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TRENDS IN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

GUJARAT



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

Gujarat is one of India's most industrialised and urbanised states, generating a large share of national manufacturing output and exports. Its industrial base is concentrated in textiles, apparel, chemicals, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and gems-and-jewellery, clustered around Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara, and Surat is among the world's leading centres for rough-diamond cutting and polishing[1]. Alongside industry, the state has a large livestock and dairy economy built on its cooperative movement, which makes animal husbandry an important rural livelihood for women[2]. In 2025 Gujarat's female labour force participation was above the national average in both rural and urban areas. Unusually, more urban women are self-employed than in regular salaried work, and their employment is concentrated in textile and apparel manufacturing, retail and education, reflecting the state's manufacturing base. The Economic Survey 2025-26 names Gujarat among the states with more women-led businesses and higher female workforce participation[3].The policy environment for women has deepened in recent years. In September 2024 Gujarat reformulated its gender policy as the Nari Gaurav Niti–2024, a State Policy for Gender Equity organised around eight focus areas, including the economic environment, education, health and protection against violence, with implementation assigned across government departments[4]. Self-help-group–based livelihoods have been promoted through the Mukhyamantri Mahila Utkarsh Yojana and the Lakhpati Didi initiative. In March 2025 the state added G-SAFAL, which supports self-help-group women from the poorest households, and G-MAITRI, which mentors rural-livelihood start-ups. The Namo Lakshmi Yojana (2024) provides financial assistance to girls in Classes 9–12 to support continued schooling. Together, an industrial-and-dairy economy, above-average but manufacturing-skewed female participation, and an active recent policy agenda frame the trends below.

Trends in Female Workforce and Labour Force Participation Rates

- Rural female LFPR rose strongly from 48.31% in 2022 to 55.76% in 2023 and 57.14% in 2024, then declined marginally to 56.34% in 2025, a net gain of 8.03 percentage points over 2022–2025. The sharp rise in 2023 mirrors the national rural trajectory, although nationally the rate declined after 2023 while in Gujarat it continued to rise in 2024.
- Urban female LFPR rose in every year, from 23.01% in 2022 to 28.36% in 2023, 28.65% in 2024 and 31.74% in 2025, a net gain of 8.73 percentage points. The largest single-year rise came between 2022 and 2023 (5.35 points), followed by a second sizeable increase between 2024 and 2025 (3.09 points).

[1]Surat Municipal Corporation. (2025, December 18). Contribution. https://www.suratmunicipal.gov.in/TheCity/Contribution
[2]Agriculture Post. (2023, July 22). NDDB, GCMMF organise Jan Bhagidari event on women-led development through dairy cooperatives. https://agriculturepost.com/allied-sectors/dairying/nddb-gcmmf-w20-organise-jan-bhagidari-event-on-women-led-development-through-dairy-cooperatives/
[3]The Economic Survey 2025-26 names Gujarat among the states with a higher presence of female-headed establishments and higher female labour force participation. https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/doc/eschapter/echap12.pdf
[4]Press Trust of India. (2024, September 1). Gujarat govt launches reformulated gender policy for inclusive development, empowerment. The Week. https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2024/09/01/bes5-gj-gender-policy.html

Figure 1: **Trends in LFPR % (15 Years and Above)**

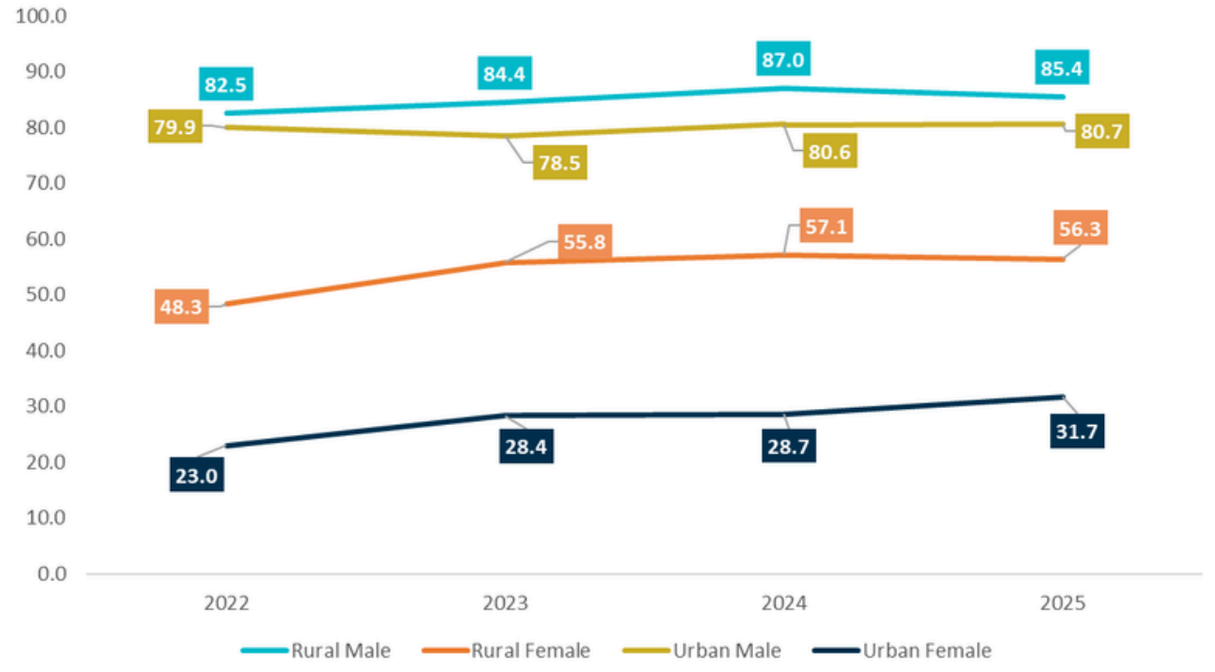
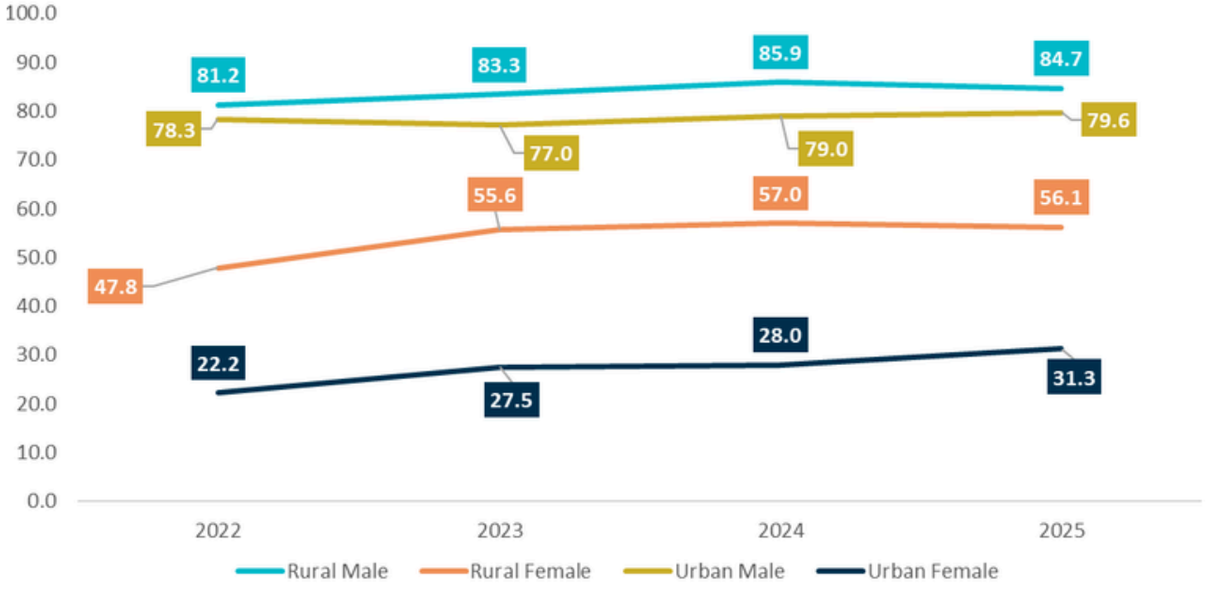


Figure 2: **Trends in WPR % (15 Years and Above)**



- WPR closely tracks LFPR as rural female WPR rose from 47.82% in 2022 to 56.14% in 2025, and urban female WPR from 22.21% to 31.26%. The very narrow LFPR–WPR gap indicates low open unemployment, with most women who seek work finding it.

- Gender gaps remain wide, especially in towns. In 2025 the rural gap was about 29 percentage points (85.43% male versus 56.34% female) and the urban gap nearly 49 points (80.67% versus 31.74%). The wider urban than rural gap follows the all-India structure, with Gujarat's urban female rate still low despite recent gains.

Comparison with All-India Averages

- Gujarat's rural female LFPR (56.34% in 2025) is above the all-India rural average of about 46%, and its urban female LFPR (31.74%) is above the all-India urban average of about 27.7%.

