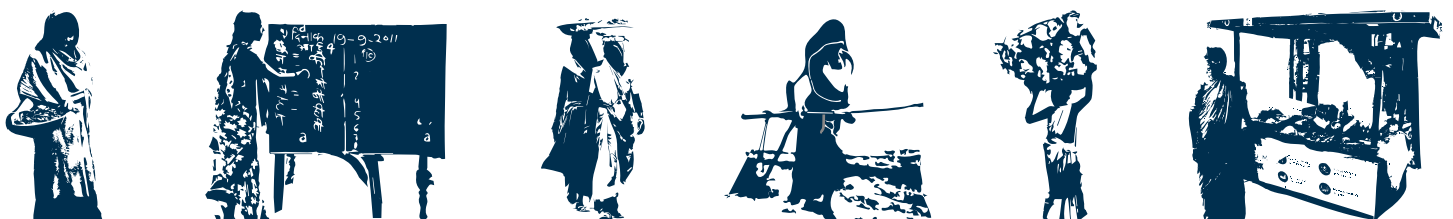


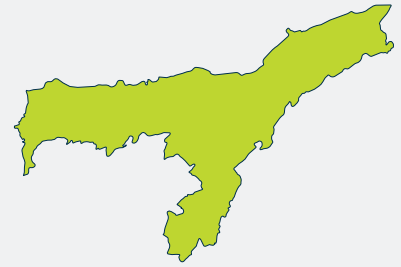
WOMEN'S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: **STATEWISE TRENDS**

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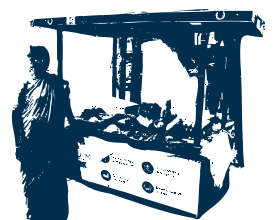
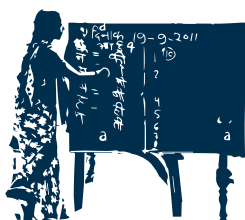
This series of state factsheets highlight important aspects of the status of women's employment in the states. The factsheets use secondary data provided by the National Sample Surveys' Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. The factsheets also draw on data from the employment – unemployment surveys (EUS) conducted by the same agency in previous years as well as data from other sources to support state specific analysis.

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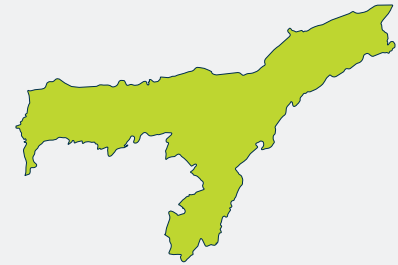
In terms of both population and area, Assam is the second-largest state in the northeast. According to the 2011 census, around 3.12 crore¹ people make up the state's entire population. In 2020-21, Assam's Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) rate² was 18.9 per cent in rural areas and 16 per cent in urban areas compared to the national average of 27.7 per cent and 18.6 per cent, respectively. Its gender ratio (2020-21) was 958 females for 1,000 males, which is lower than the national average of 1,020 (in 2019-21). In 2011, the state's overall literacy rate was 72.2 per cent, with 77.85 per cent of men and 66.27 per cent of women being literate. Assam's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)³ for 2020-21 was INR 3,73,872 crores.



¹ Assam State Portal <https://assam.gov.in/about-us/393#:~:text=The per cent20male per cent20literacy per cent20rate per cent20is,rate per cent20is per cent2066.27 per cent25 per cent20in per cent20Assam>

² Annual Report PLFS 2020-21 <https://dge.gov.in/dge/sites/default/files/Annual per cent20report/Annual per cent20Report per cent20PLFS per cent202020-21.pdf>

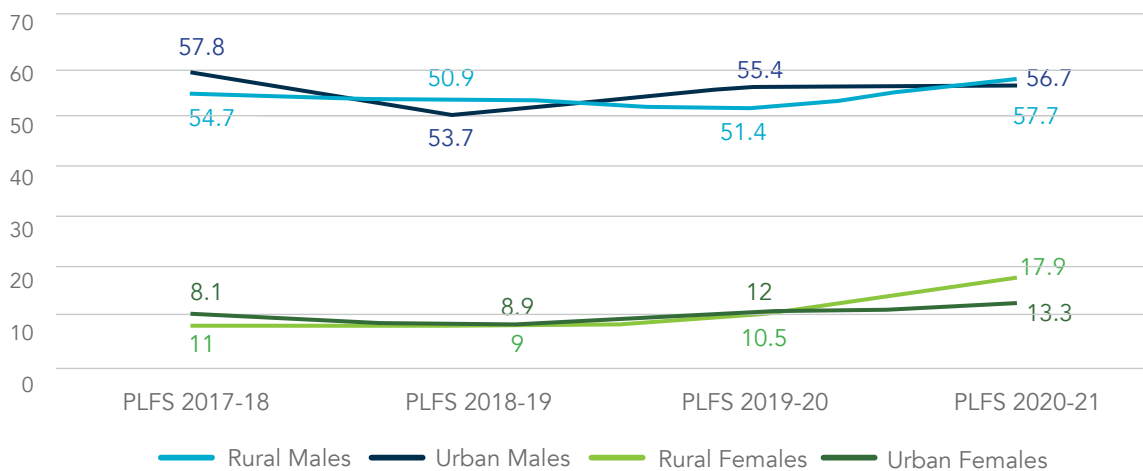
³ Assam Budget Analysis 2021-22; PRS <https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/assam-budget-analysis-2021-22>



