

6. 'Women and Men in India 2025' – Report

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the 27th edition of "Women and Men in India 2025 – Selected Indicators and Data" providing comprehensive statistical overview of gender-related conditions.

1. Background

Gender inequality in India has deep historical roots spanning millennia, manifesting through patriarchal social structures, discriminatory customary practices, unequal resource access, and systemic barriers limiting women's opportunities across education, employment, health, and decision-making. Post-independence, the Constitution enshrined gender equality through fundamental rights and directive principles, yet translating constitutional guarantees into lived reality required sustained policy interventions, legal reforms, and social transformation. Early decades witnessed slow progress constrained by entrenched social norms, limited female education, early marriages, high maternal mortality, and near-total exclusion from formal employment and political representation. The liberalization era beginning 1991 accelerated some improvements—female literacy rose, sex ratios improved marginally, and urban middle-class women accessed expanded opportunities. However, progress remained uneven with rural-urban divides, interstate variations, and intersectional disadvantages based on caste, class, and religion creating vast disparities in women's conditions. The 'Women and Men in India 2025' report released by the Ministry of Statistics represents the 27th edition of this publication series tracking gender indicators since 1998, providing longitudinal data enabling assessment of policy impacts and identification of persistent gaps. The 2025 edition covering recent years reveals significant achievements including improved sex ratios at birth, declining infant mortality for both genders, gender parity across school education levels, dramatically increased female Labor Force Participation Rate particularly in rural areas, and growing women's representation in managerial positions. These improvements reflect policy impacts including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Mission Shakti, and numerous educational, health, and economic empowerment schemes targeting gender gaps demonstrating that sustained governmental commitment combined with social awareness can transform gender outcomes even in deeply patriarchal societies.

2. About the 'Women and Men in India 2025' Report

Publication Overview

1. The report provides comprehensive statistical overview of gender-related conditions in India using official data from multiple ministries and government agencies.
2. It represents the 27th edition of this publication series, indicating nearly three decades of systematic gender data tracking since 1998.
3. The publication serves as authoritative reference for policymakers, researchers, civil society, and international organizations monitoring India's gender progress.

Data Coverage and Structure

1. The report brings together gender-disaggregated data across major areas including population demographics, education access and outcomes, health indicators, economic participation, decision-making representation, and violence against women.
2. It includes 50 key indicators with detailed metadata explaining definitions, data sources, collection methodologies, and limitations.
3. This transparency improves understanding, enables informed interpretation, and allows users to assess data quality and comparability.

Analytical Framework

1. The report presents data across rural-urban divisions, States and Union Territories, and over time enabling comparison and tracking of trends.

2. Geographic disaggregation reveals spatial inequalities requiring targeted interventions in lagging regions.
3. Temporal tracking shows progress trajectories, policy impacts, and emerging challenges requiring course corrections.

3.Key Highlights – Demographic and Health Indicators

Sex Ratio Improvement

1. The sex ratio at birth has increased at the all-India level from 904 in 2017-19 to 917 in 2021-23.
2. This improvement indicates enhanced survival of female children, reflecting declining sex-selective abortion and improved care for girl children.
3. However, 917 still falls short of the biologically normal sex ratio of approximately 952, indicating persistent son preference.
4. States like Haryana and Punjab continue showing severely skewed sex ratios despite improvements, requiring sustained interventions.

Infant Mortality Decline

1. Infant mortality rates for both female and male infants have recorded pronounced and sustained decline between 2008 and 2023.
2. Female infant mortality declined from 55 per 1,000 live births in 2008 to approximately 27 in 2023.
3. Male infant mortality declined from 52 per 1,000 live births in 2008 to approximately 26 in 2023.
4. The convergence between male and female rates indicates reduced gender discrimination in infant care and health-seeking.
5. Overall decline reflects improved maternal health services, institutional deliveries, immunization coverage, and paediatric care access.

4.Key Highlights – Education Indicators

Gender Parity in School Education

1. Gender parity has been achieved across all levels of school education from Primary to Higher Secondary level.
2. The Gender Parity Index—ratio of female to male enrolment—has reached approximately 1.0 at all school levels.
3. This represents historic achievement considering traditional barriers preventing girls' education including early marriage, domestic responsibilities, safety concerns, and son preference in educational investment.

Higher Education Progress

1. Gross Enrolment Ratio at Higher Education improved from 28.5 to 30.2 for females between 2021-22 and 2022-23.
2. Male GER increased marginally from 28.3 to 28.9 during the same period.
3. Female GER now exceeds male GER, indicating girls' educational aspirations and parental willingness to invest in daughters' higher education.
4. This reversal from historical patterns where males dominated higher education represents significant social transformation.

5.Key Highlights – Labour Force Participation

Overall LFPR Increase

1. Labour Force Participation Rate for ages 15 and above has increased for both men and women.
2. LFPR measures the proportion of working-age population either employed or actively seeking employment.
3. Rising LFPR indicates expanded economic participation, improved job opportunities, and changing social attitudes toward work.

Rural Female Participation Surge

1. Rural females witnessed the highest increase in LFPR, surging from 37.5% in 2022 to 45.9% in 2025.

2. This dramatic increase reflects multiple factors including expanded rural employment schemes like MGNREGS, self-help group proliferation, agricultural mechanization freeing women's time, and changing attitudes toward women's work.
3. Rural women's increased economic participation enhances household incomes, improves women's status, and provides economic autonomy.

Urban-Rural Patterns

1. While rural female LFPR increased dramatically, urban female participation remains lower reflecting different economic structures and social attitudes.
2. Urban areas offer more formal sector jobs requiring specific skills and education, creating barriers for less-educated women.
3. Urban middle-class families often discourage women's employment due to status considerations and caregiving expectations.

