

Trends in Female Labour Force Participation

MEGHALAYA



This series of state factsheets highlights key aspects of women's employment across states, drawing on secondary data from the National Statistical Office's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). The analysis incorporates the **latest calendar year-based PLFS data (January–December, 2025)**, along with the **earlier calendar year data for 2022, 2023, and 2024** to capture recent trends in women's employment. It is important to note that recent PLFS estimates are affected by revisions in survey methodology and sampling design introduced from January 2025, including expanded sample coverage and changes in stratification and rotational sampling. While these revisions improve representativeness and reliability, caution is required when comparing trends across pre- and post-revision periods.

Introduction

Meghalaya is a small, hilly state in north-east India with a predominantly rural, agrarian economy and one of the country's most distinctive social structures. Its major communities (the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo) are matrilineal, with lineage, clan identity and ancestral property passing through women and the youngest daughter customarily inheriting the family home¹. This matrilineal tradition is widely associated with the state's high female labour force participation, which has long ranked among the highest in India.

Agriculture, horticulture and allied activities employ most of the rural workforce, while coal and limestone mining have historically been important; rat-hole coal mining was, however, banned by the National Green Tribunal in 2014 on safety and environmental grounds, reshaping mining-linked livelihoods (National Green Tribunal 2014). The wider economy has grown rapidly of late. The state government reported it nearing the US\$6 billion mark with growth close to 15%, above the national average²; though much of women's work remains informal and concentrated in agriculture, retail and personal services.

Women's economic participation is supported by several programmes. Self-help-group-based livelihoods are organised under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission through the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihood Society. Public employment under MGNREGS is a further important source of rural women's work. Meghalaya recorded one of the largest recent increases in women's participation, against a national ten-year high of about 58.8% in 2023-24³. These are complemented by working-women's hostels, skill-development initiatives and maternity-benefit schemes.

Despite the matrilineal context and high participation, women remain under-represented in regular salaried, socially-secured jobs, and tailored policies. Quality education, more salaried work with social security, and opportunity-driven sectors such as retail trade are seen as necessary to sustain participation. These features frame the trends below.



Trends in Female Workforce and Labour Force Participation Rates

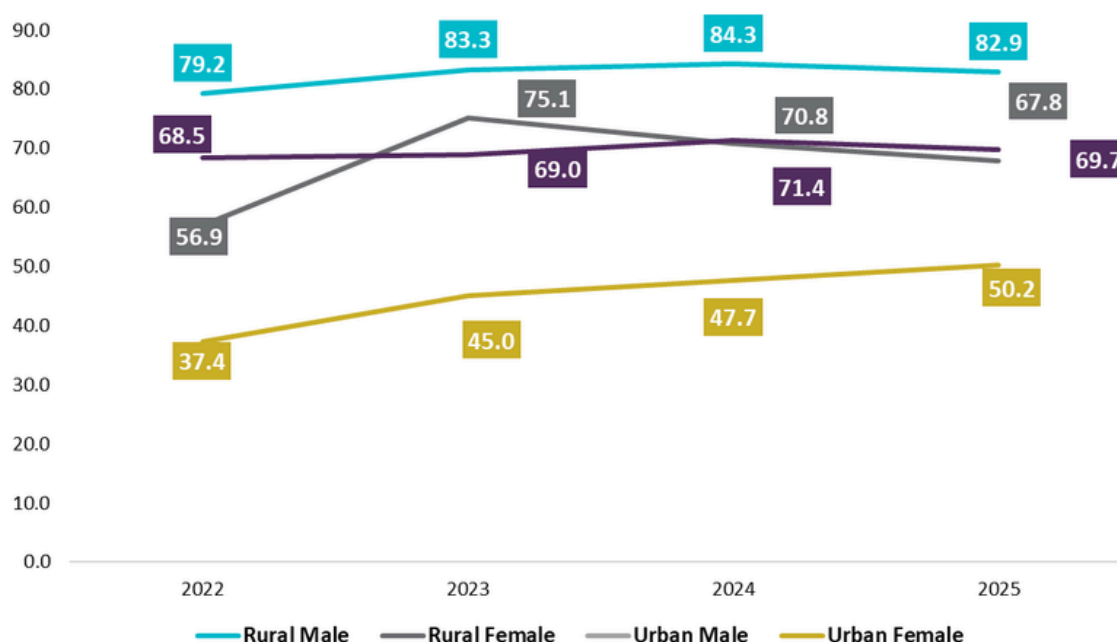
- Rural female LFPR rose steeply from 56.89% in 2022 to 75.08% in 2023, then eased to 70.83% in 2024 and 67.80% in 2025 — a net gain of 10.91 percentage points over 2022–2025, but well below the 2023 peak. This post-pandemic acceleration in rural female participation has been documented in earlier analysis of Meghalaya. The mid-period spike and subsequent settling is the most distinctive feature of the rural series.
- Urban female LFPR improved steadily and substantially in every year, from 37.35% in 2022 to 50.16% in 2025 — a net rise of 12.81 percentage points and the standout positive trend in the state. By 2025 urban female LFPR had crossed 50%, an unusually high level by national standards.

¹ Roy, P., & Barua, A. (2025). Female workforce participation in Meghalaya: Some insights. *Social Change*, 55(3), 370–386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00490857251352610>

² All India Radio. (2025, July 12). North East news bulletin, 12 July 2025 [News bulletin]. Prasar Bharati, News Services Division. <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/shillong-3.pdf>

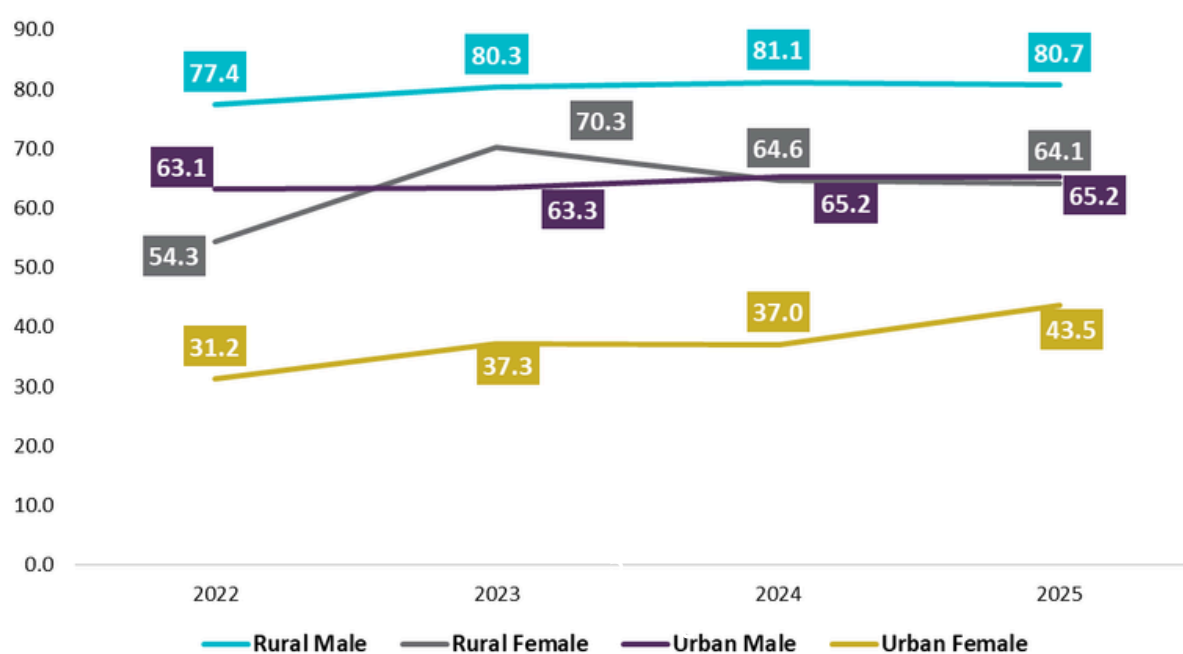
³ Chitlangia, R. (2024, April 3). Women's participation in MGNREGS hits 10-yr high at 58.8%. Meghalaya, UP see biggest spikes. *ThePrint*. <https://theprint.in/india/womens-participation-in-mgnregs-hits-10-yr-high-at-58-8-meghalaya-up-see-biggest-spikes/2026112/>

Figure 1: Trend in LFPR (15 Years and above)



- WPR tracks LFPR closely. Rural female WPR rose from 54.30% in 2022 to 64.13% in 2025 (peaking at 70.26% in 2023), while urban female WPR rose from 31.23% to 43.54%, with its largest single-year jump between 2024 (37.00%) and 2025 (43.54%). The narrow LFPR–WPR gap indicates that most women entering the labour force find work, though much of it is informal.
- Gender gaps are comparatively narrow. In 2025 the rural LFPR gap was about 15 percentage points (82.88% male versus 67.80% female) and the urban gap about 20 points (69.73% versus 50.16%). Both gaps are far smaller than at the all-India level, consistent with Meghalaya’s higher overall female participation.

Figure 2: Trends in WPR % (15 Years and Above)



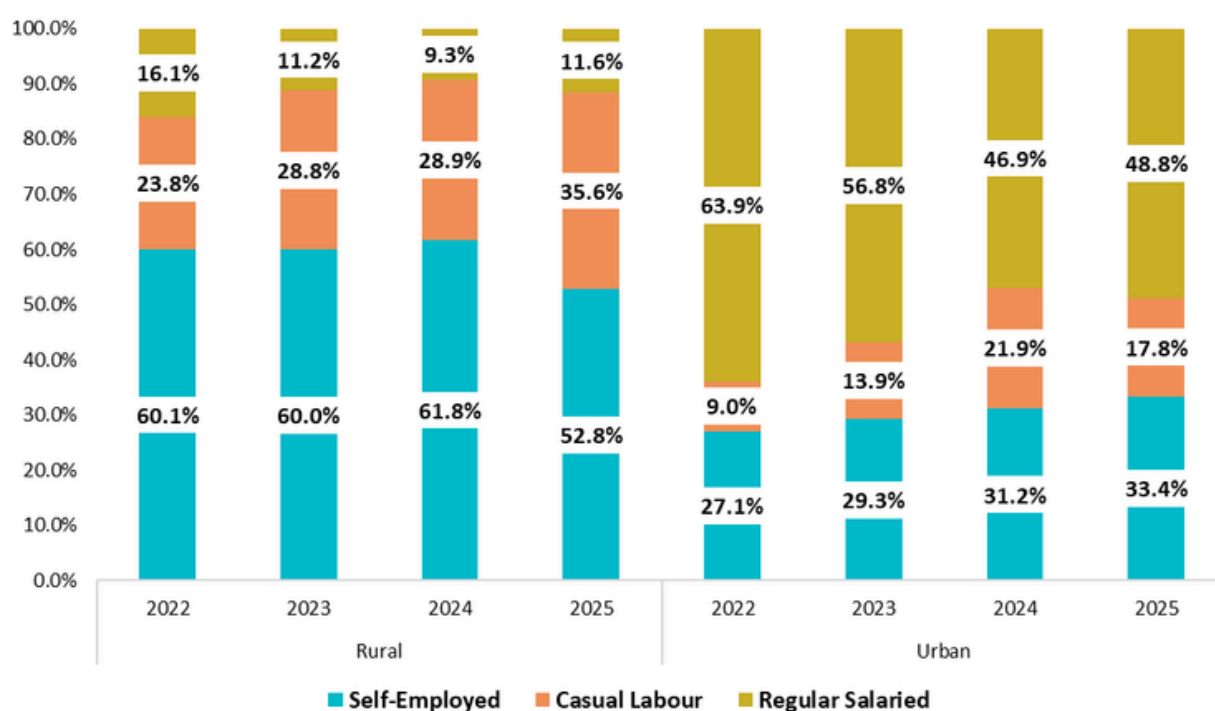
- Meghalaya's rural female LFPR (67.80% in 2025) is far above the all-India rural average of about 46%, and its urban female LFPR (50.16%) is close to double the all-India urban average of about 27.7%.
- Whereas all-India urban female LFPR rose only modestly between 2022 and 2025 (24.7% to 27.7%), Meghalaya's urban rise (37.4% to 50.2%) was much steeper. Both Meghalaya and India show the characteristic pattern of a wider urban than rural gender gap, but in Meghalaya both gaps are markedly narrower.

