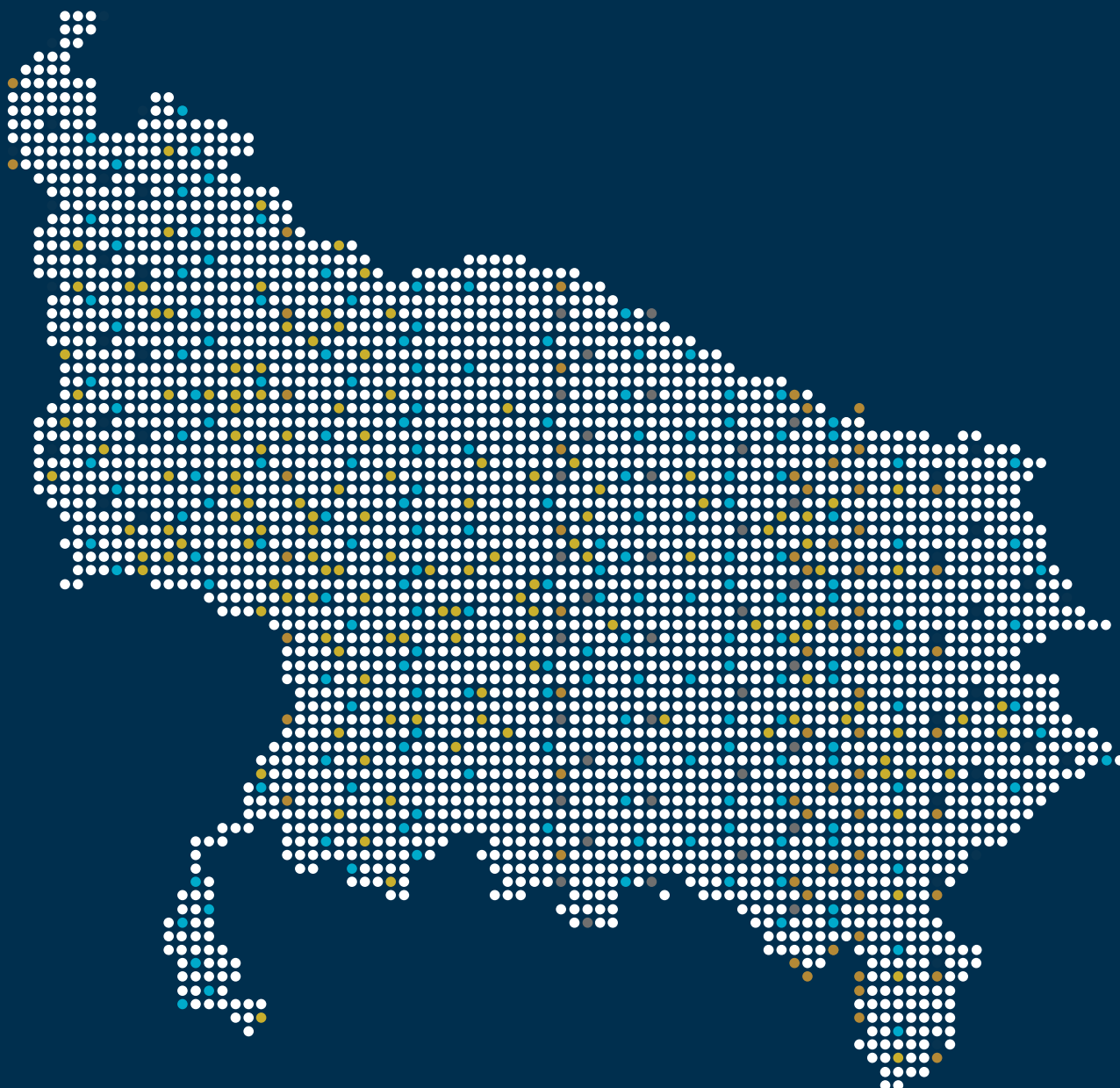


TREND IN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN

Uttar Pradesh



This series of state fact sheets highlight important aspects of the status of women's employment in Uttar Pradesh. The factsheets use secondary data provided by the National Sample Surveys' Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2017-18 to 2023-24



