

WOMEN AND WORK

HOW INDIA FARED IN 2021



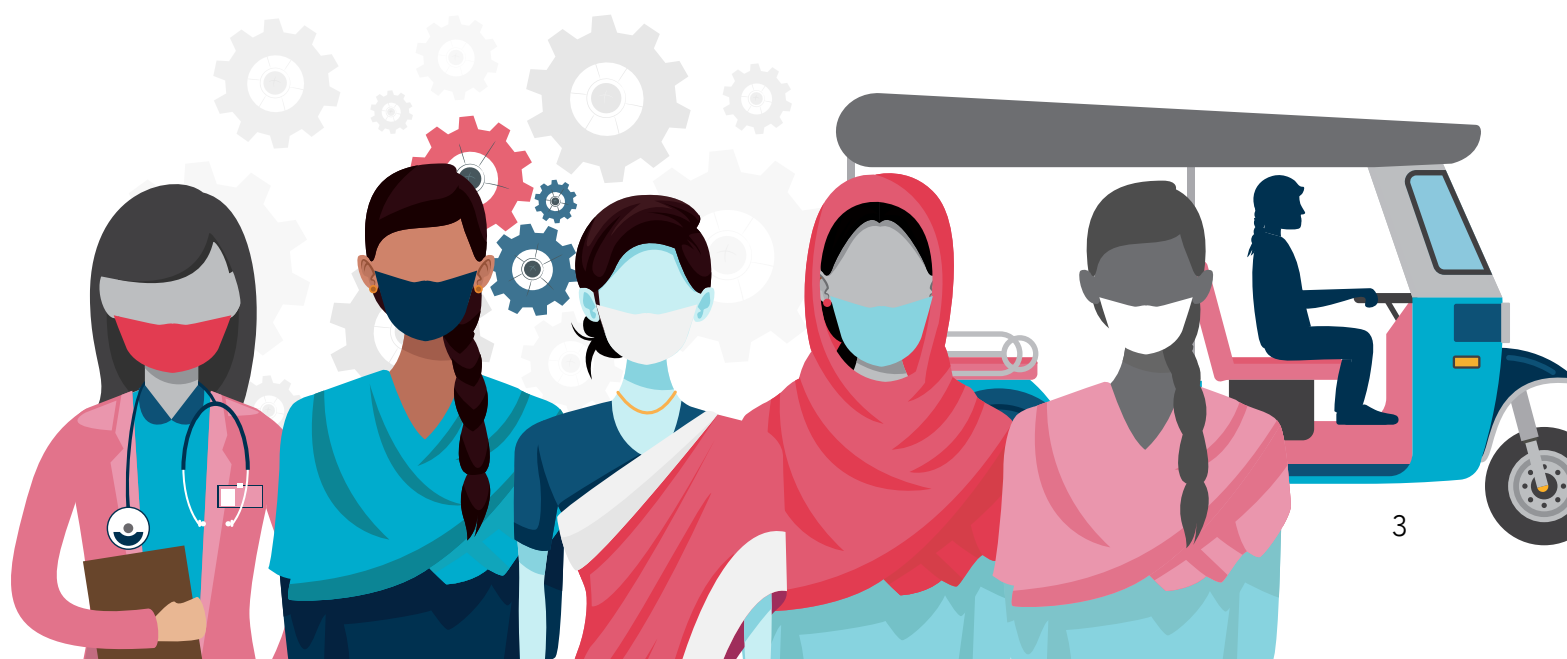
Introduction

The year 2021 continued to be a year of response, recovery and resilience. Even as recovery seemed to be on the horizon, a brutal second wave of COVID-19 brought about a new set of challenges. In line with observations from the first year of the pandemic, women and girls were impacted disproportionately — with structural barriers to equality adding an additional layer of disadvantage to the health crisis. Even as this report is compiled, the Omicron variant threatens to destabilise recovery further, with leaders from across geographies and sectors working towards mitigating its impact.

We need a recovery that is gender-responsive and equitable. In order to achieve this, we need social safety nets that are better designed and inclusive; reduce the gendered divide in access to technology and design hybrid working solutions; **reduce and redistribute**

care work and invest in strengthening the care economy; and, ensure effective and scalable policies and solutions by collecting robust, sex-disaggregated data.

This report stitches together and maps the efforts that are underway to – **bring women back to work and prepare women and girls for the future of work**. The report highlights different developments, whether policy-focussed or programmatic, that have defined work for women in India in 2021. The report also provides a forward-looking **perspective on the future of work for a self-reliant India**, with a focus on new age skills, entrepreneurship, and rise of non-traditional livelihoods. Woven through this report are insights around the social indicators that impact women's participation in the workforce, including issues such as access, health and well-being, and security.



Women at Work

For most of early 2021, the economy was recovering, with India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growing by 20.1% in the first quarter. The stringent lockdown measures imposed during the early months of the pandemic, gradually eased to ensure an uptick in economic activity.

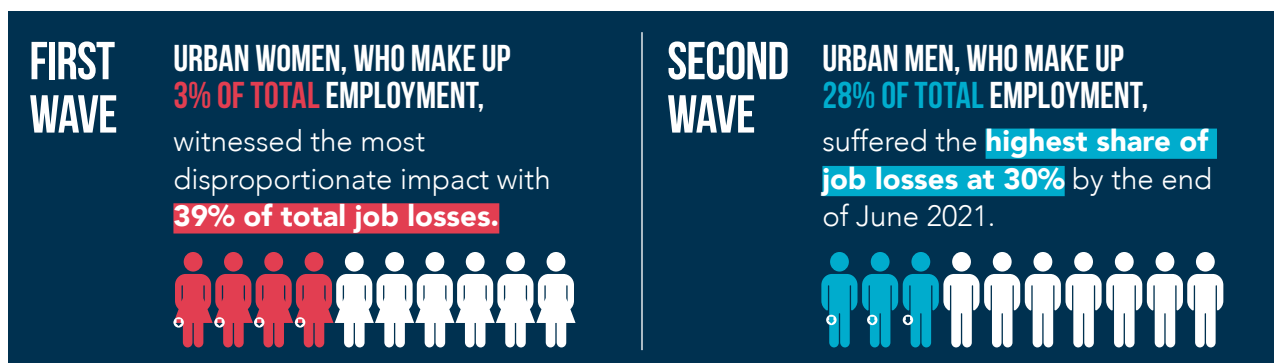
However, the devastating health impacts of the Delta variant put India's recovery efforts to a standstill leading to significant loss of lives and livelihoods and pushing the already fragile and marginalised households into further deprivation.

1. An overview of women's work in 2021

The country did not see a nation-wide lockdown as it did in 2020, as a result of which the effect on the economy was largely contained. But, state-wise lockdowns did impact jobs, particularly among women.

i. STATUS OF WORK FOR WOMEN

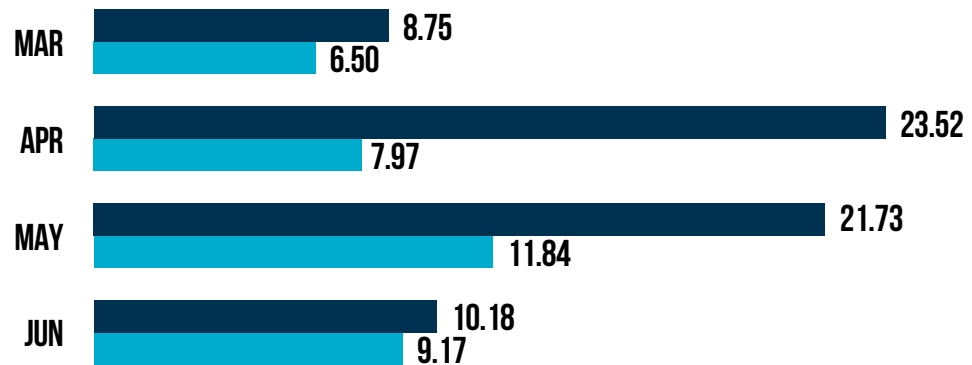
The gendered aspects of job losses varied significantly between the first (March-June 2020) and second (March-June 2021) COVID wave.¹



¹ <https://www.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=warticle&dt=20210712171532&msec=220>

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 'IN %' DURING 1ST AND 2ND WAVE OF COVID IN INDIA

■ 1st wave (Mar-Jun 2020)
■ 2nd wave (Mar-June 2021)



According to CMIE data, as of the quarter of March 2021:

TOTAL JOBS 399.7M



WOMEN ACCOUNTED 41.8M



Sectors which employ a significant number of women workers, including tourism and hospitality, construction, street vending, domestic work, waste picking, factory labour were among the most affected during the second wave of the pandemic, causing a disproportionate impact on women's work. Data from India on the impact on women workers in these sectors remains unavailable largely due to the informal nature of this work. However, in late 2021 the government announced the launch of the All India Survey on Domestic Workers to account for them and understand their needs.

Key trends globally across hard-hit sectors

TOURISM²

Nearly **one in every five persons employed in the tourism sector are estimated to have lost their jobs** during the second wave in April-May 2021³.



AS OF NOVEMBER 2021, DATA SHOWS THAT HIRING ACROSS THE **HOSPITALITY AND TRAVEL SECTOR PICKED UP BY 58% COMPARED TO THE SAME PERIOD IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR.**

CONSTRUCTION⁴

Nearly **two in every five persons who lost their jobs** during the second wave in April-May 2021 were workers⁵ in the construction sector, which has been one of the largest absorbers of labour in the country since September 2021.



7.55 MILLION ADDITIONAL PEOPLE HAVE FOUND EMPLOYMENT IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DURING THE MONTH⁶.

² A significant proportion of workers in the tourism sector fall under the unorganised sector and while there's no definitive statistic on the number of women employed in this sector, it is estimated that about 95% of India's working women are in the unorganised sector.