B: Composition of Female Workforce

B.1 Type of Employment (TOE)

Distribution of Female Workers by Type of Employment (% share)

Figure 3: Type of Employment



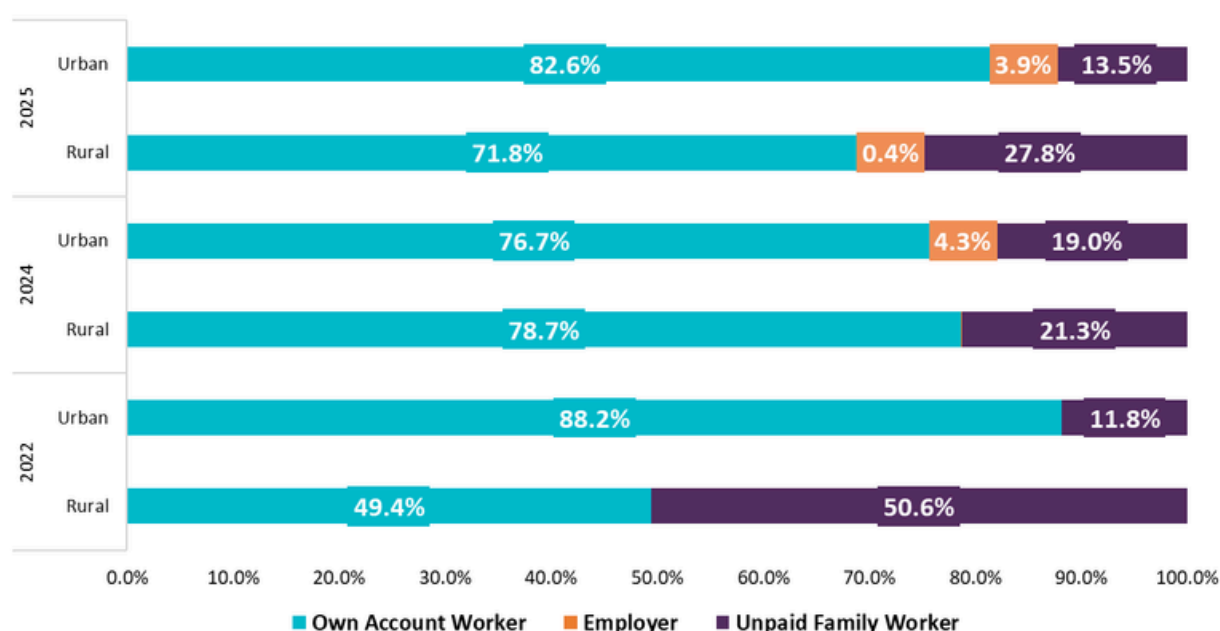
- In rural Meghalaya, women's employment has shifted away from self-employment towards casual wage work. The share of self-employed women declined from 60.11% in 2022 to 52.81% in 2025, while casual labour increased sharply from 23.80% to 35.61%, a rise of 11.81 percentage points. Regular salaried employment also fell from 16.09% to 11.58%. This trend contrasts with the national pattern, where rural women's reliance on casual labour declined slightly over the same period. By 2025, rural Meghalaya had a substantially lower share of self-employment and a much higher share of casual labour than the all-India averages (70.7% and 20.0%, respectively), indicating a greater dependence on wage-based and often less secure forms of work among rural women.

- Urban employment patterns also changed considerably during this period. The share of self-employed women increased from 27.09% in 2022 to 33.38% in 2025, while regular salaried employment, though still the largest category, declined markedly from 63.90% to 48.81%. Casual labour rose from 9.02% in 2022 to a peak of 21.93% in 2024 before moderating to 17.81% in 2025. Compared with national urban figures, Meghalaya continues to exhibit a significantly higher reliance on casual labour among women. The decline in regular salaried employment from an exceptionally high base has brought the state closer to the national urban employment structure, but the persistently elevated share of casual work remains a distinctive feature of women's employment in the state.

B.2 Breakdown Among Self-Employed Women

Distribution within Self-Employed Women (% share)

Figure 4: Distribution among Self-Employed Women



- The composition of women's self-employment in Meghalaya has become increasingly oriented towards independent economic activity. In rural areas, the share of own-account workers among self-employed women rose from 49.41% in 2022 to 71.80% in 2025, while the share of unpaid family workers declined from 50.59% to 27.79%. Although this shift mirrors the broader national trend, it is more pronounced in Meghalaya and results in a substantially higher share of own-account work than the all-India rural average.
- A similar pattern is evident in urban areas, where self-employed women are overwhelmingly own-account workers. Despite some fluctuations during the period, own-account work accounted for 82.63% of urban self-employed women in 2025, considerably higher than the national urban average.
- The employer category remained negligible throughout the period in both rural and urban areas. These patterns suggest that women who are self-employed in Meghalaya are far more likely to operate their own small enterprises rather than contribute unpaid labour to family-based economic activities, distinguishing the state from the national employment structure.

C: DISTRIBUTION BY BROAD INDUSTRY DIVISION (ALL FEMALE WORKERS)

C.1 Top Sectors by NIC Division — Rural Female Workers

Figure 5A: Rural (2022)

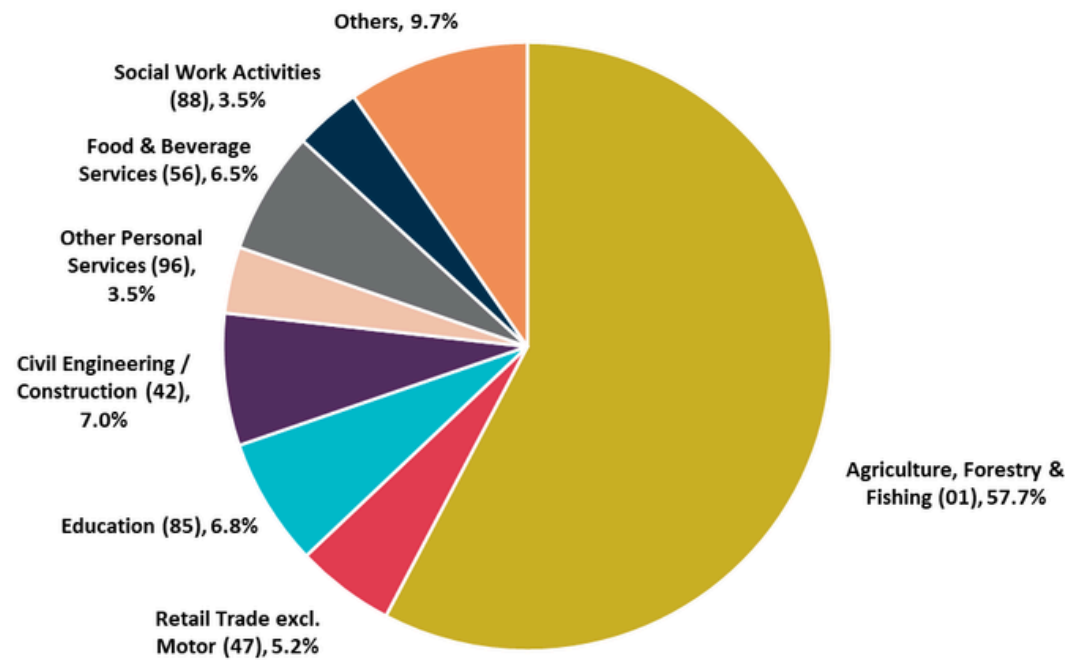
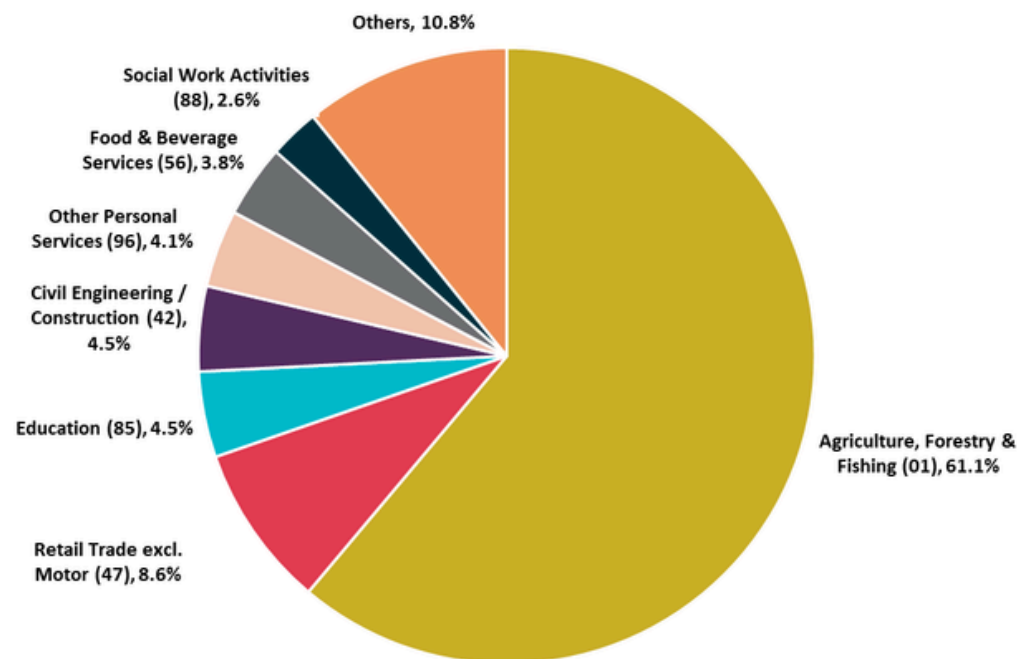


Figure 5B: Rural (2025)



- Agriculture dominates rural female employment and rose from 57.69% in 2022 to 61.12% in 2025. Non-farm sectors are small. Retail trade rose from 5.24% to 8.57%, while education (6.81% to 4.50%), civil-engineering construction (7.02% to 4.47%), food & beverage services (6.53% to 3.82%) all declined since 2022. Forestry & logging (0.62% to 1.67%), mining & quarrying (0.72% to 1.51%) and wholesale trade (0.31% to 1.35%) edged up.
- The rural distribution is broadly in line with the all-India pattern of overwhelming agricultural concentration, though Meghalaya's agricultural share is somewhat lower than the all-India rural figure (about 73% in 2025), leaving slightly more room for retail and services.