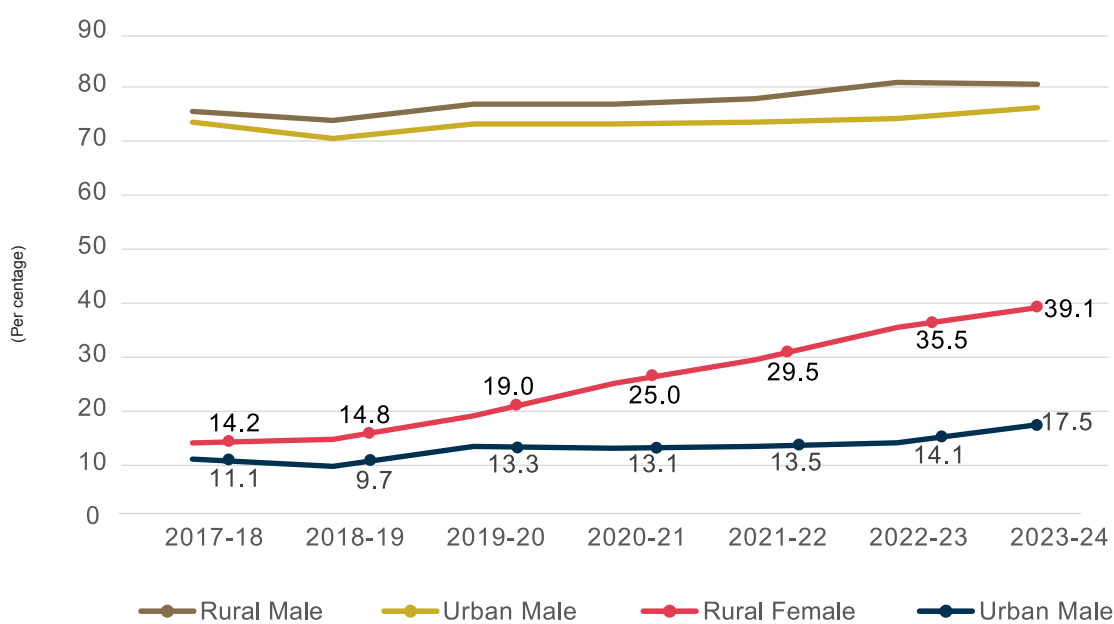
Introduction

Being the fourth largest state of India, Uttar Pradesh has the highest population in the country with more than 200 million people. In 2021, the number of working-age women (15–60 years) in the state—over 57 million—exceeded the entire populations of countries like Canada, Australia, Malaysia, and South Korea.¹ The western part of the state is more developed economically as compared to the eastern part. Eastern Uttar Pradesh lacks in public infrastructure and has a high concentration of population. Thus, there exists a significant disparity in socio-economic development² across the regions in the state. The female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) of UP is much lower than the all India FLFPR. The low FLFPR in the state accrues to both restrictive socio-cultural norms and lack of economic opportunities. Workforce participation rates also vary across social categories, with Hindu SC/ST and Muslim OBC women often exhibiting higher WPRs compared to other³ groups. However, the participation of women in the workforce has increased significantly over the period of 2017-18 to 2023-24 in the state, and this could be attributed to policies which aim to 'economically empower women' in the state. The *Mudra Yojana* has claimed to empower women entrepreneurs, with 70% of loans disbursing to women. *Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana* has connected women to self-help groups and increased assistance *thirteen-fold* since 2014. Additionally, self-help group loan limits have doubled to Rs 20 lakh, and these groups are instrumental in managing 80,000 ration shops etc.

Trends in Female Labour Force Participation Rates

- The rural FLFPR has been rising since 2018-19, from 14.8 per cent to 39.1 per cent in 2023-24, whereas the LFPR for men in rural areas rose from 75 per cent in 2017-18 to 80.5 per cent in 2023-24.
- For urban regions, the FLFPR started rising from the year of 2022-23, and it increased from 14.1 in 2022-23 to 17.5 per cent in 2023-24, while the LFPR for men in urban areas rose from 73.4 per cent in 2017-18 to 76.2 per cent in 2023-24.

