



Employment Statistics in Focus-April 2023

Female Labour Utilization in India



भारत सरकार

Ministry of Labour and Employment

Directorate General of Employment



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PREFACE

Female participation in the labour force and access to decent work is very much essential for an inclusive and sustainable development of the country. At the macro level, greater participation of female in the workforce is good for the overall economy. In India, female labour force participation is growing significantly over the years. Albeit, the female labour force participation rate is lower than global average, but it is moving upwards notably. On the other side, the various socio-economic factors which affect female participation in labour force can't be overlooked. A number of barriers continue to exist for women to enter the labour market and obtain decent jobs, and they are disproportionately subject to a wide range of challenges regarding access to employment, choice of work, working conditions, job security, wage parity, discrimination and balancing work and family obligations.

The Report "Female Labour Utilization in India" is an attempt to present the various components of female labour utilization, either in labour force or outside the labour force, in order to have robust, reliable and richer information on female labour utilization for policy formulators. It summarises the barriers that stop female to participate in labour force with facts and figures. It provides a glance of correlation between female employment and education.

I wish to place on record my appreciation for the painstaking efforts to Shri Amit Nirmal, Deputy Director General (Employment), Dr. Shikha Anand, Director (Employment) and their entire team in bringing out this publication with data pooled from various sources.

I hope this Publication will serve as a valuable tool in the hands of policy makers, planners, administrators, researchers and other stakeholders for enhancing the female participation in decent and quality work.

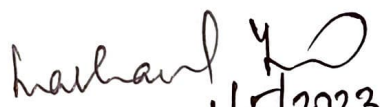

(Dr. Shashank Goel)

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I. Introduction

Female employment in India has an intrinsic relationship with female empowerment. Female employment and empowerment have been considerable issues over the years. The rise in economic growth in India has brought significant change to the lives of Indian women and ultimately affects the female employment. The national Household survey, Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted by National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), reveals the female employment status in India. No doubt that the Female labour force participation (FLFPR) rate in India, which refers to women who are either working or looking for a job, is below the global average of 47 percent for several years. But the commendable fact is that the women empowerment over the years has taken the female employment at the risings steps. Though it is still not at par with global average, however, it's improving over the years. The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2021-22 highlights that the FLFPR for prime working age group (15 years & above) has increased considerably and stood at 32.8% in India. Experiencing structural improvements to their lives, such as decline in fertility rates and expansion of women's education brought India's female LFPR on an upward track. Now, India is a country where one third of women have joined the labour force.

This Report is organised in twelve sections. The next section describes the objectives of the report. Section 3 explains the female participation in labour force in India. Rural and urban female participation in labour force are explained in this section. Section 4 discusses the major factors responsible for low female participation in labour force. Section 5 provides the details of female labour utilization components and gives the distribution of females by various activities, either in labour force or not. Section 6 gives the details on female protected employment. Section 7 provides insights on wage disparity based on gender. Section 8 explains the industrial compositions of female by their status in employment. Section 9 examines the correlation between education and labour force participation. Section 10 explains the major field of training for females segregated by rural and urban. The Government policies and interventions towards the female employment are summarized in Section 11. The last section concludes with the suggestions for improving the position of female workers in India.

II. Objectives of the Report

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the findings from household survey, policy and data on female labour force participation. The report aims to establish trends, summarise the hindering reasons, identify potential areas for females. Followings are the main objectives of the report:

- ❖ To present a portrait of female in labour market
- ❖ To summarize the reasons of low female labour force participation in India
- ❖ To go into detail where most of the women, who are not in labour force, are engaged.
- ❖ To familiarize with female labour market information for gender analysis and policymaking
- ❖ To highlight continuing labour market imbalances

III. Explaining the Female Participation in Labour Force

Female labour force participation rate is a multidimensional agglomeration of structural and socioeconomic factors. Over the years, the female participation in labour force showed an increasing trend. Encouraging and welcoming female higher participation in the labour force is vital for economic growth. The latest Report of Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2021-22 is evident of increased Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India. Though it is lower than the male, but female LFPR is significantly increasing over the years and at present, around one third of women have joined the labour force.

As per the latest PLFS report, around 32.8% female of working age (15 years and above) were in labour force in 2021-22 which was just 23.3% in 2017-18, registered a surge of 9.5% points during these years. The major push came from the rural sector than the urban sector, where it increased by 12.0 and 3.4 percentage points, respectively. In rural areas, female LFPR has increased to 36.6% during 2021-22 as compared to 24.6% in 2017-18, showed an increase of 12.0% points. On the other side, female participation in urban areas was significantly lower than the rural areas. Female LFPR was 23.8% in 2021-22 as compared to 20.4% in 2017-18 in urban areas, showed an increase of just 3.4% points.

According to Annual PLFS Report, Figure 1, 2 and 3 shows the Female Labour Force Participation Rate for age 15 years & above at usual status during 2021-22.

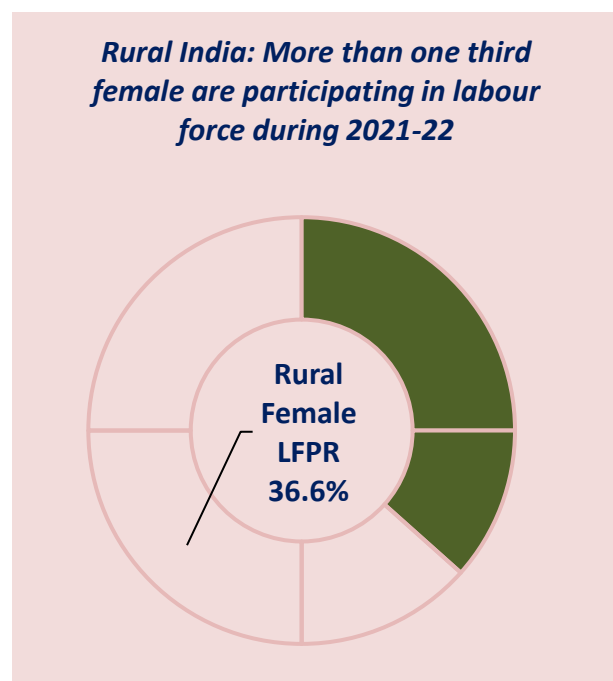


Figure 1:

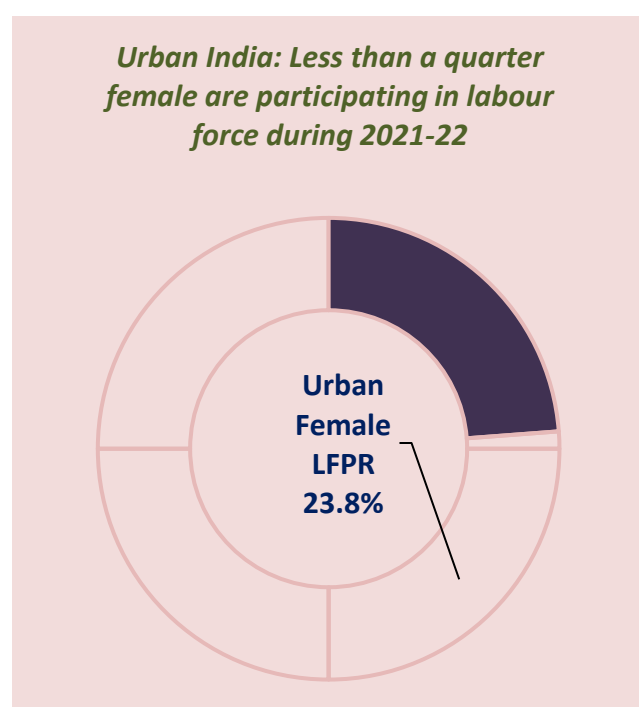
36.6% of female aged 15 years & above in Rural areas are participating in labour force, as against 78.2% male.

Female LFPR in age group 15-59 years in Rural areas is 39.3%, as against 82.1% male.

Overall LFPR in rural areas is 57.5% for persons of age 15 years & above and 60.8% for age group 15-59 years.

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

Figure 2:



23.8% of female aged 15 years & above in Urban areas are participating in labour force, as against 74.7% male.

Female LFPR in age group 15-59 years in Urban areas is 26.5%, as against 81.2% male.

Overall LFPR in Urban areas is 49.7% for persons of age 15 years & above and 54.5% for age group 15-59 years.

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

Figure 3:



32.8% of female aged 15 years & above in India are participating in labour force, as against 77.2% male.

Female LFPR in age group 15-59 years is 35.6%, as against 81.8% male.

Overall LFPR in India is 55.2% for persons of age 15 years & above and 58.9% for age group 15-59 years.

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

Table 1 shows the LFPR in usual status (ps+ss) for persons of age 15 years & above (in %) segregated by gender and geographical location (rural and urban).

Table 1: LFPR in usual status (ps+ss) for persons of age 15 years & above (in %)									
Years	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2017-18	76.4	24.6	50.7	74.5	20.4	47.6	75.8	23.3	49.8
2021-22	78.2	36.6	57.5	74.7	23.8	49.7	77.2	32.8	55.2
Change in 2021-22 over 2017-18 (% points)	1.8	12.0	6.8	0.2	3.4	2.1	1.4	9.5	5.4

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

The female participation in labour force has increased by 9.5% points in 2021-22 over the year 2017-18, this upward trend in female LFPR is the result of various influential factors. Further, it is evident from the table that the major component of increase in the overall labour force participation in India is increase in the female LFPR. One of the main factors of positive signs in female labour market is various steps taken by the Government of India for boosting employment and women empowerment through

various laws, policies and schemes. Although, the female LFPR is lower than male in India, but the optimistic point is that the female LFPR is increasing over the years and has already crossed one quarter of total female and touched one-third of women.