³ Hotels and tourism took a hit of 4 million on a base of 22.5 million, as per CMIE data.

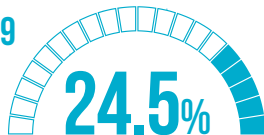
⁴ There's varying accounts of women's participation in the construction workforce, with numbers varying from 25% to 50%.

⁵ <https://www.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=warticle&dt=2021-06-01%2018:06:45&msec=766>

⁶ In April-May 2021, employment in the construction sector shrank by 8.8 million on a base of about 64 million in March 2021, as per CMIE data.

Findings from the 2019-20 Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey

2018-19



2019-20



THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (LFPR) FOR BOTH URBAN AND RURAL WOMEN

As this positive trend has emerged amid an overall dip in economic activity — where real growth rate has plummeted from 7% to 4.2% over the same period — it is important to also examine the overall structure of ‘employment’ in the country. PLFS data indicates that the proportion of the urban workforce dependent on services has increased from 69.3% to 71.8% over 2017-18 to 2019-20. The proportion of the rural workforce in agriculture has also increased from 59.4% to 61.5% over the same period. Such trends suggest an overall increase in workforce distress, with many falling back on agriculture or taking up low-paid service sector jobs with the dip in India’s gross domestic product growth.

How the Female labour force participation fared during the COVID waves

PRE-PANDEMIC



21.9%
JAN-MAR 20

1ST WAVE
LOCKDOWN



19.6%
APR-JUN 20

START OF
2ND WAVE



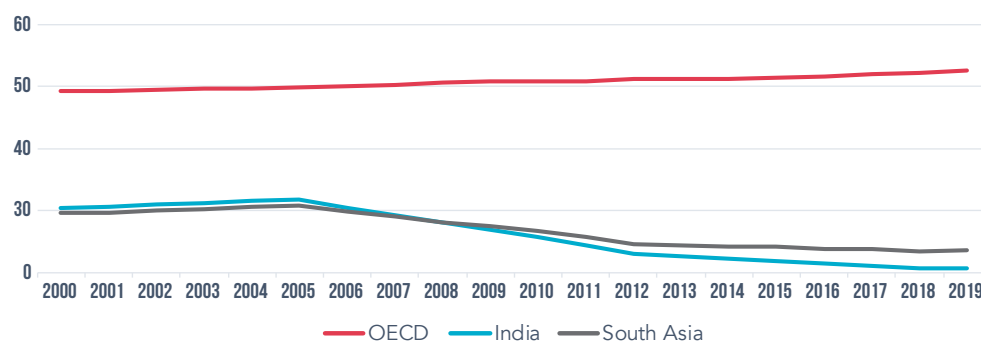
21.2%
JAN-MAR 21

The impact of the second wave of the pandemic remains to be documented.

How India fares globally

According to World Bank data for 2020, India’s female labour participation rate stood at 26.2% in comparison to the OECD average of 51.1%⁷. The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2021 ranks it as the sixth worst performing country on the ‘Economic Participation and Opportunity’ metric; better only than Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan⁸ compared to 2020 when India was ranked fifth.⁹

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, FEMALE (% OF FEMALE POPULATION AGES 15+) (MODELED ILO ESTIMATE) - INDIA, OECD MEMBERS, SOUTH ASIA



⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLFC.ACT.FE.NE.ZS?locations=OE-IN>

⁸ https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

⁹ However, it is worth noting that India’s overall score for the year has fallen by 0.028 points, and Afghanistan had not been included in the list of countries surveyed for this purpose in 2020.

IWWAGE INSIGHTS

A study by IWWAGE¹⁰ utilise household-level data of the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) (for 2017-18 and 2018-19), and NSSO's Employment-Unemployment Surveys (various rounds completed in 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2004-05, 2009-10, 2011-12), to provide systematic evidence on the country's gender gaps in employment and labour market outcome, and made the following observations:

A WOMAN WITH A GRADUATE AND HIGHER DEGREE HAS MORE THAN A 12 PERCENT CHANCE OF BEING IN THE LABOUR FORCE IN URBAN AREAS. SIMILARLY, VOCATIONAL TRAINING SEEMS TO BE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DETERMINING WOMEN'S PAID WORK PARTICIPATION.

WOMEN IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AGED LESS THAN 5 YEARS OF AGE ARE LESS LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LABOUR FORCE ACROSS RURAL AND URBAN AREAS. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SHOW THE SAME FOR WOMEN WITH OLDER CHILDREN.

SOCIAL GROUPS AND RELIGION ALSO PLAY A DOMINANT ROLE IN DETERMINING WOMEN'S PAID WORK PARTICIPATION IN INDIA, WITH SC/ST WOMEN AND HINDU WOMEN BEING MORE ACTIVE IN THE LABOUR MARKET THAN MUSLIM AND UPPER CASTE WOMEN.



ii. POST-LOCKDOWN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION



OVER
40%

women have been affected by the unnatural development of dual workload of domestic care work and paid work as a result of pandemic induced lockdowns¹¹.



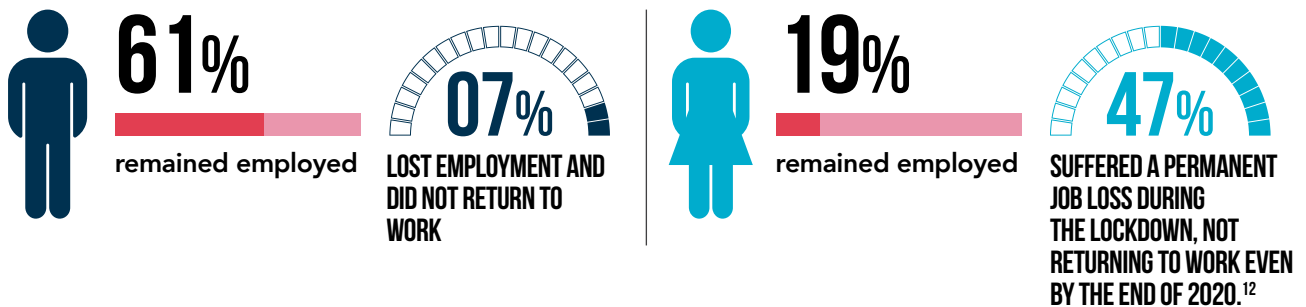
AROUND
45%

women indicated that managing family and domestic commitments came in the way of their career development, **an issue most predominantly seen in India (71%).**

¹⁰ <https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/IWWAGE-Working-Report-upd.pdf>

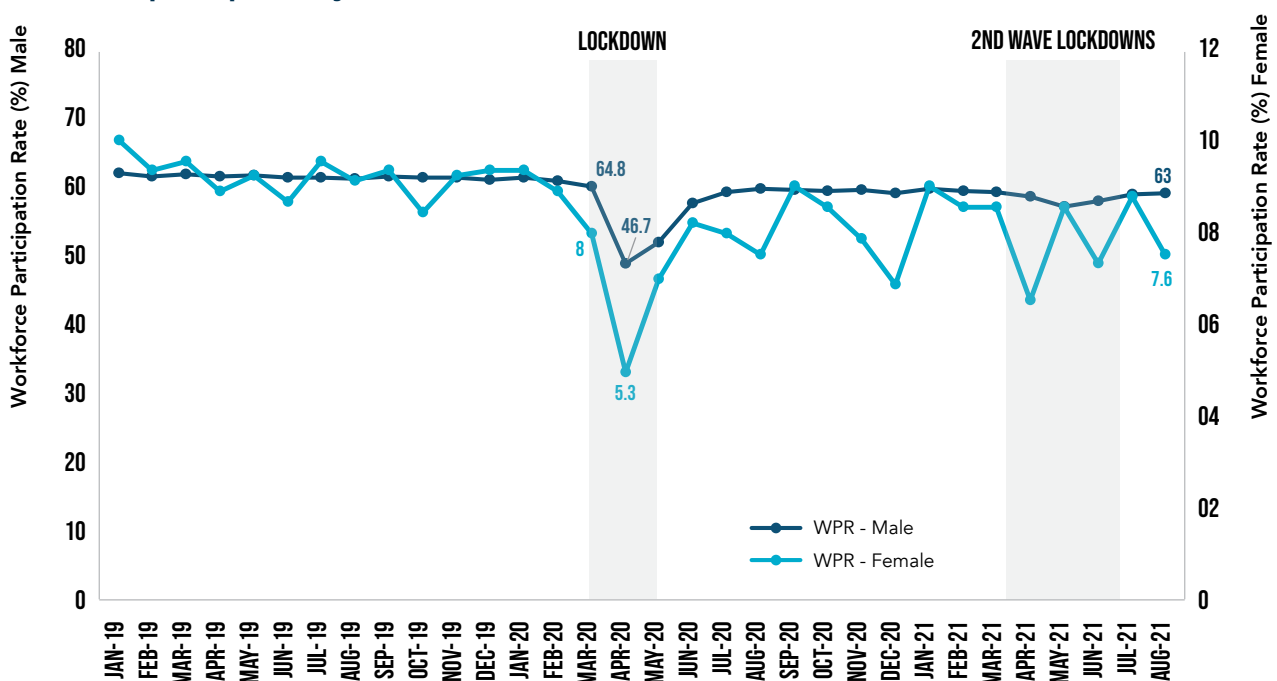
¹¹ As observed in the 2021 Opportunity Index Report by LinkedIn, which surveyed more than 10,000 respondents in paid work across seven countries in the APAC region.

During and after the first lockdown:



Gender-disaggregated data¹³ show that women's participation in the workforce has been more erratic and challenging, even during non-lockdown periods as compared to men.

Workforce participation by sex



Sources and notes: Authors' calculations based on CMIE-CPHS.

IWWAGE INSIGHTS

IN THE RUN UP TO THE UNION BUDGET 2022-23, A REPORT¹⁴ BY THE QUANTUM HUB AND IWWAGE OFFERS SOLUTIONS FOR A GENDER-RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE RECOVERY IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT.

¹² <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/swi-2021/>

¹³ <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid19-data-tracker/>

¹⁴ https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/TQH_Note_November_2021-1.pdf

The report offers recommendations to improve women's labour market outcomes:

Investing in the care economy by expanding the frontline health workforce to create 3 million jobs	Expand the sectors and increase the stipends offered to female apprentices under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)	Expand private-sector procurement by incentivising them through tax breaks and subsidies to directly procure from women's enterprises
Increase the mandate for public procurement from women-owned MSMEs in Public Procurement Policy (2018) from the current 3 percent	Extend the cash transfer scheme to supplement household income, where women have lost their jobs	Create gender-equitable workplaces, such as creation of creches and flexible work policies, in the private sector by incentivising them through tax holidays

2. How women's work fared across different sectors

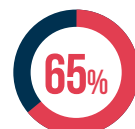
i. WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

OVER 3 IN 5



WOMEN WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR LOST THEIR LIVELIHOOD

REDUCTION IN INCOME



REDUCTION IN THEIR INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC FOLLOWING THE SECOND WAVE OF THE PANDEMIC¹⁵

The first year of the pandemic further increased informality in India, which is expected to have disproportionately impacted women due to their preponderant presence in the informal sector¹⁶. It is noteworthy that the highly impacted sectors such as trading and services are dominated by women. Other sectors which also have high women participation, including personal and non-professional services, comprising operators of small-scale enterprises such as tailors, dressmakers, petty shopkeepers, barbers and beauty-parlour owners, as well as domestic and part-time workers witnessed relatively high volatility compared to other sectors (EPW, 2021).

As a result of the pandemic, the overall trend saw men move from the formal to informal sector, **whereas women largely moved out of the workforce as most of their jobs were made redundant¹⁷**. Compared with pre-pandemic levels, the share of women exiting any arrangement of work was doubled during the first year of the pandemic.

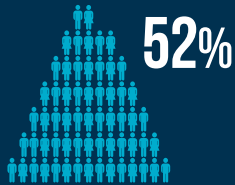
¹⁵ https://www.sewafederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SEWA-COVID2-REPORT-FOR-SCREEN-30Nov_compressed-2.pdf

¹⁶ <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/swi-2021/>

¹⁷ <https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/state-of-working-india/swi-2021/>

INFORMAL SECTOR

GROSS VALUE ADDED
(GVA) IN 2017-18



GROSS VALUE ADDED
(GVA) IN 2020-21



ON A POSITIVE NOTE, THERE'S BEEN A SHIFT TO FORMALISATION OF THE ECONOMY, AND IT'S ESTIMATED THAT THE SHARE OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN OVERALL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY HAS DIPPED TO 15-20% OF GROSS VALUE ADDED (GVA) IN 2020-21 FROM ABOUT 52 PERCENT IN 2017-18.¹⁸

The Indian government has also recently made efforts to collect data on unorganised workers as a step towards formalisation of employment and as a means to streamline disbursement of welfare benefits to those working in this sector. As a result of data collected from the e-Shram portal – the country's first centralised database of unorganised workers – we have a statistical glimpse into India's unorganised sector. However, as the database was recently launched, it does not capture the full extent of the informal economy.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE E-SHRAM PORTAL¹⁹

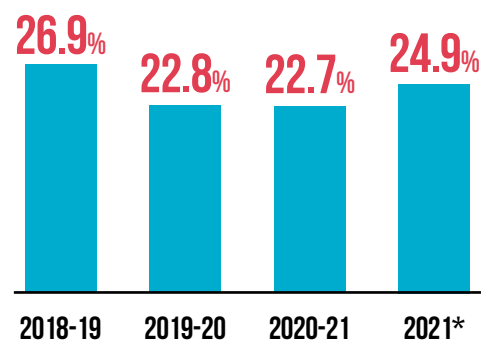


ii. WOMEN IN THE FORMAL SECTOR

According to data collected by the Government of India, women's share in new payroll additions has declined from 2018-19 to 2020-21. In the first wave of the pandemic, the share of women payroll enrollments saw a gradual decline from June to August after which it witnessed an uptick on account of lockdowns being lifted.

These trends can be attributed to lockdowns being more parochially imposed and flexible employment options being offered to women in the formal sector during the second wave of the pandemic.

THE AGGREGATE SHARE OF NEW WOMEN PAYROLL ENROLLMENT IN INDIA



* As of October 2021'

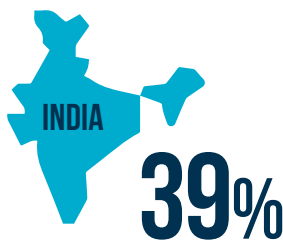
¹⁸ https://sbi.co.in/documents/13958/10990811/281021-Ecowrap_20211029.pdf/b0625dda-46bf-1f1e-2998-3c58c94dd156?t=1635409920832

¹⁹ As of 26th Dec, 2021 – e-Shram dashboard

iii. WOMEN IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP ROLES

In addition to an increase in female payroll enrollments in 2021 compared to the previous two years, women in corporate leadership roles have witnessed an increase from pre-pandemic levels.

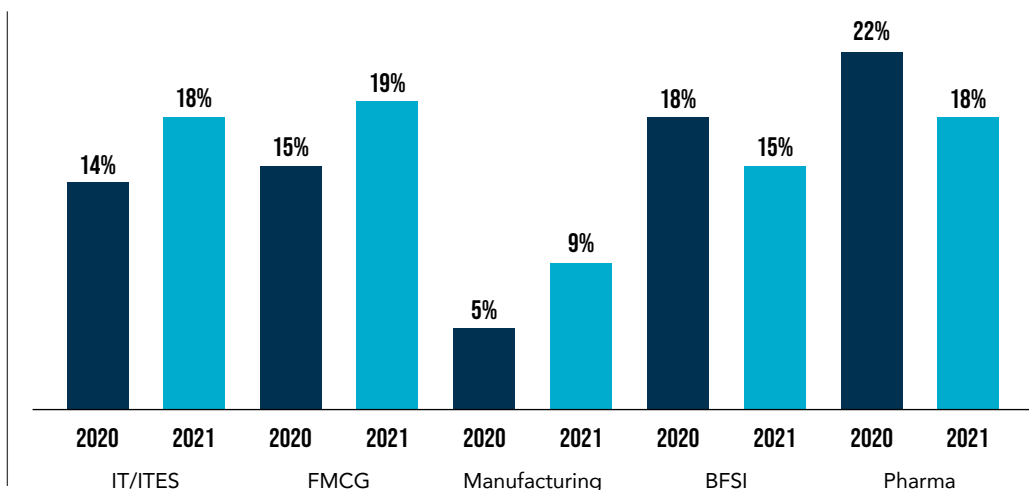
WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT



WOMEN CONTINUE TO FIGHT AGAINST GLASS CEILINGS AND THE BURDEN OF UNPAID WORK TO GET TO THESE LEVELS

According to data available in the Working Mother & Avtar Best Companies for Women in India (BCWI) 2021 report:

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN CORPORATE LEADERSHIP ACROSS SECTORS



iv. WOMEN IN PUBLIC HEALTH



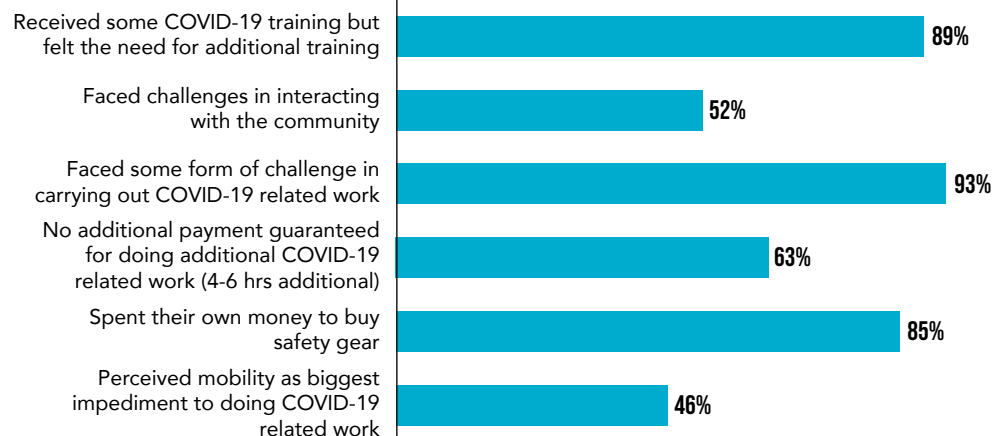
Community Health Workers (CHWs) were at the forefront of India's response to COVID-19, especially in less developed and rural areas. The CHW trinity, which includes Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM), and Anganwadi workers, constitutes an all-women volunteer force. Despite anchoring India's COVID-19 management efforts across the country, CHWs faced – continue to face – some of the toughest challenges among India's frontline healthcare workers. While the workload increased dramatically, incomes and incentives remained the same, and, in some cases, declined.

ACCORDING TO DATA FROM A REPORT PUBLISHED BY BEHANBOX²⁰:

CHW work hours increased from 6-8 hours a day to almost 12-15 hours due to increase in COVID-related work . Most CHWs were on call for almost 24 hours.	ASHA workers who receive incentive-based honorariums saw their incomes drop between INR 1,000-5,000 due to suspension of routine tasks such as immunisation, pre and ante natal care etc. Eighty-six percent of ASHA workers reported a drop in their incomes during loss of incentives.	ASHA and AWWs experienced debt burden due to inadequate remuneration and delay in payments amidst job losses in their families. The recorded estimates of debt burden range between INR 10,000 to INR 1,00,000.	At the time of the study, 28% of healthcare workers had not received PPEs at all from the government.
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Another study of 500 CHWs in Bundelkhand region spread across Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh revealed the following:

CHALLENGES FACED BY CHWS IN DOING COVID-19 RELATED WORK



PAYMENT OF EXTRA REMUNERATION TO THOSE PROMISED



²⁰ <https://behanbox.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APU-Report-Final.pdf>

v. WOMEN-OWNED AND LED ENTERPRISES

Reportedly, the number of women-owned enterprises in India is higher than many other countries, with them owning an estimated 13.5 million to 15.7 million MSMEs and agribusinesses. However, most of these enterprises are largely single-person enterprises, with only 17% of all women-owned enterprises employing hired workers versus 28% for all enterprises²¹.

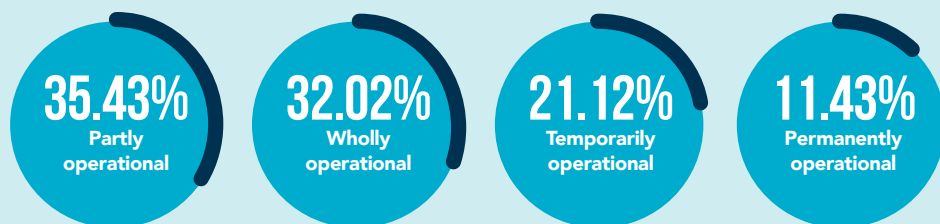
Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 many women-run MSMEs have permanently closed as a result of repeated lockdowns due to which demand dried up, supply chains were disrupted, and businesses were not able to financially sustain themselves. The Ministry of MSME does not have data on the percentage of women-led enterprises that reported a significant decrease in their sales revenue post lockdown.

However, according to a recent study conducted by the Ministry through Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) that assessed the impact of the pandemic on micro-units including women-led units set up under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) – 88% beneficiaries reported a negative impact while the remaining 12% of micro-units, which operate in the health and retail sectors, stated that they benefited due to COVID²².

IWWAGE INSIGHTS

IN NOVEMBER 2020, LEAD AT KREA UNIVERSITY RE-SURVEYED AROUND 205 ENTERPRISES THAT WERE REPORTED TO BE PERMANENTLY CLOSED IN JUNE-JULY 2020²³. OF THE 205 SURVEYED, 73.2% OF WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES (THAT REPORTED PERMANENT CLOSURES IN ROUND-1) HAD REOPENED AND 58.4% REPORTED AN INCREASE IN INCOME LEVELS.

STATUS OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AT TIME OF SURVEY (JUNE-JULY 2020)



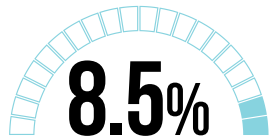
²¹ <https://www.bain.com/insights/powering-the-economy-with-her-women-entrepreneurship-in-india/>

²² <https://thewire.in/government/covid-micro-units-kvic-employment-gadkari>

²³ https://ifmrlead.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CERR-2-Resurvey_-Key-Findings_Final.pdf

According to another study conducted by LEAD at Krea University COVID-19 had the following impact on women-led enterprises:

DURING FIRST LOCKDOWN

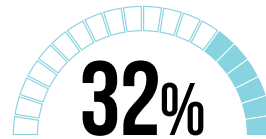


WOMEN-LED ENTERPRISES
WERE OPERATIONAL

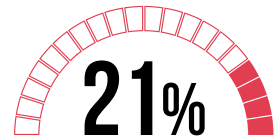


BECOMING
TEMPORARILY CLOSED

AFTER LOCKDOWN



RETURNED TO BEING
FULLY OPERATIONAL



WERE LEFT
TEMPORARILY CLOSED



During the lockdown

11%

women-led enterprises were permanently closed which remained the same after the lockdown. Unregistered enterprises were **1.4 times more** likely to face permanent closures compared to unregistered businesses.

Average monthly revenues declined



INR 7,921
PRE-PANDEMIC



INR 2,534
DURING LOCKDOWN

During the study, about



enterprises had outstanding business loans mostly from formal sources. However, **19% of these enterprises had taken loans during the lockdown period** with an increase in informal source loans.

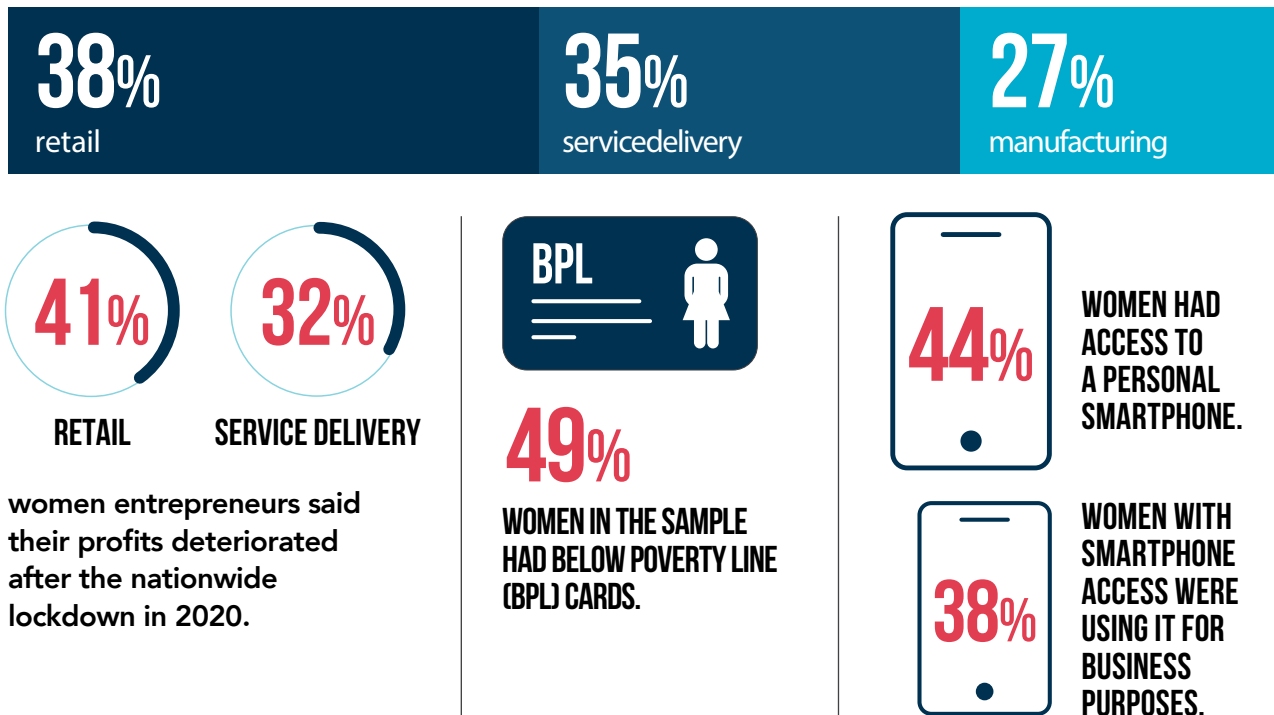


60%

of women business owners felt high levels of stress due to the impact of COVID-19 on their business and similarly high levels of income instability.

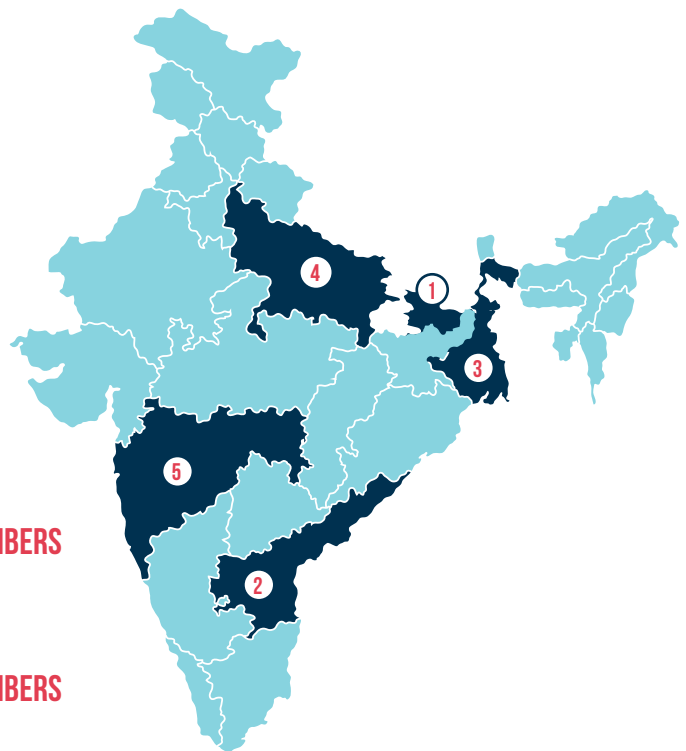
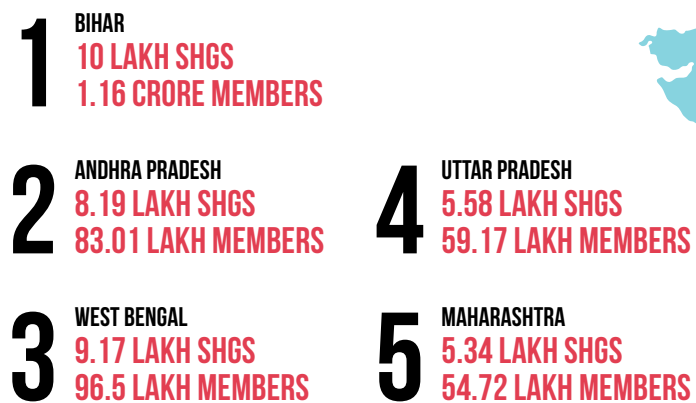
Another study on women entrepreneurs, covering 1,235 women across 13 states/UTs, found that (Edelgive 2021)²⁴:

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS WERE ENGAGED IN



vi. WOMEN'S COLLECTIVES

Across the 34 states/UTs, which have transited to NRLM, a total of 73.6 lakh self-help groups (SHGs) are in existence, covering over 8 crore members²⁵. The top 5 states leading in the number of SHGs are as follows:

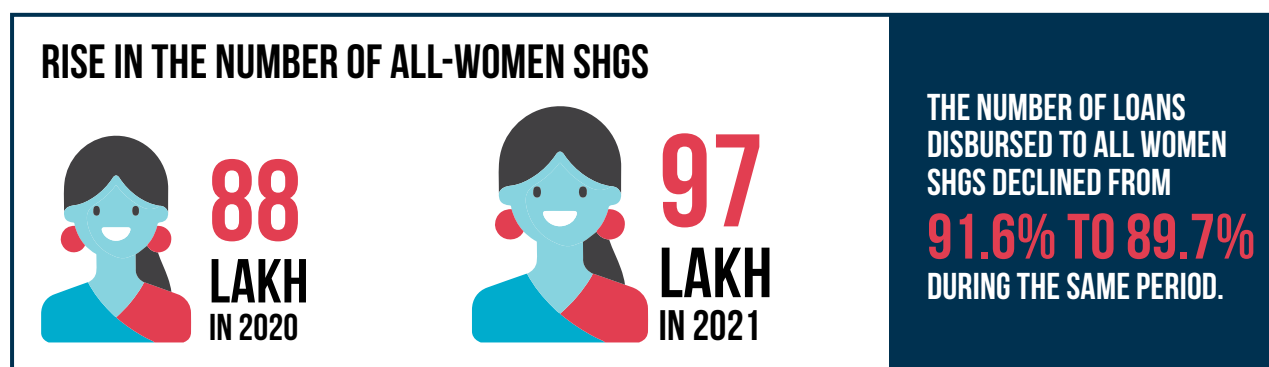


²⁴ https://cdn1.edelweissfin.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/04/Landscape-Study-on-Women-Entrepreneurship_UdyamStree_By-EdelGive.pdf
²⁵ <https://nrlm.gov.in/shgOuterReports.do?methodName=showShgreport>

Key insights on the loans disbursed to SHGs:

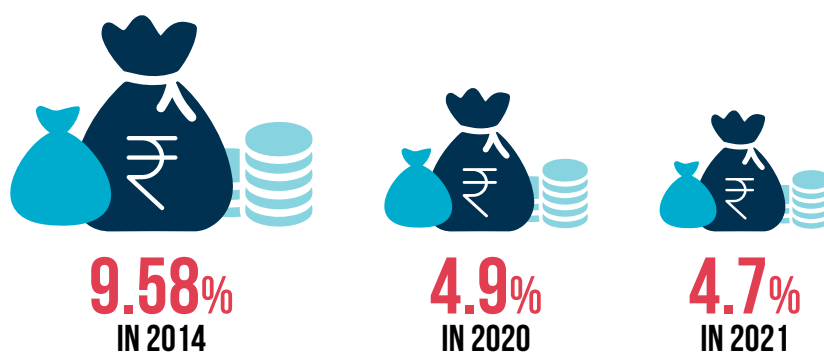
The central government released INR 1,625 crore for women entrepreneurs and also declared that the loan limit for SHGs has been raised from INR 10 lakh to INR 20 lakh in August 2021.

The Status of Microfinance Report (2020-21) published by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) reports that savings of nearly 70 lakh SHGs (7.5 crore families) out of 112.2 lakh SHGs, touched an all-time high of INR 37,478 crore and the banks have disbursed loans of INR 58,071 crore by March 2021.



Around 68.5% of total SHGs are located in South and Eastern regions contributing 81.2% of total SHGs' savings. They get 93.6% of total credits extended to SHGs with a good credit quality with Non-Performing Assets (NPA) to total loans ratio less than 5%, while a few other regions have NPA ratios more than 40%. Regionally, the Northeast and Central regions account for the highest percentage of NPAs.

NPAs under bank loans to SHGs has marginally declined



3. Enablers for women's participation in the workforce

i. ADDRESSING THE BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Increasing participation of women in the labour force necessitates the dismantling of structural barriers that restrict their economic mobility and improve their access to assets, finance, rights, entitlements and information.



LAND OWNERSHIP

Increase from 38.4% in 2015-16 to 43.3% in 2019-21

Source: NFHS V



BANK ACCOUNT OWNERSHIP & USAGE

Increase from 53% in 2015-16 to 78.6% in 2019-21

Source: NFHS V



ACCESS TO INTERNET

Only 64% of women have ever used the internet compared to 85% men

Source: NFHS V



MOBILE PHONE OWNERSHIP

67% of women own a mobile phone of whom 30% are mobile internet users compared to 79% male owners of whom 45% are internet users.

Source: Global Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021



EDUCATION

Among girls aged 7-10, percentage of girls who are not enrolled in any schools have gone up from 1.4% in 2018 to 4.1% in 2021.

Among girls aged 11-14, percentage of girls who are not enrolled in any schools have gone up from 3.6% in 2018 to 3.9% in 2021.

Among girls aged 15-16, percentage of girls who are not enrolled in any schools have down from 12.6% in 2018 to 7.1%.

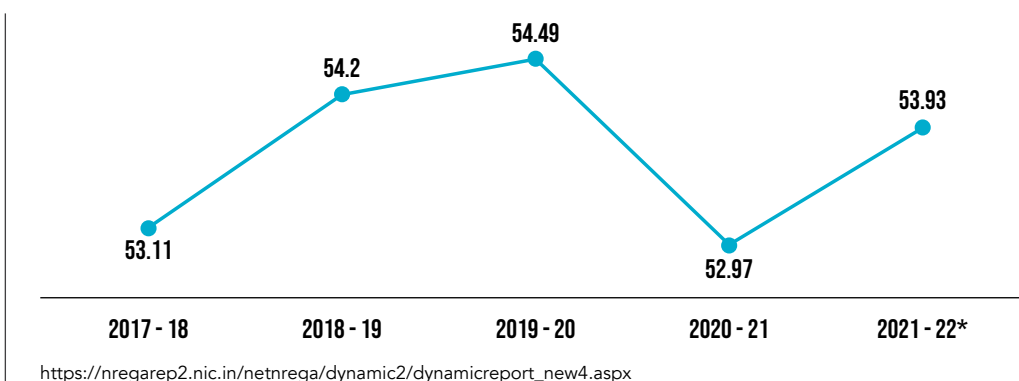
Source: ASER 2021 (Rural)

ii. GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED SOCIAL PROTECTION AND JOB CREATION PROGRAMMES

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Considering the devastating impact of the national lockdown on people's jobs and livelihoods, particularly during the first wave, there was an increased focus on the need for employment generation, particularly in urban areas, especially after the immediate economic lockdown during the first wave of COVID. To cater to an increase in demand for wage employment opportunities in rural areas, the Government increased the allocation for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme while several state governments such as Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand introduced urban wage employment programmes (described in the later sections).

PERCENTAGE OF PERSON DAYS WORKED BY WOMEN IN MGNREGA



SVANIDHI scheme for street vendors

The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs launched a scheme PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) in 2020 to empower Street Vendors by not only extending loans to them, but also for their holistic development and economic upliftment. The scheme intends to facilitate collateral free working capital loans of up to INR 10,000/- for a single-year tenure, to approximately 50 lakh street vendors, to help resume their businesses in urban areas, including surrounding peri-urban/rural areas.

UNDER PM SVANIDHI



41%

OF ALL CAPITAL LOANS TO STREET VENDORS
HAVE BEEN DISBURSED TO WOMEN

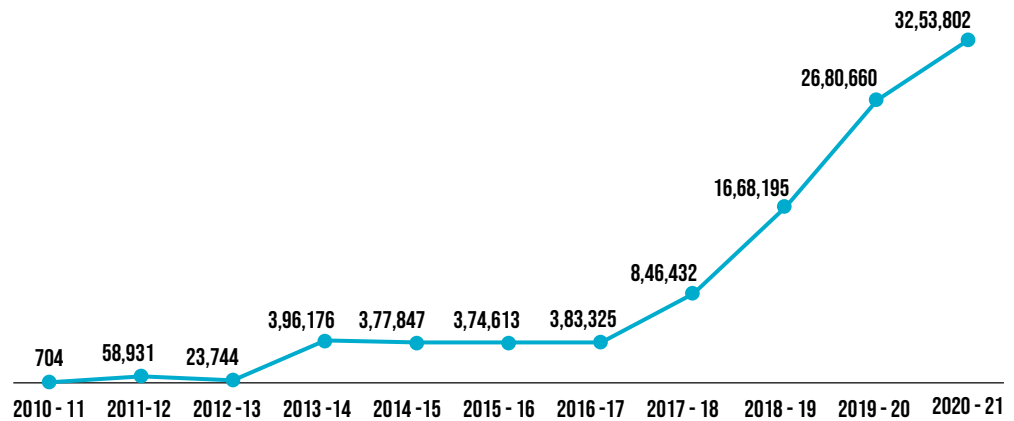
State government initiatives targeting job creation for women²⁶

Since 2010 Kerala was the first state in India to provide 100 person-days of guaranteed wage employment through the Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS). As of March 2021, nearly 90% of the job card registrations in Kerala were by women. **In the financial year 2021-22, of the 1,31,318 households with active job cards, 58,827 were provided employment, of which 55,239, i.e.94% beneficiaries were women²⁷.**

²⁶ Courtesy: <http://urbanaffairskerala.org/index.php/mis-report2/aeugs-report>

²⁷ <http://urbanaffairskerala.org/index.php/aeugs/mandays-reports>

KERALA'S AUEGS - PERSON-DAYS OVER THE YEARS



RAJASTHAN

The Rajasthan Government announced a "Back to Work" scheme in 2021 for women who have quit their jobs owing to family responsibilities, with a target to provide 15,000 jobs in three years. The scheme aims to prioritise widows, divorcees, and victims of violence, as per official statements. Interestingly, Rajasthan had the third highest unemployment rate for women in the country in May-August 2021 according to data from the CMIE.

KARNATAKA

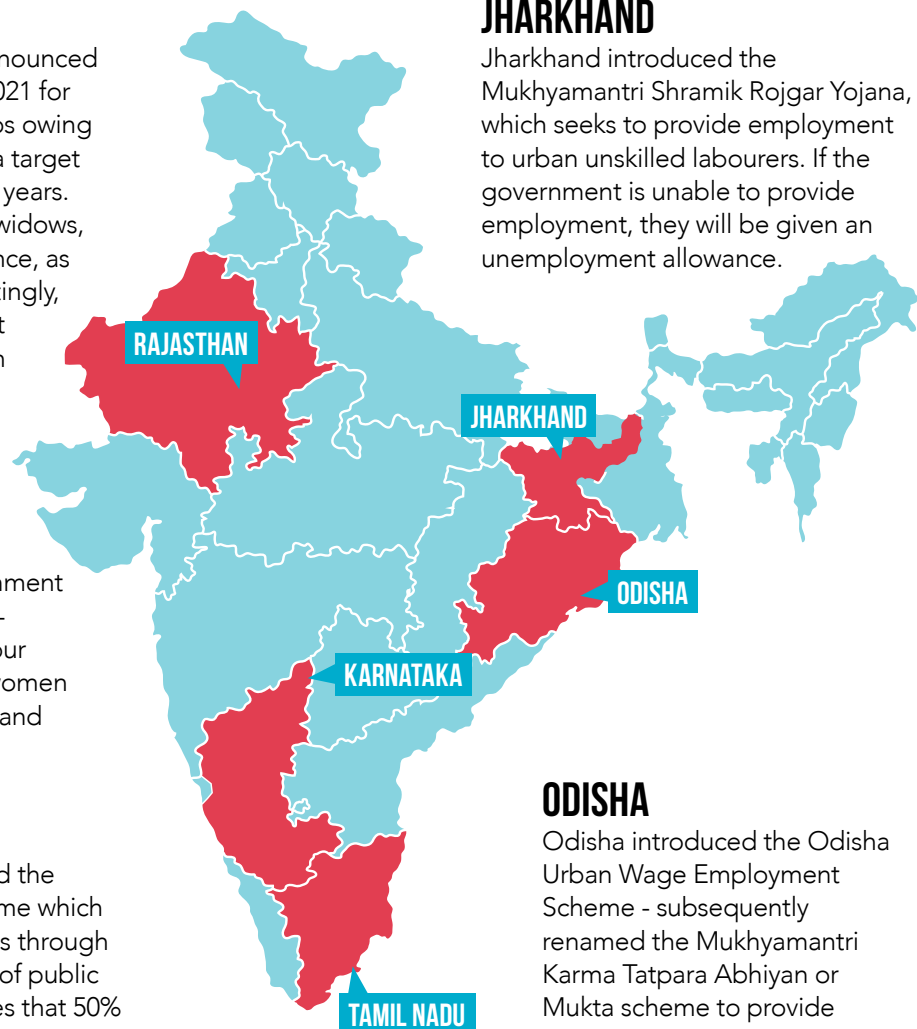
In November 2021, the Government of Karnataka announced a first-of-its-kind initiative to set up four industrial parks dedicated to women in Mysuru, Dharwad, Harohalli and Kalaburagi.

TAMIL NADU

In 2021, Tamil Nadu announced the pilot Urban Employment Scheme which aims to boost job opportunities through the creation and maintenance of public assets. Additionally, it mandates that 50% of the total person-days be earmarked for women besides ensuring equal wages for women and men for unskilled and semiskilled workers.

JHARKHAND

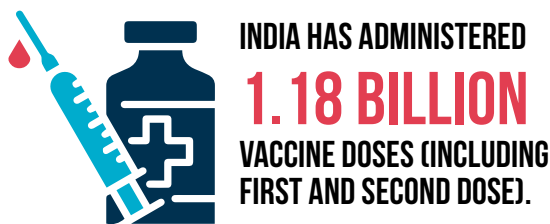
Jharkhand introduced the Mukhyamantri Shramik Rojgar Yojana, which seeks to provide employment to urban unskilled labourers. If the government is unable to provide employment, they will be given an unemployment allowance.



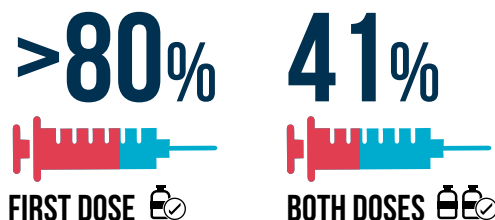
ODISHA

Odisha introduced the Odisha Urban Wage Employment Scheme - subsequently renamed the Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan or Mukta scheme to provide temporary employment to the urban poor. Of the reported 1.3 million person-days that were generated, 40% were women.

iii. VACCINE ADMINISTRATION



ELIGIBLE POPULATION VACCINATION



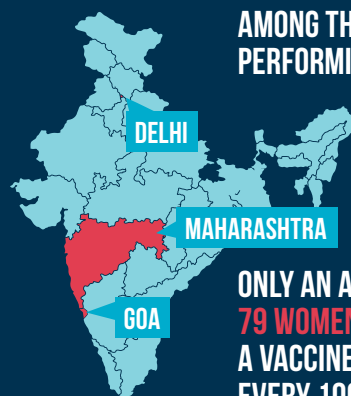
WOMEN MAKE UP 48.5% OF THE TOTAL RECIPIENTS OF VACCINES

Additionally, many districts – even in better performing states – have recorded wide gender gaps in terms of first dose coverage (November 2021 data).

Of the 544 of 700 districts which have at least 40% of their vaccinated total population,



**46% HAVE WORSE
VACCINATION SEX RATIO THAN
THE POPULATION SEX RATIO.**



AMONG THE WORST PERFORMING STATES

**ONLY AN AVERAGE OF
79 WOMEN HAVE RECEIVED
A VACCINE DOSE FOR
EVERY 100 MEN**

In the initial days of the vaccine rollout, women made up the majority of vaccine recipients given that many frontline jobs are performed by women. In March 2021, when vaccines became available to those over 45 years of age, and then in May 2021 to those between ages 18 to 44 years, the numbers began reversing, with more men being vaccinated than women.²⁸ The Government of India has been highlighting that the gender gap in administering vaccines is significantly more among the elderly population than younger females. This reflects the existing gender stereotypes in society due to which women are left behind and the reasons include unequal access to resources and technology.

In July 2021, an analysis by IWWAGE also found that states with a higher percentage of females being vaccinated were also likely to have lower poverty levels, higher female education levels, and a higher share of women reporting intra-household bargaining power.²⁹

²⁸ <https://idronline.org/article/gender/gender-inequities-prevail-in-indias-vaccination-drive/>

²⁹ <https://idronline.org/article/gender/gender-inequities-prevail-in-indias-vaccination-drive/>

iv. CHILDBIRTH RATE AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATION ON WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

Childbirth has been observed by experts as being a point of exit for women in the workforce. While it is not the only reason for women to drop out of the labour market, it is often a contributing factor. Seemingly in line with this, the central government issued an advisory to state governments in June 2021, to allow nursing mothers to continue working from home even after maternity leave.

At the start of the pandemic, several sources predicted a baby boom across the globe, with a *UNICEF report*³⁰ suggesting that India would be most likely to lead the charge in this context with a projected 20.1 million births in 2020. However, a concomitant decrease in home births, an increase in unsafe abortions as well as a *drop in India's fertility rate* has been noted in the same period, impacting women's health and wellbeing across the country.

A *Lancet study*³¹ across 5 states in India found that access to safe abortion services was hindered particularly during lockdowns and there was a decline in hospital births.

v. ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Increasingly, violence against women is being studied in relation to its impact on women's workforce participation. In November 2021, IWWAGE released a report that highlighted the following³²:

WHILE ALL-INDIA FLFPR SAW AN 8-PERCENTAGE POINT DECLINE, THE OVERALL RATE OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



**MORE THAN TRIPLED TO
57.9%
BETWEEN 2011-12 AND 2017-18.**

A closer look at states with the lowest FLFPRs during the said time periods (Bihar, Delhi, Assam and Tripura) strengthens the argument that crime rate is indeed strongly associated with women's participation in the workforce.

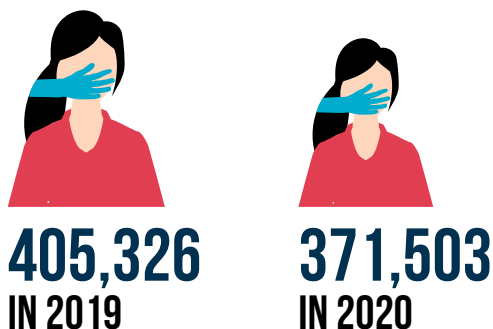
30 <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/industry/at-20-1-million-india-expected-to-have-highest-births-since-covid-19-declared-as-pandemic-unicef/75597080>

31 <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2589-5370%2821%2900343-6>

32 <https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Understanding-violence-female-labour-supply.pdf>

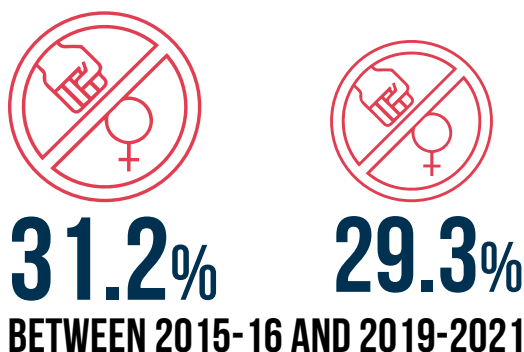
Meanwhile, despite the increase in domestic violence cases recorded during the pandemic by the NCW, all-India data on both domestic violence and violence against women overall seems to be lower than previous years as per the data points below:

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN



As per the National Crime Records Bureau Crime Report 2020 released in September 2021

DECREASE IN SPOUSAL VIOLENCE



As per the NFHS-V³³ data released in November 2021

Still, from the discrepancies between the NCW complaints and the recorded data, it is unclear whether there was a decrease in crimes against women, or simply a decrease in crimes recorded by authorities due to the overwhelming nature of the pandemic health response. Further, it is critical to note that the numbers from NFHS V may be disputed as has been reported extensively in the media after its release.

vi. WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTION MANIFESTO PROMISES

In 2021, elections to the legislative assemblies were held in 4 states (Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal) and 1 UT (Puducherry). Over the years, women have emerged as a significant voting bloc in these states, with over 50% of the votes coming in from women in Kerala, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu, with the other two states recording over 48% votes from women. As a result, across these states, political campaigns and election manifestos spoke to the needs of women, with poll promises including cash transfers to women homemakers and women-led households, free / subsidised transport for women, free home appliances, increase in maternity benefits and reservation for women in government jobs.

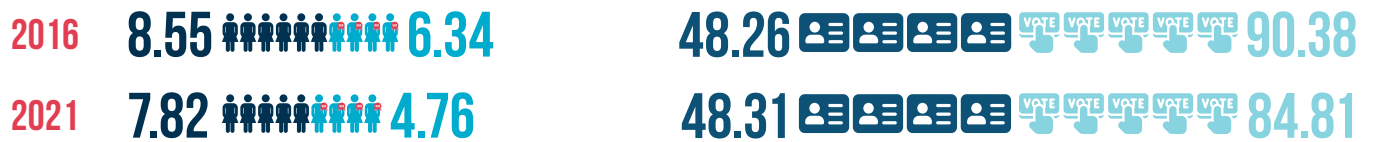


This rise of the female voting bloc could ultimately result in political parties and governments introducing more gender-responsive policies which are specifically catered to the needs of women.

³³ There have, however, been several debates around the validity of these findings.

Women's participation in electoral politics

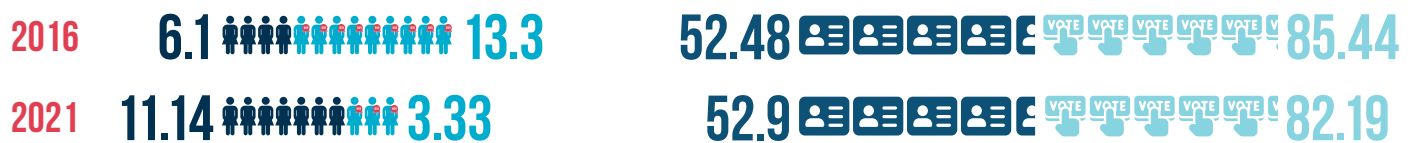
ASSAM



KERALA



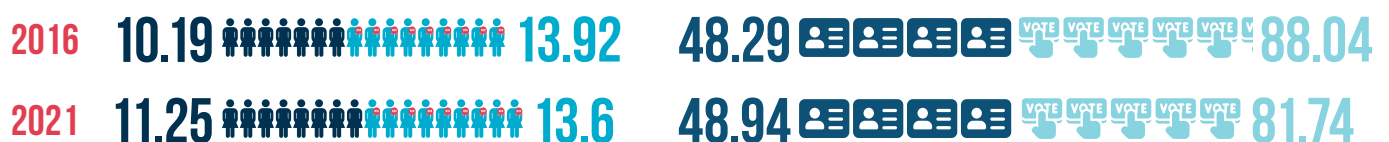
PUDUCHERRY



TAMIL NADU



WEST BENGAL



Women
contestants



Seats won by
women



Registered
women electors



Women
votes polled

All figures in percentage

Future of Work

While the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic lockdowns wreaked havoc on the livelihoods and incomes across all segments of the population, particularly the most vulnerable and informal workers – there were green shoots of recovery in certain sectors. For example, the service industry, e-commerce industry, and manufacturing had to rapidly expand digitalisation, similarly, the nature and number of jobs are growing in the renewable sectors and the green economy. The nature of jobs, contractual arrangements and employer and employee relations have also evolved rapidly with opportunities in the gig economy and hybrid working models, but largely restricted to the white-collar segment.

Several organisations and mostly the Big Tech firms, including Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon, have also announced that their employees can choose to work from home permanently. It is likely that even in a post-pandemic world, organisations might move towards a hybrid work model, which is also reflected in people's choices.

According to Microsoft's inaugural Work Trend Index³⁴



73%
EMPLOYEES SURVEYED
IN INDIA WANT MORE
IN-PERSON WORK
OR COLLABORATION
POST-PANDEMIC



74%
WANTED MORE
FLEXIBLE REMOTE
WORK OPTIONS
GOING FORWARD

This would however require both governments as well as workplaces to come up with new policies which would make the 'future of work' more conducive to women's workforce participation.

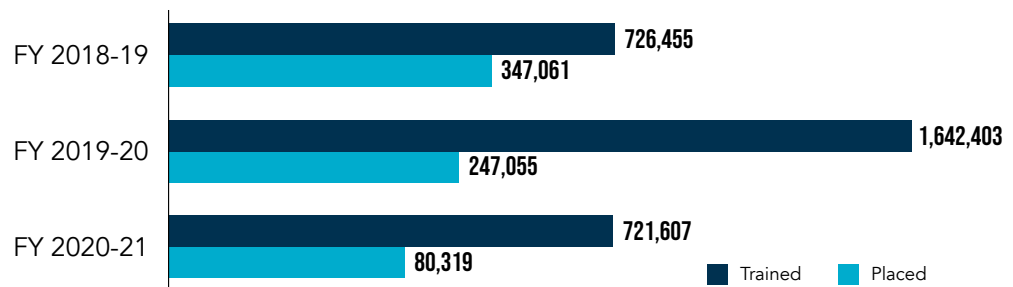
³⁴ <https://news.microsoft.com/en-in/microsoft-work-trend-index-reveals-urgent-trends-as-hybrid-work-unfolds-in-india>

i. RE-SKILLING AND UPSKILLING FOR BETTER WORK OPPORTUNITIES

In an effort to return to the workforce, women are endeavoring to independently upskill themselves in order to enhance their employability in a rapidly changing job market and to mitigate the resulting uncertainty.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

DETAILS OF FEMALE CANDIDATES TRAINED AND PLACED UNDER PMKVY 2.0



PMKVY is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) with the objective to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood³⁵. Under PMKVY 3.0 which was launched in 2021, the Ministry is offering courses and promoting skills to address industry needs that meet new-age market demands that have become critical since the pandemic.

TRAINED

AS ON JANUARY 2021, OF THE 99.31 LAKH CANDIDATES WHO HAD BEEN TRAINED/ORIENTED UNDER THE SCHEME,



41.23 LAKH WERE WOMEN³⁶

PLACED

OF THE TOTAL CANDIDATES WHO REPORTED BEING PLACED



52% ARE WOMEN³⁷

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme

Launched in 2016, the NAPS programme aims to promote apprenticeship training in the country by providing financial aid to employers who engage apprentices. The government provides 25% of prescribed stipend subject to a maximum of Rs. 1,500 per month per apprentice with the employers.

TOTAL FEMALE CANDIDATES TRAINED:



³⁵ Source: <http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/177/AU186.pdf>

³⁶ <https://pqars.nic.in/annex/253/Au2875.pdf>

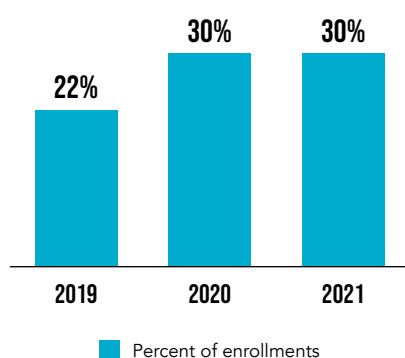
³⁷ <http://www.pmkvyofficial.org/placement.php>

Online education and vocational training

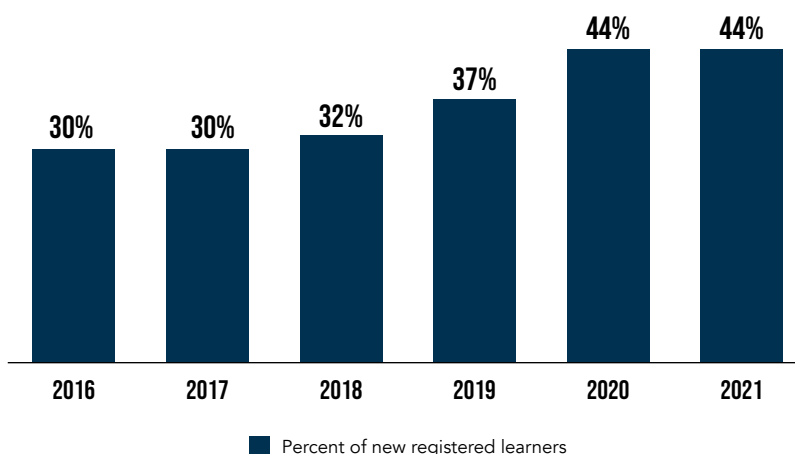
Over the years digital learning platforms developed by private sector players, and particularly platforms that offer Massive Open Online Courses, have grown reaching over 220 million learners worldwide³⁸.

- UpGrad has reported a 90% increased intent amongst women learners in 2021 (Jan to March) as compared to the same period in 2020. In India, women make 27% of total learners as compared to 23% globally.
- According to Coursera, the share of new registered women online learners has increased from 37% (pre-pandemic) in 2019 to 44% in 2020 and 2021 (pandemic).
- The share of entry-level professional certificate enrollments from women has also increased from 22% in 2019 to 30% in 2020 and 2021.
- India has the second highest number of women registered as learners on Coursera at 4.8 million. Most enrollments are in STEM-related courses.

Share of entry-level Professional Certificate enrollments from women over time



Share of new women registered learners over time



However, there remain impediments to women accessing online education resources across the country, especially in rural India, due to the slow pace of internet and lack of access to digital devices. There is a marked decline in female training and placement under the PMKVY scheme from pre-pandemic to pandemic times coupled with an increase in women upskilling themselves on non-government online platforms.

³⁸ <https://www.classcentral.com/report/moocs-stats-and-trends-2021/>

ii. FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ENTERPRISES




The Indian government has taken several initiatives for promoting women-led enterprises, which includes a push for 'Nari se Kharidari' (which literally translates to 'Buy from Women') and 'Women-led Development'. On a more concrete level, the Indian government has introduced several schemes and programmes which include the following:

	CENTRAL-LEVEL INITIATIVES	STATE-LEVEL INITIATIVES	
WHAT IS IT	NITI Aayog - Women Entrepreneurship Platform: The WEP is a first of its kind, unified access portal that brings together women from different parts of India to realise their entrepreneurial aspirations. In August 2021, NITI Aayog launched the next phase of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform.	Delhi - Saheli Samanvay Kendra: The multi-pronged scheme includes a livelihoods component that aims to provide training for women to open micro-economic units or promote self-help groups for their economic empowerment.	Jammu & Kashmir "Saath": Saath is a rural enterprise acceleration programme, targeted at women members of self-help groups.
	OBJECTIVE/ OUTCOME Apart from services such as free credit ratings, mentorship, funding support to women entrepreneurs, apprenticeship and corporate partnerships; WEP will encourage entrepreneurs to share their entrepreneurial journeys, stories & experiences to nurture mutual learning.	The Delhi government plans to set up 500 Anganwadi hubs for incubating individual start-ups and to promote self-help groups under this scheme. Special arrangements will also be provided at Anganwadi hubs for providing the required training to open micro-economic units.	The scheme aims to mentor and upskill women members of SHGs and provide market linkages for the products created by them with a view to strengthen their social and financial standing. The state also plans to train women members of the 48,000 existing SHGs while also creating 11,000 new groups, and aims to provide them with the skills required to convert their businesses into Higher Order Enterprises.



iii. SUPPORTING WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

The year 2021 has witnessed a growing trend where women are getting precedence even in critical and arduous manufacturing units and processes. There are several efforts underway to engage women in sectors and livelihoods where traditionally women have been absent or in few numbers. Several efforts are underway to encourage women to adopt non-traditional livelihoods (NTLs) by investing in enablers and reducing the barriers, including gender norms, that women face when looking for jobs in these sectors. Examples of some initiatives include:

<p>OLA ELECTRIC</p> <p>Ola Electric has announced a 10,000-strong all woman workforce at its facilities</p>	 <p>ITC Foods unit in Karnataka has an all-woman workforce</p>	<p>FOXCONN</p> <p>Rising Star (Foxconn Group) has over 25,000 women making electronic devices and appliances</p>
 <p>At Vedanta, women manage smelting and crane operations</p>	<p>GREAVES</p> <p>Greaves Electric, an electric two-wheeler manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu, will have a 70% female workforce</p>	<p>Flipkart </p> <p>A fulfillment centre in Coimbatore will be the only facility for Flipkart which will be almost entirely run by women constituting 90% of the overall workforce</p>

iv. CLIMATE RESILIENT JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS

There is growing evidence to show that women tend to have smaller ecological footprints than men and tend to engage more in sustainable practices³⁹. Women comprise more than 50 percent of the agricultural labour, and nearly 14 percent of all entrepreneurs, and their relationship with the environment and informal economy can be critical in climate action and transforming livelihoods for their communities and families.

- A recently published study shows that MGNREGA has been improving carbon sequestration across India. In 2017-2018, 'drought-proofing' activities such as planting new trees and improving soil quality could have captured 102 million tonnes of CO₂.⁴⁰
- Promising examples from urban climate resilience initiative include the work being undertaken by The Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT), a finalist for the 2020-2021 Prize for Cities. MHT has increased household and community resilience through a range of physical upgrades, increased access to city-level initiatives and decision-making, and improved status of women in community and municipal decision-making processes.⁴¹

³⁹ <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/gender-and-climate-change-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

⁴⁰ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0251825>

⁴¹ <https://prizeforcities.org/project/womens-action-towards-climate-resilience>

- According to the Jal Shakti Ministry, around 18,000 women from Karnataka's self-help groups are being trained to manage solid waste and utilising solar energy to generate livelihoods in rural areas. SHG members are learning about renewable energy sources, solid waste management, different composting technologies for wet waste, the idea of bio gas for managing biodegradable waste, and the importance of menstrual health and its management after the training.
- In Maharashtra, a self-help group of women in Maharashtra's Wardha Zilla Parishad have set up a solar panel manufacturing unit. The project aims to enhance the entrepreneurship among women who primarily belong to backward classes. The unit had received an order of street lights worth ₹40 lakh from the Zilla Parishad.

v. REIMAGINING THE CARE ECONOMY AND PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Across the world, women shoulder a higher burden of care work, and 2021 proved to be no different. According to a report published by Dalberg⁴² in May 2021, Indian women in low-income households reported an increase in time spent on unpaid care work through the course of the pandemic, and a decrease in rest, in comparison to their male counterparts. Further, this increase in unpaid care work was particularly marked among women in households with over five members.



47%
OF WOMEN (COMPARED TO
43% OF MEN) REPORTED
AN INCREASE IN CHORES



41%
OF WOMEN (COMPARED TO 37%
OF MEN) REPORTED AN INCREASE
IN UNPAID CARE WORK

FEWER WOMEN THAN MEN (16 PERCENTAGE POINTS) REPORTED AN INCREASE IN REST DURING THE PANDEMIC

A 2018 report by the International Labour Organisation suggests that increasing investment in the care economy could result in 475 million jobs by 2030, of which 117 million jobs will be additional new jobs — over and above the status quo scenario. A 2021 UN Women report laying out a plan for a just, sustainable and feminist recovery focuses on investing in the care economy as a public good.

Aside from care work, public employment holds several other opportunities to bring women into the formal workforce. In 2020, an IWWAGE scoping paper on public employment opportunities for women aimed to estimate the impact of creating and regularising jobs for women within the system of public administration, especially in frontline public services delivery.

⁴² <https://dalberg.com/our-ideas/the-disproportionate-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-in-india/>

- In 2021, citing a decrease in rates of crimes against women, the Tripura Chief Minister announced 500 posts for female constables in the Tripura Police in addition to the 10% reservation for women which came about in 2018.
- In September 2021, the Tamil Nadu government also announced an increase in quota for women in government jobs — from 30% to 40%, with Minister for Finance & Human Resources Management P Thiaga Rajan highlighting that gender equality would play an important role in “ushering in change.”

vi. REDUCING BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S WORK AND INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE POLICIES

- In December 2021, media reported that the Indian government is in the process of developing a legal framework for work from home – details of which are still not readily available.
- In February 2021, the Kerala Labour and Excise Minister launched the Labour Department’s project to construct studio apartments for working women, with the aim to benefit women in the unorganised sector, and those with minimal income.
- In 2020, Mumbai became the first Indian city whose urban plan (the Revised Draft Development Plan 2034) has a gender lens on its infrastructure design. Mumbai’s plan seeks to challenge inequalities, while empowering women — particularly harnessing their capability to contribute to the workforce such as child care facilities, skill development centres, multipurpose housing for working women, etc.
- With the 2041 Master Plan for Delhi underway, 2021 emerged as a year where several citizen’s groups and policy experts collectively called for a separate gender chapter in the plan.
- The Tamil Nadu Government increased maternity leave for its employees from 9 months to 12 months.
- Similarly, the Karnataka government announced an additional 6 month childcare leave for women employees.

However, the last two leave measures may have the unintended consequence of disproportionately burdening women by placing them responsible for childcare. Simultaneously, however, the following developments were made in India, with an intent to address the work imbalance:

- According to a report by ProEves, several companies in India have adopted an integrated approach to childcare, with gender-neutral benefits ranging from virtual care support to childminder support benefits being allowed for employees in line with hybrid work models during the pandemic.
- In February 2021, P&G announced an inclusive parental leave policy called “Share the Care” alongside a few other measures to promote gender equality at the workplace and step up its work with women-owned businesses in India.
- To mark International Women’s Day in March 2021, Unilever offered open access to their policy to other businesses and organisations. Their Global Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy details access to ‘safe leave’, flexible working conditions and support services.

Acknowledgements

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The contents of this brief do not necessarily represent the views of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.





IWWAGE – An Initiative of LEAD at Krea University

Block M 6, Second Floor, Kharera, Hauz Khas New Delhi, Delhi-110016
+91 11 4909 6529 | www.iwwage.org