Figure 1: Trend in LFPR from PLFS 2017-18 to 2023-24



*For ages 15 years and above

¹ Is Uttar Pradesh stuck with low women's participation in its labour force? | Mint

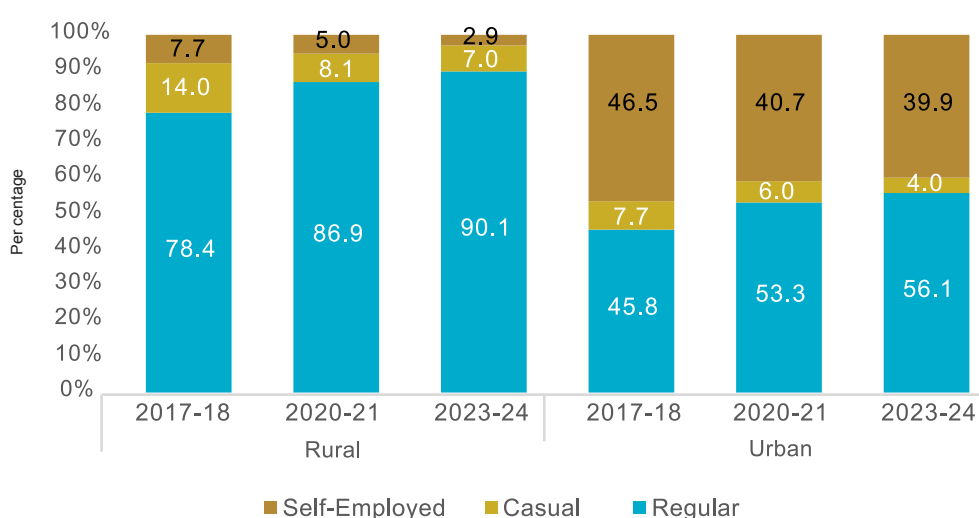
² Tiwari, Anil & Pandey, Ravindra & Sharma, V.N.. (2021). A study of disparities in the socio-economic development of eastern Uttar Pradesh, India. National Geographical Journal of India. 67. 438-446. 10.48008/ngji.1789.

³ Singh, U. V., and Nripendra Kishore Mishra. "Women work participation in rural Uttar Pradesh: A regional analysis." International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research 2, no. 8 (2013): 47-57

Distribution of Women Workers by Status of Employment

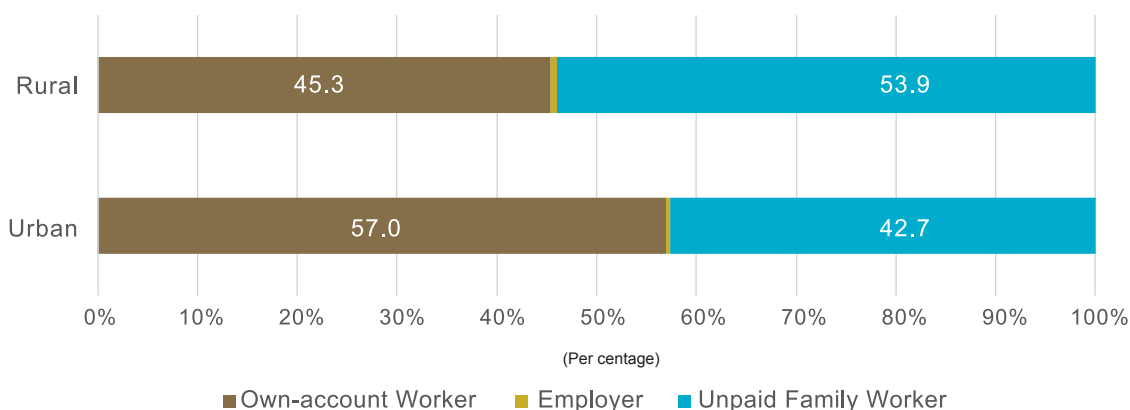
- In rural Uttar Pradesh, the proportion of self-employed women has risen from 78 per cent in 2017-18 to 90 per cent in 2023-24, significantly exceeding the national average. Conversely, alongside this increase in self-employment, there has been a consistent decline in the share of both casual and regularly employed women from 2017-18 to 2023-24.
- Self-employment among urban women increased, though at a slower rate, from 46 per cent to 56 per cent between 2017-18 and 2023-24. During the same period, the proportion of women in both casual and regular salaried employment declined.

Figure 2: Trend in Women Workforce across Type of Employment



- In rural areas of the state, 45 per cent of self-employed women are own-account workers, while 54 per cent are unpaid family workers, indicating a higher proportion of women engaged in unpaid work.
- In urban areas, 57 per cent of self-employed women are own-account workers, and 43 per cent are unpaid family workers, which aligns with the national trend.