Key Highlights – Leadership and Representation

Managerial Position Growth

1. Men engaged in managerial positions increased by 73.80% between 2017 and 2025.
2. Women engaged in managerial positions increased by 102.54% during the same period.
3. Women's faster growth rate indicates breaking of glass ceilings and expanding leadership opportunities.
4. However, absolute numbers likely remain heavily male-dominated despite women's faster proportional growth.

Sectoral Representation

1. Women's representation in corporate boards, senior government positions, and entrepreneurship has improved.
2. Political representation through reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions created approximately 1.3 million elected women representatives.
3. However, parliamentary and state assembly representation remains low without constitutionally mandated reservations.

6.Major Government Initiatives for Women's Empowerment

Constitutional and Legal Framework

1. The Indian Constitution guarantees gender equality through Preamble provisions, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy.
2. Article 14 ensures equality before law prohibiting discrimination.
3. Article 15 specifically prohibits discrimination based on sex.
4. Article 51(a)(e) creates constitutional duty to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity.
5. Directive Principles in Articles 39 and 42 emphasize equal livelihood opportunities, equal pay for equal work, and maternity relief.

Nutrition and Health Programs

1. Poshan Abhiyaan launched in 2018 aims to improve nutrition for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
2. The program addresses malnutrition reducing stunting, wasting, and anaemia through convergent action.
3. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana provides financial compensation for wage loss due to pregnancy and childbirth.
4. The scheme was extended to cover the second child if the child is a girl, promoting gender equality.
5. Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 improve nutrition, health, and immunity through upgraded Anganwadi centres.

Girl Child Protection

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao launched on January 22, 2015, aims to prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination.
2. The scheme ensures survival and protection of girl children while promoting their education.
3. Multi-sectoral interventions address sex ratio imbalances, discriminatory practices, and educational barriers.

Education Initiatives

1. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyas are residential schools for girls from socio-economically disadvantaged groups in educationally backward areas.
2. These schools provide safe education from classes VI to XII, supporting girls' transition to higher secondary schooling.
3. Vigyan Jyoti run by the Department of Science & Technology encourages meritorious girls, especially in rural areas, to pursue STEM careers.
4. The program addresses gender gaps in science and technology through mentoring, counselling, laboratory exposure, and role model interactions.

Skill Development

1. Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls (NAVYA) launched in 2025 provides skill development for adolescent girls aged 16–18 years who have passed Class 10.
2. Skill India Digital Hub offers unified platform integrating skilling, training, and employment services.

Comprehensive Empowerment

1. Mission Shakti launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development ensures safety, security, and empowerment through two components.
2. Sambal focuses on safety and security through legal support, helplines, and protection mechanisms.
3. Samarthya promotes empowerment through economic opportunities, skill development, and leadership training.

7. Persistent Challenges

Violence Against Women

1. Despite improvements across indicators, violence against women including domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and trafficking remains widespread.
2. Reporting rates remain low due to stigma, fear of retaliation, lack of faith in justice systems, and social pressure.
3. Conviction rates in rape and domestic violence cases remain abysmally low, creating impunity.

Economic Inequality

1. Gender wage gaps persist with women earning substantially less than men for comparable work.
2. Women's overrepresentation in informal sector employment denies social security, job security, and legal protections.
3. Unpaid domestic and care work remains almost entirely women's burden, limiting economic participation.

Political Representation

1. Women's representation in Parliament and state assemblies remains around 10–15%, far below the 33% reservation proposed in pending legislation.
2. Without constitutionally mandated political reservation, women's legislative representation lags dramatically.

Intersectional Disadvantages

1. Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and minority women face compounded disadvantages from caste, religious, and gender discrimination.
2. Rural, poor, and less-educated women experience worse outcomes across all indicators compared to urban, affluent, educated women.

8. Way Forward

Strengthen Implementation

1. Translate legal rights and policy frameworks into ground-level implementation through adequate budgets, trained personnel, monitoring systems, and accountability mechanisms, while addressing last-mile delivery gaps preventing scheme benefits from reaching intended beneficiaries, particularly in remote and marginalized communities.

Address Violence Comprehensively

1. Implement comprehensive violence prevention including legal reforms ensuring swift justice, police and judicial training on gender sensitivity, widespread awareness campaigns challenging patriarchal attitudes, and accessible support services including shelters, counselling, and legal aid for survivors.

Expand Economic Opportunities

1. Create quality employment opportunities for women through skill development aligned with market demands, workplace safety regulations including harassment prevention, childcare infrastructure enabling women's workforce participation, and equal pay enforcement closing gender wage gaps across sectors.

Enhance Political Participation

1. Pass pending Women's Reservation Bill providing 33% reservation in Parliament and state assemblies, while strengthening women's participation in local governance through training, mentorship, and support systems enabling effective leadership rather than proxy representation by male relatives.

Challenge Social Norms

1. Address root causes of gender inequality through educational curricula promoting gender equality, media campaigns challenging stereotypes, community engagement transforming discriminatory practices, and male involvement in domestic and care responsibilities creating more equitable household divisions of labor.

Conclusion

The 'Women and Men in India 2025' report reveals significant gender progress with sex ratios improving from 904 to 917, infant mortality declining dramatically for both genders, gender parity achieved across school education, female higher education GER exceeding males at 30.2, and rural female LFPR surging from 37.5% to 45.9%. Women in managerial positions increased by 102.54% compared to 73.80% for men. These improvements reflect policy impacts from Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Poshan Abhiyaan, Mission Shakti, and educational initiatives. Despite progress, persistent challenges including violence, economic inequality, and political underrepresentation require sustained commitment.

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