017–18.





## Occupational Composition of Female Workers in the Government Sector

The occupational composition of female government workers (PS) in Bihar is in line with the national trend, with 71 per cent of workers engaged as 'technicians and associate professionals'. Their number is higher in rural areas at 88 per cent (a rise from 82 per cent in 2011–12). 'Professionals' emerge as the second category, with 12 per cent female government workers. The proportion remains the same even when workers in subsidiary status are taken into account.

In Telangana too, the occupation composition is similar, with 40 per cent of female government

workers employed as 'technicians and associate professionals'. 'Professionals' (18 per cent) and 'elementary occupations' (15 per cent) are the other two prominent jobs. There has been a decline in the number of workers in elementary occupation from 44 per cent in 2011–12 to 15 per cent in 2017–18, which is some improvement. The decline has been greater in urban areas (47 percentage points). Telangana vis-à-vis Bihar has more women in elementary occupations.

## Terms of Employment

The NSS presents data on work conditions under four heads: type of job contract, availability of paid leave, social security provision, and method of payment of remuneration. In both states, these conditions were examined for female workers in all enterprises and female workers in the government sector. Overall, conditions of

employment in Bihar are superior to those in Telangana.

In Bihar, more than 50 per cent of female workers have a written job contract, while Telangana reports a mere 13 per cent. Across both rural and urban areas, Telangana does not have formal job contracts for females.

Table A10:  
Female Workers (PS) by Type  
of Job Contract

Region		Bihar	
No Written Contract	Written: 1 year or less	Written: 1-3 years	Written: more than 3 years
Rural	43.36	1.08	3.63
Urban	63.25	8.42	0.79
Rural+ Urban	49.17	3.22	2.8
Telangana			
Rural	84.68	0	0
Urban	82.33	3.24	3.14
Rural+ Urban		83.16	2.1

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2017–18.





When only female workers in the government sector are taken into account, Bihar does better than Telangana, but there is a slight improvement in the latter too; 42 per cent of female government workers have some sort of job contract in Telangana, and 70 per cent in Bihar. The trend is similar when workers in subsidiary status are included in the analysis.

- **Provision of Paid Leave:** Provision of paid leave in Bihar exceeds that in Telangana, for all female workers as well as for females in the government sector; 51 per cent of female workers and 74 per cent of female government workers in Bihar are eligible for paid leave, while in Telangana the percentage is 28 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively. There is not much variation by region.
- **Social Security Benefits:** For workers in principal status, 34 per cent do not have any social security provision in Bihar, and 20 per cent of those in the government sector do not have any social security. The situation is worse in Telangana, where 72 per cent of female workers and 55 per cent of female government workers are not eligible for any social security benefits.
- **Method of Payment:** In 2011–12, 71 per cent of female workers in Bihar and Telangana received a regular monthly salary. Daily payment is the second prevalent mode of payment. For those in the government sector, 99.5 per cent and 89 per cent in Bihar and Telangana, respectively, received regular monthly payments.

**Table A11:**  
**Workers without**  
**Written Job Contract,**  
**Paid Leave Provision**  
**and any Social**  
**Security Benefit**  
**(Absolute Values),**  
**Bihar and Telangana**

	2011-12			2017-18		
	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural+ Urban
	<b>Female Workers (PS)</b>					
Bihar	57,095	22,015	79,110	75,437	30,914	106,351
Telangana	171,683	350,323	522,006	222,535	339,725	562,260
	<b>Female Workers (PS+SS)</b>					
Bihar	140,152	23,649	163,801	75,437	30,914	106,351
Telangana	676,122	350,323	1,026,445	295,791	339,725	635,516
	<b>Female Govt. Workers (PS)</b>					
Bihar	6,033	0	6,033	15,003	5,121	20,124
Telangana	26,946	28,433	55,379	29,504	19,850	49,354
	<b>Female Govt. Workers (PS+SS)</b>					
Bihar	21,975	1,451	23,426	15,003	5,121	20,124
Telangana	467,928	28,433	496,361	84,328	19,850	104,178

Source: Calculated from NSS Unit Level Data for 2011-12 and 2017-18.





In 2017–18, around 1,00,000 female workers (PS) in Bihar did not have any written job contract, paid leave provision or social security benefit. The scenario for Telangana was further bleak with the corresponding figure being 6,35,000. The number has increased in both states since 2011–12.

Among females in the government sector (PS), the number of such workers is lower vis-à-vis all female workers. However, Bihar showed an increase from 6,033 in 2011–12 to 20,124 in 2017–18, while Telangana showed a slight fall (by 6,025 workers).





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