Figure 3: Distribution of Self-Employed Worker

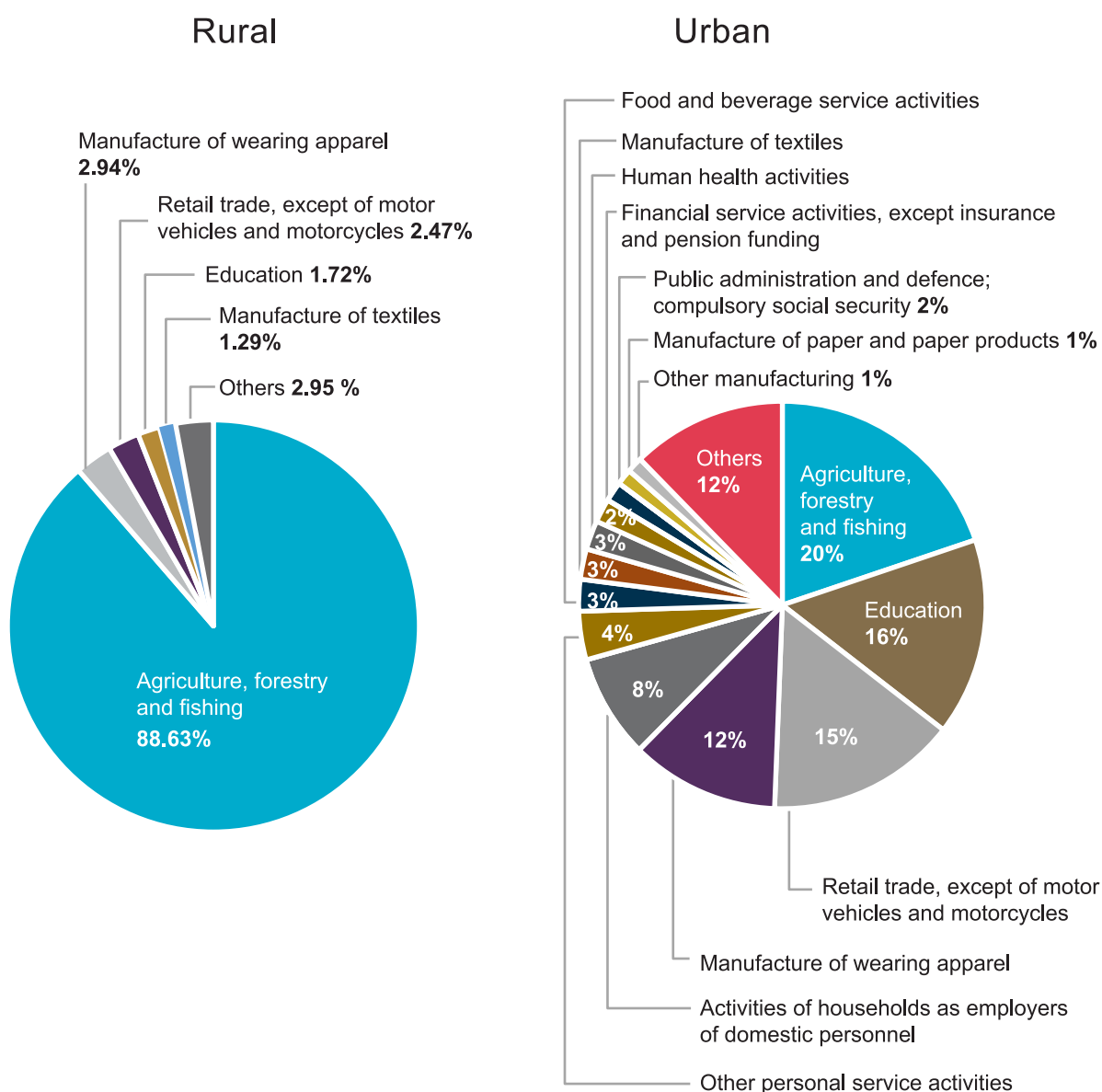


*For ages 15 years and above

Distribution of Women Workers by Broad Industry Divisions

- In the rural female workforce of the state, 87 per cent are employed in agriculture and allied activities, followed by manufacturing of wearing apparel and retail trade, each with a 3 per cent share.
- In urban areas, 20 per cent of the female workforce is employed in agriculture and related activities, followed by education (16 per cent) and retail trade (15 per cent).