C.2 Top Sectors by NIC Division — Urban Female Workers

Figure 6A: Urban (2022)

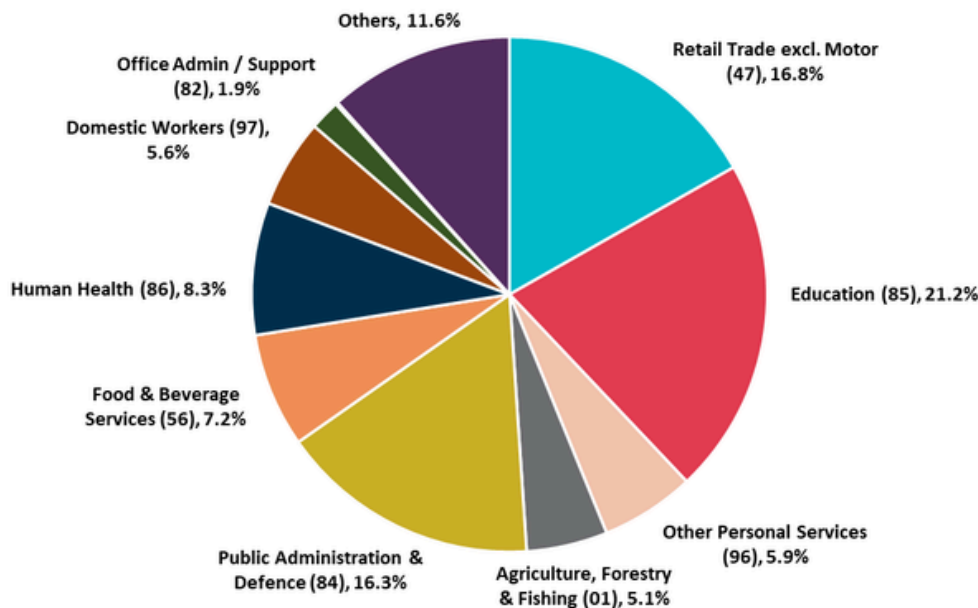
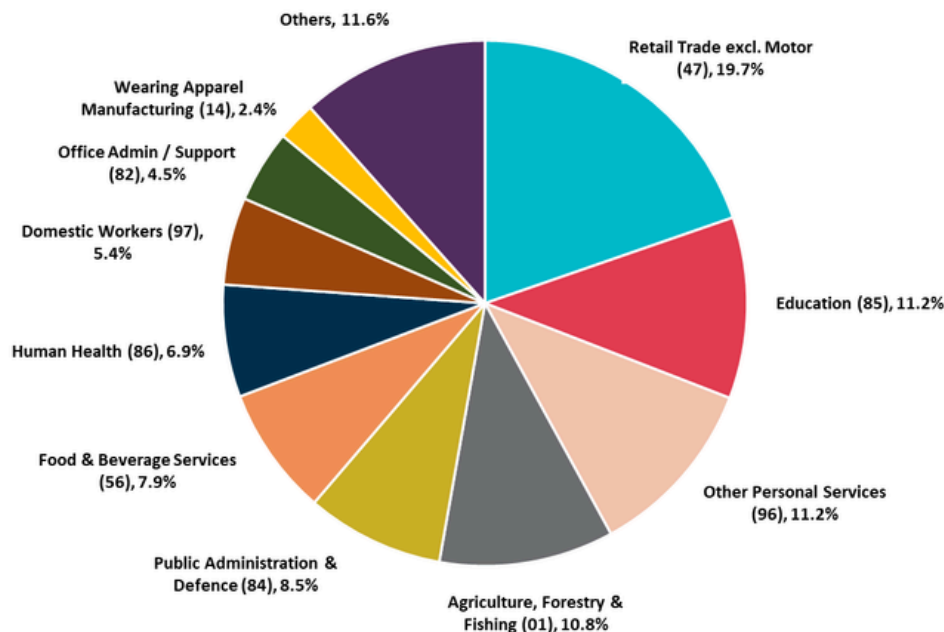


Figure 6B: Urban (2025)

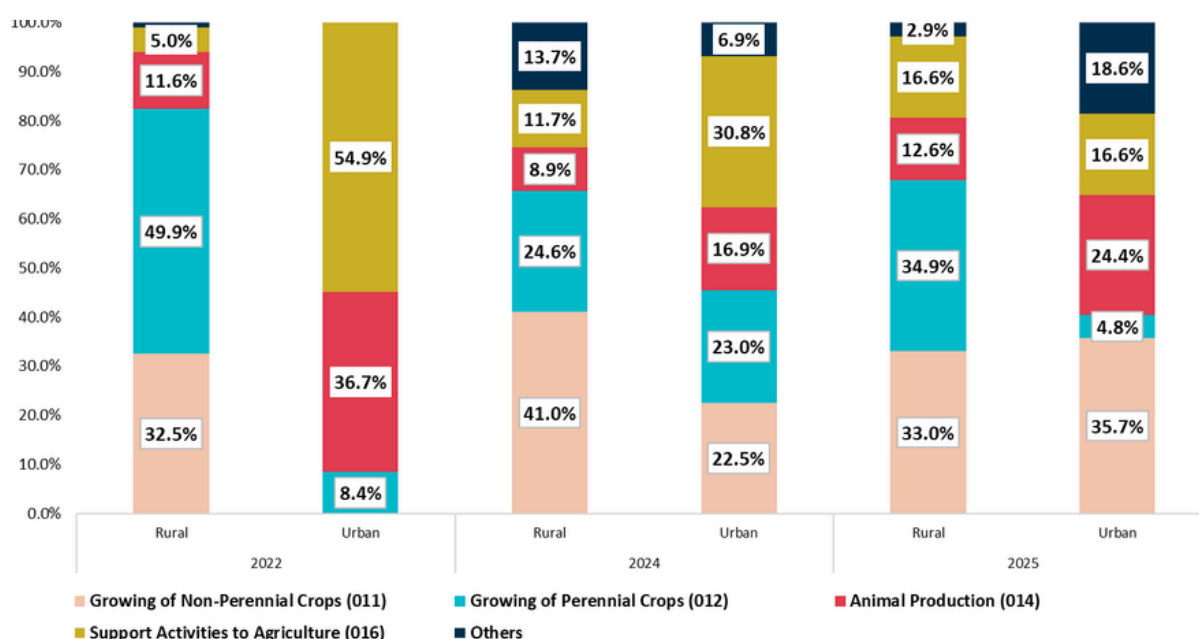


- Urban women's employment is far more diversified. Retail trade is the largest sector and rose from 16.78% in 2022 to 19.71% in 2025. The most striking changes since 2022 are the halving of education's share (21.16% to 11.16%) and of public administration (16.34% to 8.49%), set against a near-doubling of other personal services (5.91% to 11.16%) and of agriculture (5.09% to 10.77%). Human health declined (8.30% to 6.91%) and office administrative/support work rose (1.91% to 4.47%).
- The unusual rise in urban agriculture echoes a similar resurgence observed at the all-India level over the same period. Mining & quarrying appears in urban areas for the first time in the series (1.09% in 2025), consistent with the regulated resumption of mineral activity.

D: THREE-DIGIT NIC DECOMPOSITION OF KEY INDUSTRIES⁴

D.1 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NIC 01-03)

Figure 7: Distribution of Women Workers Within Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NIC 01-03)

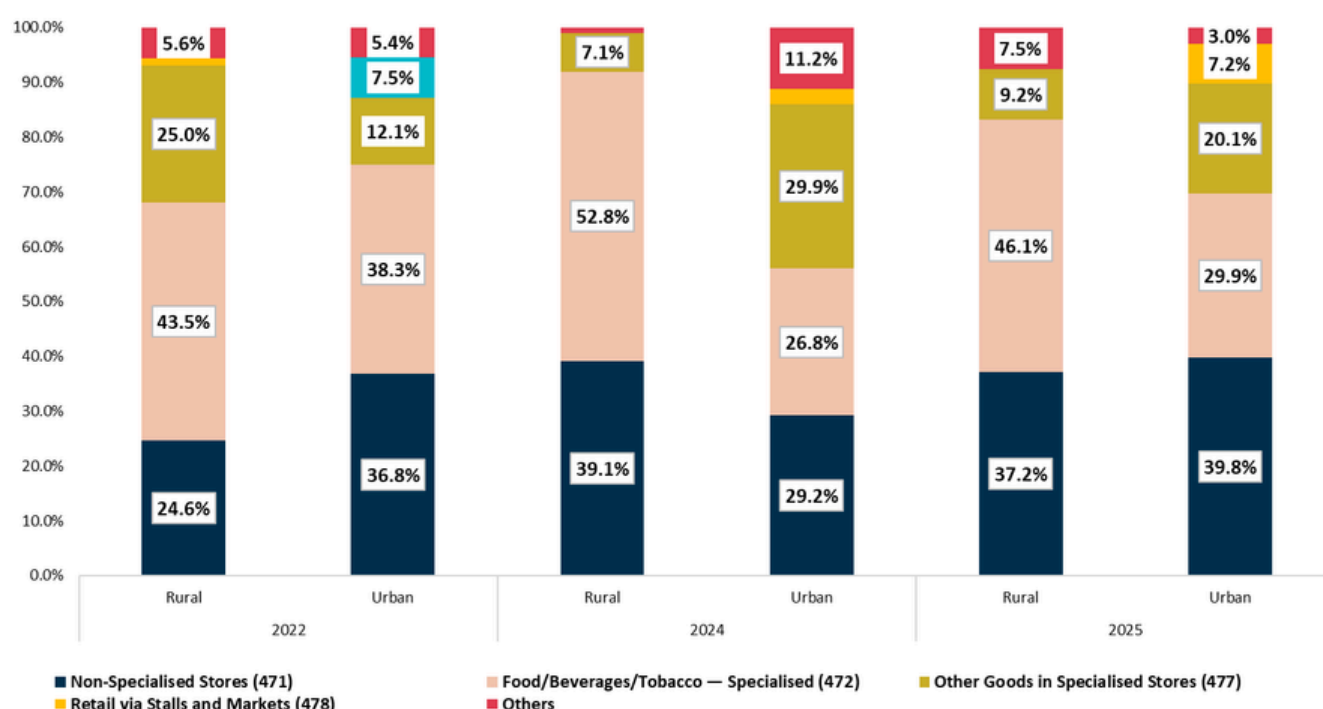


⁴Three-digit decomposition is presented only for industry divisions in which more than one sub-class carries a meaningful share of women workers. Where a division collapses almost entirely into a single three-digit class, a breakdown would simply show one sub-class at close to 100% and add no information, and so it is not tabulated; the single underlying activity is named here instead, so that the detail is retained. Six of the flagged divisions fall into this category. Other personal services (NIC 96) consist entirely of "other personal service activities" (960), and domestic work (NIC 97) entirely of "activities of households as employers of domestic personnel" (970) — each accounting for 100% of its division in every year from 2022 to 2025. Construction of buildings (NIC 41) likewise resolves wholly into "construction of buildings" (410). Civil-engineering construction (NIC 42) is effectively all "construction of roads and railways" (421), which made up 100% of the division between 2022 and 2024 and 97.9% in 2025, and public administration (NIC 84) is dominated throughout by "administration of the State and economic and social policy" (841), ranging from about 87% to 98% of the division across the four years. Finally, forestry and logging (NIC 02) — whose two-digit share spiked sharply in 2023 — is composed almost entirely of "logging" (022): logging accounted for 100% of the division in 2022 and stayed in the 88–98% range in every subsequent year, including the 2023 peak. This confirms that the spike reflected a surge in logging specifically, rather than any broadening of forestry work into silviculture or the gathering of non-wood forest products.

- Meghalaya's female agricultural employment is strikingly diversified, with no single sub-activity dominant and a sharp rural–urban contrast. In rural areas, perennial-crop cultivation (NIC 012 — areca nut, betel, cashew and fruit) was the largest activity in 2022 at 49.90%, but by 2025 it had fallen to 34.90%, roughly level with non-perennial crops (NIC 011, broadly stable at 32–33%). The most pronounced movement is the rise of support activities to agriculture (NIC 016), from a negligible 4.97% in 2022 to 16.59% in 2025, alongside a modest increase in animal production (NIC 014, 11.59% to 12.60%). The rural trajectory is not a clean decline, however: non-perennial crops spiked to 41.03% in 2024 before easing back, so the movement toward support work has come in fits rather than steadily.
- The urban profile is differently weighted. In 2025 employment is spread across non-perennial crops (35.67%), support activities (33.17%) and animal production (24.36%), but two features set it apart from the countryside. Perennial-crop cultivation barely registers in urban areas — just 4.78%, against 34.90% rural — reflecting that areca and fruit horticulture is a land-based rural activity. Animal production, by contrast, is almost double the rural share (24.36% versus 12.60%), and support activities, which absorbed a striking 54.88% of urban agricultural women in 2022, remain a major activity even after falling to 33.17%. Urban agricultural work in Meghalaya is thus tilted toward livestock and support services rather than the crop cultivation that anchors it elsewhere.
- This profile departs sharply from the all-India pattern, where non-perennial crop cultivation dominates (55.2% of rural women's agricultural work in 2025) and animal production is the main rising allied activity. Meghalaya's rural women are instead split between perennial horticulture and a fast-growing share of agricultural support work, while its urban women lean markedly more toward livestock and support activities than toward crops.