Further, the LFPR for persons of age 15-59 years (in %) segregated by gender and geographical location (rural and urban) in usual status is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: LFPR in usual status for persons of age 15-59 years (in %)									
Years	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
2017-18	80.2	26.6	53.6	80.1	22.3	51.6	80.2	25.3	53.0
2021-22	82.1	39.3	60.8	81.2	26.5	54.5	81.8	35.6	58.9
Change in 2021-22 over 2017-18 (% points)	1.9	12.7	7.2	1.1	4.2	2.9	1.6	10.3	5.9

Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

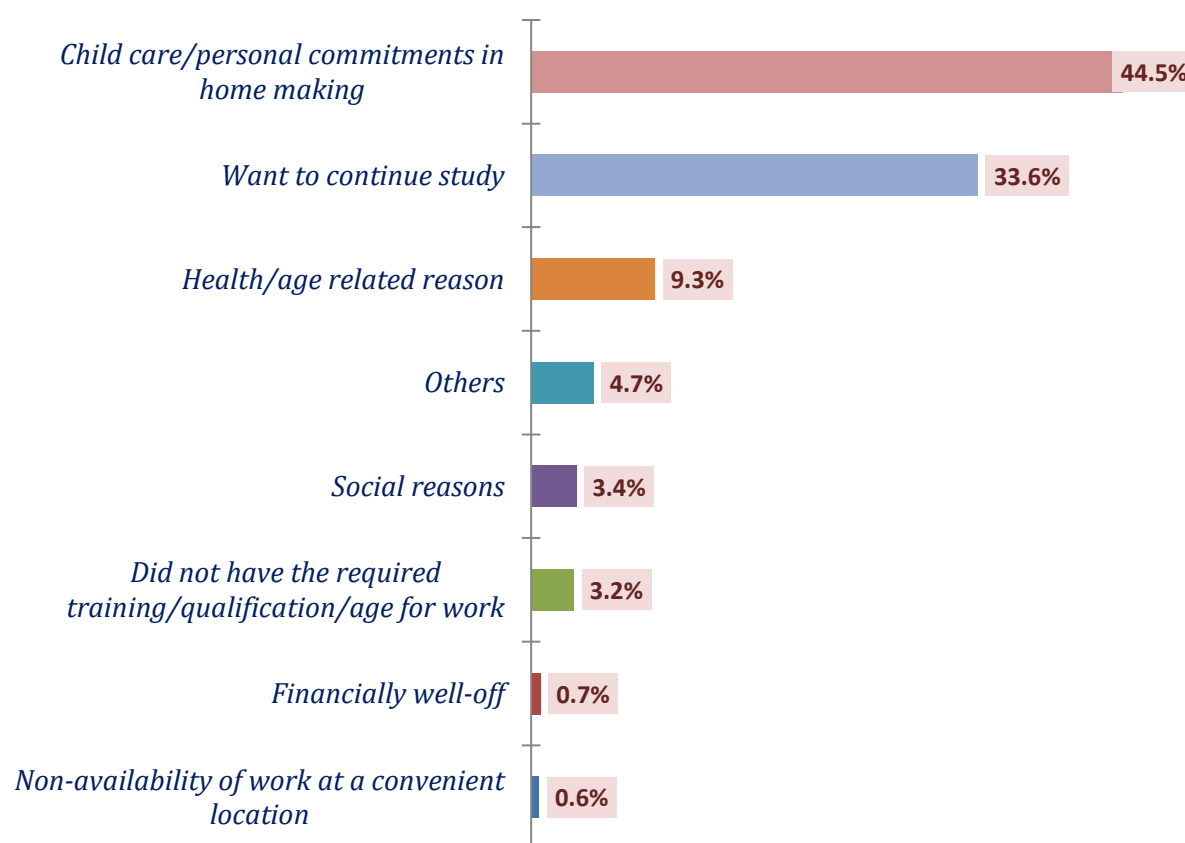
The data in the above table shows that out of the total females of age group 15-59 years, 35.6% females were in labour force during 2021-22 as compared to 25.3% during 2017-18, a total increase of 10.3% points during the span of 2017-18 to 2021-22. Around 39.3% females of age group 15-59 years in rural areas were in labour force during 2021-22, registered an increase of 12.7% points from the year 2017-18. In urban areas, around 26.5% females were in labour force during 2021-22 as compared to 22.3% in 2017-18.

IV. Factors responsible for low Female Participation in labour force

The participation of women in the labour market are primarily driven by various factors, viz., economic development, education levels, fertility rates, access to childcare and other supportive services and, ultimately, the cultural and normative context of society and social norms. These factors react as the “Push and Pull factors” for female participation in employment. However the rapid economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, results in increasing women participation in labour force but women faces barriers in accessing economic opportunities. World Bank Report

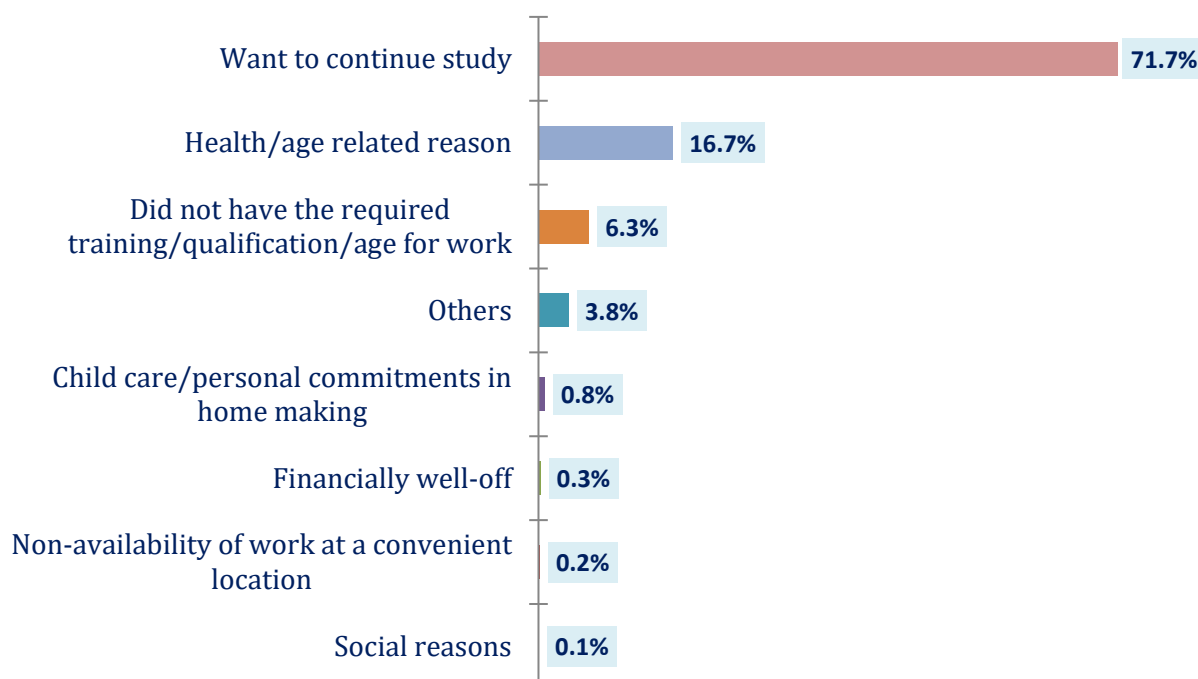
“Reshaping Norms: A New Way Forward” reveals that the economic development and increasing income levels don’t seem sufficient to reduce stubbornly high gender gaps across multiple dimensions in the region. Social norms about gender can be considered as a key obstacle towards gender equality. This section highlights the major reasons that forced women to be outside the labour force. Here, an analysis has been done to understand the prime factors that create hurdles for women for participating in labour force. The periodic labour force surveys capture the information on the *reasons for not being in labour force*. According to the PLFS 2021-22 results, the percentage distribution of men and women not being in labour force by the main reasons are as follows:

Figure 4: Reasons reported by females (in %) for not being in labour force



Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

Figure 5: Reasons reported by male (in %) for not being in labour force



Source: Annual PLFS Report, MoSPI

It is evident from the above data that out of the total women, who are outside the labour force, around 44.5% women were not in labour force due to “*Child care/personal commitments in home making*” and 33.6% women want to continue their study instead of joining labour force. Around 3.4% women were outside the labour force due to “*social reasons*”.

There is no analogy in the hindrances faced by men and women to participate in the labour force. The main reason for men not being in labour force was continuation of their study. Around 71.7% men wanted to continue their study and it keeps them outside the labour force.

Here, it can be easily understood that most of the work of women is home based such as caregiving, contributing to non-market activities, which have economic benefits for households. Women play the multidimensional role in the family and are, therefore, burdened with housework or house commitments, a situation that is influenced by

gender norms. Such sort of work is overlooked, undervalued and under-reported. Hence the measurement is another key issue in the arena of low female LFP.