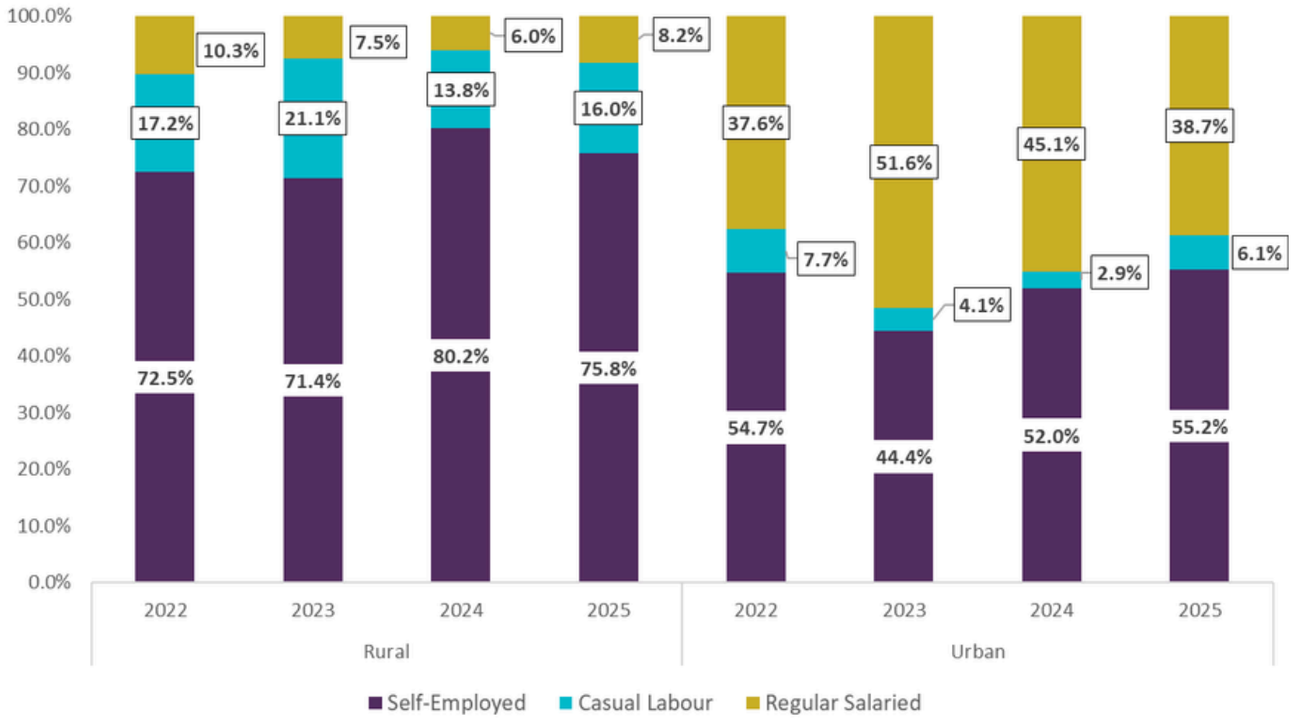
- Female participation rose in both Gujarat and India between 2022 and 2025, but the pattern differs. Nationally the gain was concentrated in rural areas (37.5% to about 46%), whereas in Gujarat urban participation rose slightly more than rural (8.73 against 8.03 percentage points). Gujarat's urban rate, below the national figure in 2022 (23.0% against 24.7%), moved clearly above it by 2025 (31.7% against 27.7%).

B. COMPOSITION OF FEMALE WORKFORCE

Type of Employment (TOE)

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

Figure 3: **Type of Employment**



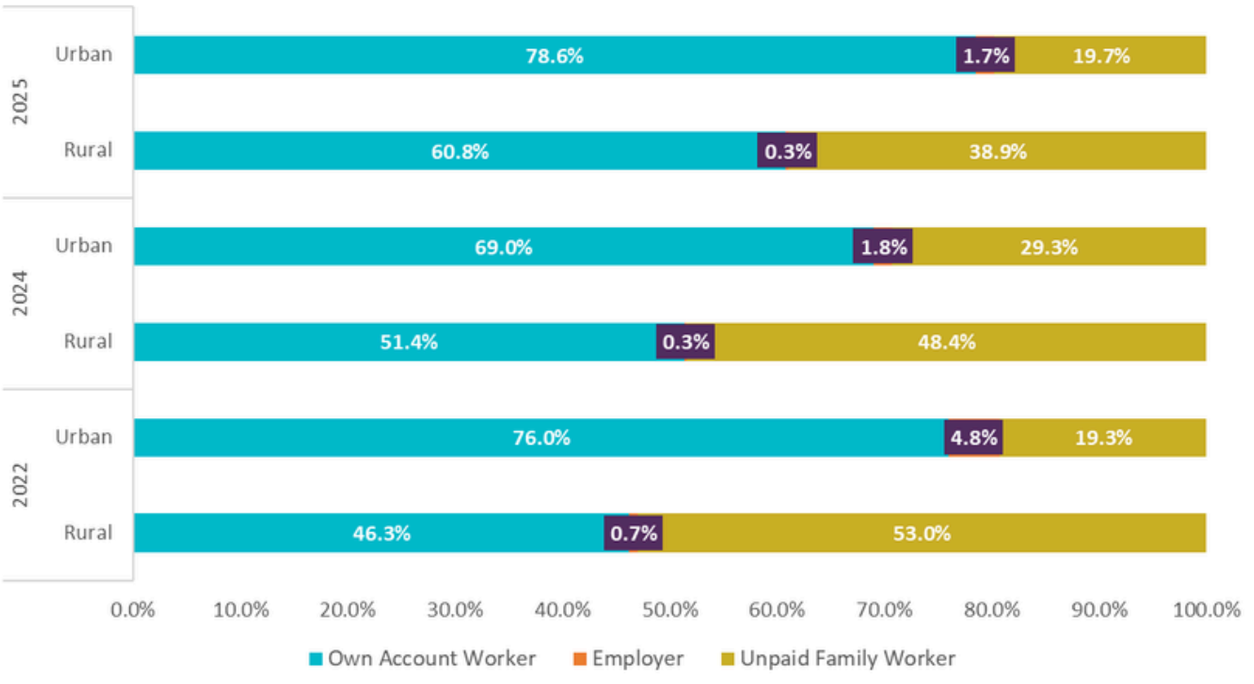
- Rural women's work is predominantly self-employment, which rose from 72.53% in 2022 to 75.77% in 2025 (peaking at 80.21% in 2024); casual labour was broadly stable (17.17% to 16.01%) and regular salaried work declined (10.30% to 8.22%).

- In urban areas, self-employment is also the largest category. It dipped to 44.39% in 2023 before recovering to 55.20% in 2025 (54.71% in 2022), while regular salaried work peaked at 51.55% in 2023 and then fell back to 38.69% in 2025, close to its 2022 level (37.60%). This departs from the national pattern, where regular salaried work is the main category for urban women (around 50–51%) and self-employment accounts for only 40–42%.

Breakdown Among Self-Employed Women

Distribution within Self-Employed Women (% share)

Figure 4: **Distribution among Self-Employed Women**



- Rural own-account work rose from 46.25% in 2022 to 60.79% in 2025 while unpaid family work fell from 53.01% to 38.91% — a clear shift toward independent work. This is the same direction as the national move toward own-account work among rural self-employed women.

- Urban self-employed women are predominantly own-account workers (78.56% in 2025, up from 75.95% in 2022), with unpaid family work broadly stable near 20%.

Casual Labour: Public Work vs Other

- Public work (such as MGNREGA) is a negligible share of female casual labour in rural Gujarat (well under 1% in most years) and fell in urban areas from 9.77% in 2022 to 0.46% in 2025. Casual employment is therefore almost entirely non-public.

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

Top Sectors by NIC Division — Rural Female Workers

Figure 5A: **Rural 2022**

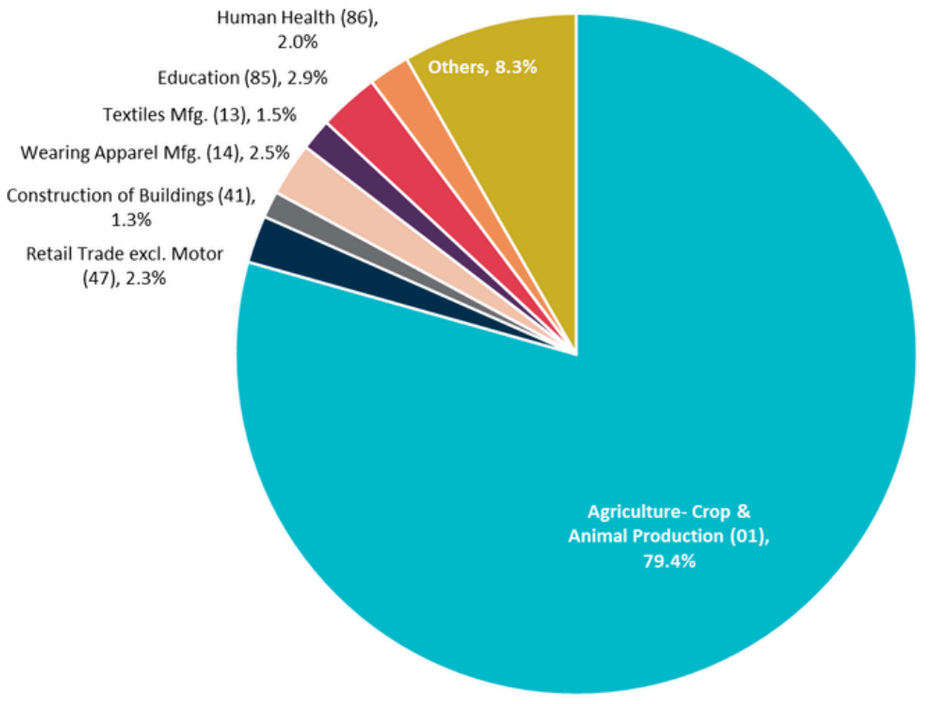
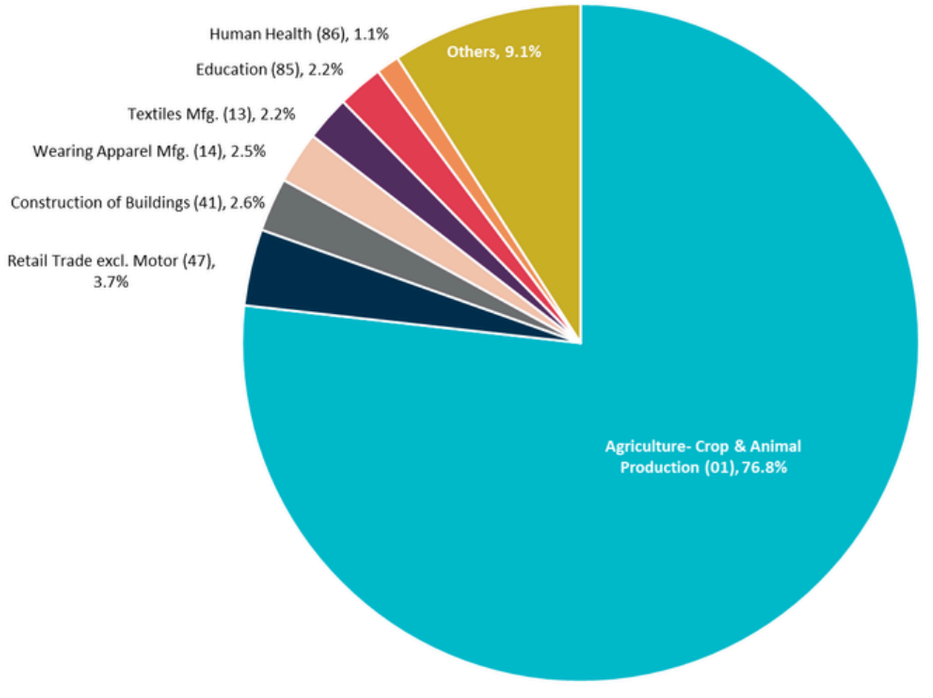