D.2 Retail Trade (NIC 47)

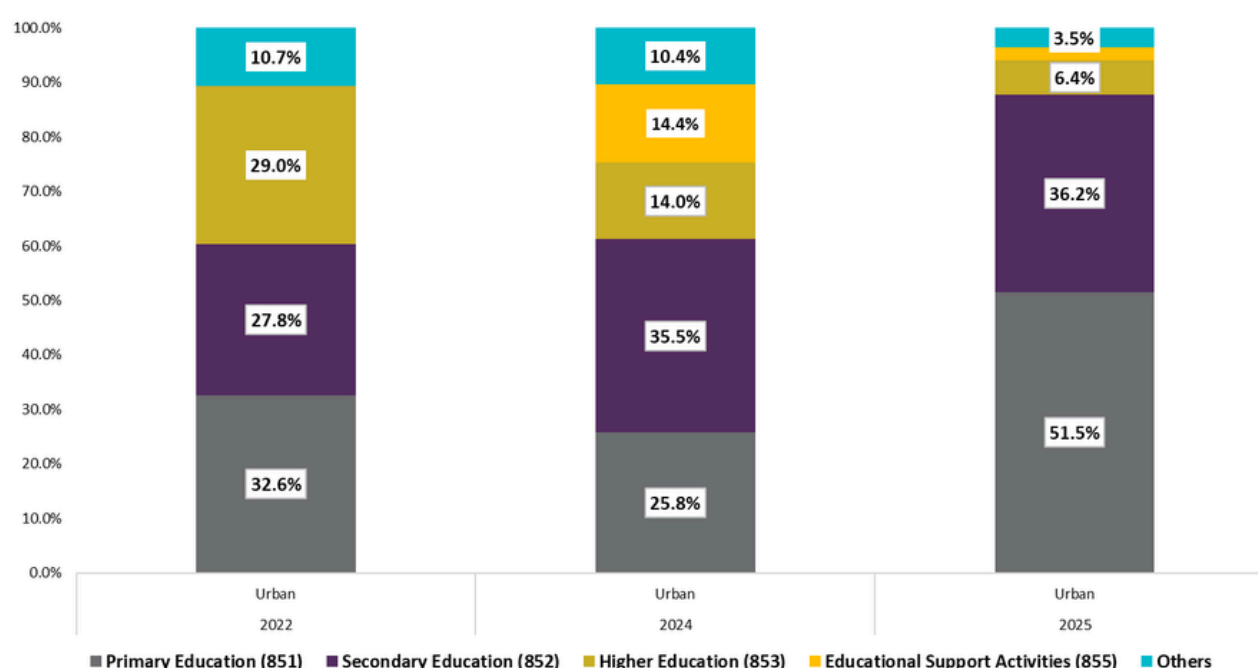
Figure 8: Distribution of Women Workers Within Retail Trade (NIC 47)



- Retail trade is an unusually large employer of women in Meghalaya in both rural (8.57%) and urban (19.71%) areas — well above the rural retail shares seen in most states. In rural areas, retail of food, beverages and tobacco in specialised stores (NIC 472) is the mainstay (43.50% in 2022, 46.06% in 2025), with non-specialised stores (NIC 471) rising from 24.60% to 37.19%. In urban areas, non-specialised stores (471) are the largest at 39.84%, followed by specialised food retail (472, easing from 38.27% to 29.85%) and a sharp rise in retail of other specialised goods (NIC 477 — clothing and similar) from 1.57% in 2022 to 20.12% in 2025.

D.3 Education (NIC 85)

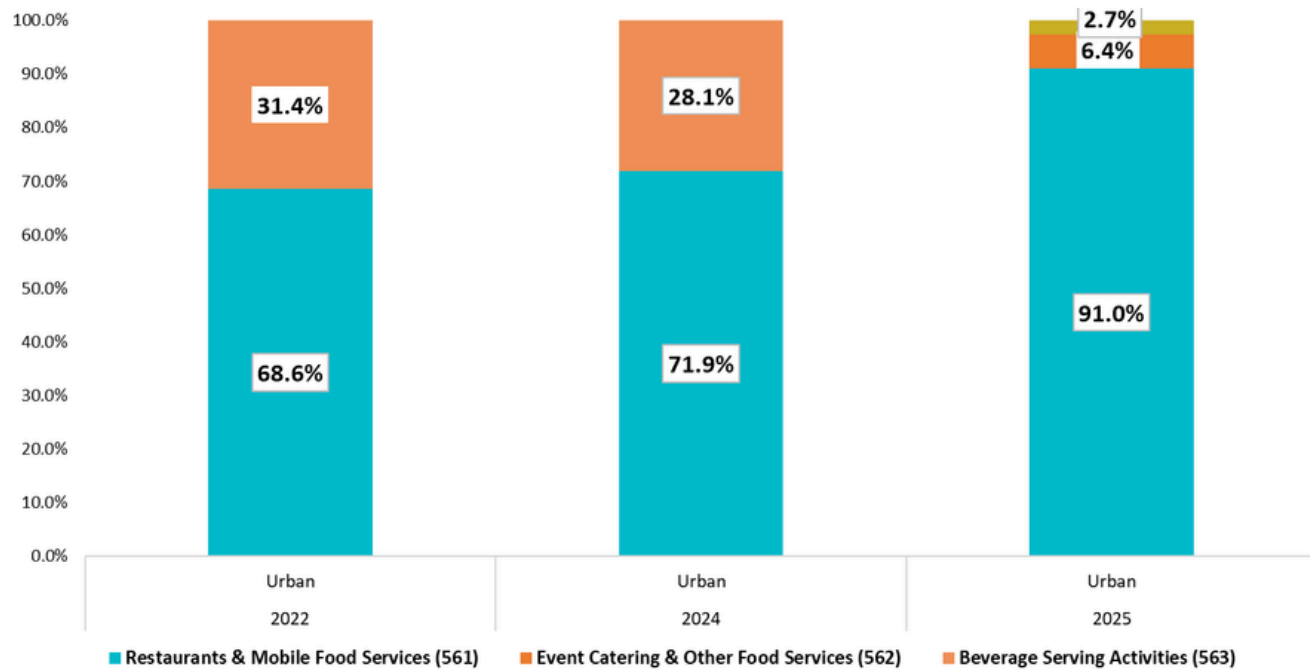
Figure 9: Distribution of Women Workers Within Education (NIC 85)



- Among urban women, education is a substantial employer, and its internal composition shifted decisively toward school-level teaching over the period. In 2022, urban education employment was distributed fairly evenly across three sub-classes — primary (NIC 851, 32.59%), higher (NIC 853, 28.96%) and secondary education (NIC 852, 27.77%). By 2025 that balance had broken apart. Primary education slipped to 25.77% in 2024 before rebounding sharply to 51.49% in 2025, making it the dominant sub-class; secondary education rose steadily to 36.24%; and higher education contracted markedly to 6.42%, a fall of more than twenty percentage points since 2022. Educational support activities (NIC 855), absent in 2022, surfaced at 14.40% in 2024 before receding to 2.32% in 2025. The defining movement of the period is the withdrawal of urban women from higher-education teaching and the consolidation of employment in primary and secondary schooling, which together accounted for close to nine in ten urban education jobs by 2025.

D.4 Food and Beverage Services (NIC 56)

Figure 10: Distribution of Women Workers Within Food and Beverage Services (NIC 56)



- Among urban women, food-service employment became steadily more concentrated in restaurant and eatery work over the period. In 2022, urban employment was split between restaurants and mobile food services (NIC 561, 68.56%) and beverage-serving activities (NIC 563, 31.44%), with event catering absent. Restaurants and mobile food services then strengthened year on year — to 71.90% in 2024 and 90.96% in 2025 — while beverage-serving activities contracted sharply, from 31.44% in 2022 to 28.10% in 2024 and then to just 2.67% in 2025. Event catering and other food services (NIC 562), absent through 2024, emerged at 6.37% in 2025. The defining movement of the period is the near-total consolidation of urban women's food-service employment into restaurant, eatery and mobile-food work, which by 2025 accounted for roughly nine in ten jobs in the division.

E. SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

E.1 Self-Employed Women – Sector Distribution

Top sectors for Self-Employed Women, Rural (% within Self-Employed Rural)

Figure 11A: Rural (2022)

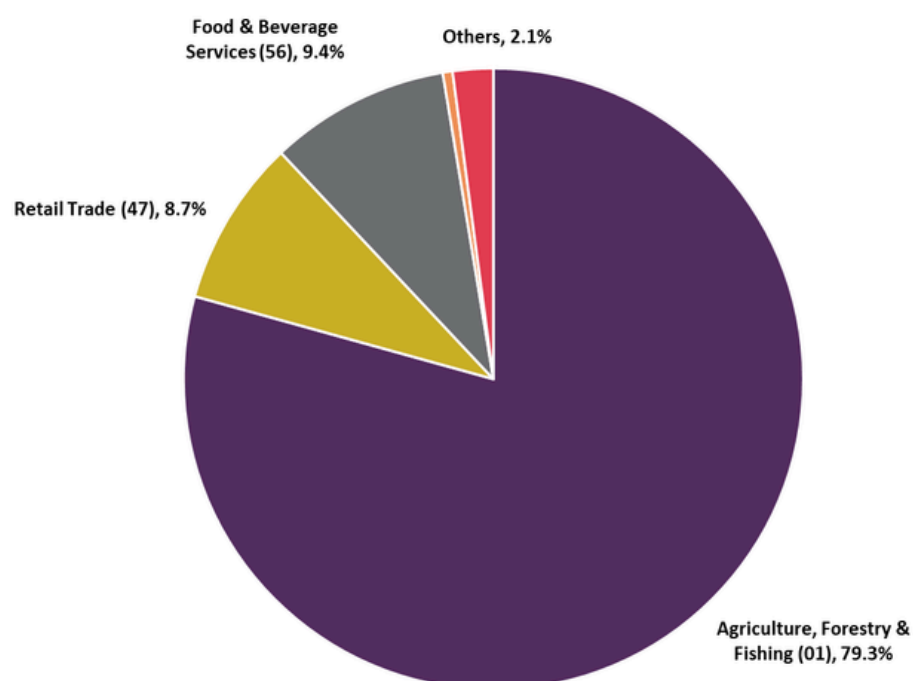
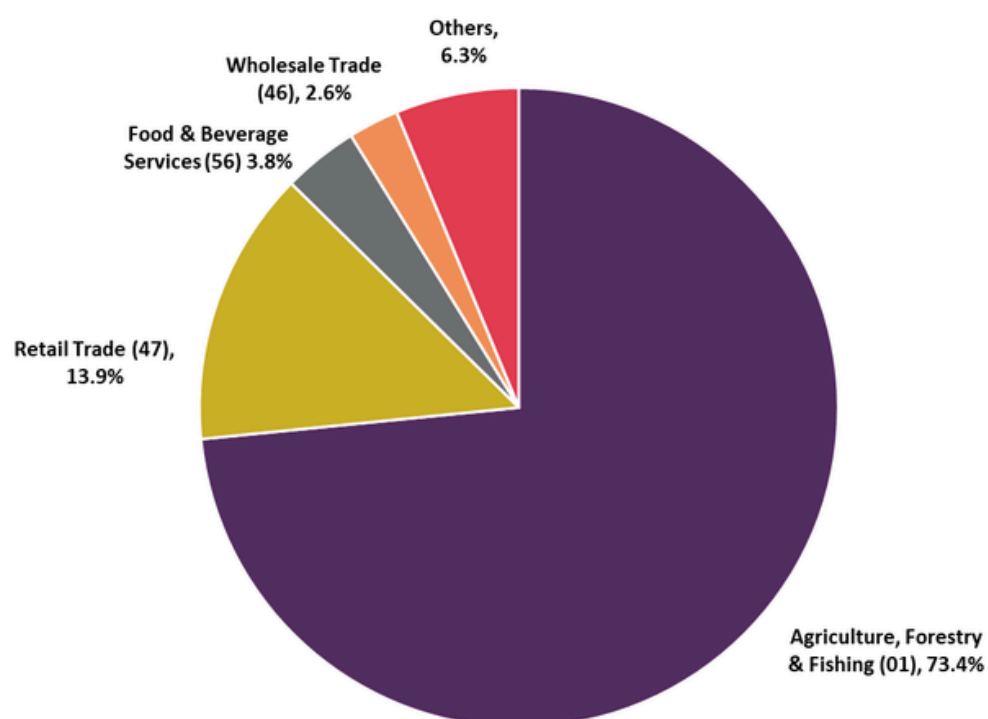