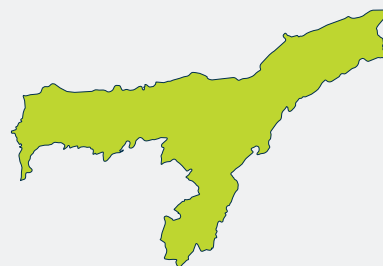
Trends in Female Workforce Participation Rates (FWPR)

- In 2020-21, the Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) in rural Assam was 17.9 per cent which is lower than the national average by 9.2 percentage points. Similarly, in the urban region, it was 13.3 per cent which is lower by 3.7 percentage points than the national figures.
- There have been some positive changes in the FWPR both in rural and urban areas. In the former, there has been a notable increase by 9.8 percentage points from 8.1 to 17.9 per cent between 2017-18 and 2020-21, respectively. In the urban areas, there is a marginal improvement by 2.3 percentage points from 11 to 13.3 per cent in the same reference period.
- Interestingly, the male female gap in workforce participation has reduced by 3.4 percentage points in the urban region while the reduction has been significant in rural areas of 6.8 percentage points.

Figure 1: Workforce Participation Rate



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18, PLFS 2018-19, PLFS 2019-20, and PLFS 2020-21, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India (GoI). The WPR figures are calculated for males and females of all age groups.



Distribution of Women Workers by Status of Employment

- The usual employment status of women workers in Assam follows national trends, with most rural women being self-employed and urban women in regular employment.
- Despite the fact that most urban women are employed as regular employees, there has been a drop in both urban and rural regions in regular employees from 2017-18. In the urban area, this number has continuously decreased from 62.8 to 57.9 per cent between 2017-18 and 2020-21. On the other hand, the figures for rural areas have almost halved from 58.7 to 27.2 per cent in the same reference period. Falling women's workforce participation can be linked to the decline in the number of regular employees. It may be noted that most of the workforce in both regions worked in the health and education sectors⁴.
- Women's self-employment has been on an increasing trend both in urban and rural areas. In the rural area, it rose from 18.5 to 65.2 per cent and, in the urban area, it jumped from 32.2 to 37.8 per cent between 2017-18 and 2020-21. Alongside, the number of unpaid workers within self-employed urban women⁵ has jumped from 6 to 40.9 per cent and, in rural areas, it has decreased from 51.2 to 44.8 per cent between 2017-18 and 2020-21. It can be assumed that women have transitioned from regular employment to self-employment and are now mostly involved in manufacturing, wholesale, and retail trades as well as agriculture. Additionally, the agriculture industry has grown significantly in both regions since it provides employment opportunities for women regardless of their age, education, or formal training⁶. Consequently, women actively participate in a variety of agricultural and related activities⁷ such as raising cattle, tea and coffee plantation, and social forestry, among others, in the state.
- The number of women employed in casual work is greater in rural areas as compared to urban areas, which is consistent with the national average. The data reveal that the number of women engaged in casual work has decreased in both urban and rural regions from 22.6 to 7.5 per cent and 4.9 to 4.1 per cent, respectively, between 2017-18 and 2020-21.

⁴ Author's estimates using unit level data from PLFS 2017-18 and PLFS 2020-21.

⁵ Author's estimate using unit level data from PLFS 2017-18 and 2020-21.

⁶ Goswami, C. (2013). Female Agricultural Workers in Assam: A Case Study of Darrang District.

⁷ Khan, M.H. (2013). Women in Agriculture of Assam.

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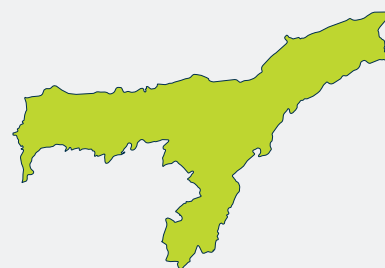
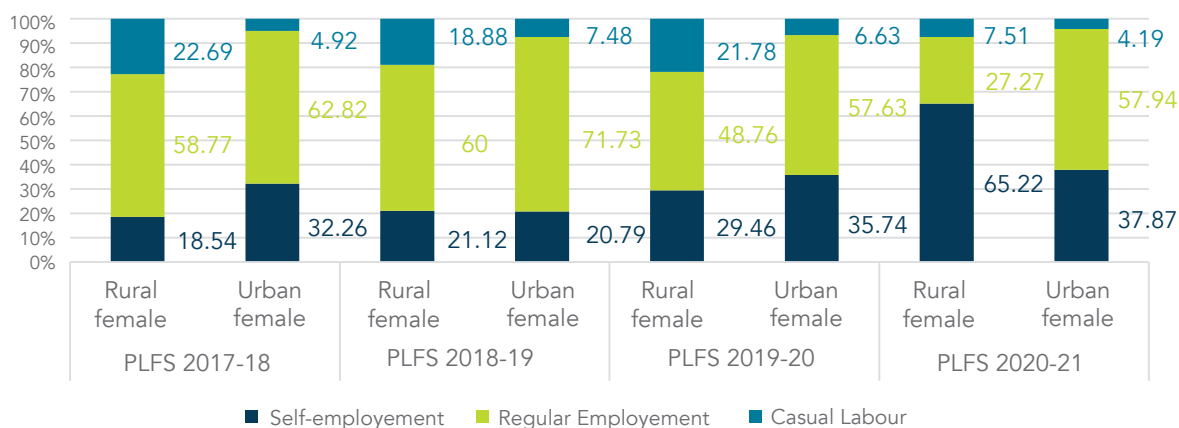