Figure 5B: **Rural 2025**



- Agriculture remains the dominant source of work for rural women in Gujarat, though its share declined from 79.37% in 2022 to 76.77% in 2025. This is above the all-India rural share of 72.7% in 2025.
- Among non-farm sectors, retail trade (2.25% to 3.65%), construction of buildings (1.26% to 2.56%, roughly doubling) and textiles manufacturing (1.50% to 2.15%) gained share between 2022 and 2025, while education (2.85% to 2.18%) and human health (1.95% to 1.11%) declined.

Top Sectors by NIC Division — Urban Female Workers

Figure 6A: **Urban 2022**

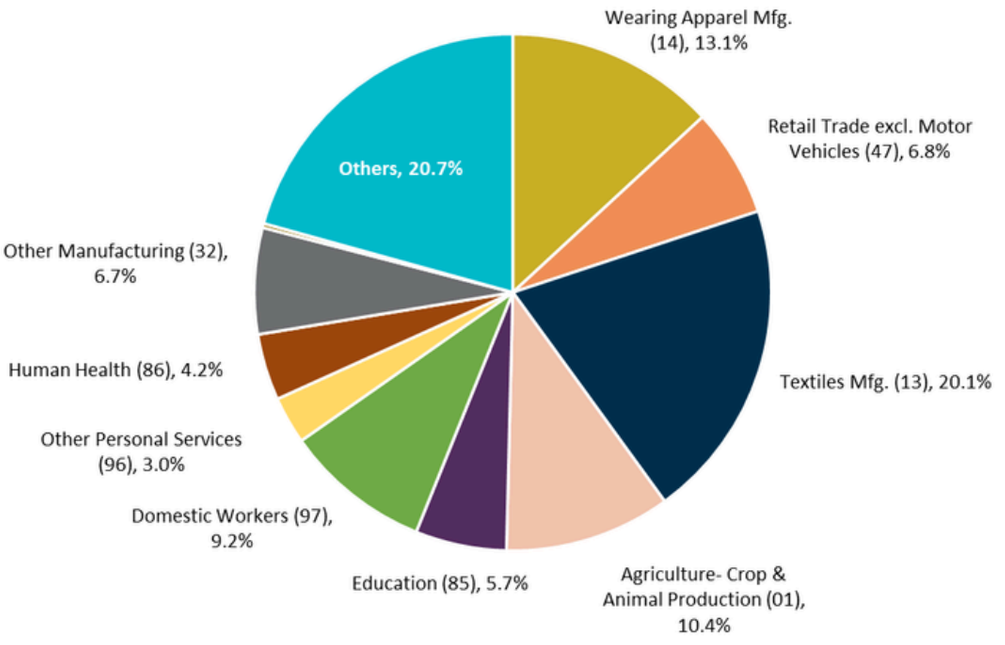
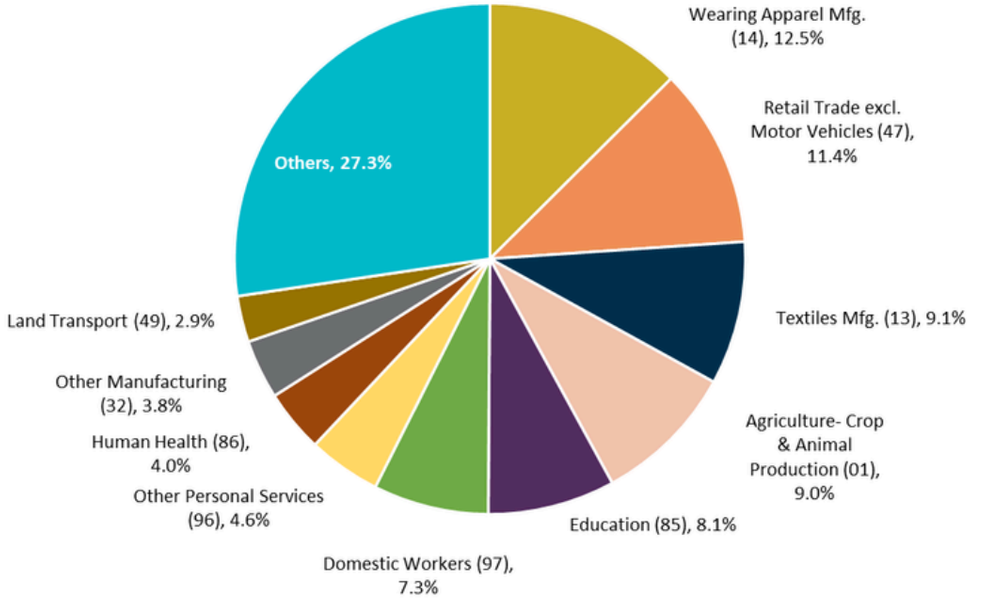


Figure 6B: **Urban 2025**



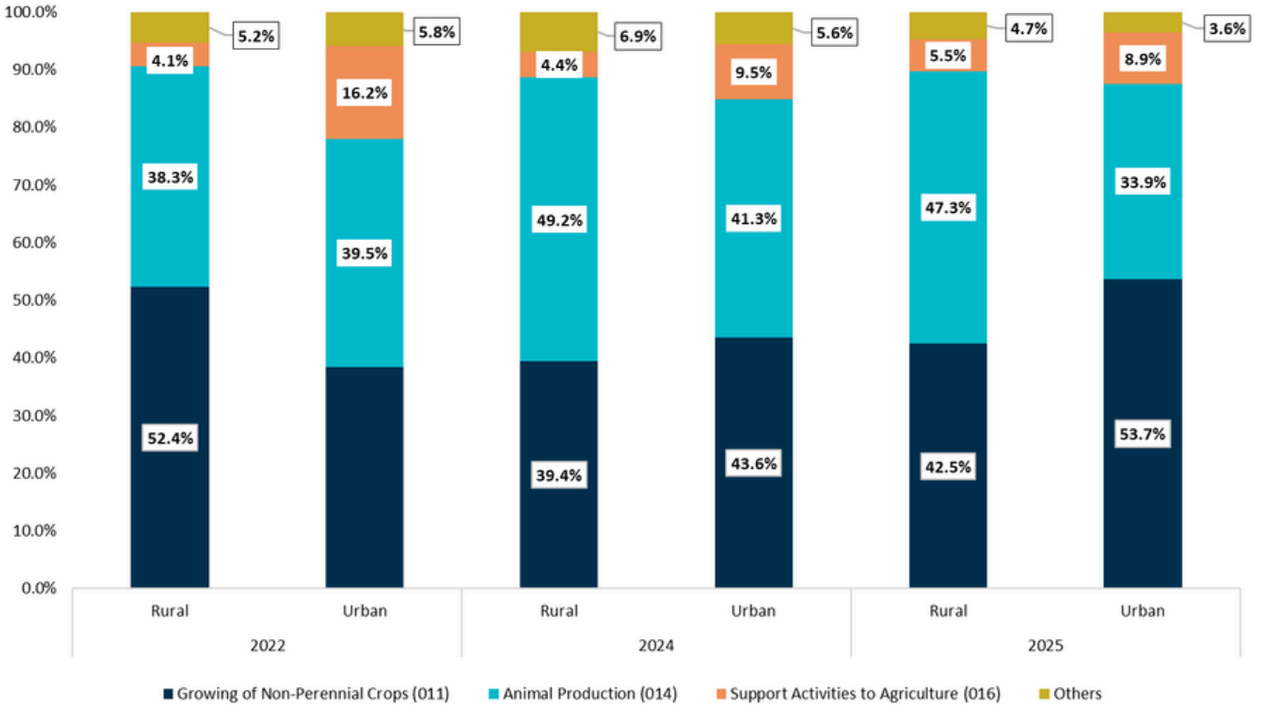
- Manufacturing remains the largest single industry group for urban women, though its share fell from 45.43% in 2022 to 33.00% in 2025, while services taken together (NIC 45–98) rose from 41.36% to 54.74% and now account for more than half of urban women's employment. Within manufacturing, wearing apparel held broadly steady (13.12% to 12.54%) and is now the largest single sector, while textiles more than halved (20.09% to 9.08%) and other manufacturing fell (6.65% to 3.75%). This concentration in textiles and apparel sets Gujarat apart from the all-India urban pattern, where agriculture (12.7%), education (12.1%) and retail trade (10.9%) were the largest sectors in 2025.

- Over the same period, retail trade rose strongly (6.79% to 11.39%), as did education (5.71% to 8.06%), other personal services (2.97% to 4.61%) and land transport (0.26% to 2.92%), while domestic work declined (9.16% to 7.30%). Taken together, the composition of urban women's employment shifted away from textile manufacturing toward trade, education and services.