Social norms are informal, unwritten rules of behaviour and social conduct that determines the acceptable, appropriate doings and attitude in the given social context. The prevalent social norms for female are “Female Homemaker norm” which assigns that the role of taking care of home and children to Woman, and for males are “Male Breadwinner norm” which assigns the responsibility of Household expenses to the man. Thus the prime social and cultural norm is ‘time poverty’ among married women. Even when women are educated and allowed to work outside the home, they prefer not to do work due to the disproportionate burden of the care economy.

Therefore, following basic interlinked factors explain the low female labour force participation in India:

- a. Unpaid domestic duties/Unpaid care work
- b. Pervasiveness of various gender biased social norms
- c. Rising household income which works as disincentive for female participation in labour market
- d. Salary/Wage Disparity

Further, education is one of the most important factors that influence the female labour force participation. The educational attainment has an important effect on an individual’s decision to participate in the labour market. There are many theories that underline the importance of education in employment outcomes. The theories also reveal that greater educational attainment leads to higher participation in the labour force and also increased productivity. Section IX describes the impact of education level on female participation in labour force and workforce.

V. Components of Female Labour Utilization

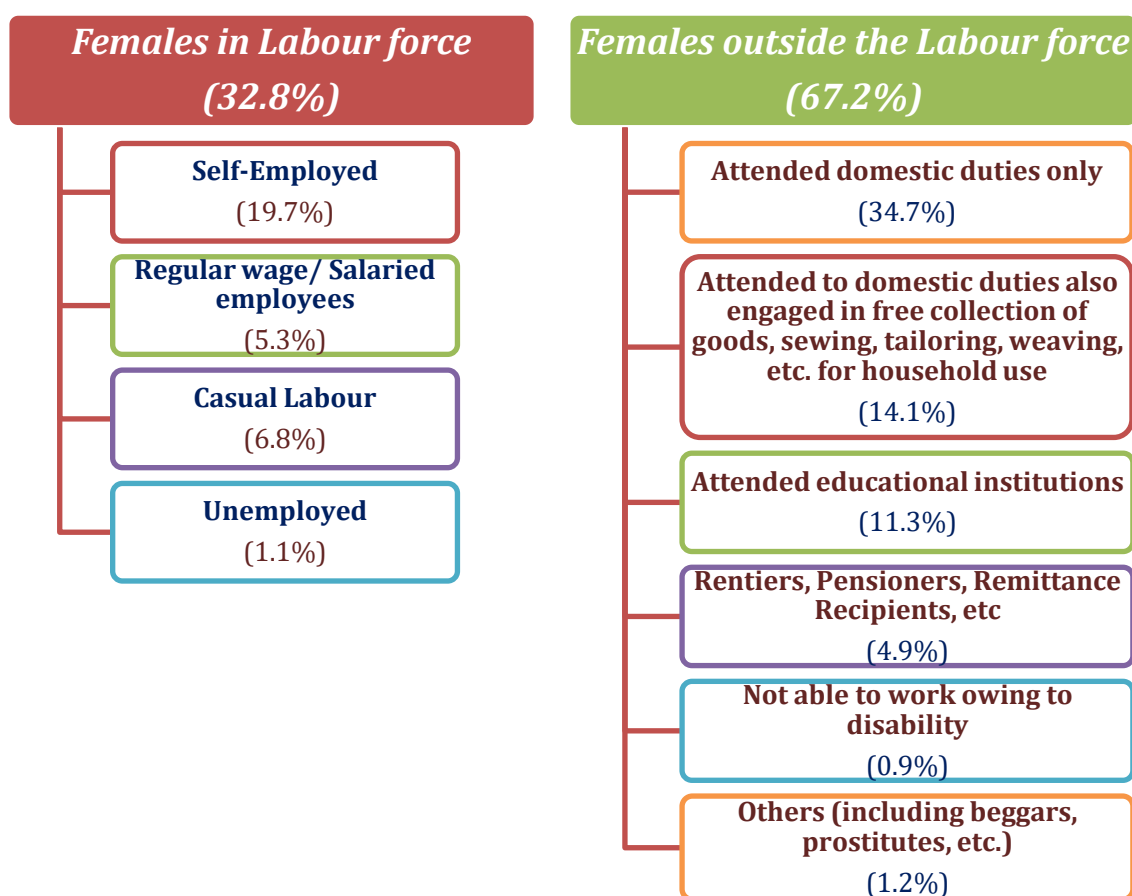
This section elaborates the female labour utilization components based on the activity situation with regard to participation in economic and non-economic activities. The broad activity status is “being in labour force” and “not being in the labour force”. The labour force is categorized in two components, viz., persons who are working, i.e. employed, and persons who are not working and want to work, i.e. unemployed. On the other side of the spectrum are persons outside of the labour force (also known as the economically inactive population), a person who neither works nor looks for work.

The descriptions and analysis regarding the distribution of females by the activity status are based on the PLFS results. Breaking down the female labour into different components helps to understand the type of work, paid-unpaid activities and unemployment. It also gives the details where the females are engaged if not in labour force. In India, 32.8% of total women of age 15 years and above are participating in labour force and the remaining 67.2% women are outside the labour force. This aggregation is here studied in detail to learn the activities of females, either in labour force or not. Breakup of these two broad activity status is shown in **Figure 6**.

It is clearly visible from the Figure 6 that out of total female, 67.2% females of age 15 years & above is not in labour force and must have engaged in some kind of non-economic activities. Here, it is observed that female participation in unpaid works is truly high and that are unlikely to be considered as work. Around 49% females (almost half of the female population) are engaged in performing their domestic duties, child care, free collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use. These household chores keep the females away from labour force due to the “*Female Homemaker Norm*”. Female partaking in their domestic activities, thus, are not paid for the labour they perform.

Around 11.3% females are neither in work nor seeking any work as they are attending the educational institutions. Thus, it is apparent that the large proportion of females of age 15 years & above is outside the labour force due to the unpaid household activities and studies.

Figure 6: Breakup for total females of age 15 years & above in India



Source: PLFS Report, MoSPI

The female workforce is skewed towards the “Self-employment” followed by “casual labour”. In India, out of the total females 19.7% females are self-employed, 6.8% are engaged as “casual labour” and 5.3% are “Regular wage/salaried employees”. To have detailed picture on female employment, it is imperative to study the status of employment across industries (Agriculture, Secondary and Services sector). Section VIII explains the percentage distribution of female with different status in employment across industries.

The distribution of females by activity status is different for geographical dimensions. Therefore, it would be useful to study the labour utilization components in respect of rural and urban sectors as well. Table 3 and Table 4 show the structure of female labour utilization components for rural and urban, respectively. It shows the changes in the activity status during 2020-21 over the year 2017-18.

Table 3: Breakdowns for Rural Females

	2017-18	2021-22
Female in Labour Force (%)	24.6	36.6
<i>as Self-Employed</i>	13.6	24.2
<i>as Regular wage/ Salaried employees</i>	2.5	2.9
<i>as Casual Labour</i>	7.5	8.7
Unemployed	0.9	0.8
Female outside the Labour Force (%)	75.4	63.4
<i>Attended domestic duties only</i>	40.8	28.3
<i>Attended to domestic duties also engaged in free collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use</i>	17.0	17.4
<i>Attended educational institutions</i>	10.3	10.9
<i>Rentiers, Pensioners, Remittance Recipients, etc</i>	4.4	4.6
<i>Not able to work owing to disability</i>	1.1	1.0
<i>Others (including beggars, prostitutes, etc.)</i>	1.8	1.3

Source: PLFS Report, MoSPI

Table 4: Breakdowns for Urban Females

	2017-18	2021-22
Female in Labour Force (%)	20.4	23.8
<i>as Self-Employed</i>	6.3	8.6
<i>as Regular wage/ Salaried employees</i>	9.5	11.0
<i>as Casual Labour</i>	2.4	2.3
Unemployed	2.2	1.9
Female outside the Labour Force (%)	79.6	76.2
<i>Attended domestic duties only</i>	54.9	50.3
<i>Attended to domestic duties also engaged in free collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, weaving, etc. for household use</i>	4.5	6.2
<i>Attended educational institutions</i>	12.9	12.2
<i>Rentiers, Pensioners, Remittance Recipients, etc</i>	4.8	5.5
<i>Not able to work owing to disability</i>	1.0	0.9
<i>Others (including beggars, prostitutes, etc.)</i>	1.5	1.0

Source: PLFS Report, MoSPI

The PLFS results indicate that 24.2% of the total rural females of age 15 years & above were self-employed in 2021-22 as compared to 13.6% in 2017-18. During these years,

female employment as Regular wage/salaried employees and casual labour has also increased. During 2021-22, 2.9% of total rural females were Regular wage/salaried employees as compared to 2.5% in 2017-18. The second scenario of females, who are outside the labour force, reveals the significant move of rural females towards the labour force and decline the percentage of females who are attended domestic duties to 28.3% only in 2021-22 as compared to 40.8% 2017-18, a remarkable move. It can be interpreted that more and more rural females are participating in economic activities.

On the other side, the breakdowns for urban females show that 8.6% of total urban females were self-employed in 2021-22 as compared to 6.3% in 2017-18. Urban females are more engaged as Regular wage/salaried employees, 11.0% in 2021-22 over 9.5% in 2017-18. Here, it is emphasized that 50.3% urban females are engaged in the domestic duties and hence, are not in labour force.

