



THINK LABOR

To keep up with everything skilling and employment

Creating a Gender Equitable Workforce in India

Originally Published: FSG

Key Highlights:

- Women's workforce participation in India dropped from 45% to 27% from 2005 to 2019. Loss of jobs in agriculture and low participation in new industries like logistics or warehousing are key reasons for this drop.
- 83% of women in urban India come from households with low income, and 85% of such women have not gone to college. 84% of women need to secure their families' permission to work which forms a key barrier to women's ability to work. But despite such barriers, 33 of nonworking women are keen to work
- The primary reason, despite high demand for talent and low job requirements, for employing low numbers of women is the biases recruiters hold on the extent to which women can perform well or safety costs of women working nightshifts.
- Moreover, some places lack physical infrastructure such as separate toilets or changing areas for women, there isn't a network of female co-workers who can help women with information about jobs and women are often not considered for promotions.
- However, it is true that diverse workforce is good for business profits as well, with female inclusion as per one study increasing accuracy, attendance and work culture.
- Over 1 million women, especially in high growth industries which only require a minimal education like 10th grade completion can contribute to the labor force in roles like warehouses, promoters in stores and delivery agents can work if given the chance.
- There are numerous ways different actors to correct for such injustice – individuals, specifically men should shoulder more childcare responsibilities, governments should inculcate gender equity in their curricula, companies should proactively address biases, etc.
- The benefits of female participation on households are also immense- they spend more on household expenditure, specifically on children's education which is beneficial in the long run.
- While most decision makers in families agree that women in society should theoretically work, they prefer that women in their own households did not work or work primarily from home. 69% believe that the main role of a woman is to look after the home and the children. In contrast, women believe that mothers should work outside the home while men don't, but at the same time they are not willing to consider paid day care since they also think that that is primarily the mother and family's responsibility. That aside, 75% of decision makers in households are also not willing to give permission to send children to paid daycare, even when day care is considered affordable by families
- Most women who have had vocational training, are also primarily trained in gendered topics such as sewing/tailoring, beauty/make up services or mehendi application. Apart from being biased, training of women also does not cater to the needs of high-growth industries such as retail jobs or warehousing.
- Over time, more women are educated with over 69% of women between 15 and 24 years old have 10th grade. The proportion of working women is the highest in the southern (42%) and western (36%) regions of India.
- 1 in 2 women is either working in a job or seeking one. While women start working for financial reasons but want to continue irrespective of financial need. Supporting one's own and one's family expenses is the key motivating factor for over 90% of women working or seeking jobs.
- Irrespective of how much education women have, a majority of them believe that they would be able to work well and are confident in their abilities. And most women prefer jobs over entrepreneurship, and those who do want to take up entrepreneurship have inaccurate income expectations from the business.
- While 55% of women said they would quit a job if the salary does not increase annually, they also consider other criteria such as reasonable distance from home, timings, type of work, etc. However, women are unwilling to migrate for a job and prefer fixed location jobs over field jobs. 90% of women rely on friends or family for job search presently.

- Women with no children or older children and who know other women have a higher propensity to be in a job. Those who are graduates and without children are strongly motivated to work for financial and non-financial reasons. Those who have just finished 10th/12th grade are often not allowed to work and a third of them believe that women should not be concerned with careers.
- In rural areas, where women are willing to work, they do not want to migrate. But unmarried graduates and those with a strong financial need from lower income households are more willing to migrate.
- There are various ways in which governments can help improve female labor force participation – extending infrastructure such as safe public transport, good public accommodation, run public service campaigns to normalize women in employment, include gender equity in curricula, etc. The private sector in turn should adopt more gender inclusive messaging (“office staff” instead of “office boy”), advertise more at locations women go to (eg., schools and tailoring shops), use local municipal corporators to mobilize female candidates, make promotion practices gender inclusive, actively do gender sensitization programs to reduce biases, etc.

Read More: <https://www.fsg.org/resource/creating-a-gender-equitable-workforce-in-india/>

Author: Saranya Ravindran, PILOt at Pratham.