D. THREE-DIGIT NIC DECOMPOSITION OF KEY INDUSTRIES

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (NIC 01-03)

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

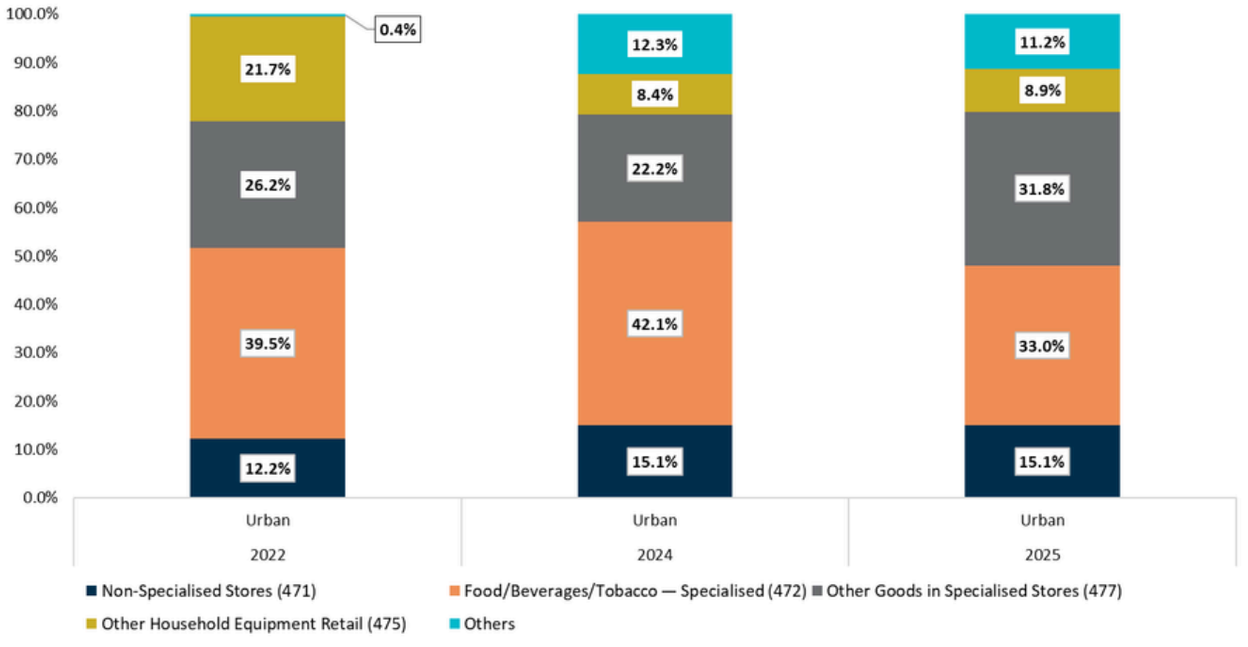


- Within rural agriculture, animal production (014) rose from 38.26% in 2022 to 47.27% in 2025 and is now the single largest sub-activity, overtaking the growing of non-perennial crops (011), which slipped from 52.35% to 42.48% over the same period — the cross-over occurring around 2024. Mixed farming (015) and support activities to agriculture (016) account for most of the remainder, the latter edging up from 4.14% to 5.50%. The prominence and continued rise of animal production is consistent with Gujarat's large livestock and dairy economy, anchored by the Amul/GCMMF cooperative network[5], and is broadly in line with the national rise in the animal-production share among agricultural women.

- In urban areas the pattern is inverted. The growing of non-perennial crops (011) is the largest activity and rose from 38.41% in 2022 to 53.68% in 2025, while animal production (014) declined from 39.54% to 33.88% and support activities (016) fell from 16.20% to 8.87%. The urban concentration in crop cultivation rather than livestock distinguishes the small urban agricultural workforce from its rural counterpart.

Retail Trade (NIC 47)

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

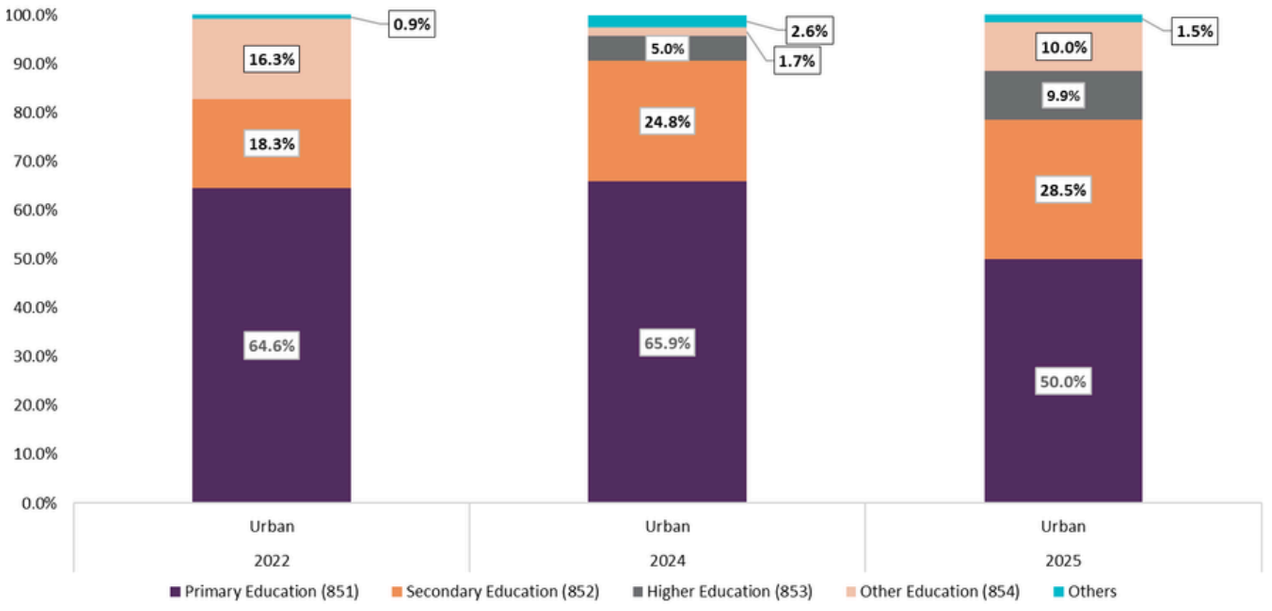


Retail is a small and year-to-year volatile share of rural female employment (3.65% in 2025), and the rural sub-shares bounce on that small base, so the discussion focuses on urban areas, where retail employs a far larger and steadily rising share of women (6.79% in 2022 to 11.39% in 2025, one of the fastest-growing urban employers in the state). Urban women's retail employment rests on two pillars, specialised food and beverage retail (472), the largest throughout despite easing from 39.52% in 2022 to 33.00% in 2025, and retail of other specialised goods (477 — clothing, footwear, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals), which rose from 26.15% to 31.80% and is the clearest upward movement. Non-specialised stores (471) settled near 15% after a 2023 spike, while household equipment retail (475) receded sharply from 21.73% in 2022 to 8.93%.

[5]See Footnote 2.

Education (NIC 85)

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



Education is about 2% of rural female employment (2.18% in 2025), and on that small base the rural 3-digit split is unstable, with primary education alone swinging between 64% and 92% across the four years, so the analysis focuses on urban areas, where education employs a substantial 8.06% of women. Through 2022–2024 primary education (851) held close to two-thirds of urban women's education employment (64.56% in 2022, 65.85% in 2024) before falling to 50.04% in 2025. Over the same period, secondary education (852) rose from 18.25% to 28.50%, its highest in the series, and higher education (853) from effectively nil in 2022 to 9.94%, while other education (854) declined from 16.31% to 10.03%. Secondary and higher education thus absorbed both the fall in primary teaching and the decline in other education, and the broadening of urban women's education employment from a primary-school base toward secondary and tertiary teaching is the clearest structural signal.

E. SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Self-Employed Women – Sector Distribution

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

Figure 10A: **Rural 2022**

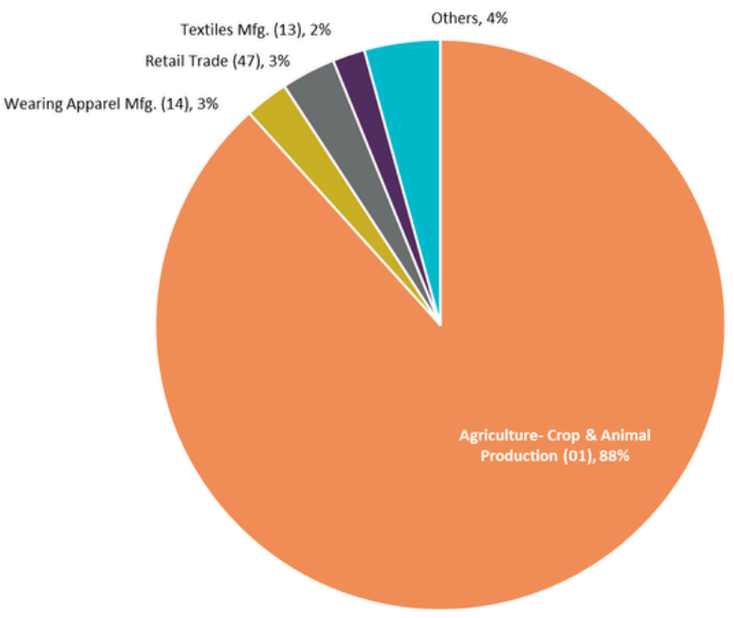
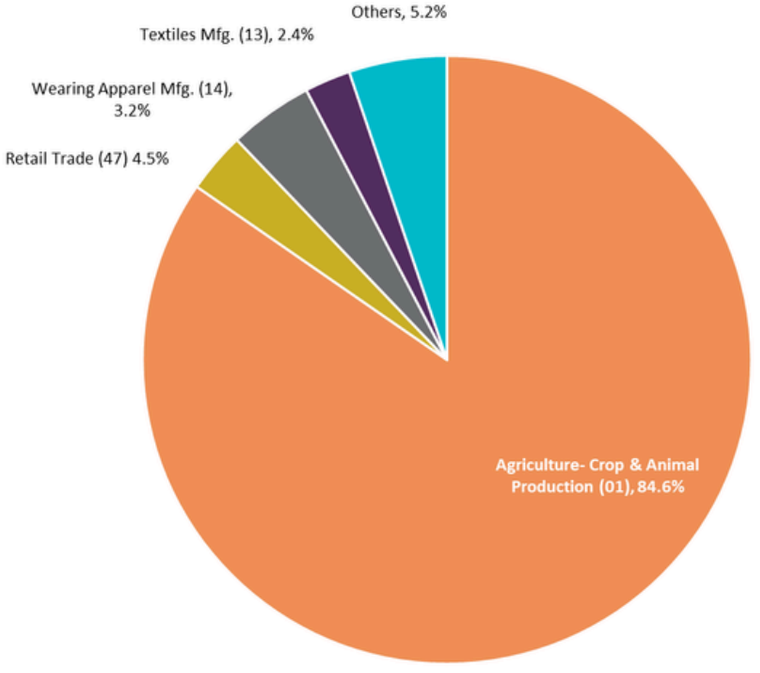