The data suggests that the female who live in rural areas are more likely to be in labour force, as compared to female living in urban areas. As per PLFS results, rural females undertake work activities, mainly in the agricultural sector, in addition to the unpaid work. The majority of jobs in the rural areas are in agriculture sector. The sector-wise distribution of rural and urban females for each status in employment is given in Section VIII.

Albeit most women work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted. Women's role in reproduction and in households activities, such as caring for the young and old, cooking and other household chores, don't find recognition in the system of economic statistics. *Mazumdar and Neetha (2011)* submit that this is a potential reason for the reportedly low labour force participation rates of women.

The aim is to explore the broad activities in which females, who are in labour force, are engaged and the activities that bound females to include in labour force. Therefore, it is far more important to go beyond this binary value of "being in labour force" and "not being in labour force" and analyse the factors driving these components.

The majority of women working in rural areas are self-employed or engaged in casual labour, while working women in urban areas are more likely to be in regular wage/salaried jobs.

VI. Protected Employment

The Periodic Labour force Survey collects the information from the employees (regular wage/salaried persons and casual labour) in usual status (ps+ss) on the following terms of employment:

- ✚ Written job contract in the employment
- ✚ Employees are eligible for the paid leave
- ✚ Employees were covered under social security benefits.

Paid leave included leave during sickness, maternity or such leave as an employee was eligible to take without loss of pay, as per the conditions of employment. The situation was assessed excluding the paid off-days/holidays, which an enterprise normally allows to its employees. The considered social security benefits were:

- ✚ Only PF/ pension (i.e., GPF, CPF, PPF, pension, etc.).
- ✚ only gratuity
- ✚ only health care & maternity benefits
- ✚ only PF/ pension and gratuity
- ✚ only PF/ pension and health care & maternity benefits.
- ✚ only gratuity and health care & maternity benefits
- ✚ PF/ pension, gratuity and health care & maternity benefits

The percentage distribution of male and female regular wage/salaried employees by terms of employment in usual status (ps+ss) engaged in non-agriculture sector is given in **Table 5**. These unfavourable terms of employment also coerce females to step back from the employment.

Table 5: Percentage of regular wage/salaried employees by terms of employment		
Terms of Employment	2017-18	2021-22
Female		
Had no written job contract	66.8	59.1
Not eligible for paid leave	50.4	44.6
Not eligible for any social security benefit	51.8	55.7
Not eligible for paid leave, without written job contract and without any social security benefits	35.0	35.1
Male		
Had no written job contract	72.3	62.9
Not eligible for paid leave	55.2	50.5
Not eligible for any social security benefit	49.0	52.2
Not eligible for paid leave, without written job contract and without any social security benefits	38.8	39.6

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

It is evident from the data in the above table that around half of the female regular wage/salaried employees were not eligible for the paid leave, which includes leave during sickness, maternity or such leave as an employee was eligible to take without loss of pay, as per the conditions of employment.

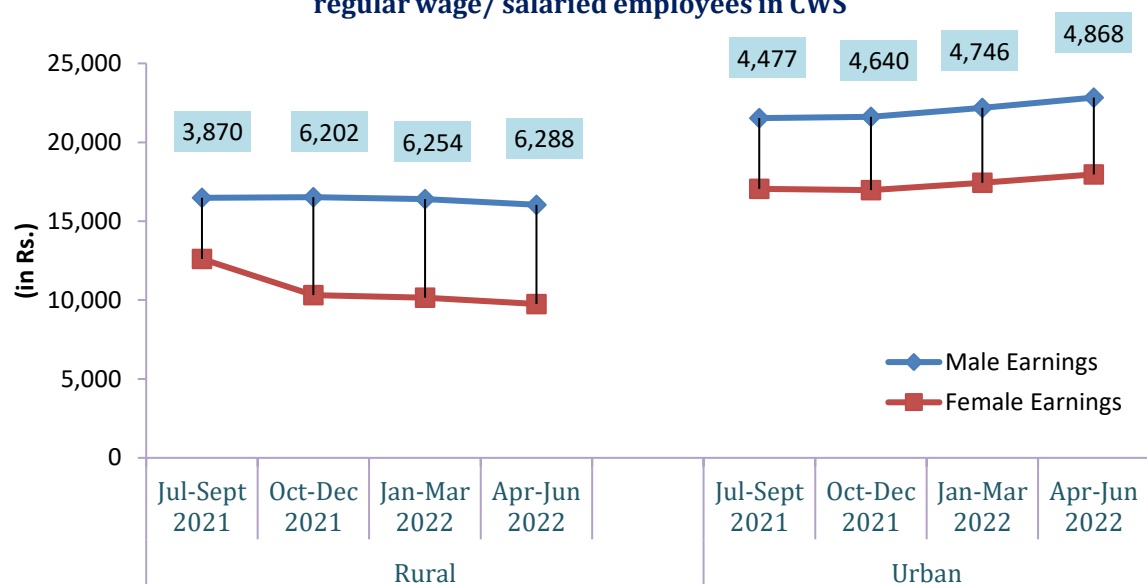
VII. Gender Wage Disparity in India

Statistics suggest a significant pay disparity exists between males and females who are engaged in similar kinds of jobs. The analysis given below provides a comparative perspective of wages earned by female workers and their male counterparts. This phenomenon of unequal wage/salary is another snag in arena of female LFPR.

(a) Regular wage/salaried employees

For regular wage/salaried employees in current weekly status, information on earnings during the preceding calendar month from the regular wage/salaried work in which the person was employed in the current weekly status was collected. **Figure 7** shows the average gap in monthly wage/salary earnings (in Rs) by the regular wage/ salaried employees. The data confirms that female employees were paid a lower wage/salary than male and gives the prima facie evidence of presence of gender biased wage/salary gap.

Figure 7: Average Gap in monthly Wage/salary earnings (in Rs) by the regular wage/ salaried employees in CWS



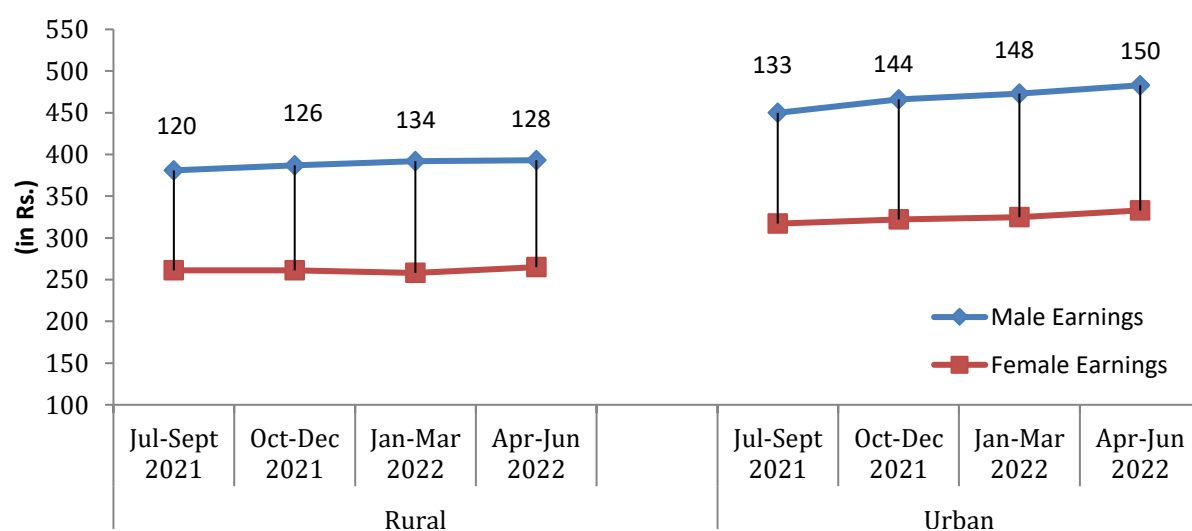
The highlighted numbers represent the difference in Male and Female earnings

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

(b) Casual Labour

For casual labour, information on earnings was collected for the casual labour work in which the person was engaged for each day of the reference week. **Figure 8** shows the average gap in earnings (in Rs) by casual labour engaged in works other than public works and reflects the obvious gap in earnings which is higher in urban areas than rural.

Figure 8: Average gap in earnings (in Rs.) per day by casual labour engaged in works other than public works



The highlighted numbers represent the difference in Male and Female earnings

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

VIII. Industrial Composition of Female Employment by the Status in Employment

Having information on female Status in Employment (Self-employed, Regular wage/salaried employees and casual labour) is not sufficient, it is also imperative to explore the distribution of females in sectors/industries in which females are working. Female employment in rural areas has grown over the years, but female are still largely concentrated in agriculture as self-employed or casual labour. According to the PLFS results, 19.7% of total females of age 15 years & above in India were self-employed in 2021-22. Looking at rural and urban sector, it is observed that more rural females were working as Self-employed than the urban females. 24.2% of total rural females were self-employed as compared to 8.6% of total urban females. **Table 6** shows the percentage distribution of self-employed rural and urban females by sectors.