Figure 4: Distribution of Women Workforce by Broad Industry Divisions

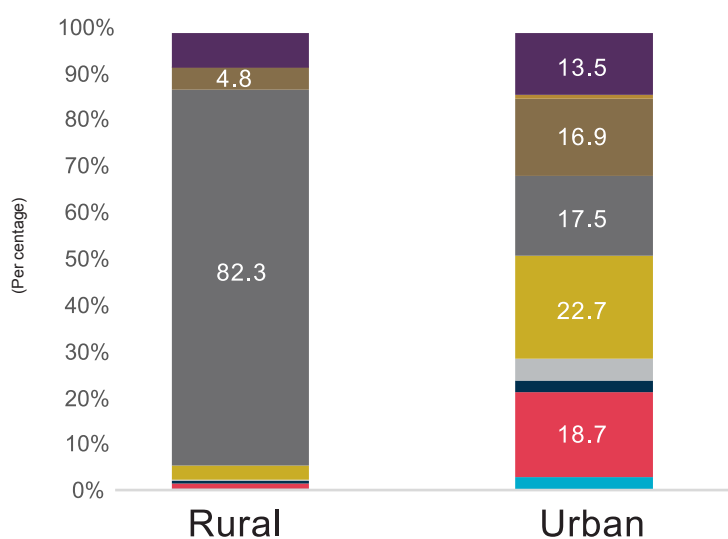


*For ages 15 years and above

Distribution of Women Workers by Occupation Types

- In rural areas, skilled agricultural and fishery work (82.3 per cent) is the primary occupation for women workers, followed by elementary occupations (7.6 per cent).
- In urban areas, service workers and market sales workers have the highest share (23 per cent), followed by professionals (18.7 per cent).