Figure 10B: **Rural 2025**



- Rural self-employed women remain overwhelmingly concentrated in agriculture, though its share fell from 88.35% in 2022 to 84.60% in 2025, close to the all-India rural figure of 82.2% in 2025. The non-farm share rose modestly over the same period, with retail trade (3.08% to 4.48%), wearing apparel (2.48% to 3.23%) and textiles (1.83% to 2.44%) each gaining ground.

Figure 10C: **Urban 2022**

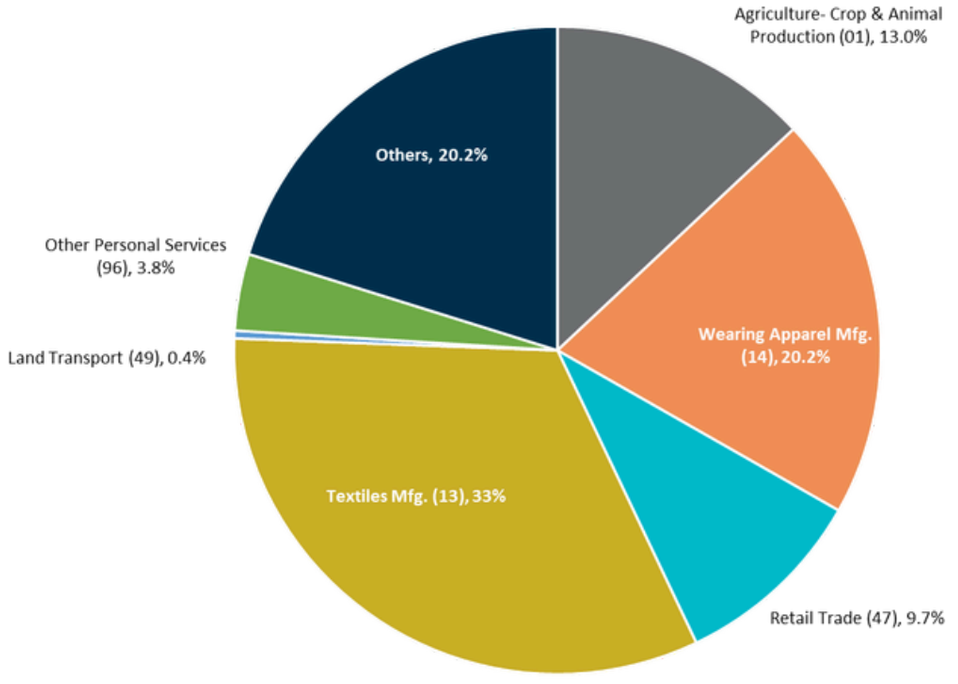
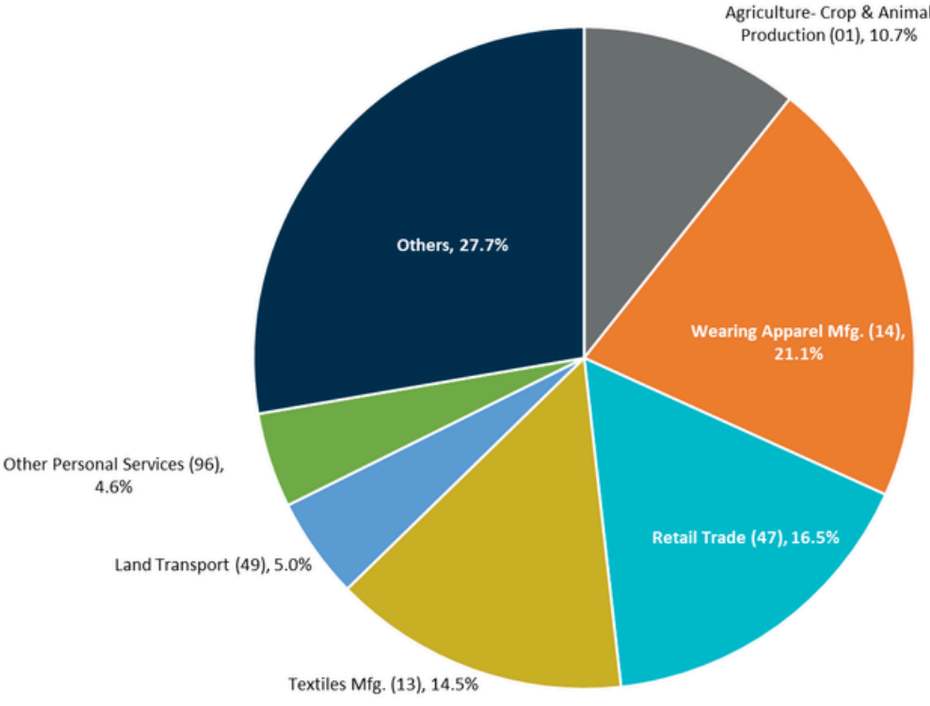


Figure 10D: **Urban 2025**



- Among urban self-employed women, textiles fell sharply from 32.66% in 2022 to 14.49% in 2025, while retail trade rose (9.71% to 16.45%) and wearing apparel held broadly steady (20.21% to 21.09%), making apparel the largest sector. Land transport, negligible in 2022 (0.39%), reached 4.95% in 2025, and agriculture declined (13.03% to 10.68%). Textiles and apparel together still account for 35.58% of urban self-employment, well above the all-India urban figure of about 24% (apparel 18.8%, textiles 5.6%), where agriculture (21.8%) and retail trade (19.5%) are the largest sectors.

Casual Women Workers – Sector Distribution

Top sectors for Casual Labour Women (% within casual)

Figure 11A: **Rural 2022**

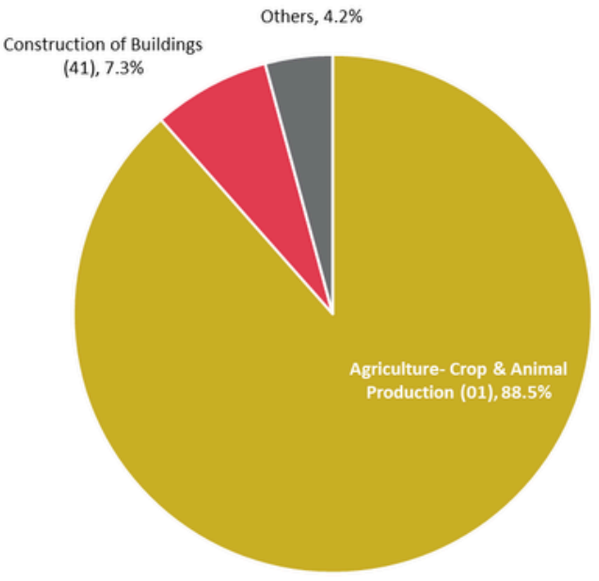
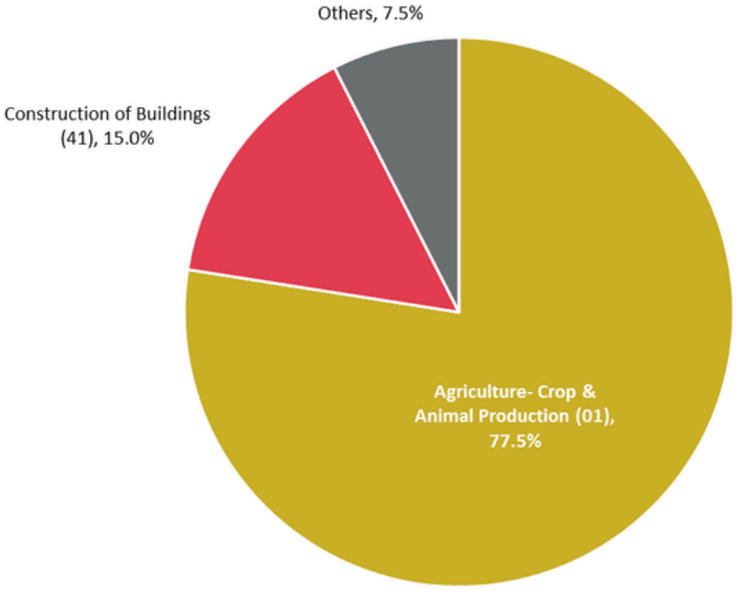


Figure 11B: **Rural 2025**



- Among rural casual women, agriculture's share fell from 88.52% in 2022 to 77.49% in 2025, while construction of buildings roughly doubled (7.33% to 15.02%). This mirrors the all-India rural pattern, where construction's share of women's casual work rose to 14.19% in 2025 and agriculture's fell to 70.1%.