Table 6: Distribution of rural and urban self-employed females by sectors

Sectors	Rural Females (in %)	Urban Females (in %)	Total Females (in %)
Agriculture sector	20.6	1.7	15.1
<i>Own account worker/Employer</i>	<i>6.4</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>4.7</i>
<i>Helper</i>	<i>14.2</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>10.3</i>
Secondary sector	2.3	3.5	2.6
Services sector	1.4	3.4	2.0
Total Self-employed Females	24.2	8.6	19.7

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

A bulk of rural females, 20.6% of total rural females were engaged in “Agriculture sector” and major portion 14.2% females are working as helper and only 6.4% females are own account worker/employer. Only 1.4% of total rural females were engaged in “Services Sector”. In urban areas, 3.4% of total females were engaged in “Services Sector” as self-employed.

As per PLFS 2021-22, 5.3% of total females of age 15 years & above in India were Regular wage/salaried employees. Looking at rural and urban sector, it is observed that more urban females were working as Regular wage/salaried employees than the rural females. 11.0% of total urban females were regular wage/salaried employees as compared to 2.9% of total rural females. **Table 7** shows the percentage distribution of regular wage/Salaried employees rural and urban females by sectors.

Table 7: Distribution of rural and urban female Regular wage/salaried employees by sectors

Sectors	Rural Females (in %)	Urban Females (in %)	Total Females (in %)
Agriculture sector	0.2	0	0.1
Secondary sector	0.4	1.6	0.7
Services sector	2.3	9.4	4.4
Total Regular wage/Salaried Females	2.9	11.0	5.3

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

11.0% of total urban females are **Regular wage/salaried employees and 9.4% are in “Services Sector”**.

As per PLFS 2021-22, 6.8% of total females of age 15 years & above in India were casual labour. Looking at rural and urban sector, it is observed that more rural females were working as casual labour than the urban females. 8.7% of total rural females were casual labour as compared to 2.3% of total urban females. **Table 8** shows the percentage distribution of casual labour rural and urban females by sectors.

Table 8: Distribution of rural and urban female casual labour by sectors

Sectors	Rural Females (in %)	Urban Females (in %)	Total Females (in %)
Agriculture sector	6.4	0.7	4.7
Secondary sector	1.1	1	1.1
Services sector	0.1	0.3	0.2
Worked in public works other than MGNREGA	1.1	0.2	0.9
Total Female casual labour	8.7	2.3	6.8

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

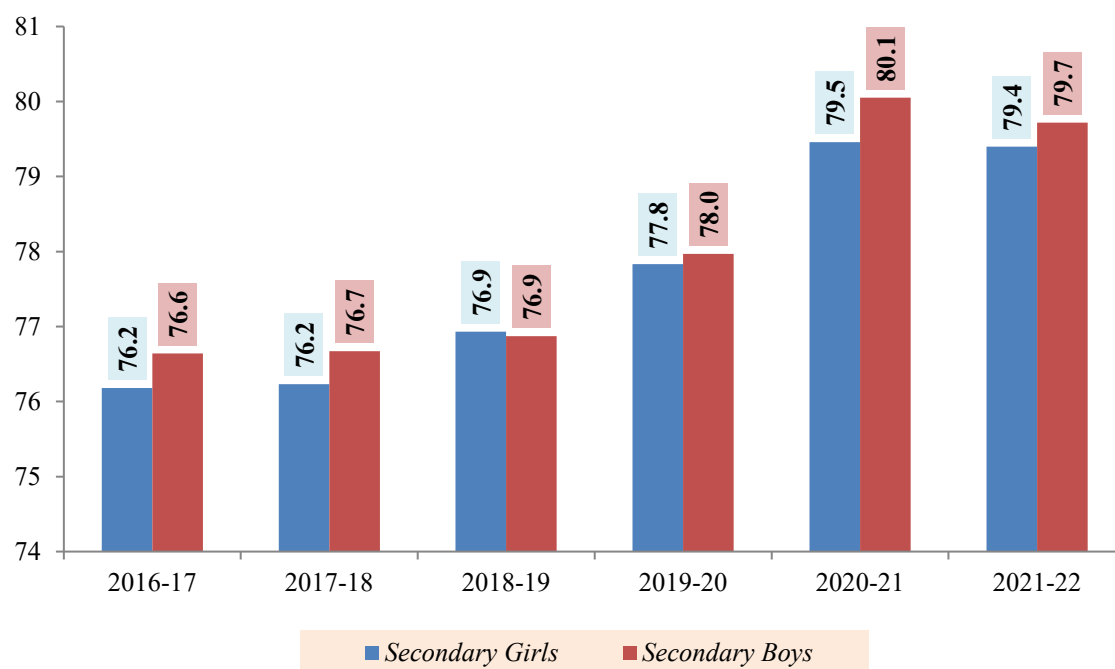
IX. Correlation of Female Education and Employment

Over the time, the access to education for females has increased and as education empowers women, employment choices for them become more stringent. Both social norms and lack of quality employment opportunities have an impact on the employment options for women with secondary and tertiary education. At present, women enrollment in school education and higher education has increased nearly twice as fast as male enrollment over the last four decades.

As per the data available on Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) / UDISE+, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls shows an increase in the enrolment of

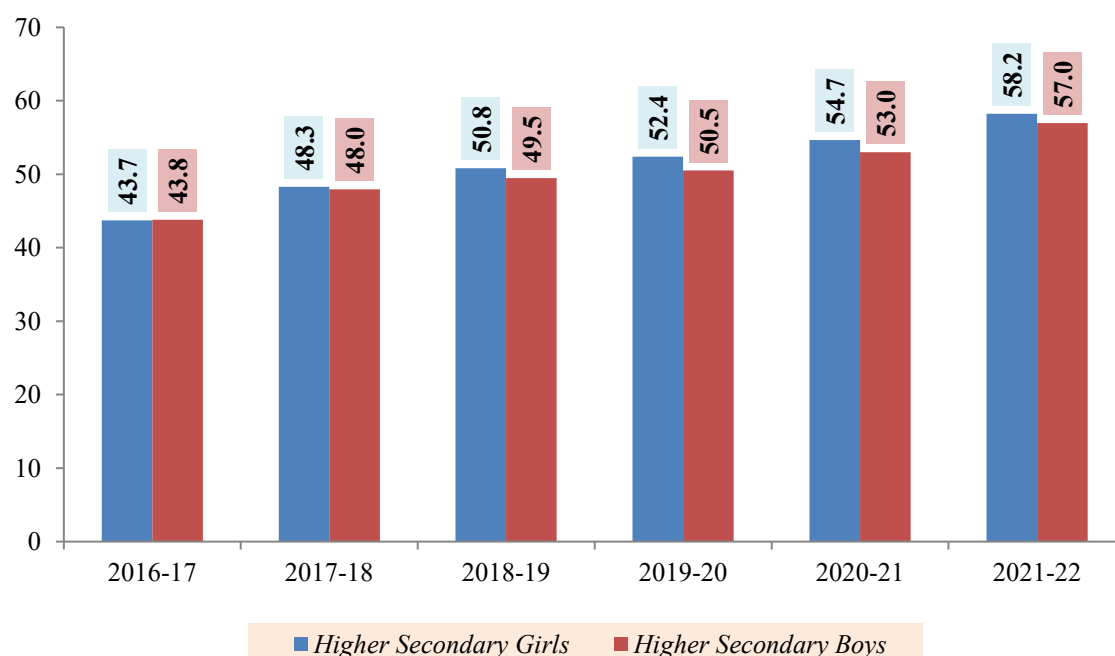
girls at all level of school education. The Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls and boys in Secondary and Higher Secondary Education is shown in **Figure 9** and **Figure 10**.

Figure 9: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Secondary Education



Source: UDISE/UDISE+ portal

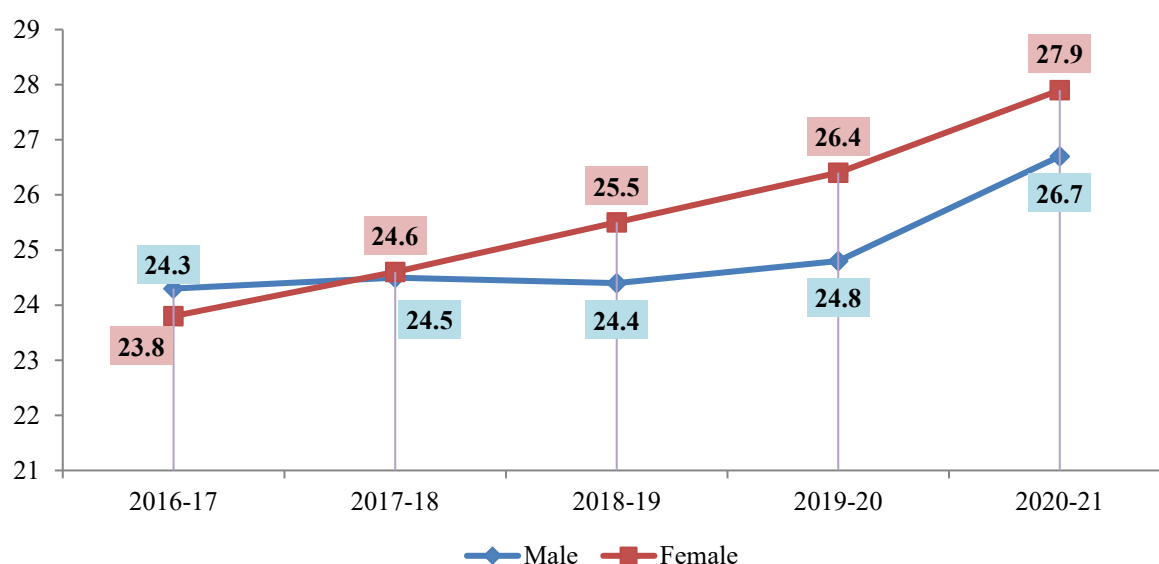
Figure 10: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Secondary Education



Source: UDISE/UDISE+ portal

As per the *All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21*, the total enrollment in higher education has increased to nearly 4.14 crore in 2020-21 from 3.85 crore in 2019-20. The Female enrolment has increased to 2.01 crore from 1.88 crore in 2019-20. The percentage of female enrolment to total enrolment has increased from 45% in 2014-15 to around 49% in 2020-21. India registered improvement in the Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of female Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to male GER, has increased from 1 in 2017-18 to 1.05 in 2020-21. Female GER has overtaken Male GER since 2017-18 and the GER for male and female is shown in **Figure 11**. As per AISHE 2020-21, GER for male population at all India level is 26.7 and GER for female population at All India level is 27.9.