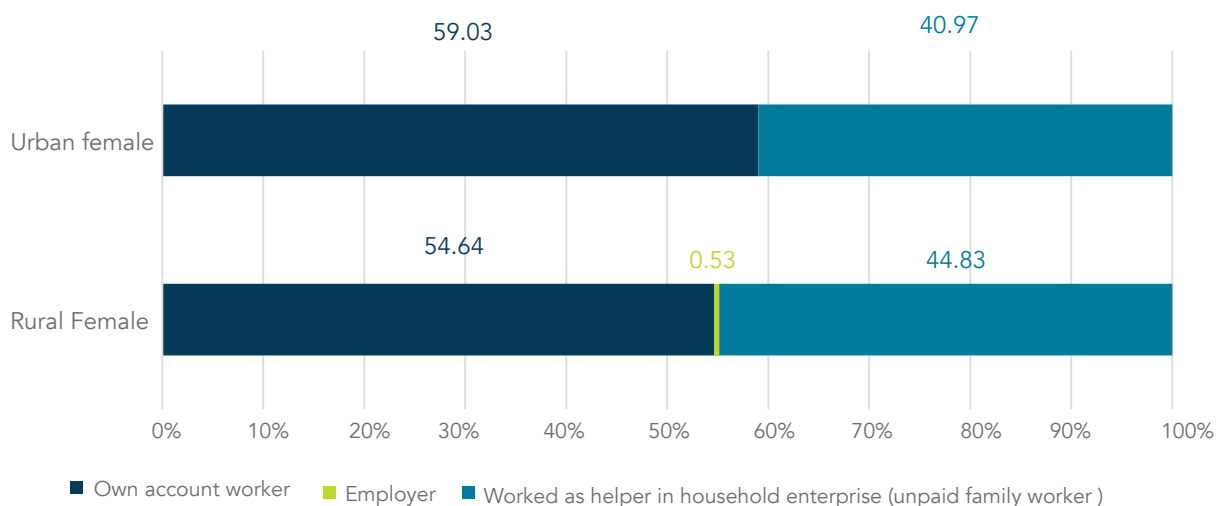
Figure 2: Distribution of Women workers by Status of Employment



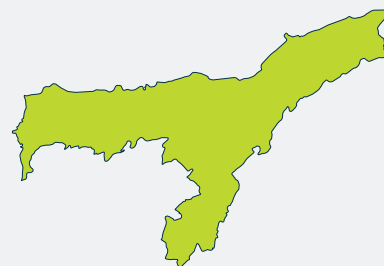
Source: Author's estimates using unit level data from PLFS 2020-21.

- In rural Assam, around 54.6 per cent of women are own account workers, followed by 44.8 per cent in unpaid work and 0.5 per cent as employers. The situation is similar in urban Assam where 59 per cent of women are own account workers followed by 40.9 per cent in unpaid work.
- The number of women employed as own account workers is higher in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas. On the other hand, unpaid women workers are more prevalent in the rural areas than in urban areas. Interestingly, a very small proportion of women are employers in both areas across the reference period.

Figure 3: Distribution of Self Employed Women Workers



Source: Author's estimates using unit level data from PLFS 2020-21.



Distribution of Self-employed Women Workers by Broad Industry Types

- According to PLFS 2020-21, 65.2 per cent of women in rural areas and 37.8 per cent in urban areas are self-employed (Figure 2). In rural areas, 76 per cent of women work in agriculture and fishing, 12 per cent in wholesale and retail trade, and 11 per cent in manufacturing.
- Similar patterns can be seen in the urban area, where women make up 33 per cent of the agricultural and fishing workforce, 27 per cent of the wholesale and retail trade workforce, and 17 per cent of the manufacturing workforce.
- The sectors that employ less than 10 per cent women are finance and real estate, accommodation and food services and education, amongst others, across both regions.