Figure 11C: **Urban 2022**

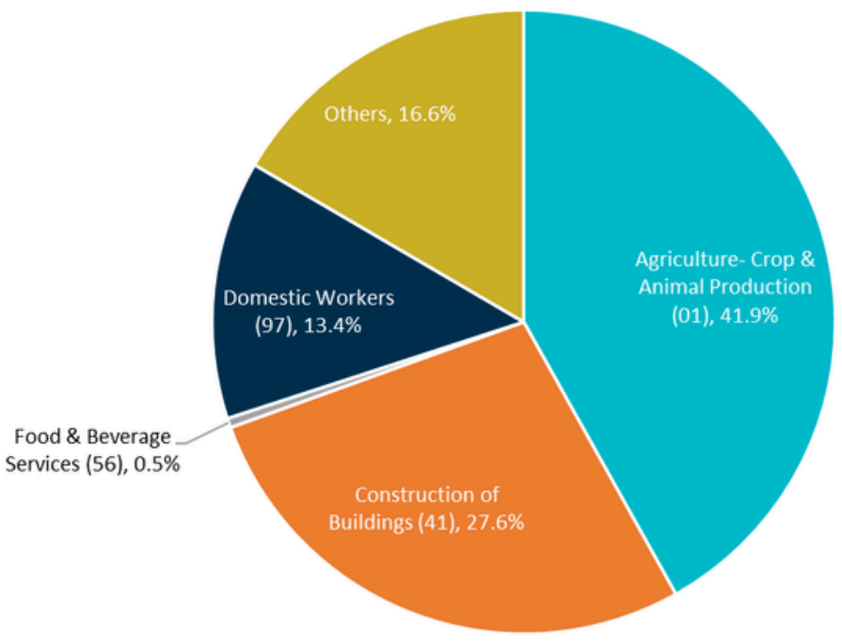
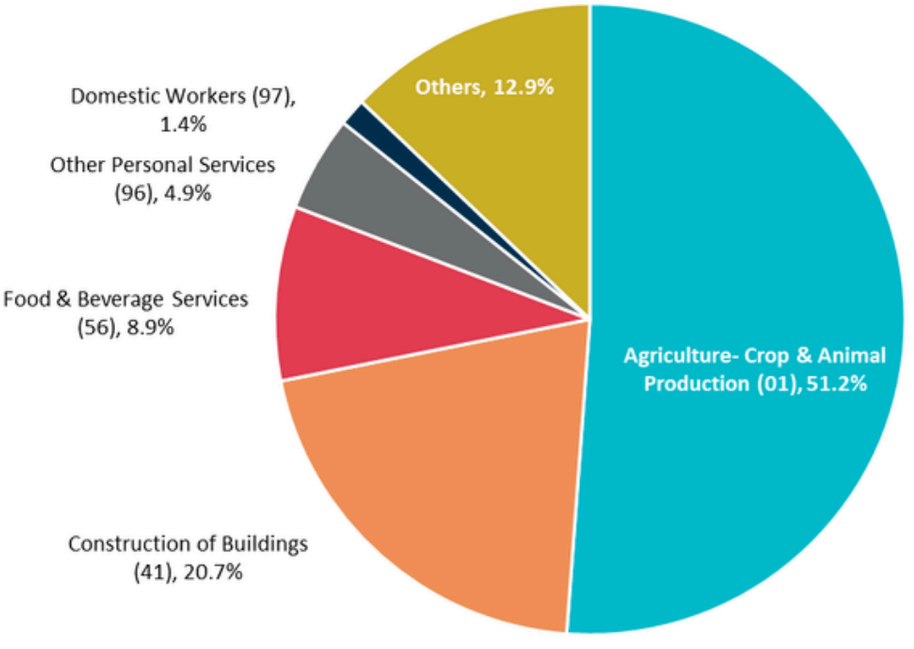


Figure 11D: **Urban 2025**



- Urban casual women are concentrated in agriculture, whose share rose from 41.89% in 2022 to 51.20% in 2025, and in construction, whose share fell from 27.63% to 20.69%. Domestic work dropped sharply (13.41% to 1.41%), while food and beverage services (0.49% to 8.94%) and other personal services (0.00% to 4.90%) emerged. Because casual work accounts for only about 6% of urban women workers, these shares rest on a small base and fluctuate considerably from year to year.

Regular Salaried Women Workers – Sector Distribution

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

Figure 12A: **Urban 2022**

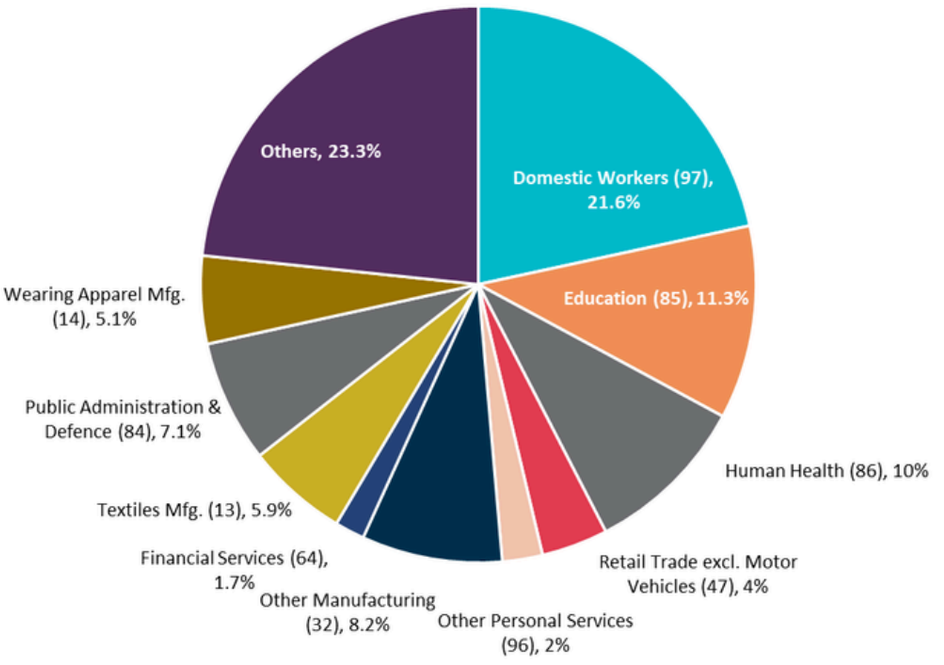
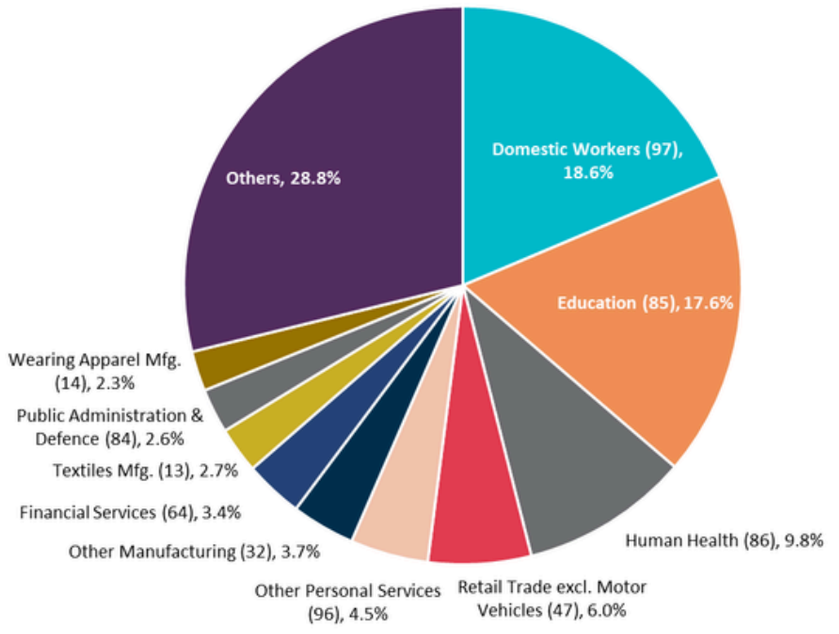


Figure 12B: **Urban 2025**



Among urban regular salaried women, domestic work remains the largest sector despite a decline from 21.61% in 2022 to 18.64% in 2025, closely followed by education, whose share rose from 11.25% to 17.63%. Retail trade (3.87% to 5.97%), other personal services (2.34% to 4.52%) and financial services (1.73% to 3.39%) also gained share, and human health was stable (9.55% to 9.78%). Manufacturing's share of urban salaried work fell sharply, with textiles, apparel and other manufacturing together dropping from 19.20% to 8.67%, and public administration declined from 7.11% to 2.58%. Education, domestic work and health are also the main sources of urban women's salaried employment at the all-India level (20.3%, 18.2% and 9.0% respectively in 2025), although nationally education rather than domestic work is the largest.[6]

[6]Sectoral distribution is reported for urban areas only, since regular salaried work accounts for a small share of rural women's employment in Gujarat (8.22% in 2025), and the rural sector-wise shares vary considerably from year to year. "Others" combines the remaining NIC divisions with a non-zero urban share (59 in 2025 and 28 in 2022), none of which exceeds 2.32% in 2025 (services to buildings and landscape activities) or 3.23% in 2022 (computer programming and consultancy). "Others" is computed as the residual to 100.