Figure 11B: Rural (2025)



Top sectors for Self-Employed Women, Urban (% within self-employed urban)

Figure 11C: Urban (2022)

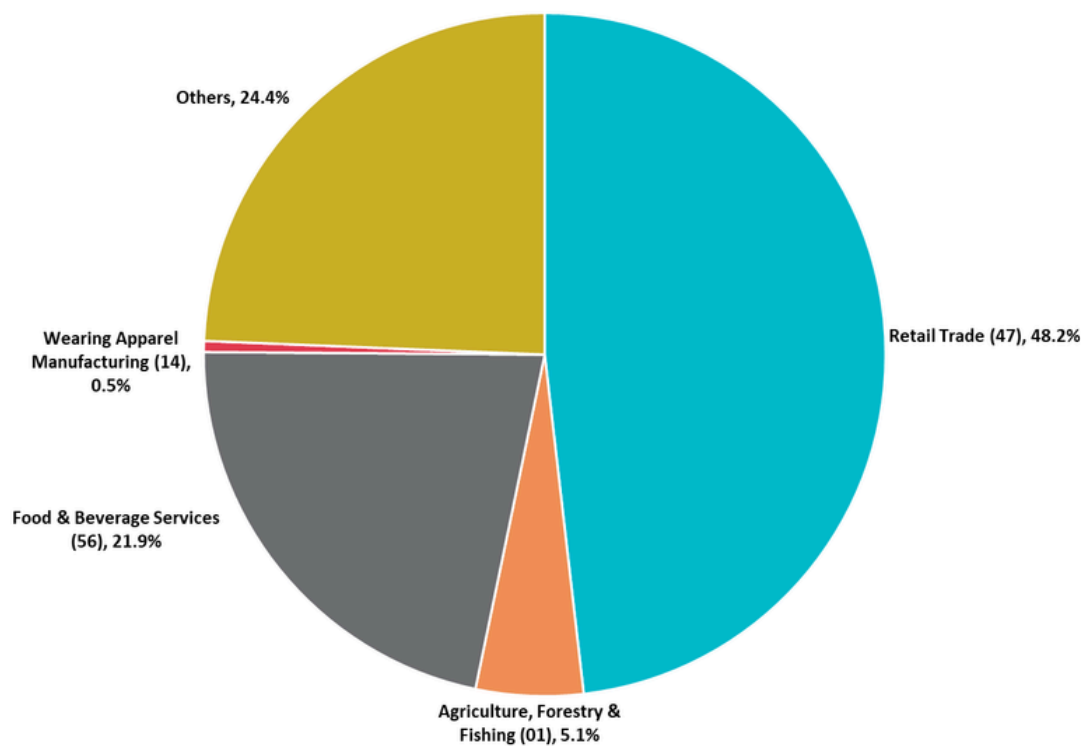
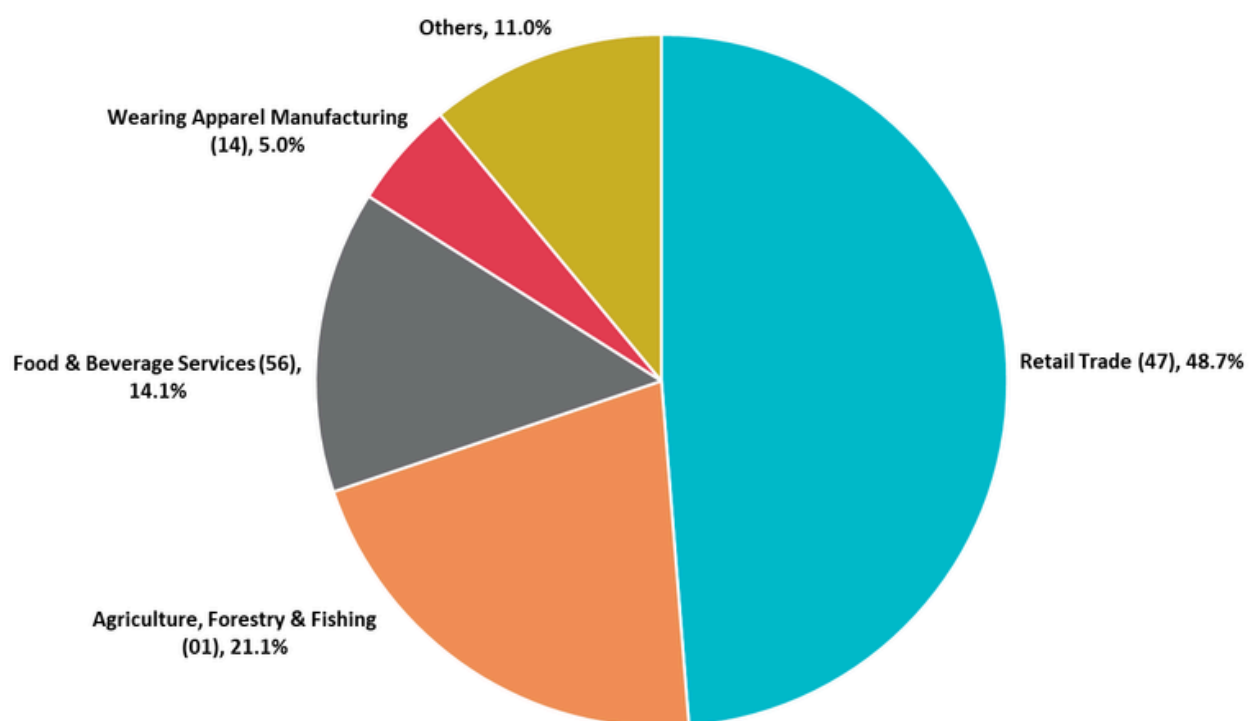


Figure 11D: Urban (2025)



- Among rural self-employed women, agriculture remains dominant but fell from 79.29% in 2022 to 73.43% in 2025, while retail trade rose from 8.69% to 13.94% and food & beverage services fell from 9.40% to 3.82%.
- Among urban self-employed women, retail trade is by far the largest sector and stable at about 48% (48.17% in 2022, 48.73% in 2025), while agriculture rose sharply (5.09% to 21.09%) and food & beverage services fell (21.86% to 14.13%). Retail trade as the primary occupation for urban self-employed women is in contrast to the national pattern.

E.2 Casual Women Workers – Sector Distribution

Top sectors for Casual Labour Women, Rural (% within casual rural)

Figure 12A: Rural (2022)

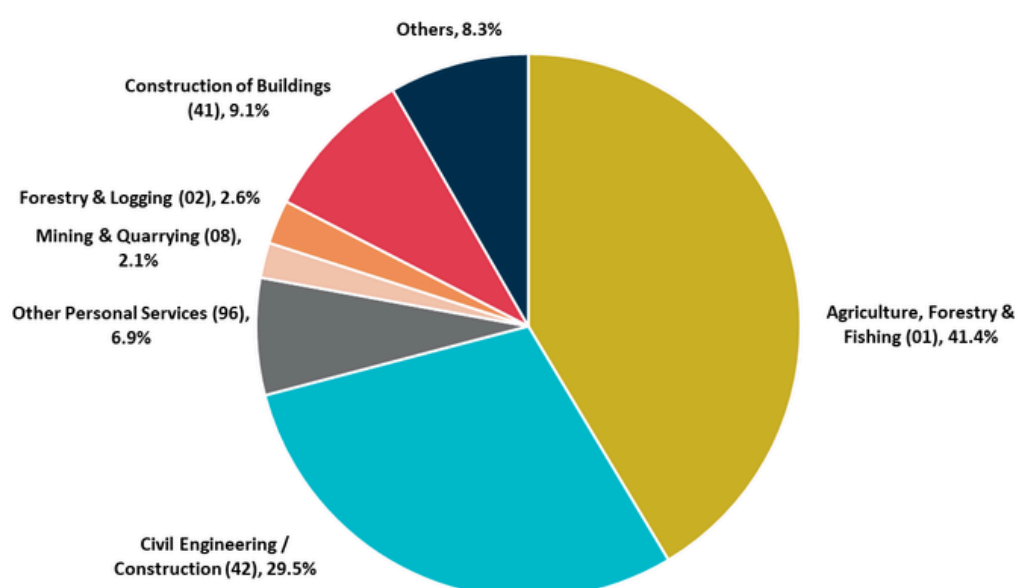
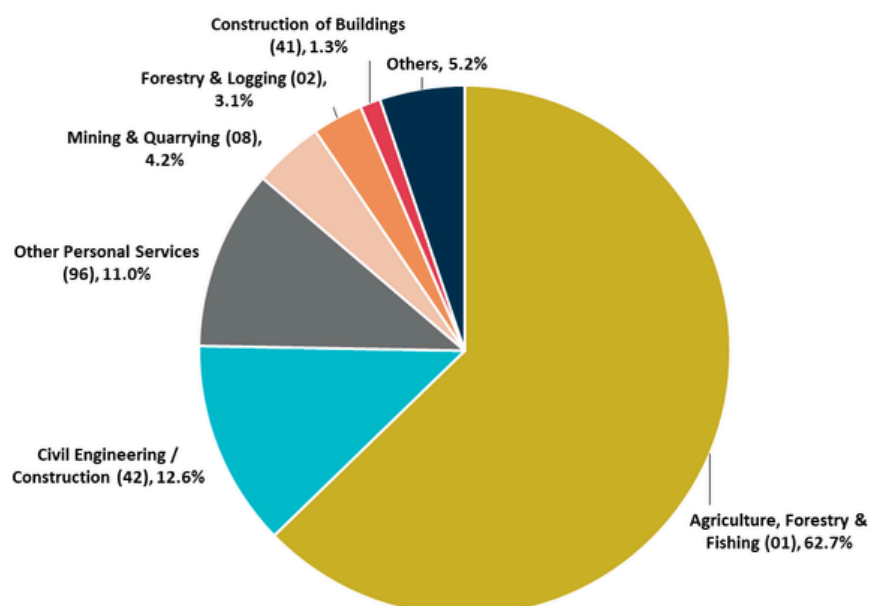


Figure 12B: Rural (2025)



Top sectors for Casual Labour Women, Urban (% within casual urban)

Figure 12C: Urban (2022)