Figure 5: Distribution of Women Workers by Occupation Types



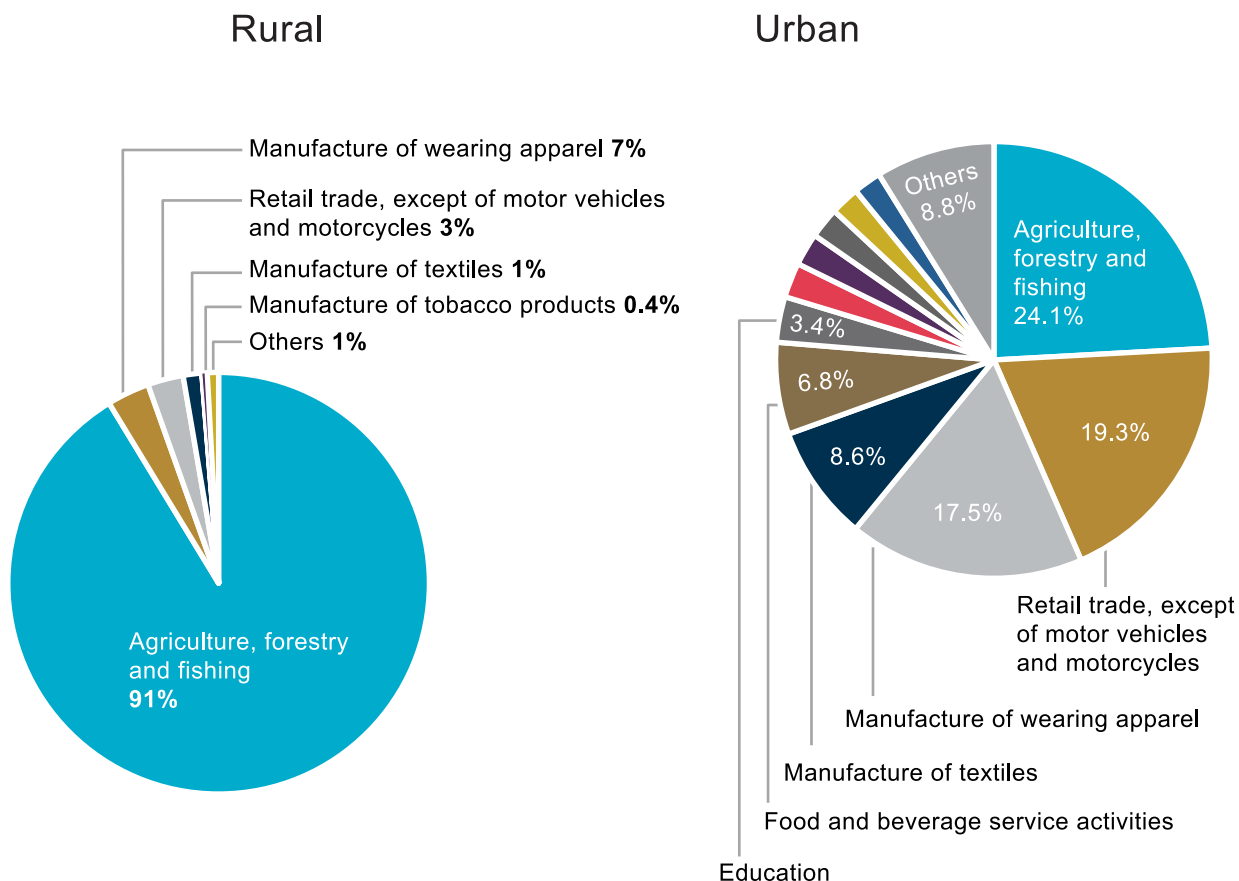
*For ages 15 years and above

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers | ■ Professionals |
| ■ Technicians and Associate Professionals | ■ Clerks |
| ■ Service Workers and Shop & Markets Sales Workers | ■ Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers |
| ■ Craft and related Trades Workers | ■ Plant and Machine Operations and Assemblers |
| ■ Elementary | |

Distribution of Self-employed Women Workers by Broad Industry Types

- Agriculture remains the primary sector of employment for self-employed women in both rural and urban areas. In Uttar Pradesh, 91.3% of women in rural areas and 31.4% in urban areas are engaged in agricultural work.
- Following agriculture, manufacturing of wearing apparel (20.4 per cent) and retail trade are the major sectors (24.7 per cent), where self-employed women are participating in urban regions of UP.