Figure 4a: Self Employed Rural Women across Industry Groups

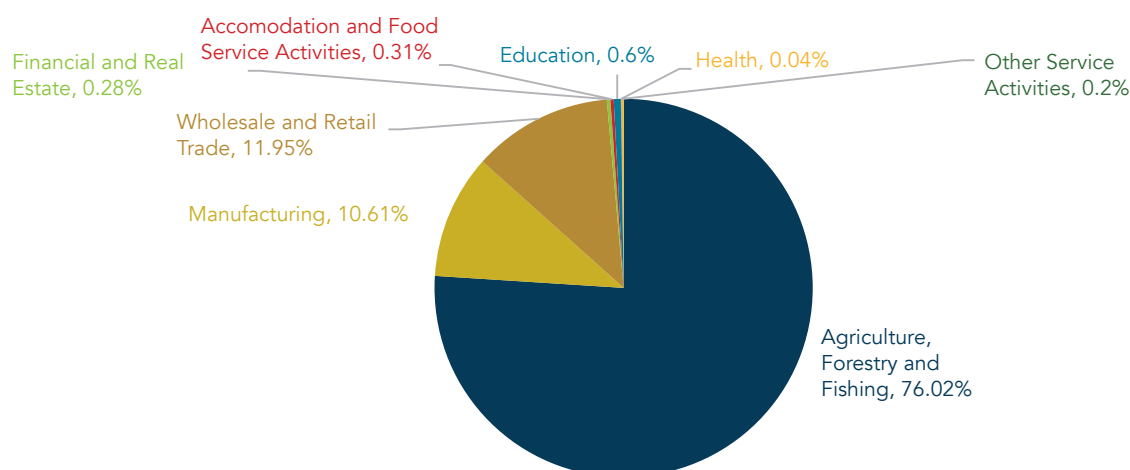
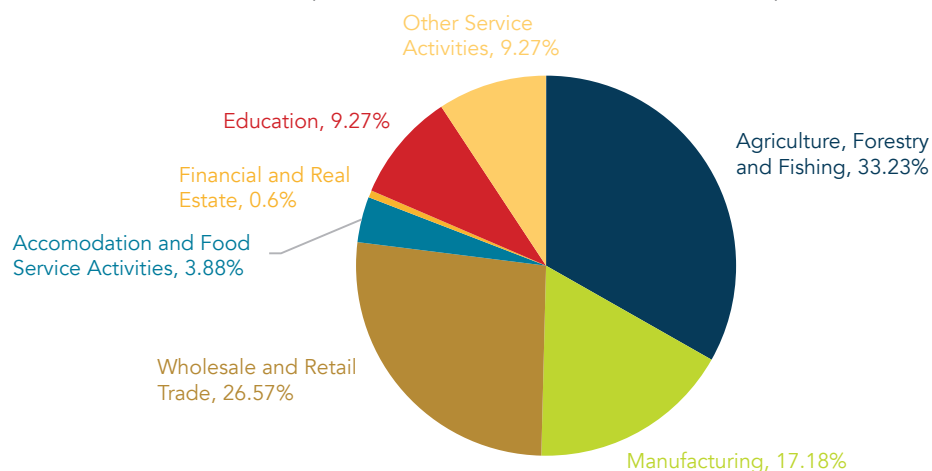
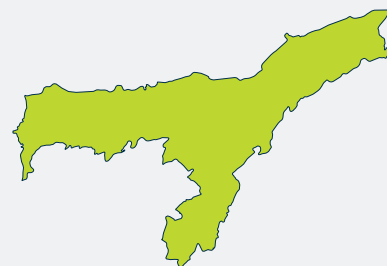


Figure 4b: Self Employed Urban Women across Industry Groups



Source: Author's estimates using unit level data from PLFS 2020-21.



Distribution of Women Workers by Broad Industry Divisions

- In rural Assam, 74 per cent of women are involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing which is consistent with the national trends, followed by 7 per cent in manufacturing and the remaining spread across different industries.
- In urban Assam, the trends are reversed with an equal proportion of 13 per cent women involved in wholesale trade and retail trade and other⁸ services, followed by 12.5 per cent in education and the remaining majority in agriculture, forestry and fishing and household activities as employers.

Figure 5a: Industry Wise distribution of Rural Women Workers

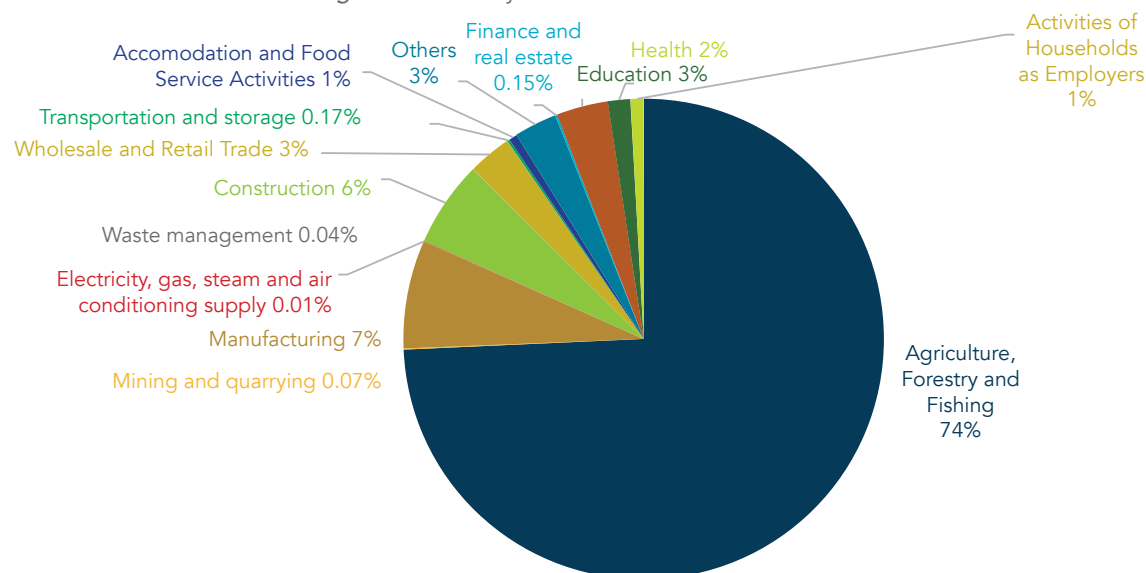
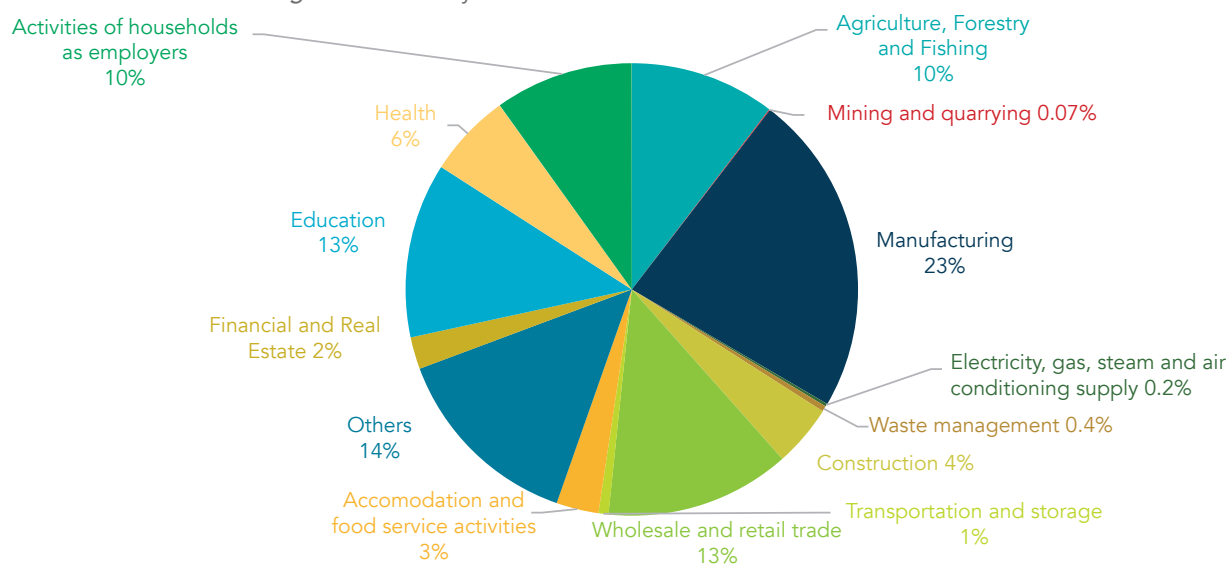
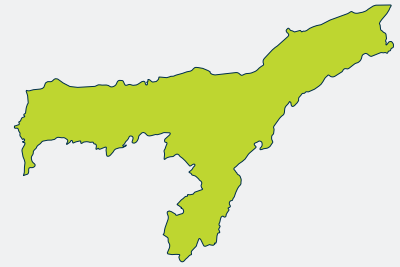


Figure 5b: Industry Wise distribution of Urban Women Workers



Source: Author's Calculations based on Unit Level Data from PLFS 2020-21.

⁸ 'Others' category includes the following sectors: information and communication, professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support service activities, public administration and defence; compulsory social security, arts, entertainment and recreation and other service activities.



Distribution of Women Workers by Occupation Types

- In rural Assam, 55 per cent women are involved in skilled agriculture and fishery work. Around 27 per cent are engaged in elementary occupations.
- In urban Assam, the trends are slightly different with 22 per cent engaged in elementary occupations and an equal proportion of 15 per cent women involved in crafts and related trades and as service workers, respectively.
- Across both regions, less than 10 per cent women are working as clerks and plant and machine operators.

Figure 6a: Occupation types of Rural Women

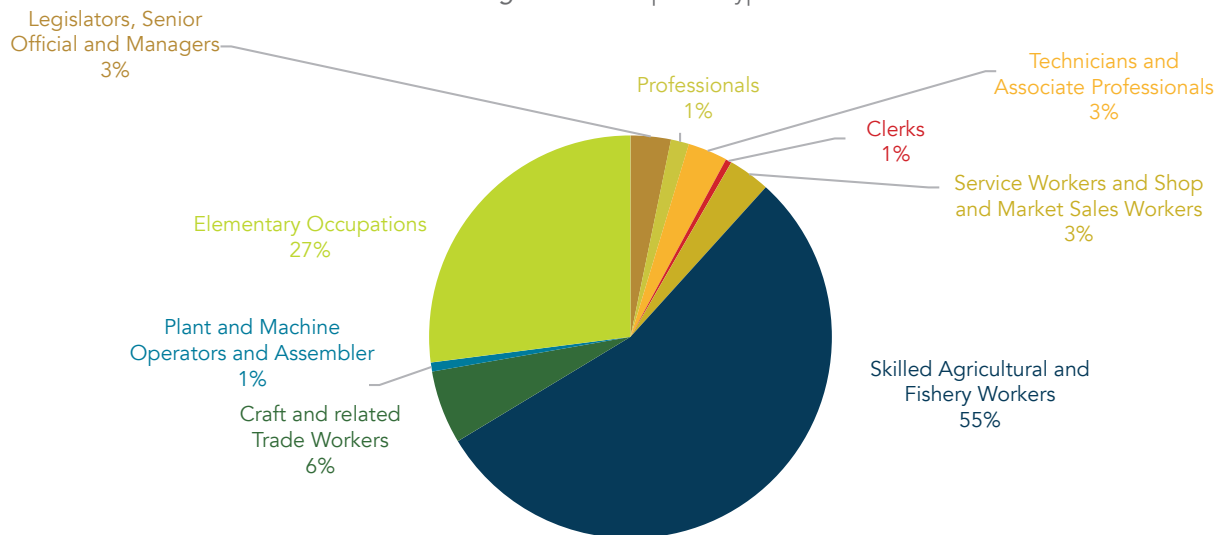
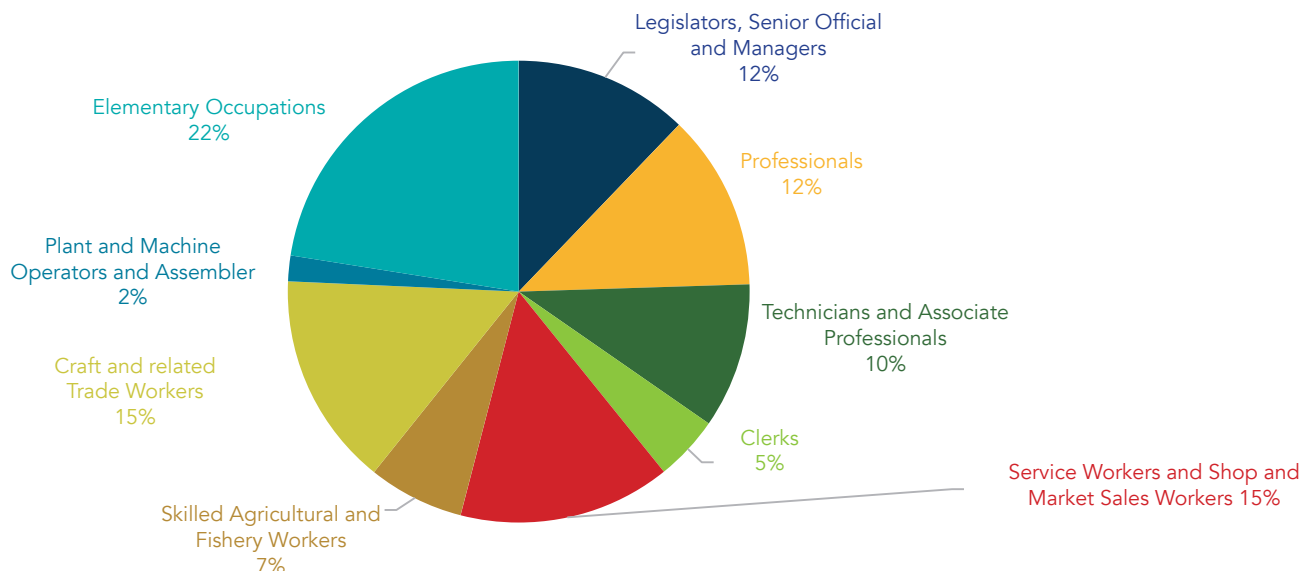
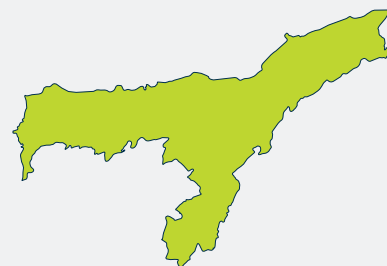