Figure 11: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education

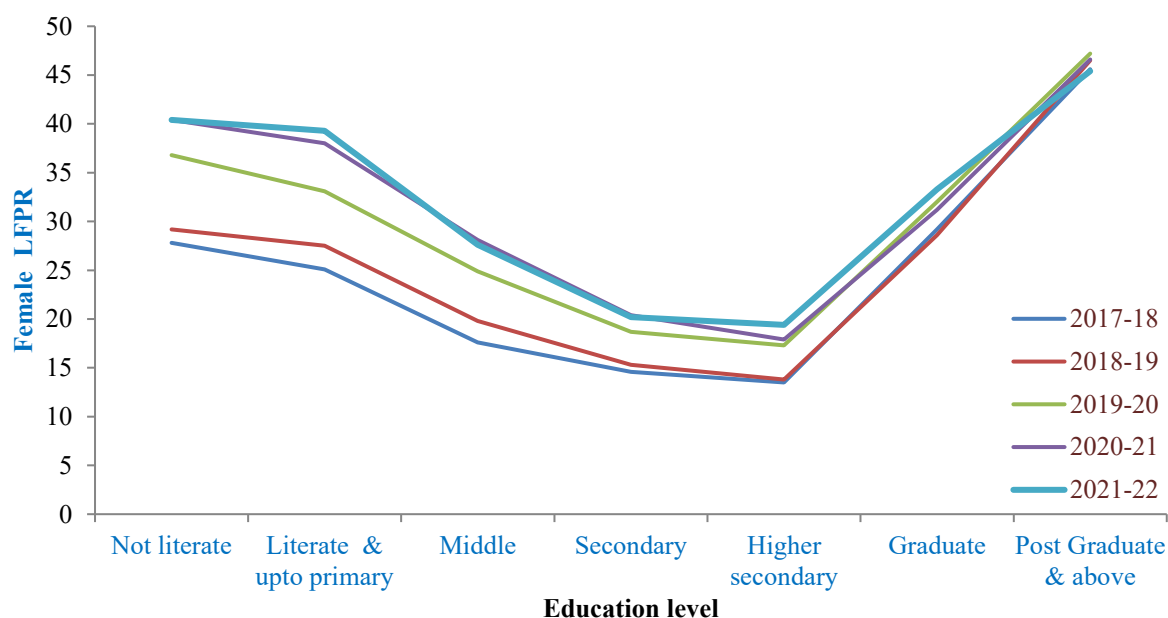


Source: All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), Ministry of Education

In this context, **Andres et al. (2017)** narrated that there is a U-shaped relationship between education and participation which grows positively for low and very high levels of education but negatively for moderate levels of education (secondary and high-school). Based on the available PLFS results, the relationship between the education level and female LFPR in India are hereby analysed and shown in **Figure 12**. It almost depicts the U-shaped/Curvilinear relationship between education level and female LFPR. The effect of education on labour force participation rate changes across level of

education. The lowest incidence of LFPR is among those who had attained secondary and higher secondary levels of education.

Figure 12: Relationship between female LFPR and education level

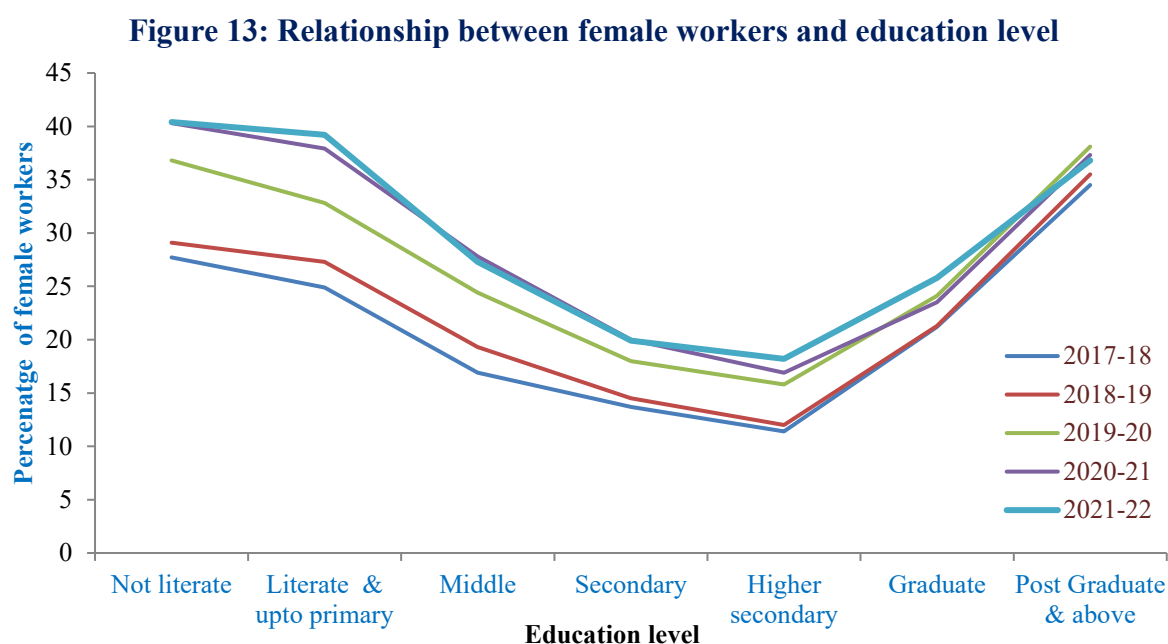


Source: PLFS, MoSPI

It shows a higher level of female LFPR amongst illiterate and college educated women as compared to women who have only studied till secondary and higher secondary (10+2) level. This could also explain the correlation between women's Education and Income. As household income increases, female gets chance to get more education and it keeps them away from labour force. When the education and income are low, the high participation rate is explained by the need to have an income source. Female LFPR is also positively correlated with wage rates. More educated and skilled women have more probability to have higher wages, consequently, as education level increases, women move back to the labour force.

Education is a lucrative investment, both in terms of greater employment opportunities and in retributive terms. A person with higher education qualification is more likely to enter the labour force and, in the long term, to achieve higher salary levels.

Further, the relationship between the education level and female participation in work force is shown in the **Figure 13** and it also seems to follow the U-shaped/Curvilinear relationship between education level and workforce participation.



Source: PLFS, MoSPI

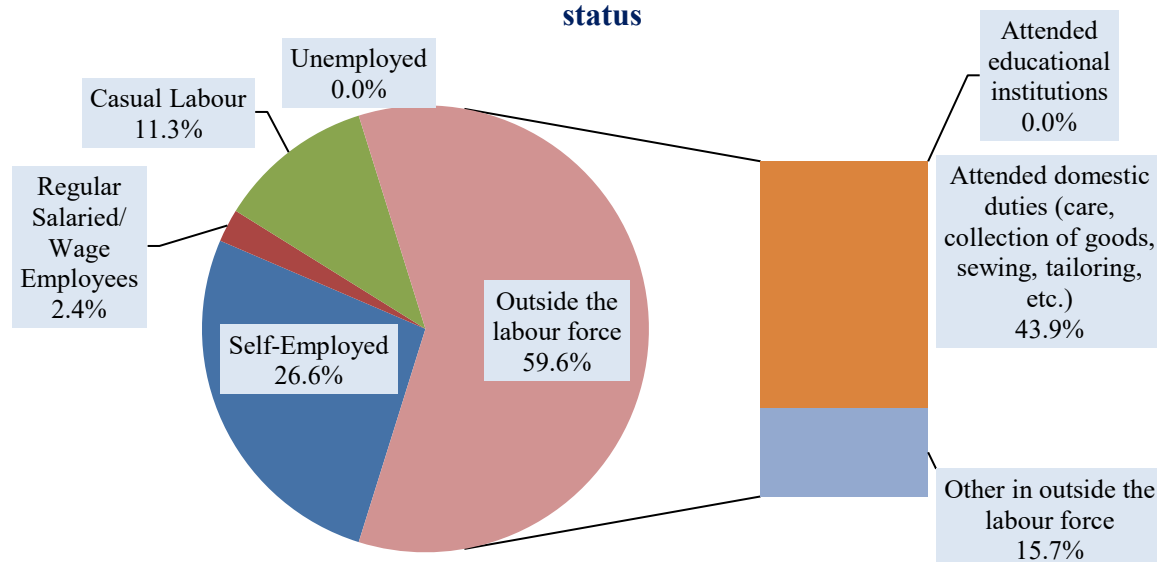
The followings are the main highlights on women workforce and education level:

- ✚ Around 37.3% women of total women with education level Post graduate & above are working.
- ✚ Around 18.2% women of total women with education level Higher Secondary are in workforce.
- ✚ Out of total illiterate women, around 40.4% illiterate women are in workforce.
- ✚ Out of total women educated upto primary level, around 39.2% women are in workforce.

