



INDIA'S FEMALE WORKFORCE

Sustainable Development Goal #5 & #8

POSSIBLE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are the challenges facing women in the workforce in India?
- What factors—geographical, political, and social—contribute to the complexity of female access to equitable work and working conditions in India?
- In what ways can equitable participation of women in the workplace impact a region's culture and economy?
- What future measures—such as education, policies, and technology—might help improve access and influence for working women in India?

BACKGROUND

India is one of the world's most populous nations and quickly growing countries, but less than 30% of its women participate in the workforce. Since gaining independence from Great Britain following World War II, India has gone through two major shifts in economic development, from a complicated centralized economic system to one of much greater flexibility. The most recent change in the early 1990s resulted in a major boom for the country. This large nation with its wide variations in geography and regional culture has quickly become one of the world's major economic forces.

Why then, do Indian women make up such a small fraction of the labor market? There are a variety of forces in play that contribute to this situation, influenced by historical, social, and geographical elements. