

Women, Work, and Digital Platforms: Enabling Better Outcomes for Women in the Digital Age



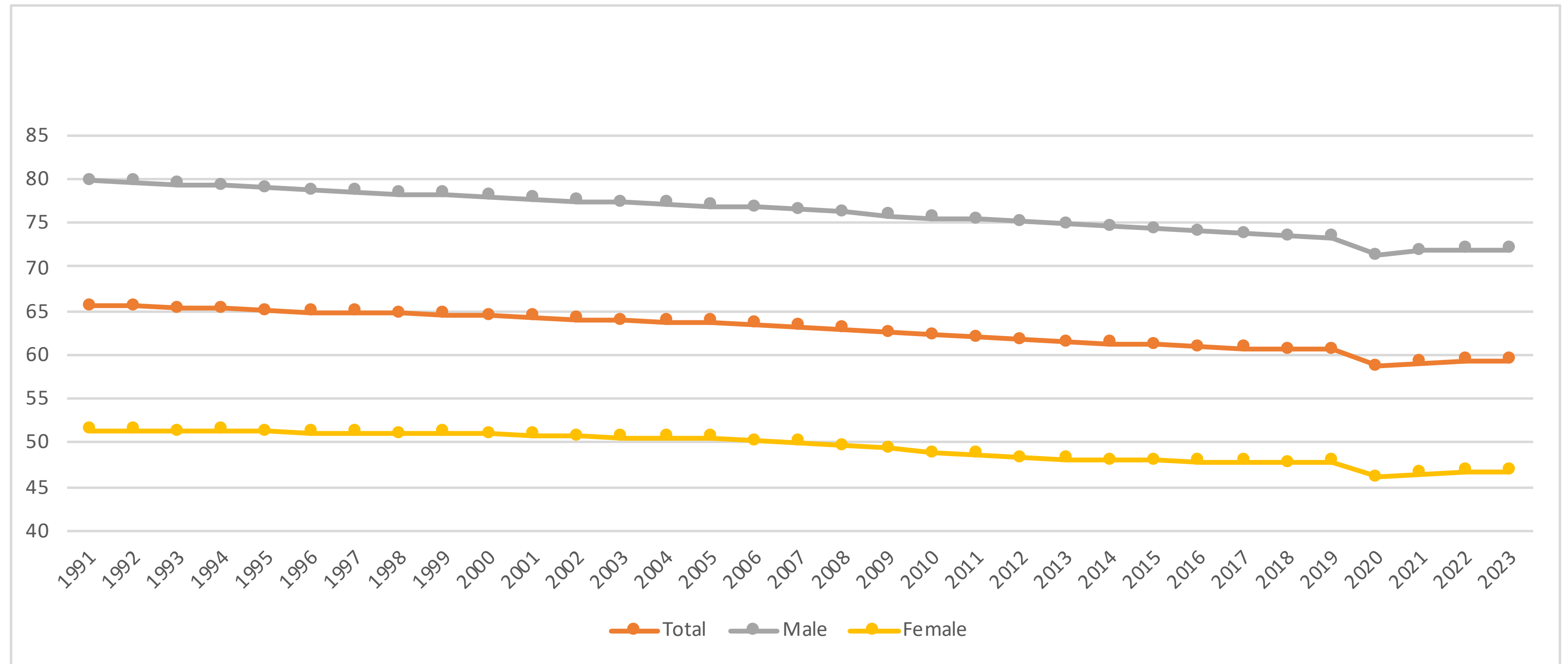
By Sabina Dewan
President and Executive Director, JustJobs Network

JustJobs Network is a global, applied research organization focused on strategies for **employment creation** and **workforce development**.

We work with **policymakers, multilateral organizations, the private sector, and grassroots organizations** to find evidence-based solutions to address the global employment crisis and to help build and more inclusive economies in a rapidly transforming world.



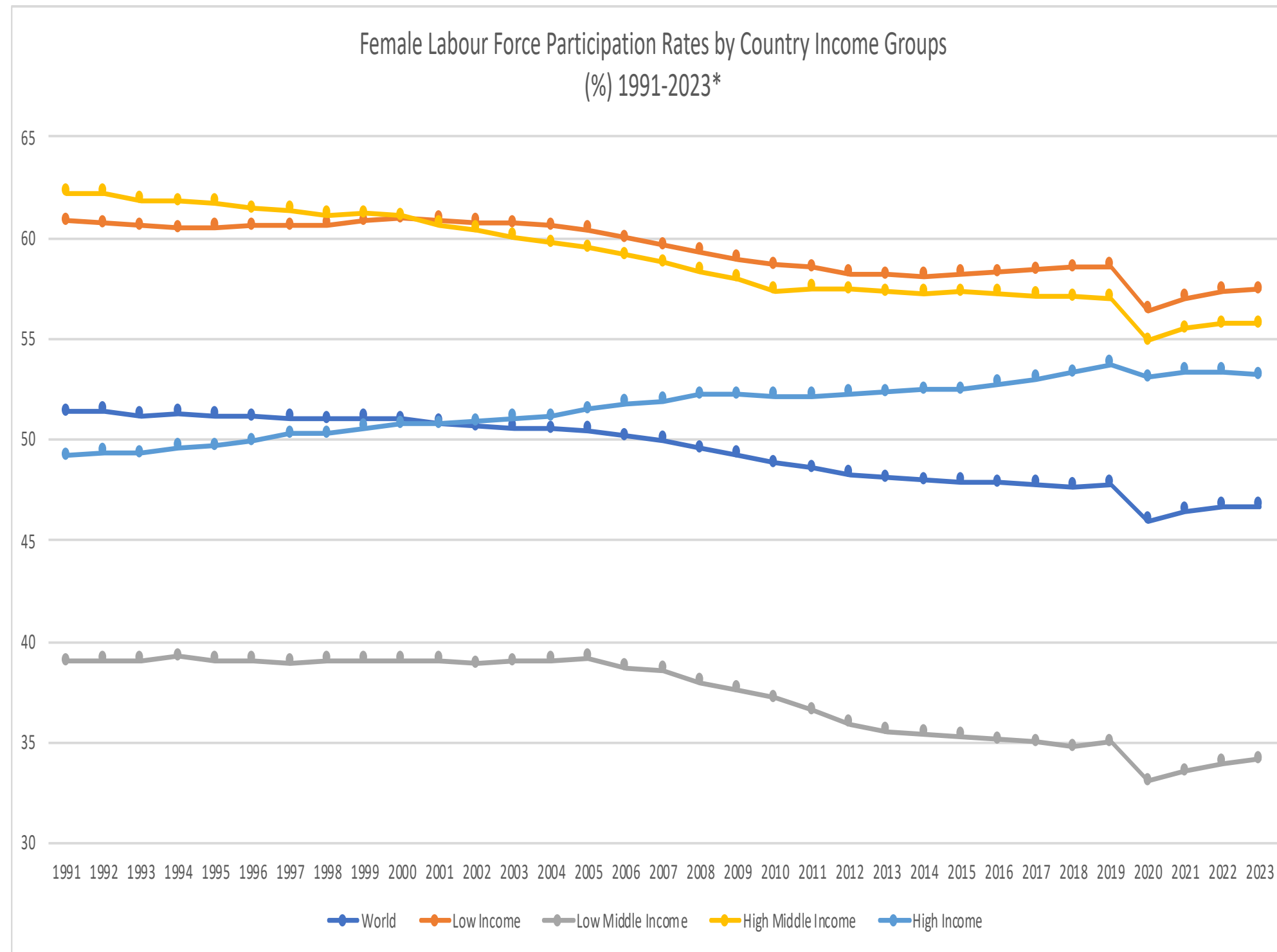
Labour Force Participation Rates Global Averages (1991 - 2023*)



Source: ILOStat, 2022

*2022 and 2023 are projections

Female Labour Force Participation Rates By Country Income Grouping (1991 - 2023*)



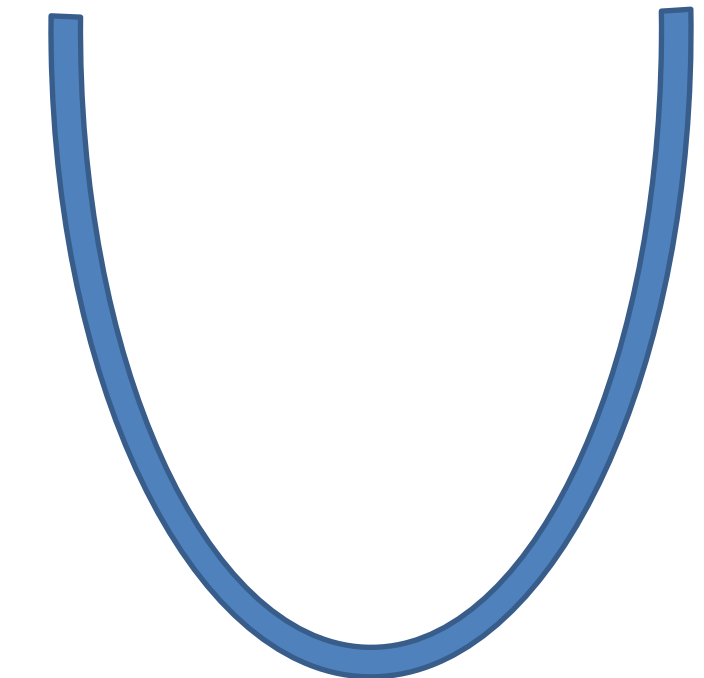
Source: ILOStat, 2022

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U-Shaped distribution of women's participation

Less-educated/
skilled women
(rural)

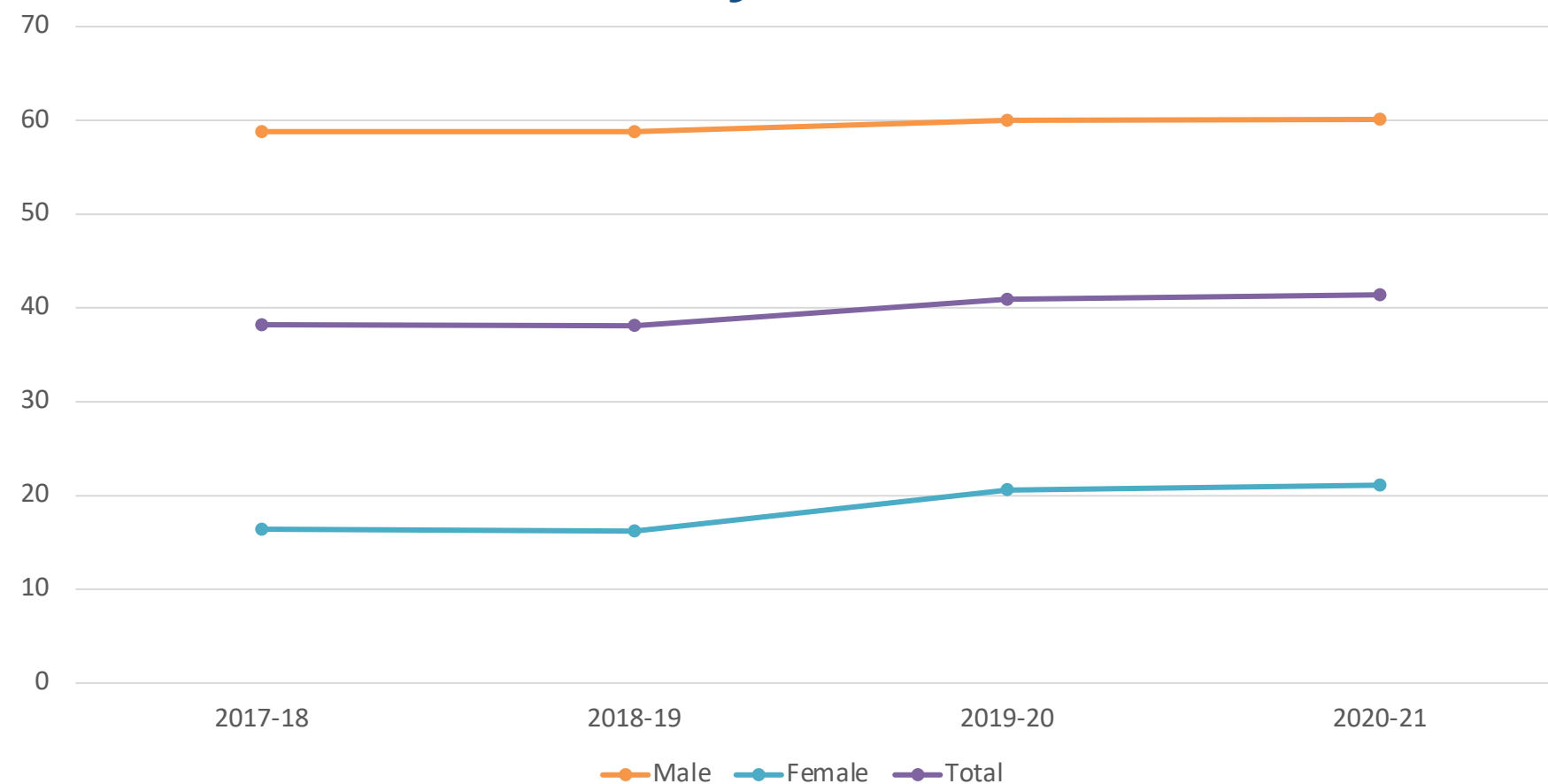
More-educated/
skilled women
(urban)



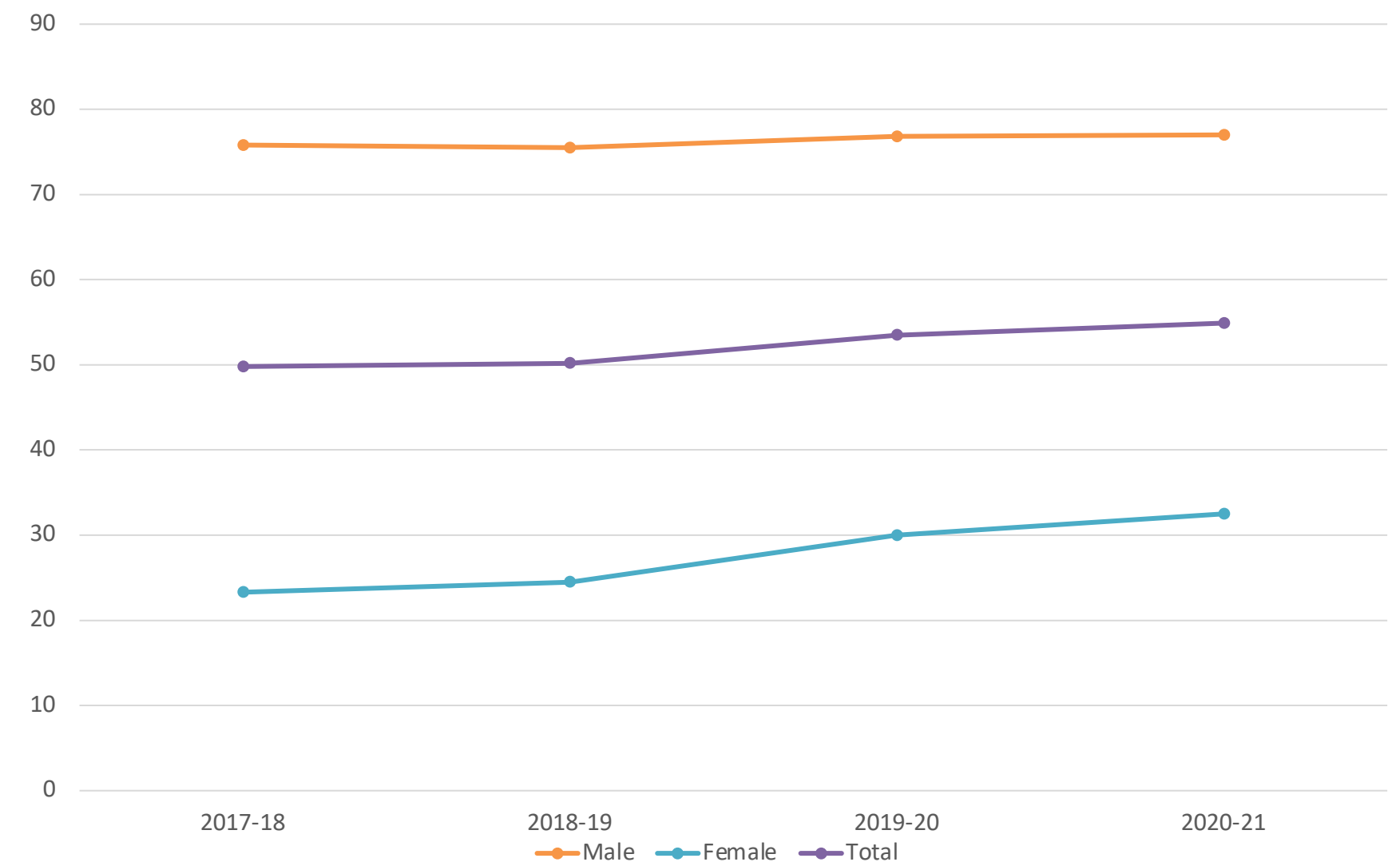
Middle
educated/skilled
women (urban)