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

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

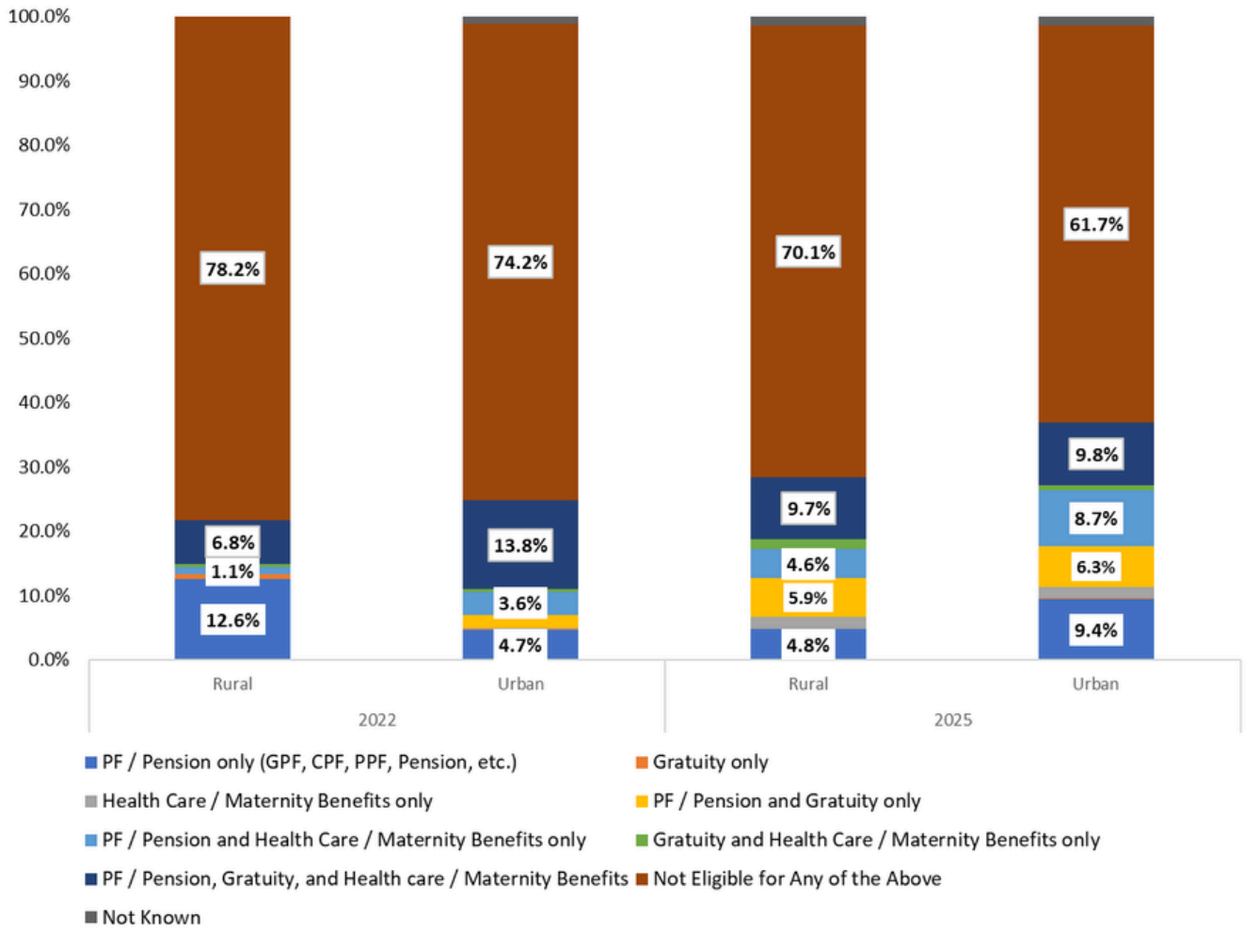
Occupation Group	RURAL			URBAN		
	2022	2024	2025	2022	2024	2025
Managers (1)	1.42	0.50	0.61	21.44	5.14	3.76
Professionals (2)	2.30	0.84	1.47	9.57	12.75	12.67
Technicians (3)	1.61	1.30	1.34	3.88	4.59	3.35
Clerks (4)	0.10	0.21	0.60	3.22	4.06	4.14
Service & sales workers (5)	5.20	3.06	4.98	8.47	16.56	17.11
Skilled agricultural & fishery (6)	62.88	71.53	65.03	7.19	2.11	6.12
Craft & related trades (7)	3.97	5.26	6.10	20.01	27.30	25.92
Plant & machine operators (8)	2.74	1.50	2.09	4.88	4.35	5.83
Elementary occupations (9)	19.78	15.80	17.78	21.35	23.15	21.10

- Rural women's occupations are dominated by skilled agricultural and fishery work (62.88% in 2022, 65.03% in 2025), followed by elementary occupations (19.78% in 2022 and 17.78% in 2025), with a modest rise in craft and related trades (3.97% to 6.10%). This is broadly in line with the all-India rural structure.
- Urban women are distinctively concentrated in craft and related trades — the largest urban group at 25.92% in 2025 (up from 20.01% in 2022) — reflecting the apparel and textile manufacturing base, alongside elementary occupations (around 21%) and a sharp rise in service and sales workers (8.47% to 17.11%). The urban craft-and-trades share is well above the national figure of about 15%, while managerial roles fell steeply (21.44% to 3.76%), echoing the national drop in urban managerial roles though more sharply; the very high 2022 figure and the revised 2025 sampling design warrant caution in reading this fall.

G. CONDITIONS OF WORK IN REGULAR SALARIED EMPLOYMENT

Social Security Benefits

Figure 13: **Extent and Composition of Social Security Coverage among Women in Regular Employment (2022–2025)**



- Among rural regular salaried women, the share with no social security benefit fell from 78.24% in 2022 to 70.14% in 2025, and the share with full coverage (PF/pension, gratuity and health/maternity together) rose from 6.83% to 9.69%. Exclusion nonetheless remains well above the all-India rural level of 57.4% in 2025, although the gap narrowed from about 17 to 13 percentage points.

- Among urban regular salaried women, the share with no benefit fell more steeply, from 74.18% to 61.70%, but full coverage declined from 13.81% to 9.79%, with gains concentrated in partial coverage such as PF/pension only (4.70% to 9.44%) and PF/pension with health/maternity benefits (3.57% to 8.72%). The gap with the all-India urban level (52.6% in 2025) narrowed from about 22 to 9 percentage points.

Type of Job Contract

Figure 14A: **No Written Job Contracts**

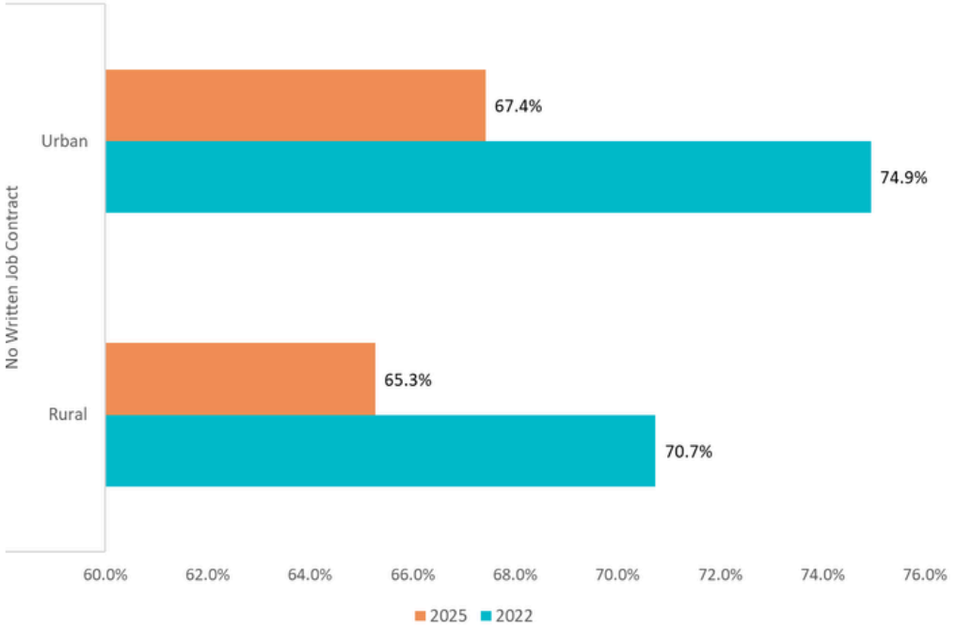
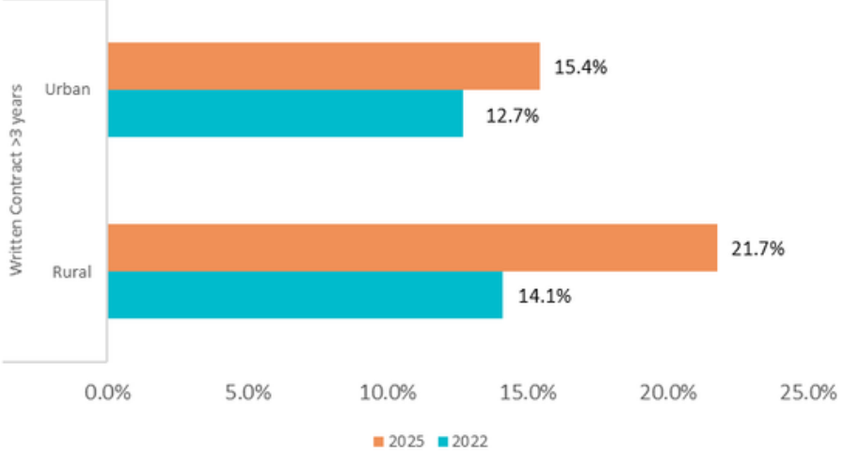