Figure 6: Distribution of Self-employed Women Workforce by Broad Industry Types

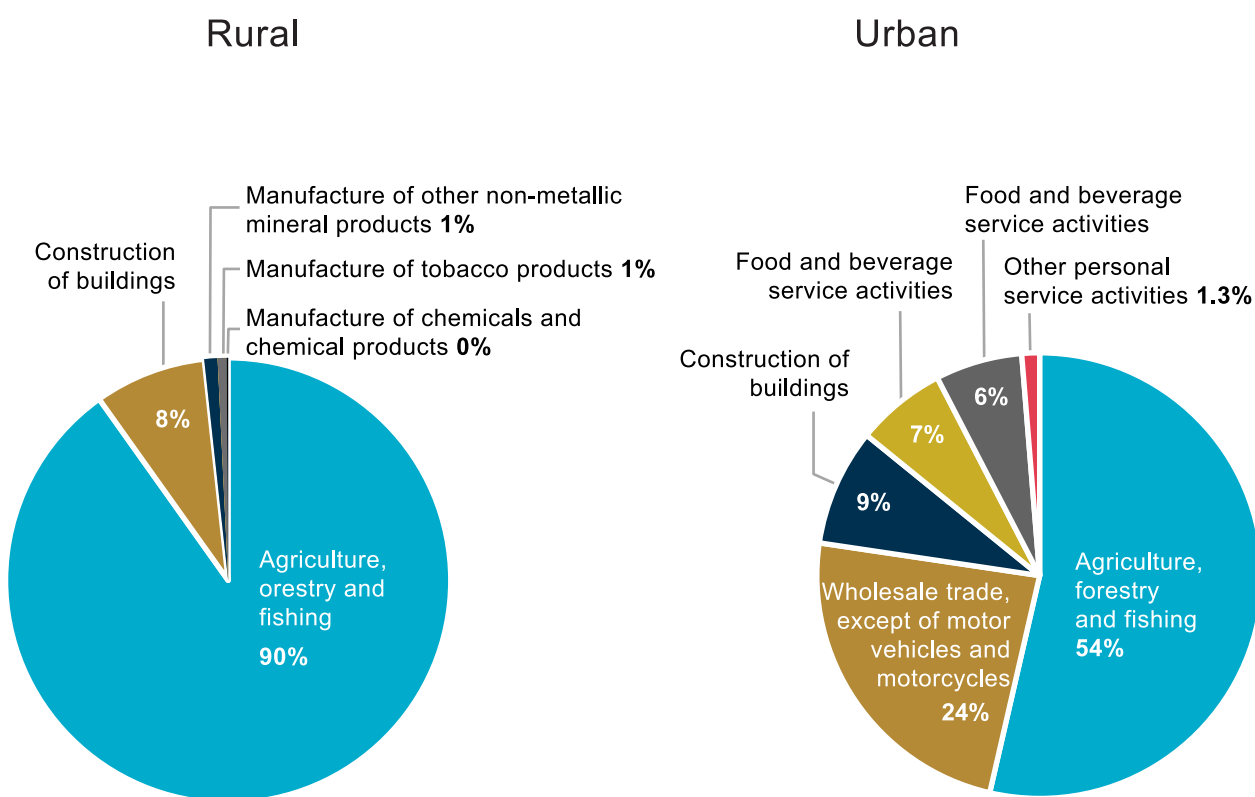


*For ages 15 years and above

Distribution of Casual Women Workers by Broad Industry Types

- Following the national trend, in rural regions of the state, 90 per cent of the casual women workforce are in agriculture followed by construction of buildings with the share of 8 per cent.
- The urban region, nearly 54 per cent of the casual women workers workforce are in agriculture, followed by wholesale trade with 24 per cent share.

Figure 7: Distribution of Casual Women Workers by Broad Industry Types

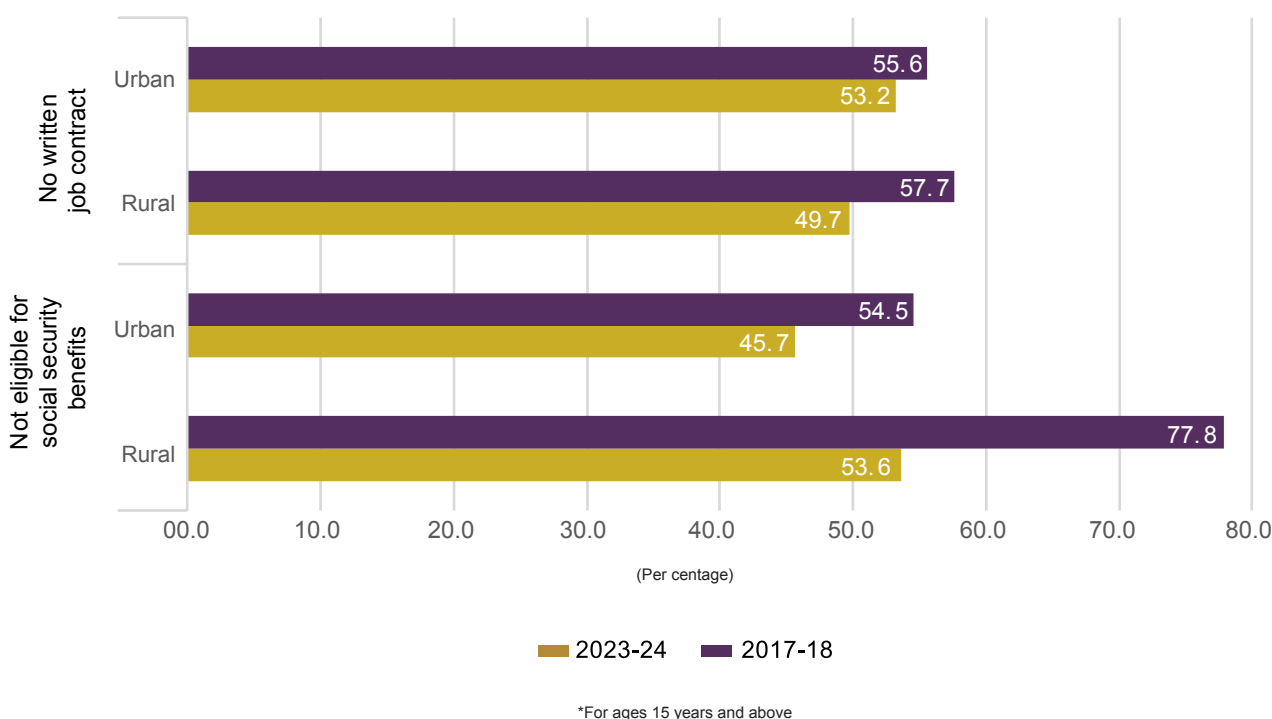


*For ages 15 years and above

Condition of Work in Regular Employment

- Regularly salaried women in both rural and urban areas are facing increased job insecurity and a lack of social security benefits.
- Mirroring the national trend, the proportion of regularly salaried women lacking social security benefits has significantly increased from 2017-18 to 2023-24, with the increase exceeding the national average.
- In terms of job insecurity, there has been an increase in it from 2017-18 to 2023-24, contrasting the national trend which shows a decrease.