Figure 6b: Occupation types of Urban Women



Source: Author's calculations based on Unit Level Data from PLFS 2020-21



Distribution of Women Regular Workers by Broad Industry Types

- According to PLFS 2020-21, just 27.2 per cent of women are regularly employed in rural areas, compared to 57.9 per cent that are regularly employed in metro regions (Figure 2). In the rural region, 54 per cent of women work in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, followed by 30 per cent in education and 5 per cent in healthcare.
- Trends are different in the urban region: 39 per cent of women work in education, 21 per cent in other⁹ services, and 10 per cent in the health industry.
- The sectors that engage less than 10 per cent women workers across both regions are manufacturing, finance and real estate and accommodation and food services, amongst others.

Figure 7a: Industry Wise distribution of Regular Wage Rural Women

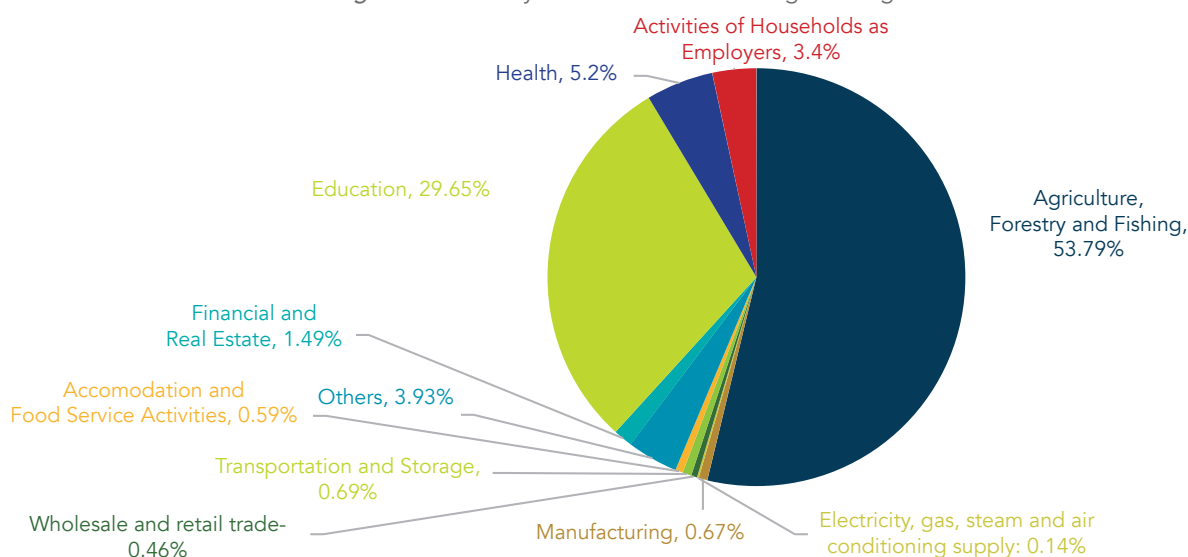
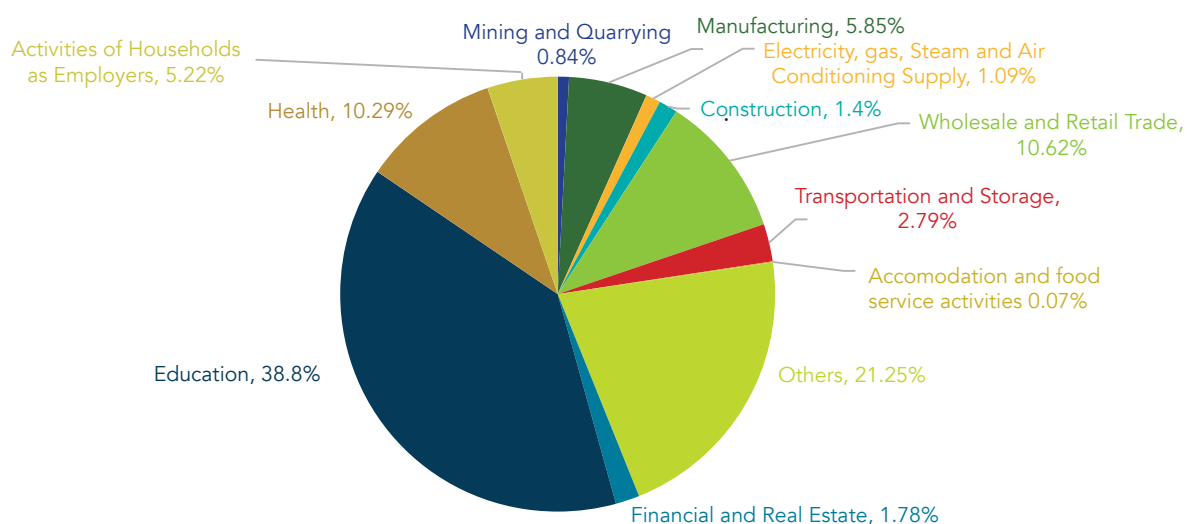
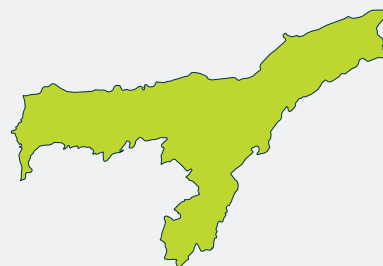