- **India female labour force participation** is low and parity is lacking
- **India ranks 135** on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (2022), below Saudi Arabia #127 and Bahrain #131

Labour Force Participation Rates (15-29 years)



Labour Force Participation Rates (15 and above)



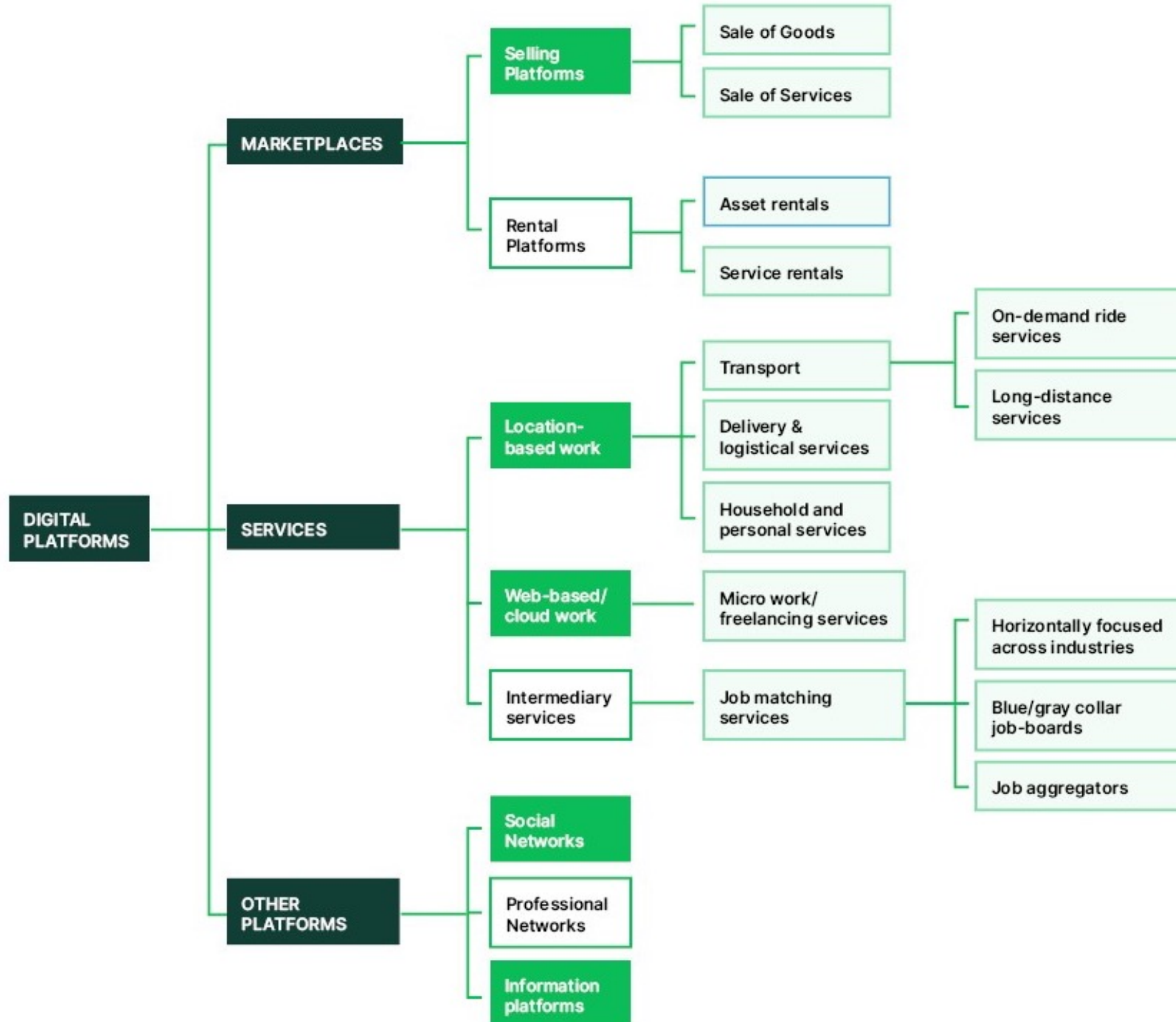
Supply-side factors

- Staying in education longer
- Or lack of access
 - technology
 - skills
 - social security
 - Supportive “infrastructure”

Demand-side factors

- Quantity of jobs
- Quantity and quality of jobs available to women
- Employer propensity to hire women

1. Despite decades of focus and advocacy acknowledging the benefits of women’s economic contributions on par with men, we continue to see declines and women struggle for parity in the world of work
2. Women’s participation, experience in the labour market, and their employment outcomes are the result of confluence of forces and broader social and political factors at play
3. Which factors are most salient, when, in which geography is difficult to discern with certainty – there are many responsible ‘causes’