The above analysis provides an overview of women workforce with education level. It is imperative to have the detailed scenario on the various activities in which the women with different education level are engaged. **Figure 14** shows the percentage distribution of illiterate females of age 15 years & above by activity status. It shows that 59.6% illiterate females are outside the labour force. Around 26.6% illiterate females are self-employed. **Figure 15** shows the percentage distribution of females of age 15 years & above with education level Post-Graduation & above by activity status. It shows that 54.6% females with education level Post-Graduation & above are outside the labour force. **Figure 16** and **Figure 17** show the percentage distribution of females of age 15

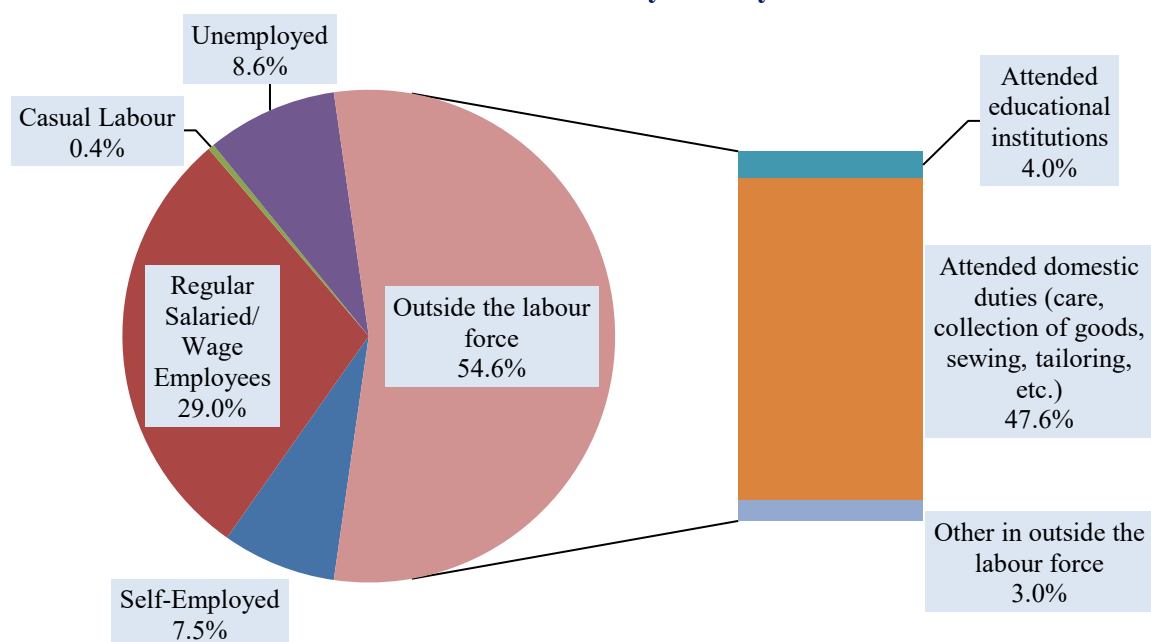
years & above with education level 'Secondary & above' and 'Diploma/Certificate course', respectively, by activity status.

Figure 14: Percentage distribution of Illiterate females by activity status



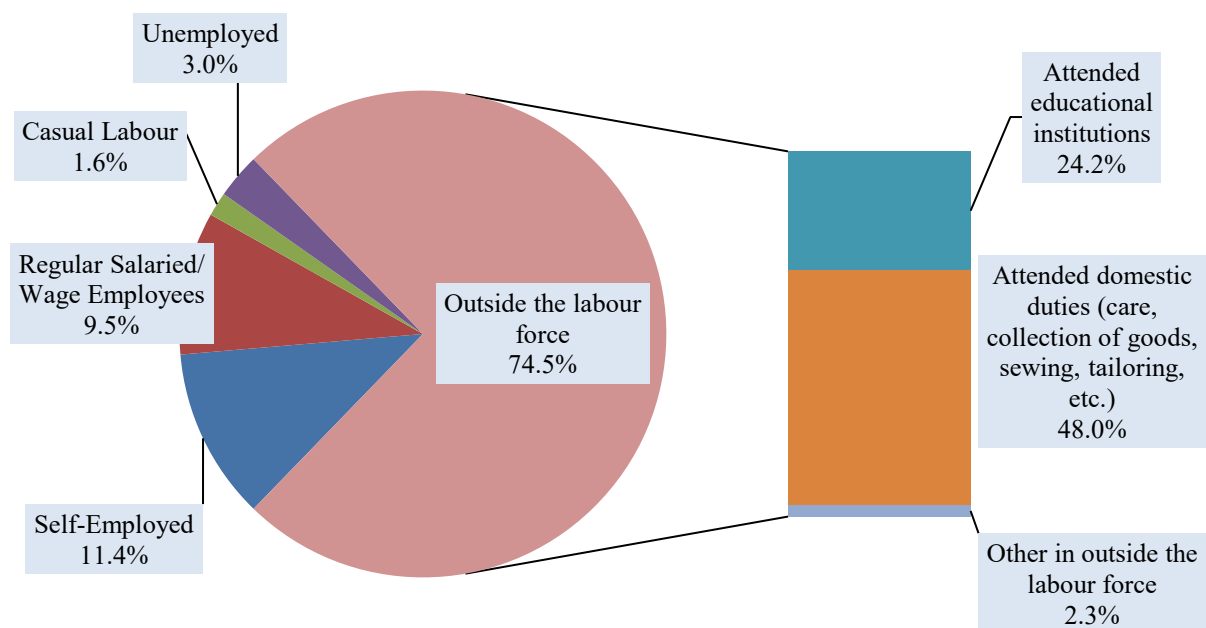
Source: PLFS, MoSPI

Figure 15: Percentage distribution of females with education level 'Post Graduation & above' by activity status



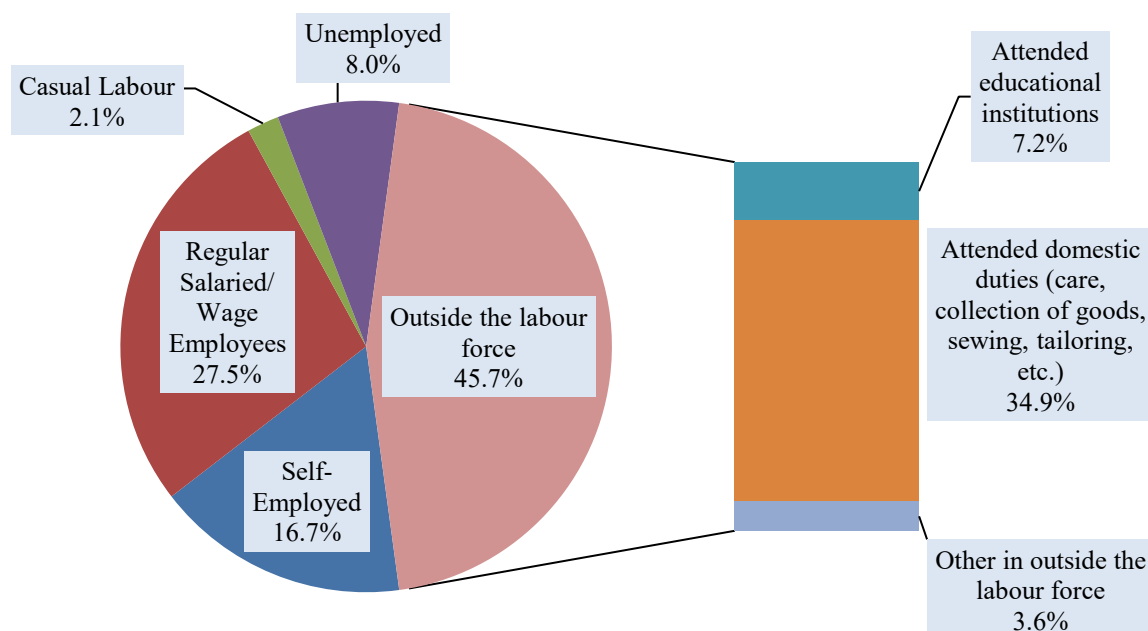
Source: PLFS, MoSPI

Figure 16: Percentage distribution of females with education level 'Secondary & above' by activity status



Source: PLFS, MoSPI

Figure 17: Percentage distribution of females with education level 'Diploma/Certificate course' by activity status



Source: PLFS, MoSPI

Followings are the main highlights from the above figures:

- ✚ The significant portion of females with higher education level and diploma/certificate course is employed as “Regular Salaried/wage employees”.
- ✚ Proportion of illiterate females is highest in Self-employed category, mostly in the agriculture sector.
- ✚ The percentage distribution of females attending the domestic duties (care, collection of goods, sewing, tailoring, etc.) are higher than other activity status irrespective of education level.
- ✚ The participation of females in labour force is lowest in middle level of education, i.e. Secondary & above. This is perhaps due to the reason that significant portion of the females at Secondary & above education level is pursuing higher studies.