Figure 7b: Industry Wise distribution of Regular Wage Urban Women



Source: Author's estimates using unit level data from PLFS 2020-21.

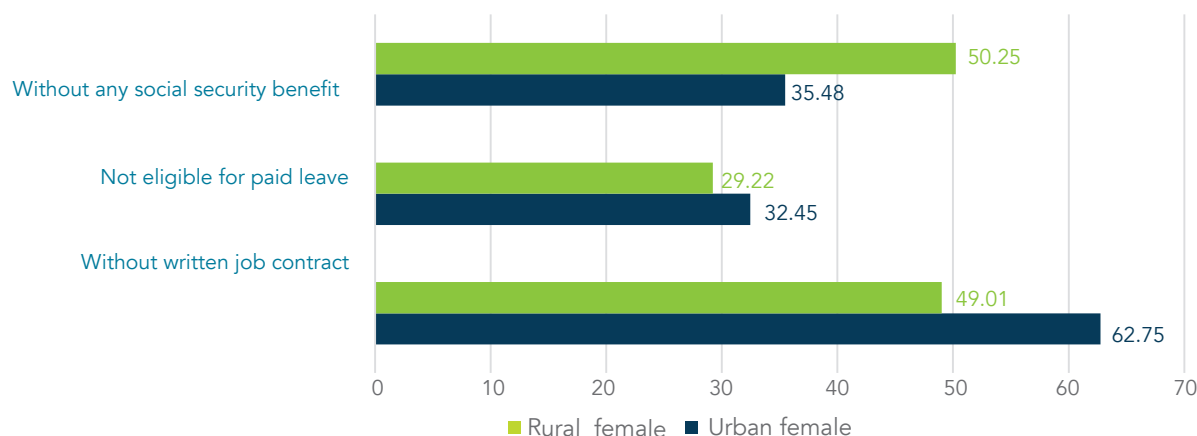
⁹ 'Others' category includes the following sectors: Information and communication, Professional, scientific and technical activities, administrative and support service activities, public administration and defence; compulsory social security, arts, entertainment and recreation and other service activities



Condition of Work in Regular Employment

- Women in regular employment constitute a major part of the working population in the urban region. Unfortunately, they are exposed to certain vulnerable working conditions.
- The data suggest that rural women are less exposed to social security benefits as compared to their urban counterparts. In rural areas, around 50.2 per cent women do not have any social security benefit, followed by 49 per cent women that have no written job contract and 29.2 per cent women that are ineligible for paid leave. The situation is slightly different in urban areas where 62.7 per cent women do not have a written job contract, followed by 35.48 per cent women without any social security benefit and 32.4 per cent women not eligible for paid leave.

Figure 8: Working Conditions in Regular Employment

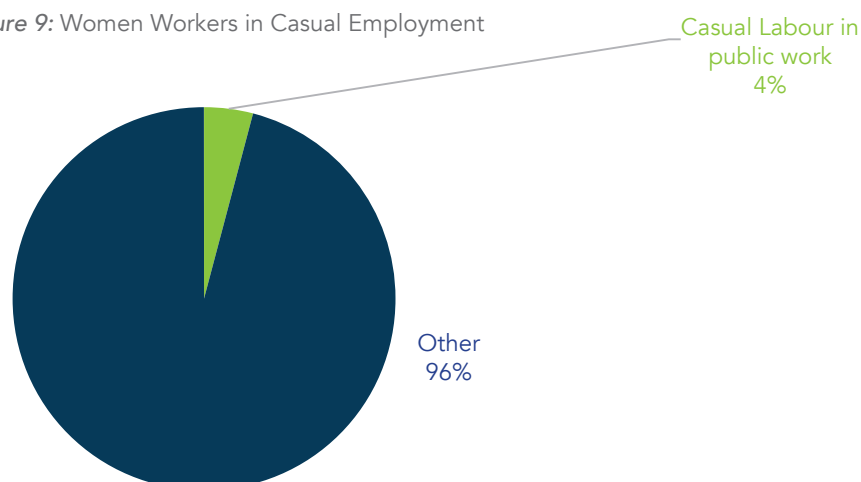


Source: Author's estimates using Unit Level Data from PLFS 2020-21.

