

## The State of Women in the Blue Grey Collar Workforce 2025

Originally published by: The Udaiti Foundation

### Introduction

The State of Women in the Blue Grey Collar Workforce 2025 report by the Udaiti Foundation and Qness Corp is a comprehensive study on the challenges and barriers faced by women in India's blue and grey collar job sectors. It draws from a survey of over 10,000 current and 1,500 former female workers, along with in-depth interviews, primarily across retail, manufacturing, BFSI, telecom, and service sectors.

### Key Findings

- Women represent only about 19% of blue-grey collar workers in India.
- High early attrition is a critical challenge: 52% of women with less than a year's tenure plan to leave within 12 months, whereas only 3% of women beyond two years do.
- Many women who leave the workforce remain unemployed due to a lack of suitable jobs.
- Women's wages are significantly lower than men's, with many women saving less than INR 2,000 a month, leading to high financial stress.
- Safety issues are prevalent during commutes and at workplaces, particularly in manufacturing and field roles lacking basic security infrastructure.
- Limited career growth opportunities and poor work culture, including inflexible schedules and lack of respect, contribute strongly to attrition.
- Mobility challenges and lack of safe, affordable housing for migrant women workers reduce retention and re-entry to the workforce.
- Skill training and upskilling offer promising pathways to increased earnings and career advancement, but few women access these opportunities.

### Structural Barriers Identified

- Low Income: Many women earn below the cost of living, markedly impacting their ability to save and sustain employment.
- Safe Mobility and Accommodation: Reliance on unsafe or unreliable public transport and lack of gender-sensitive worker housing pose major obstacles.
- Career Growth: Lack of clear promotion pathways and limited access to skill development restrict women's upward mobility.
- Workplace Safety and Sanitation: Absence of basic safety measures (CCTV, helplines, clean restrooms) affects women's comfort and retention.

- Work Culture: Rigid schedules, poor managerial respect, and lack of grievance redressal support lead to dissatisfaction and exits.

### **Recommendations**

The report calls for coordinated efforts among government, companies, and civil society to:

- Raise wages and align pay with living costs.
- Provide safe, affordable, and gender-sensitive accommodation and transport solutions.
- Upgrade workplace safety infrastructures and sanitation facilities.
- Create transparent and inclusive career advancement and upskilling opportunities.
- Promote flexible work schedules, open communication, and anti-harassment policies.
- Conduct community sensitization on gender norms and safety audits to foster supportive environments.
- Improve gender-disaggregated workforce data collection for evidence-based policymaking.

### **Broader Impact**

The blue-grey collar workforce constitutes a foundation of India's economy, projected to form 70% of the labour market by 2030. Increasing women's retention and participation here is critical not only for gender equity but also for India's ambition to become a \$30 trillion economy by 2047. This report emphasizes that addressing the gender-specific structural barriers is indispensable for economic growth and social empowerment.

**Read More:** [The State of Women in the Blue Grey Collar Workforce 2025](#)

**Author:** Kanak Singh, PILOT at Pratham