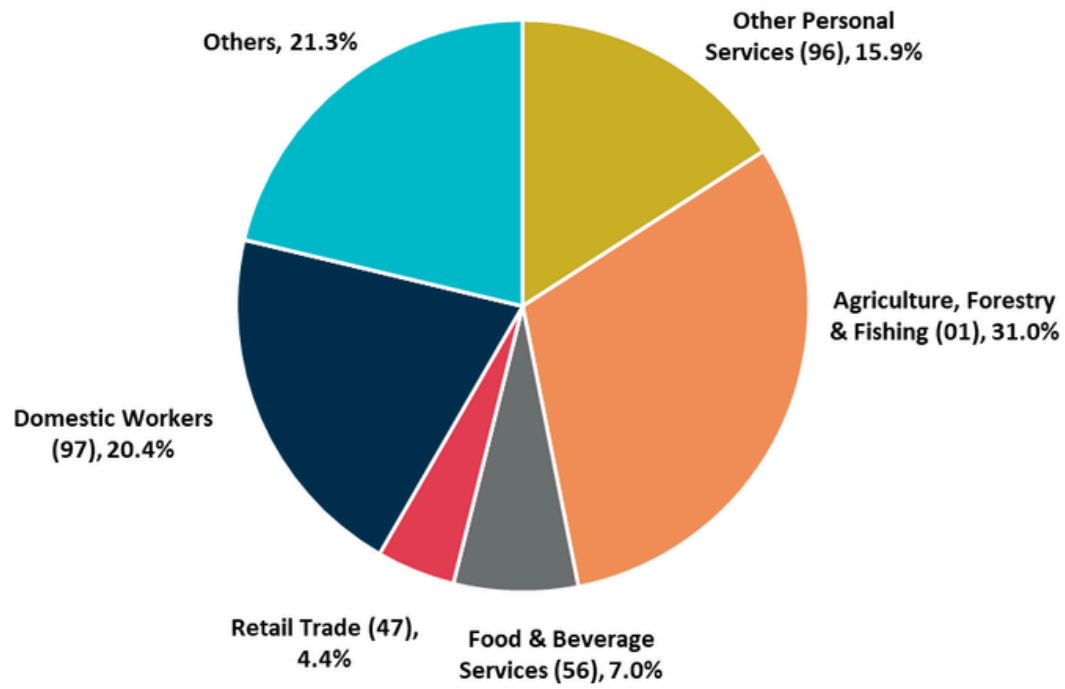
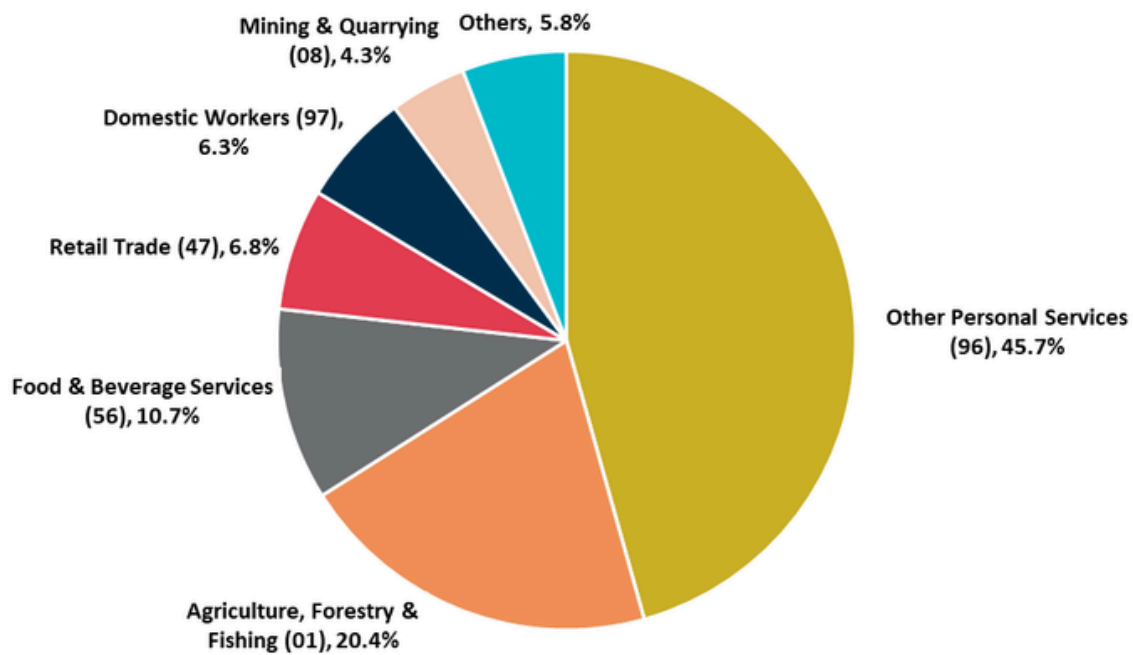


Figure 12D: Urban (2025)



- Among rural casual women, agriculture's share rose strongly from 41.40% in 2022 to 62.73% in 2025, while civil-engineering construction fell (29.52% to 12.56%) and building construction collapsed (9.13% to 1.25%); other personal services, such as laundry/cleaning or beauty salons (6.94% to 10.97%) and mining & quarrying (2.09% to 4.24%) rose. This concentration of rural casual work in agriculture runs opposite to the all-India shift, where rural casual employment moved toward construction.
- Among urban casual women, other personal services surged from 15.89% in 2022 to 45.66% in 2025 (peaking at 47.91% in 2024), agriculture fell (30.99% to 20.35%) and domestic work fell sharply (20.39% to 6.33%). Urban casual shares are highly volatile across years, characteristic of the precarious nature of this work.

E.3 Regular Salaried Women Workers – Sector Distribution

Top sectors for Regular Salaried Women, Rural (% within regular salaried rural)

Figure 13A: Rural (2022)

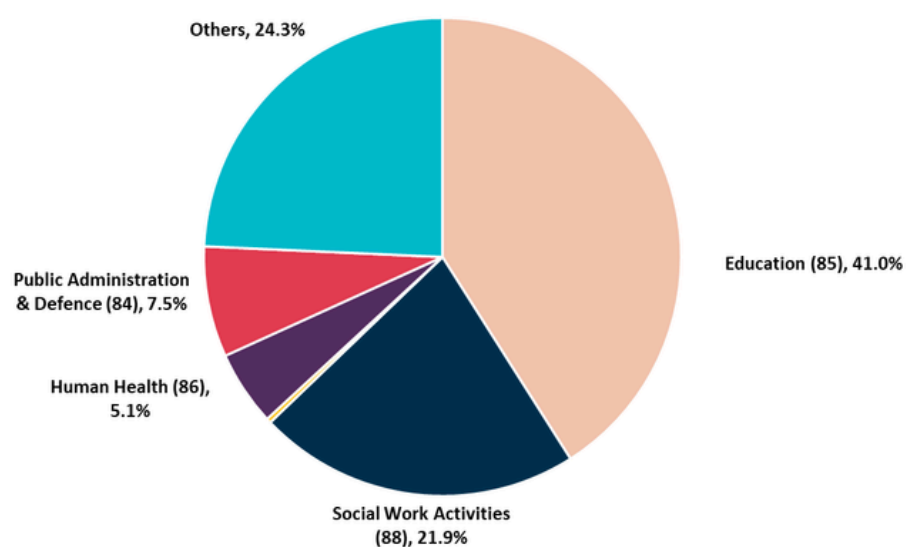
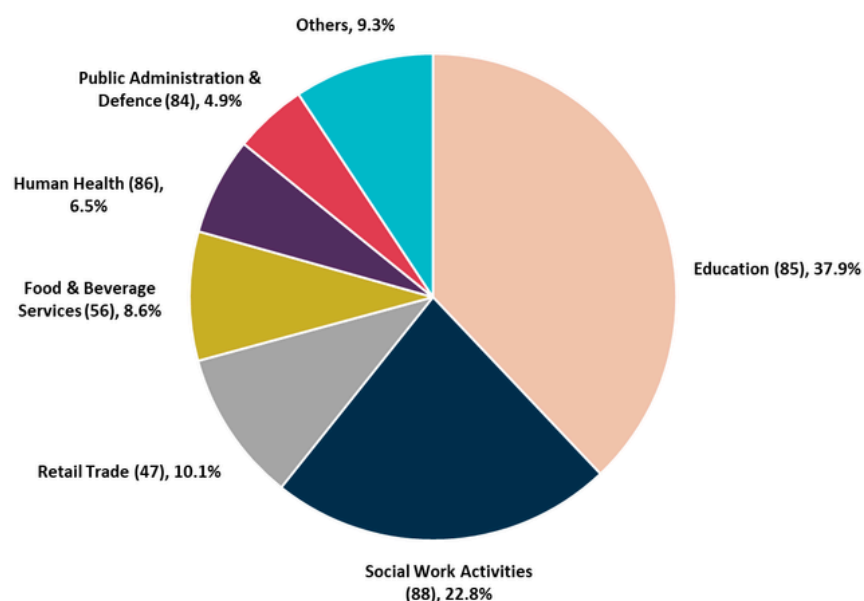


Figure 13B: Rural (2025)



Top sectors for Regular Salaried Women, Urban (% within regular salaried urban)

Figure 13C: Urban (2022)

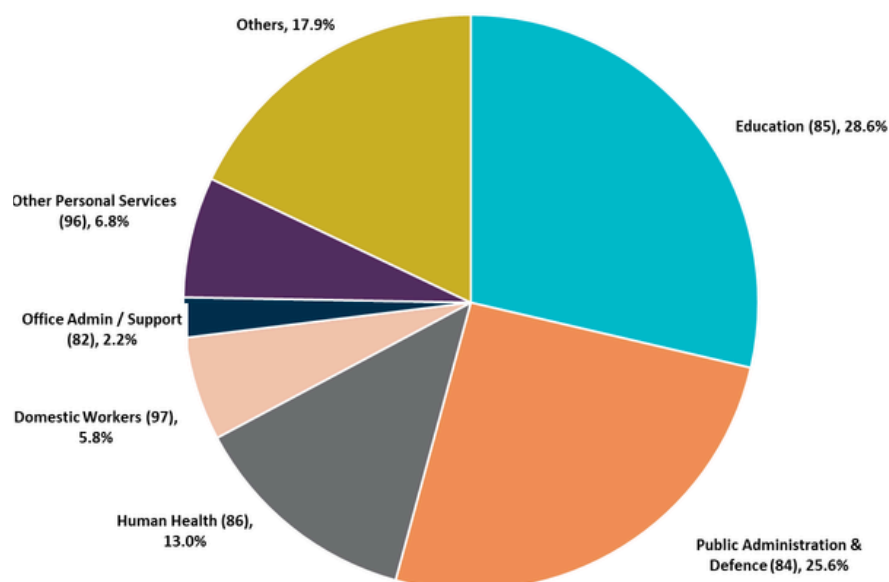
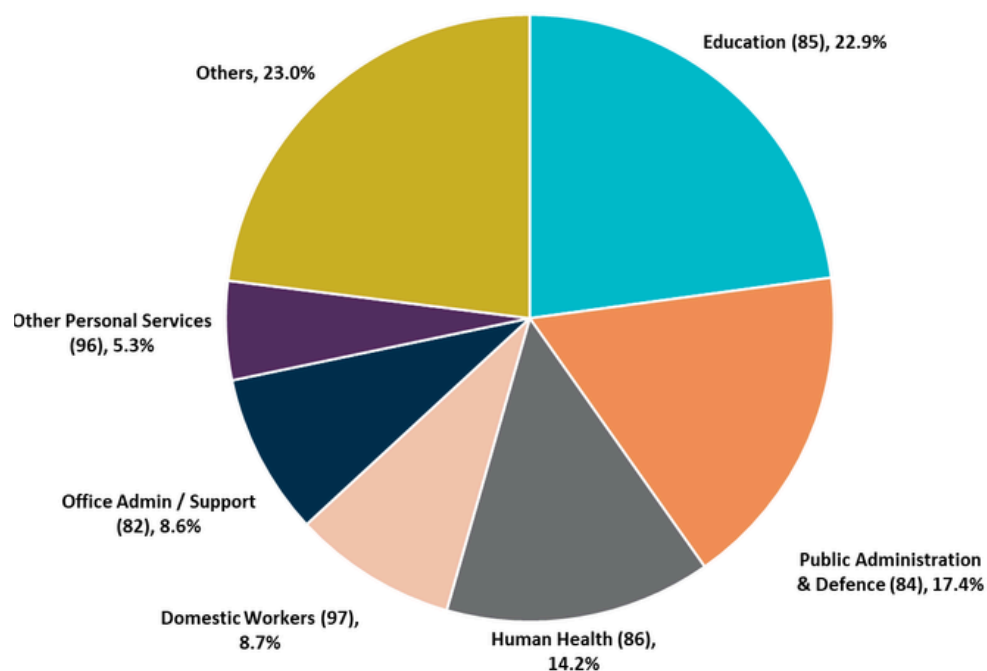


Figure 13D: Urban (2025)



- Among rural regular salaried women, education (37.93% in 2025) is the largest sector and social work activities are unusually prominent (22.78%), reflecting the inclusion of anganwadi and scheme workers in regular salaried employment. Retail trade (0.00% to 10.07%) and food & beverage services (0.31% to 8.57%) emerged as salaried activities since 2022, while public administration declined (7.49% to 4.85%).
- Among urban regular salaried women, education (22.86%), public administration (declining from 25.58% to 17.39%) and human health (14.16%) are the leading sectors, with office administrative/support work rising sharply (2.24% to 8.60%). As at the all-India level, education and health remain the backbone of women's regular salaried employment.

F. DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WORKERS BY OCCUPATION TYPE (NCO-2015)

Distribution of Female Workers by Major Occupation Group (% share)

Occupation Group	RURAL				URBAN			
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2022	2023	2024	2025
Managers (1)	7.12	5.24	1.17	0.07	20.79	15.85	2.34	2.41
Professionals (2)	7.89	5.09	4.6	4.14	26.27	23.32	15.48	15.16
Technicians & Associate Professionals (3)	4.8	2	2.28	3.4	7.85	10.46	5.49	6.75
Clerks (4)	1.24	1.27	0.76	0.55	13.34	7.08	9.38	10.91
Service & Sales Workers (5)	4.35	5.1	10.5	14.66	11.91	13.31	31.37	30.95
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery (6)	49.02	50.8	51.92	40.51	2.3	1.95	5.78	7.43
Craft & Related Trades (7)	0.93	1.93	0.37	2.4	1.96	4.7	2.58	4.82
Plant & Machine Operators (8)	0	0	0.08	0.04	0.53	0.47	1.05	0.43
Elementary Occupations (9)	24.64	28.57	28.33	34.23	15.05	22.86	26.53	21.14

- Rural women's occupations remain dominated by skilled agricultural and fishery work, but its share fell from 49.02% in 2022 to 40.51% in 2025. This decline fed two categories pulling in opposite directions: elementary occupations rose from 24.64% to 34.23%, while service and sales workers rose sharply from 4.35% to 14.66%. The latter is a positive element within an otherwise mixed shift — service and sales sits in the medium-skill band, so its rise reflects a degree of occupational upgrading even if the category also captures some lower-skill service work. Unlike the all-India pattern, where the skilled-agricultural share is broadly stable (around 58%) and elementary occupations decline (24.0% to 22.0%), in Meghalaya the skilled-agricultural share fell and elementary work rose; but the service-and-sales increase is also far steeper than the national rise (4.8% to 6.2%), a comparatively strong movement into medium-skill service work that partly offsets the concurrent rise in elementary occupations.
- Higher-skilled rural roles contracted over the same period. Professionals fell from 7.89% to 4.14%, technicians from 4.80% to 3.40%, and managerial roles from 7.12% to near zero (0.07%). The very high 2022–2023 managerial figures and their steep fall should be read with caution given the small rural sample and the revised 2025 sampling design.
- Among urban women, the most pronounced change is the surge in service and sales workers, from 11.91% in 2022 to 30.95% in 2025, most of it occurring between 2023 and 2024 (13.31% to 31.37%), alongside a rise in elementary occupations from 15.05% to 21.14%. This came largely at the expense of higher-skilled occupations: professionals fell from 26.27% to 15.16% and managerial roles from 20.79% to 2.41%. The drop in urban managerial roles is directionally the same as at the all-India level (8.0% to 3.3%) but far steeper in Meghalaya, while the rise in service work echoes the national increase (17.1% to 20.2%) and professionals nationally stayed broadly stable (17.9% to 18.2%). Skilled agricultural work also rose in urban areas (2.30% to 7.43%), consistent with the urban-agriculture increase noted earlier.
- As at the all-India level, the overall picture is one of continued occupational diversification with limited upward mobility. Women in both rural and urban Meghalaya are moving out of skilled agriculture and, in part, out of professional and managerial roles, toward a mix of elementary work and medium-skill service and sales occupations. The rise in service and sales is the more encouraging strand of this shift, while the sharp fall in managerial and professional shares partly coincides with the revised PLFS sampling design from 2025 and, for a small state, may reflect sample volatility; the broad direction, however, is consistent across both sectors and across years.

G. CONDITIONS OF WORK IN REGULAR SALARIED EMPLOYMENT

G.1 Social Security Benefits

Figure 14: Extent and Composition of Social Security Coverage among Women in Regular Employment (2022–2025)



- In rural Meghalaya, the share of regular salaried women not eligible for any social security benefit fell from 59.4% in 2022 to 47.9% in 2025, while full coverage (PF/pension, gratuity and health/maternity together) rose from 13.7% to 21.0%. Rural Meghalaya thus moved from being close to the all-India rural exclusion rate of 61.5% in 2022 to well below it at 57.4% in 2025, reflecting the larger share of its women in public-sector education and health employment.
- In urban Meghalaya the direction of change was the opposite. Exclusion rose from 37.3% in 2022 to 48.1% in 2025, converging on the all-India urban level of 52.64%, which was itself essentially unchanged from 52.46% in 2022. Full coverage nonetheless improved from 26.4% to 30.6%, moving against the national urban trend where the fully covered share fell from 22.10% to 18.55%.

G.2 Type of Job Contract

Figure 15A: Status of Job Contract

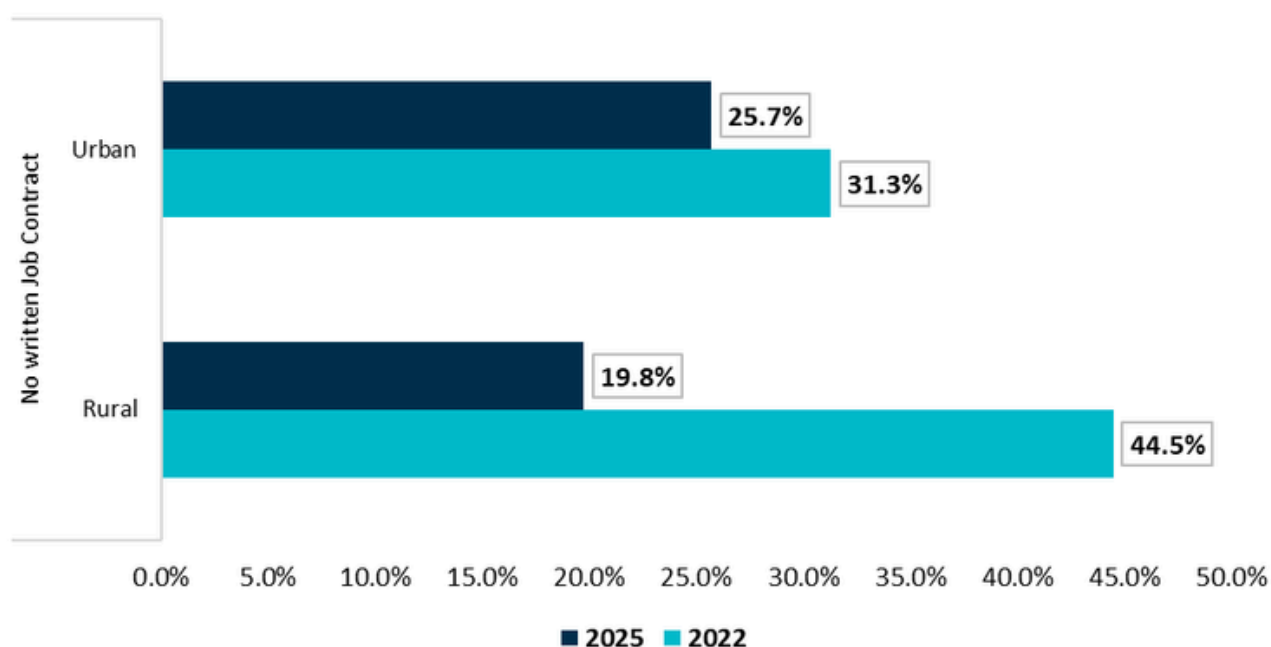
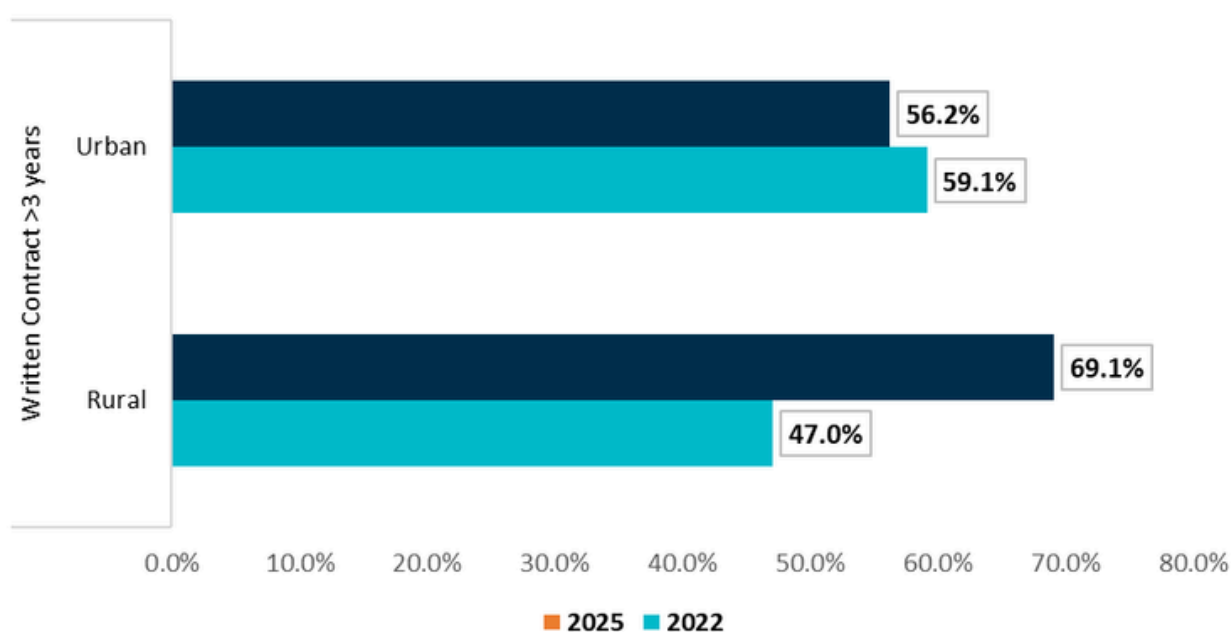