Women Workers in Rural Casual Employment

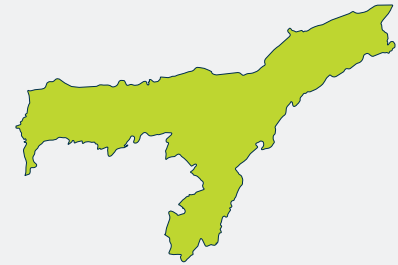
- According to PLFS 2020-21, there are 27.2 per cent of women working in casual jobs in rural areas (Figure 2). According to the data, women are more involved in non-public labour. Around 95.8 per cent of women who work casually do non-public jobs, followed by 4.1 per cent of women who work in the public sector.

Figure 9: Women Workers in Casual Employment



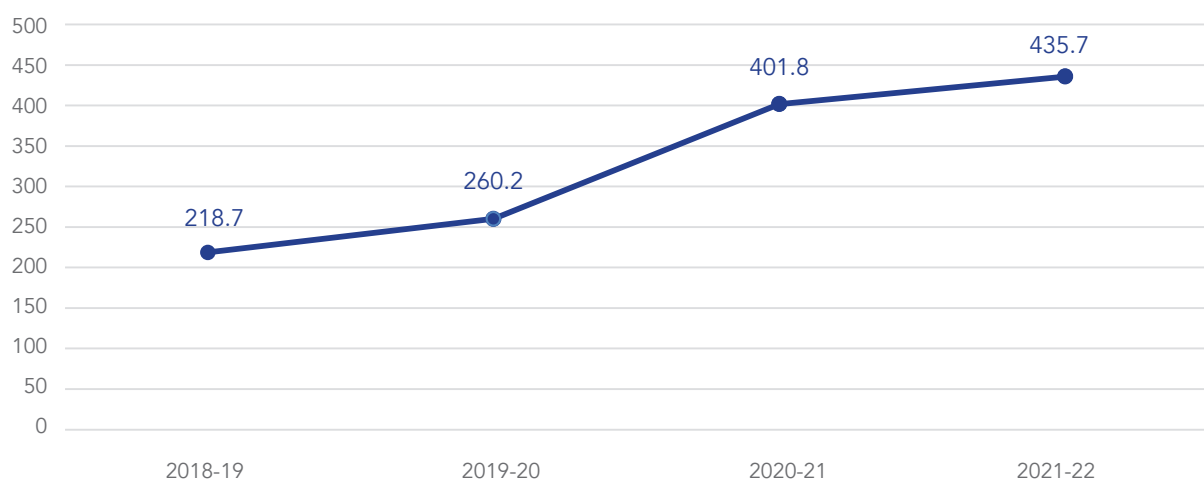
Source: Author's Estimates using Unit Level Data from PLFS 2020-21

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- The PLFS does not correctly show women's engagement in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The MGNREGS dashboard (Ministry of Rural Development) reveals that the number of women person-days under MGNREGs have been average as compared to other Indian states. In 2021-22, women person-days increased to 435.7 lakhs¹⁰.
- Currently, 50.1 lakh women from rural Assam are registered under MGNREGS, of which 57.2 per cent are active members¹¹. MGNREGS has performed poorly in the state due to administrative inefficiency in executing the programme, failure to offer employment to job card holders, and a lack of worksite amenities such as clean drinking water and restrooms, among other factors¹².

Figure 10: Women Persondays under MGNREGA (In Lakhs)



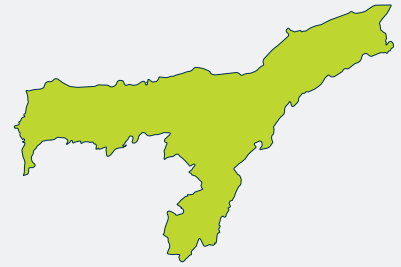
Source: Author's Estimates using MGNREGA Dashboard.

¹⁰ Author's estimates using MGNREGA dashboard
https://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx?Fin_Year=2022-2023&Digest=ftWYwJ4W7YWkLDX82gF7Mw

¹¹ Author's estimates using MGNREGA dashboard for 2022-23.

¹² Choudhury, S.T. and Alam, H. I. (2021). A Comparative Study of Women's Participation through MGNREGA Programme in India's North-eastern States of Assam and Meghalaya.

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CONCLUSION

Despite trends being lower than the national average, Assam has seen some significant gains in the participation of women in the workforce. The percentage of rural women that are employed has increased significantly and, as a result, the gender gap has been gradually closing. Women who are self-employed have multiplied across both regions, making up a significant percentage of the agricultural and fishing industries and working as unpaid family workers in rural areas.

Due to this and perhaps because of the lack of social security benefits, the number of regular wage and daily wage workers has fallen in both rural and urban areas. Surprisingly, there is a mismatch among women participating in MGNREGS (according to PLFS data and the MGNREGS dashboard), which can be discussed in future studies and requires further examination.

The factsheet is prepared by Suchika Gupta and, reviewed by Sona Mitra and Bidisha Mondal, IWWAGE – Lead at KREA University. Copyright @2022

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