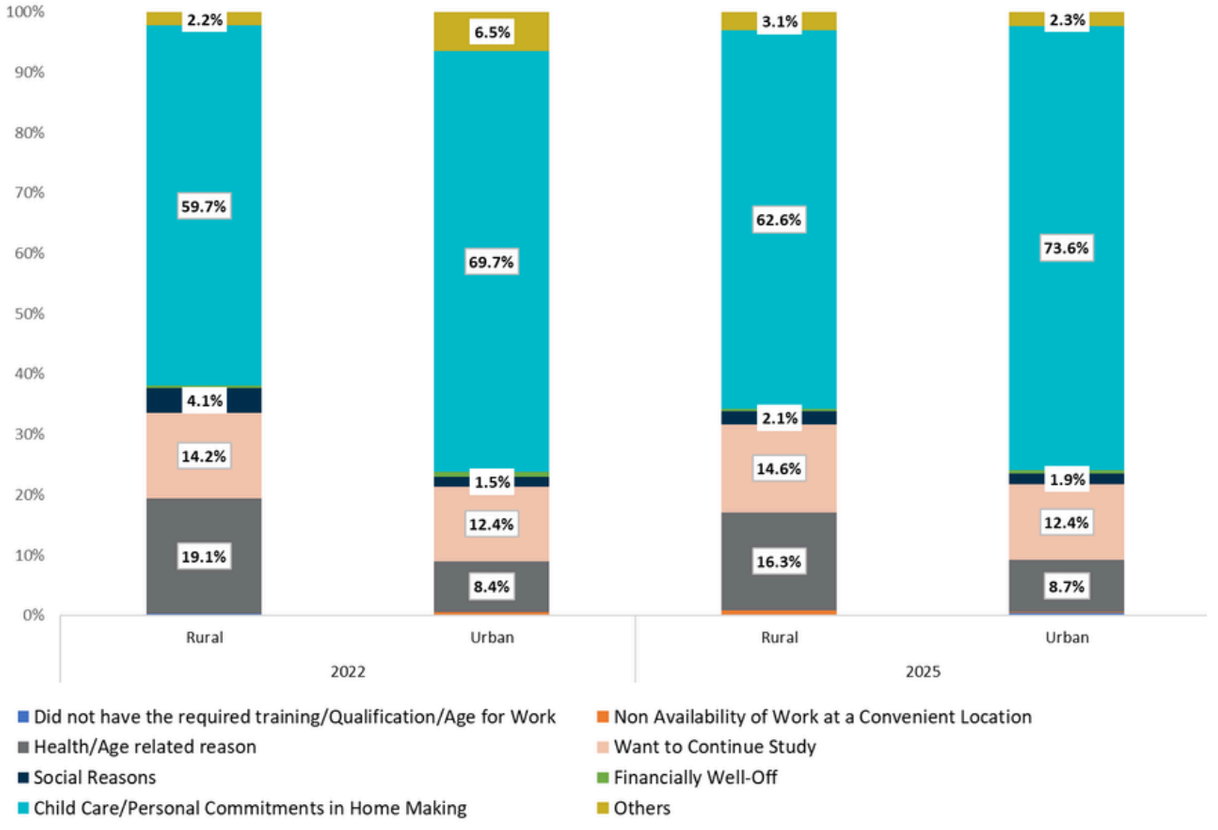
Figure 14B: **Written contract of more than 3 years**



- Among rural regular salaried women, the share without a written job contract fell from 70.74% in 2022 to 65.27% in 2025, while contracts of over three years rose from 14.11% to 21.74%. Despite this improvement, informality remains well above the all-India rural level, where 53.5% lacked a written contract in 2025.
- Among urban regular salaried women, the share without a written contract declined from 74.94% to 67.42%, with gains spread across short-term contracts of up to one year (10.92% to 12.12%), one-to-three-year contracts (1.48% to 5.07%) and contracts of over three years (12.66% to 15.40%). As at the all-India level, urban salaried women are somewhat less likely than rural women to hold a written contract, but Gujarat's urban share without one remains well above the national figure of 58.6%.

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

Figure 15: **Reason for Not Being in the Labour Force**



Child care and home-making commitments are by far the dominant reason women remain outside the labour force, and their share rose between 2022 and 2025 in both rural (59.68% to 62.62%) and urban areas (69.71% to 73.59%). Health or age is the next most common reason for rural women (19.10% to 16.26%), and continuing study for urban women (12.40% to 12.44%). The dominance of care mirrors the all-India pattern, although nationally the share eased slightly overall (61.6% to 60.0%), falling in rural areas while rising in urban areas (62.9% to 65.4%), whereas in Gujarat it rose in both.

I. CONCLUSION

Between 2022 and 2025, women's labour force participation in Gujarat rose in both rural (48.3% to 56.3%) and urban areas (23.0% to 31.7%). The rural rate remained well above the all-India level throughout, while the urban rate, below the national figure in 2022 (24.7%), moved clearly above it by 2025 (27.7%)[7]. What stands out, however, is less the level than the changing shape of women's work. In urban areas, manufacturing remained the largest single industry group and craft and related trades the largest occupational group, but services overtook manufacturing as a whole (54.7% against 33.0% in 2025), the textiles share more than halved (20.1% to 9.1%), and retail trade and education gained ground, a change in composition rather than uniform growth. In rural areas, self-employed women, most of them in agriculture, moved away from unpaid family work toward own-account work, and within agriculture animal production overtook crop cultivation as the main activity.

Conditions in regular salaried work improved on both measures tracked here. The share of salaried women without any social security benefit fell from 76.0% to 64.7%, and the share without a written contract from 73.1% to 66.7%, although fewer urban women held the full package of provident fund, gratuity and health benefits (13.8% to 9.8%), and both indicators remain worse than the national rural and urban levels[8]. Child care and home-making commitments remained by far the most common reason women stayed outside the labour force.

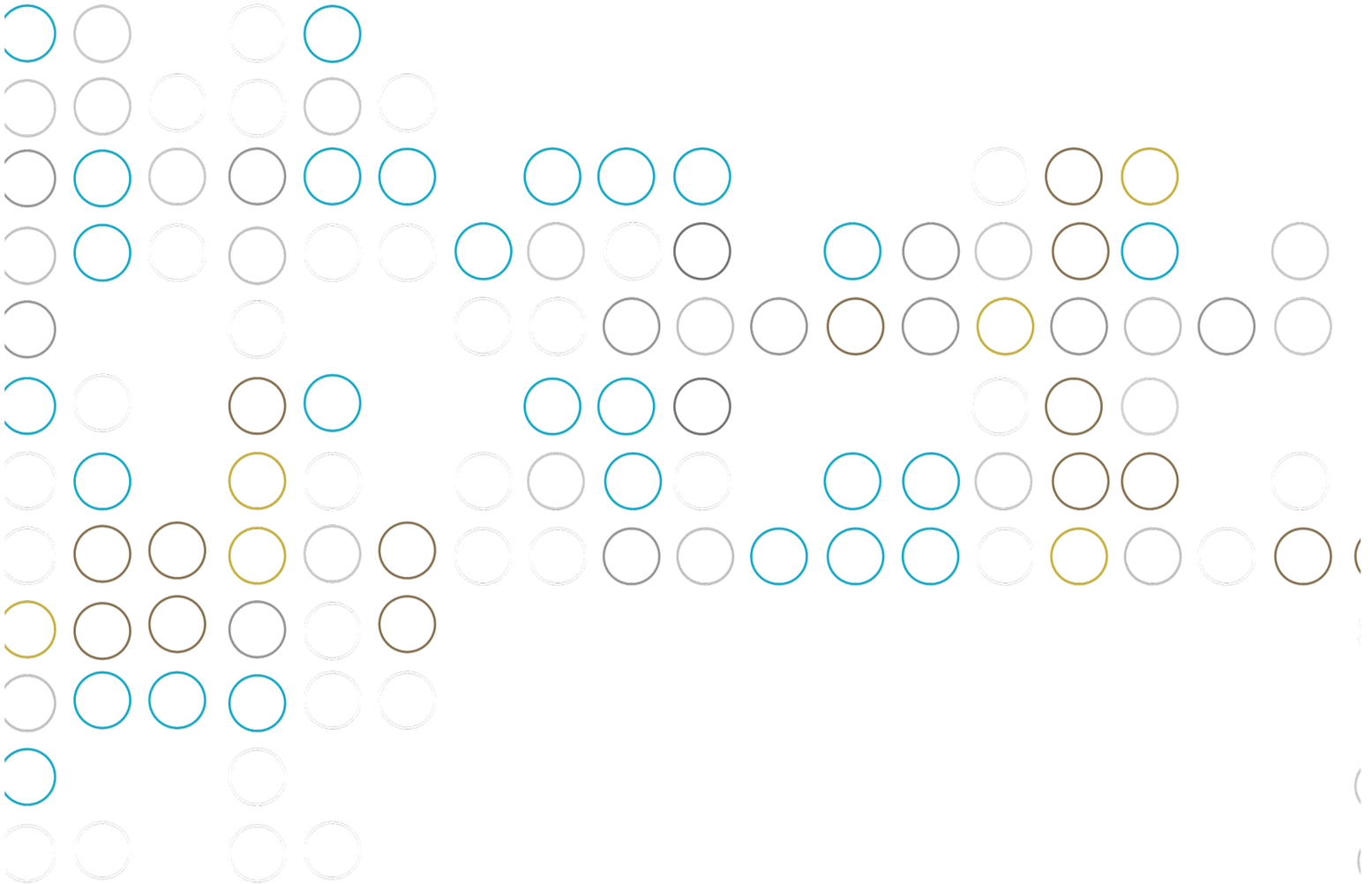
Set beside the state's recent agenda, these findings suggest where effort could be directed. Self-help-group programmes such as the Mukhyamantri Mahila Utkarsh Yojana, Lakhpati Didi and G-SAFAL are well placed to support the rural move into own-account work, particularly if they help women build viable non-farm enterprises. Since care responsibilities remain the main barrier, expanding crèche provision, for instance through anganwadi-cum-crèches under the national Palna scheme, bears directly on participation[9], and the Nari Gaurav Niti–2024, with the economic environment among its eight focus areas, offers a framework for coordinating such efforts across departments[10]. In urban areas, where manufacturing's share of both women's employment and salaried work fell (the latter from 19.2% to 8.7% of urban salaried women), consolidating the gains will depend on retaining women in textile and apparel work and on extending written contracts and social security to domestic work, which remains the largest single employer of urban salaried women.

[7]See Footnote 9

[8]See Footnote 9

[9]Press Information Bureau. (2025, April 7). Palna scheme under Mission Shakti. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2119769

[10]Press Trust of India. (2024, September 1). Gujarat govt launches reformulated gender policy for inclusive development, empowerment. The Week. https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2024/09/01/bes5-gj-gender-policy.html



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

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