X. Vocational/Technical Training for enhancing Employability

Vocational/technical training seems to be an important factor to improve the labour market prospects in the era of digitisation and emergence of technologies. The technical/vocational training programmes provide occupation specific knowledge and job related skills to participants. Vocational/technical trainings are closely related with the economic growth and are capable to create employment for their income generation. Vocational and technical trainings are designed to develop the skills, ability and knowledge necessary for employment, income support and development of women empowerment. Vocational trainings provide an opportunity to females for climbing on a social ladder of faster development.

The participation rate of male and female in various vocational education/training programmes are also affected by the traditional patterns of occupational segregation. The major field of vocational/technical training in which female received the formal training alongwith the percentage of female in rural and urban areas are as follows:

Table 9: Percentage distribution of female of age 15-59 years who received formal vocational/technical training by field of training during 2021-22

Training Field	Rural	Urban	Rural+Urban
IT-ITeS	22.1	30.2	26.6
Textiles and handlooms, apparels	30.1	19.5	24.2
Healthcare and life sciences	9.4	8.5	8.9
Beauty and wellness	5.0	8.6	7.0
Office and business related work	4.0	4.6	4.4
Work related to childcare, nutrition, pre-school and crèche	3.3	3.5	3.4
Artisan/ craftsman/ handicraft/ creative arts and cottage based production	3.8	1.5	2.5
Hospitality and tourism	1.1	1.3	1.2
Electrical, power and electronics	1.0	1.2	1.1
media-journalism, mass communication and entertainment	0.2	0.9	0.6

Source: PLFS, MoSPI

Textiles and handlooms, apparels is the most prevalent field of training among rural females followed by the IT-ITeS. Around 30.1% of total rural female who received vocational/technical, are trained in Textiles and handlooms, apparels field. Around 30.2% of total urban females who received vocational/technical, are trained in IT-ITeS field. Around 5.0% rural females and 8.6% urban females received training in Beauty and wellness field.

XI. Government Interventions

The Government has taken various steps to improve female's participation in the labour force, to ensure their economic security and quality of their employment. Some major schmes/policies/programmes are as follows:

A) For Survival and Education of Females

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme: The scheme was launched for creating awareness among the people to educate all girl children in the country. It was launched with the objective to guarantee the survival, safety, and education of female children. The initiative intends to tackle the issue of the diminishing sex ratio in recent years, raise social awareness, and improve the effectiveness of welfare benefits for girls.

National Education Policy (NEP), 2020: The policy prioritises gender equity and envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

B) For Safe and Convenient Accommodation

Working Women Hostel: One of the main difficulties faced by working women is lack of safe and conveniently located accommodation. The Government introduced a scheme of grant-in-aid for construction of new/ expansion of existing buildings for providing hostel facilities to working women in cities, smaller towns and also in rural areas where employment opportunities for women exist. The objective of the scheme is to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exist. The scheme is assisting projects for construction of new hostel buildings, expansion of existing hostel buildings and hostel buildings in rented premises. The working women's hostel projects being assisted under this scheme shall be made available to all working women without any distinction with respect to caste, religion, marital status etc., subject to norms prescribed under the scheme. While the projects assisted under this scheme are meant for working women, women under training for job may also be accommodated in such hostels subject to the condition that taken together, such trainees should not occupy more than 30% of the total capacity the hostel and they may be accommodated in the hostels only when adequate numbers of working women are not available. Children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys may be accommodated in such hostels with their mothers.

C) For Supporting Women affected by violence

One Stop Centre (OSC) and Universalization of Women Helpline: The Scheme of Universalization of Women Helpline is intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence through referral (linking with appropriate authority such as police, One Stop Centre, hospital) and information about women related government schemes programs across the country through a single uniform number. Women Helpline (WHL) will be integrated with One Stop Centre Scheme (OSC) under which one OSC shall be established in every State/UT to provide

integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof. One Stop Centres (OSCs) are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. Women affected by violence and in need of redressal services will be referred to OSC through WHL.

D) Codification of the Labour Laws for harmonizing the needs of job seekers, workers and employers

Introducing Labour Codes:

The Government has notified four Labour Codes namely, the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 by simplifying, amalgamating and rationalizing the relevant provisions of 29 Central Labour Laws. Codification of the Labour Laws provides a policy framework for harmonizing the needs of job seekers, workers and employers. The Labour Codes will, inter-alia, reduce multiplicity of definitions & authorities, facilitate implementation and use of technology in enforcement of labour laws and bring transparency and accountability in enforcement, promote setting up of more enterprises, catalyzing the creation of employment opportunities in the country. It would promote setting up of industries by reducing rigidity of labour market and facilitate hassle free compliance, paving the way for realizing the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

E) Equal Opportunity and Congenial Work Environment

A number of protective provisions have been incorporated in the labour laws for equal opportunity and congenial work environment for women workers. These includes enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, Maternity leave of 12 weeks to mothers adopting a child below the age of three months as well as to the commissioning mothers, provision for mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc. Employment of women in the aboveground mines including opencast workings has been allowed between 7 pm and 6 am, and in below ground working between 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.

F) Wage Parity

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 now subsumed in the Code on Wages, 2019 provides that there shall be no discrimination in an establishment or any unit thereof among employees on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages by the same employer, in respect of the same work or work of similar nature done by any employee. Further, no employer shall make any discrimination on the ground of sex while recruiting any employee for the same work or work of similar nature in the conditions of employment, except where the employment of women in such work is prohibited or restricted by or under any law for the time being in force. To enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes.

G) Steps for Protected Employment in Government Jobs

To increase the representation of women in Central Government jobs and to provide them a balanced life between professional and family, following concerted efforts has been taken:

Child Care Leave: The women employees having minor children are granted Child care Leave (admissible in different spells) for maximum period of two years (i.e. 730 days) during the entire service. CCL can be taken to take care of upto two children whether for rearing or to look after any of their needs like examination, sickness etc. In continuation of the child care leave, a female Govt. servant can also take any leave due and admissible for a period of one year.

Special Allowance to Women with Disability: Instructions issued for special allowance to women employees with disabilities. They are being provided Rs. 3000/- per month as Special allowance for child care w.e.f 1st July 2017. The allowance is payable from the time of the child birth till the child is two years old for a maximum of two children.

Special Leave connected to inquiry of sexual harassment: Provision made for leave upto a period of 90 days to an aggrieved female Government servant. The leave may be

granted after the recommendation of the internal Committee or the Local Committee, as the case may be. Leave granted to the aggrieved female Government Servant under this rule shall not be debited against the leave account.

Special Maternity Leave: Keeping in view the potential emotional trauma caused due to stillbirth or death of a child soon after birth, which has a far-reaching impact on mother's life, provision has been made to grant a Special Maternity Leave of 60 days to a female Central Government Servant in case of death of a child soon after birth/stillbirth. It will be admissible to female Central Government Servant with less than 2 surviving children and for child delivery only in an authorised hospital.

H) Skill India Mission

In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also introduced Skill India Mission.

I) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA)

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) mandates that at least one third of the jobs generated under the scheme (MGNREGS) should be given to women.

XII. Conclusion

In India, female labour force participation rate is at the risings steps. The latest PLFS 2021-22 shows that the female LFPR for the age group 15 years & above has increased considerably and stood at 32.8% in India, which was 23.3% in the year 2017-18. Female LFPR for the age group 15-59 years also increased to 35.6% in 2021-22 from 25.3% in 2017-18. The continuous Government interventions are one of the major factors of this successive progress. Despite various socio-economic norms, female participation in labour force and workforce is increasing significantly and further inspiring the others for moving on the success path. In the journey of employment of females, Government assistance in terms of policies, schemes, programmes, etc., are their companion. The various Government programmes and schemes are ongoing process to increase the female participation in labour force along with the safe working environment. Girls' enrolment in schools and higher education are also increasing over the years. The structural improvements to their lives, such as decline in fertility rates and expansion of women's education might have a major role to push India's female LFPR on an upward track.

Since the educated women are a significant part of the workforce and that the various skilling programmes, vocational trainings are effective in generating employment in urban areas, policymakers must formulate strategies towards the diversification of jobs. To dissolve the taboos and insecurities associated with female working, it is necessary to create a healthy, safe, and hygienic work atmosphere. These are some of the issues that should be considered in a gendered form of policymaking so that female labour force participation in India can become a more hopeful aspiration.

It is well known that the hindrances catalysed by the social norms and domestic responsibilities can't be neglected, but the part-time better paid employment opportunities may help it in a positive way and may perhaps increase the female workforce. After the Covid pandemic, "work from home" has spiked and a large segment of workforce has already experienced the remote-work. Therefore, it is imperative to chalk out the policy on hybrid approach, giving choices to workers about where they work, especially to females who are bound to perform their domestic duties but, are willing to work.

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