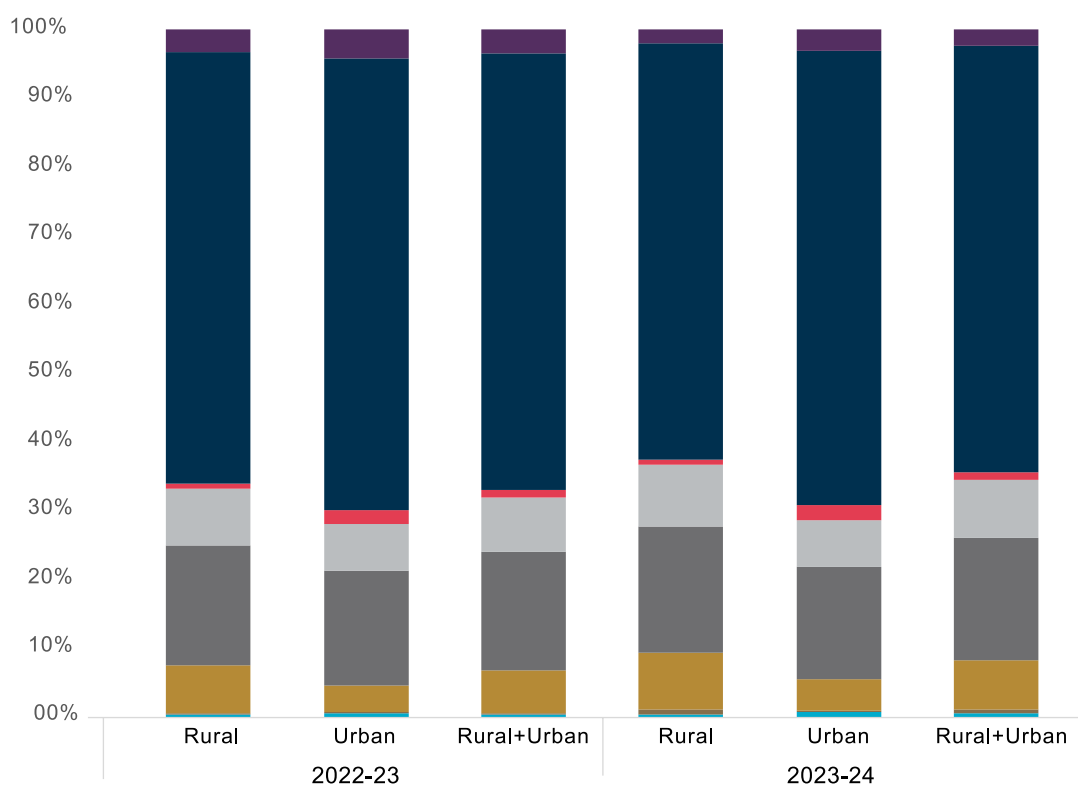
Figure 8: Job and Social Security Benefits over the Years



Reason for Not Being in the Labour Force

- In rural areas of the state, the proportion of women citing childcare and domestic chores as the primary barrier to labour force participation has decreased slightly, from 63 per cent in 2022-23 to 61 per cent in 2023-24. However, this proportion remains higher than the national average.
- Conversely, in urban areas of the state, the proportion of women citing childcare and domestic chores as the primary barrier has slightly increased from 65.8 per cent to 66.2 per cent within a year.

Figure 9: Reason for Not in the Labour Force



- Did not have the request train/qualification/age for work
- Health/age related reason
- Social reasons
- Child care/personal commitments in home making
- Non availability of work a convenient location
- Want to continue study
- Finacially well-off
- Others

Conclusion

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, faces significant challenges in boosting its female FLFPR. Although rural FLFPR has increased, overall rates remain low compared to the national average. This rise can be attributed to state and central government initiatives that strengthen rural women's entrepreneurship and encourage their self-employment. However, the concentration of self-employed women in agriculture and the informal sector indicates limited access to higher-opportunity employment. Consistent with national trends, the increase in FLFPR is primarily driven by rural self-employment, while regular salaried employment, particularly with job and social security benefits, is declining. Given the distress driven FLFP in the state, policymakers must prioritise their focus on generation of remunerative employment, women's education, skills training, and childcare infrastructure. This is crucial because the observed FLFPR growth is largely driven by precarious, low-opportunity employment.

The fact sheet is prepared by Aneek Chowdhury and reviewed by Bidisha Mondal, IWWAGE – An Initiative of LEAD at Krea University. Copyright @2025



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