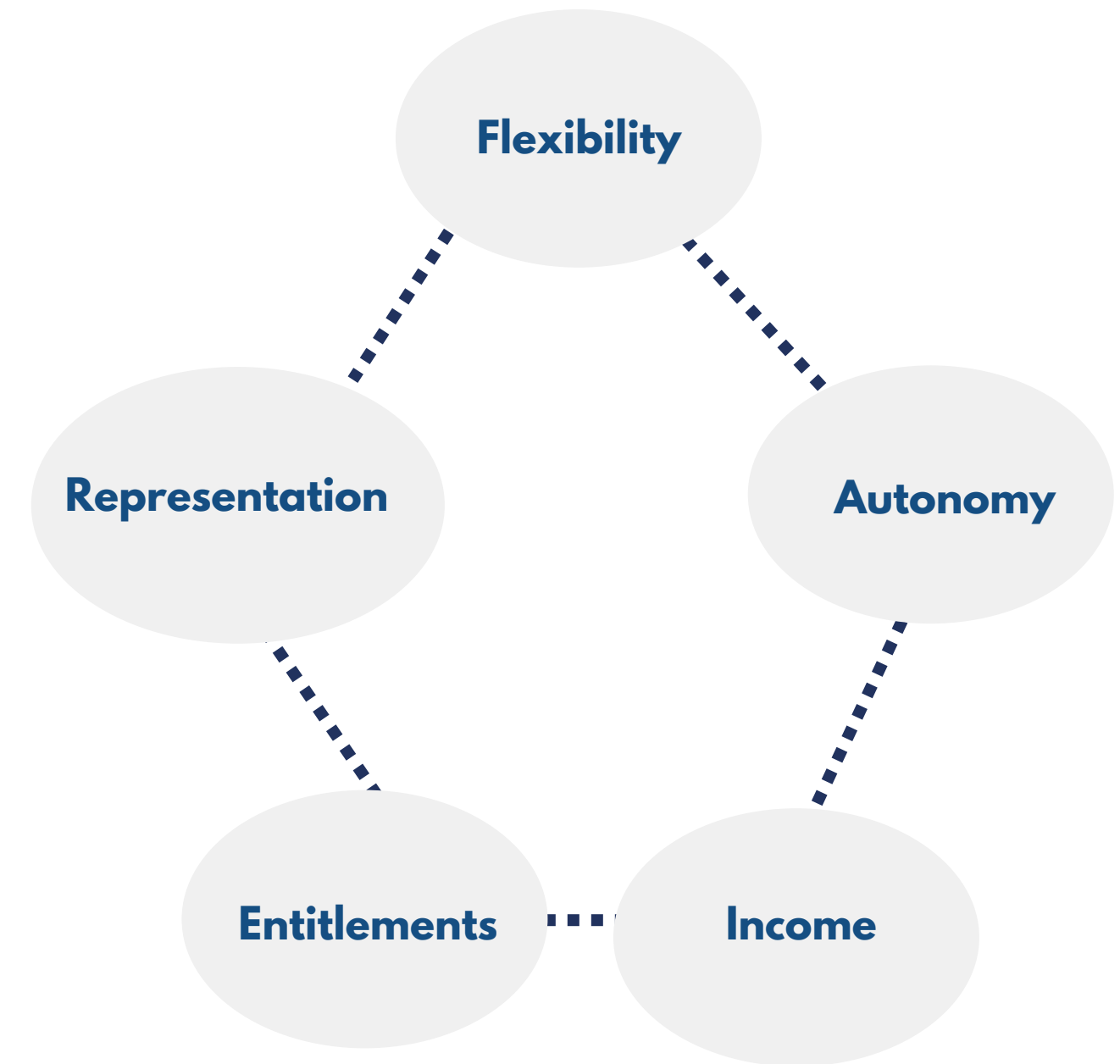


There is a **new emerging ecosystem of digital work mediated by platforms --**

How are women **faring** in this new labour market?

Are there ways to leverage digital platforms, to create **higher-quality and gender inclusive** work for women?

And what must happen to enable women to **avail these opportunities** and to ensure **better outcomes**?



Recommendation 1

Tackle the invisibility of women in data

- **There is a pressing need to collect more gender-disaggregated data** on the incidence, characteristics, and experience of women engaging in digitally mediated work through platforms
- **Regulations on data sharing and transparency to have companies/platforms share anonymized data**

BUT,

If we focus only on what is possible through existing data, we will continue to neglect the root causes of gender inequity and barriers to progress for women

- Institutions, policies and regulations take longer to institute than the pace and scale of technological and labour market change
- Data is always lagging
- Important factors – e.g. social normative factors – are not always conducive to measurement and quantifiable metrics

Recommendation 2

MUST acknowledge socio-cultural barriers that inhibit women, and must recommend and invest in long-term efforts to address them

- Business as usual is not working; economic benefits of improving women's participation have been well acknowledged for years
- Yet, gaps in female labour force participation and outcomes continue to persist

Need a new paradigm:

- Isn't afraid to acknowledge the role of socio-cultural barriers and actually recommend that stakeholders consider how socio-cultural barriers inhibit women; and articulate what programs can help address them
- Won't settle for lack of data as an excuse

Recommendation 3

Beyond policies related to technology, or even just gender-specific policies, we need to enable an ecosystem of support

- Embed gender-sensitization in all policy, not just gender-related ones
- Address issues like safety – in transport; at work and at home; online and offline
- Take efforts to reduce time poverty – e.g. enable access to childcare, water, electricity
- Specific incentives to enable access to skills development in STEM courses and professions – beyond gender-normative courses and occupations
- Enable access to social security
- Promote political participation and leadership





@JJNglobal
@Sabinadewan

sabinadewan@justjobsnetwork.org