Figure 15B: Status of Job Contract

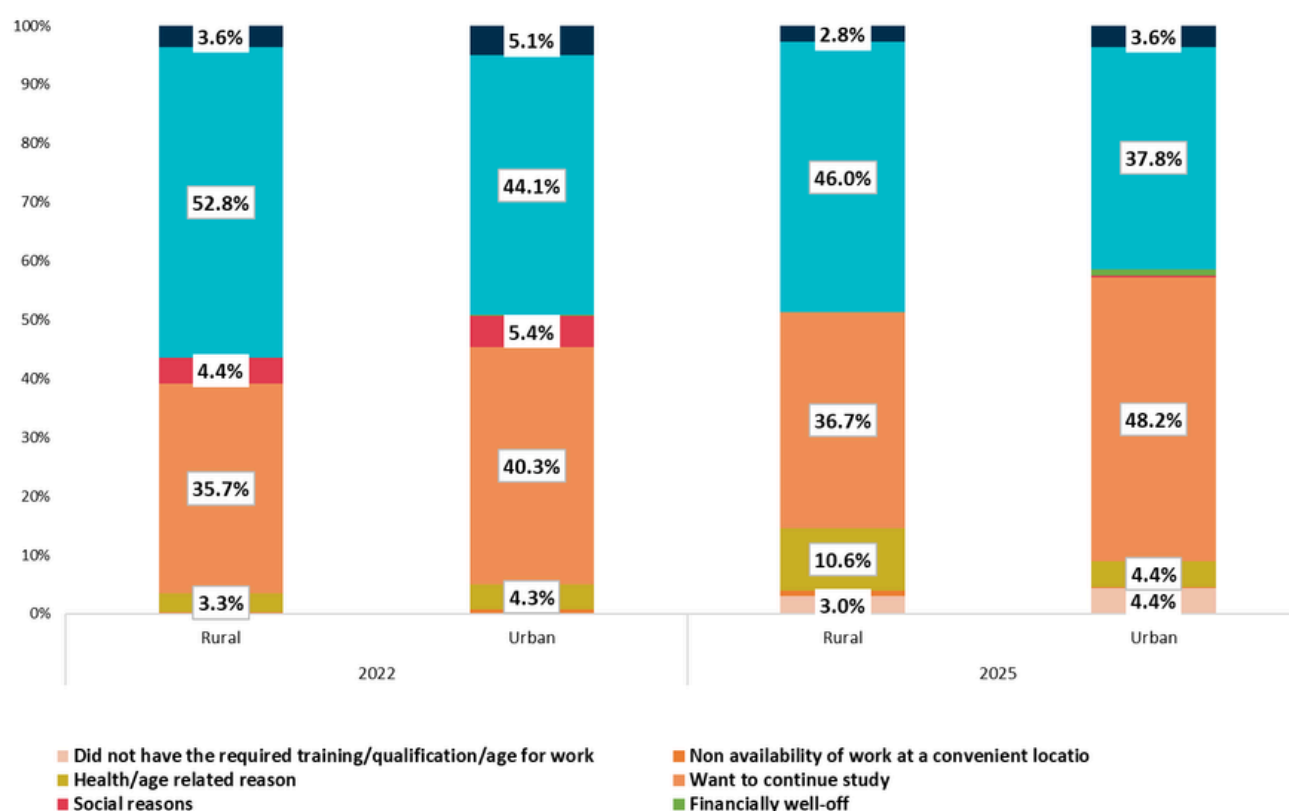


- In rural Meghalaya, the share of regular salaried women without a written contract fell sharply from 44.49% in 2022 to 19.75% in 2025, with almost the entire shift moving into long-term security. Contracts of more than three years rose from 47.00% to 69.06%. Rural Meghalaya is therefore far below the all-India rural no-contract share, which was broadly unchanged at 53.76% in 2022 and 53.54% in 2025, reflecting the public-sector-heavy composition of women's formal employment in the state

- In urban Meghalaya, the no-contract share declined more modestly, from 31.29% to 25.72%, but long-term contracts also fell from 59.11% to 56.22%. Urban Meghalaya thus remains well ahead of the all-India urban position, where the no-contract share rose from 56.6% in 2022 to 58.6% in 2025. Urban Meghalaya thus retains a large advantage over the national picture, though its recent improvement has come through fixed-term rather than open-ended arrangements.

H. REASONS FOR NOT BEING IN THE LABOUR FORCE (ACTIVITY STATUS 91–97)

Figure 16: Reason for Not Being in The Labourforce



- Child care and home-making commitments remain the largest reason for women being outside the labour force in rural Meghalaya but decline over the period, from 52.8% in 2022 to 46.0% in 2025; in urban areas the share falls from 44.1% to 37.8% and is displaced by continued study as the single largest reason by 2025. Both segments sit well below the all-India share (61.6% overall in 2022 to 60.0% in 2025), and while the rural decline is consistent with the national pattern, the urban decline runs counter to it, as the all-India urban share rises from 62.9% to 65.4%. Education-related reasons are correspondingly high, at 35.7% to 36.7% in rural areas and 40.3% to 48.2% in urban areas, against 16.3% to 17.2% nationally.
- Health and age-related factors rise sharply in rural areas (3.3% to 10.6%) while remaining flat in urban areas (4.3% to 4.4%), broadly tracking the national increase (11.6% to 14.1%), Health and age-related factors rise sharply in rural areas (3.3% to 10.6%) while remaining flat in urban areas (4.3% to 4.4%), broadly tracking the national increase (11.6% to 14.1%), and social reasons decline almost entirely, from 4.4% to 0.02% in rural and 5.4% to 0.35% in urban areas.

Other factors, including lack of training or qualification, non-availability of work at a convenient location, and financial well-being, rise from a near-zero base but together account for under 5% in both segments in 2025, indicating that education and care responsibilities together explain the overwhelming share of women's non-participation in Meghalaya.

I. CONCLUSION

The four years leave Meghalaya with materially higher female participation than it began with, but by two different routes. Rural LFPR gained 10.91 percentage points overall while peaking in 2023 and giving back much of that rise thereafter, whereas urban LFPR gained 12.81 points and did so in every single year, ending above 50%. The steadiness of the urban trajectory is what distinguishes the state. Urban FLFPR had already risen from 31.8% in 2017-18 to 47.7% in 2023-24, a movement recorded as running counter to India and other major states⁵, and Meghalaya remains among the small group of states reporting overall LFPR above 70% in the PLFS 2025 round⁶.

The composition of that work tells a harder story. Rural women moved out of self-employment into casual wage work, which gained close to twelve percentage points from a base already high by state standards. Meghalaya's female casual-labour share stood at 24.7% in 2022-23⁷. The rise in casual work has been absorbed almost entirely by private employment. Occupationally, skilled agricultural work contracted and professional and managerial roles fell more sharply still, while elementary occupations and service-and-sales work expanded. The service-and-sales rise is the encouraging strand, though it shares a medium-skill band with skilled agricultural work and is only partly an upgrade.

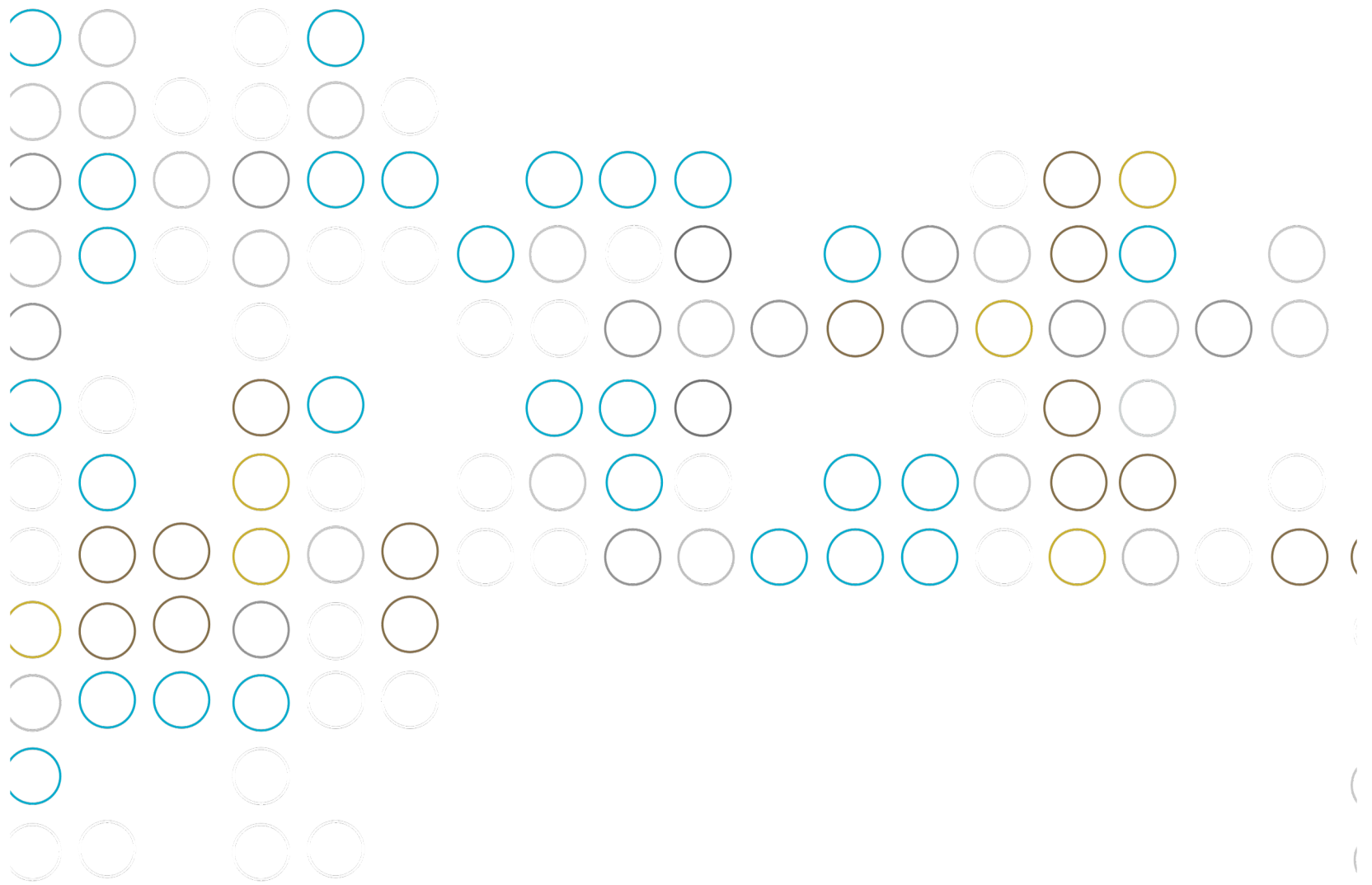
The most consequential finding is a paradox in job quality. Conditions inside regular salaried employment improved markedly and are better than the national picture, reflecting the concentration of salaried women in public-sector education, health and social work. But the regular salaried category itself contracted in both sectors, steeply in urban areas. Meghalaya's difficulty is thus not one of mobilisation but of absorption: an increasingly educated cohort is entering a labour market whose secure segment is shrinking, with own-account enterprise taking up the slack. Expanding salaried work with social security, and lifting returns in retail trade and services, would turn the state's high participation into stable employment.

⁵Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy. (2025). Factsheet: Meghalaya.

<https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Factsheet-Meghalaya.pdf>

⁶Economic and Political Weekly. (2026). PLFS 2025: Some labour market perspectives [Editorial]. Economic and Political Weekly, 61(16). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2026/16/editorials/plfs-2025-some-labour-market-perspectives.html>

⁷Centre for Economic Data and Analysis. (2024). How does labour force participation vary across Indian states? Ashoka University. <https://ceda.ashoka.edu.in/how-does-labour-force-participation-vary-across-indian-states/>



This factsheet has been prepared by Nabankur Huda and reviewed by Bidisha Mondal

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IWWAGE – An Initiative of LEAD at Krea University
Block M-6, Second Floor, Kharera, Hauz Khas, Delhi - 110016
+91-11-49403983 | www.iwwage.org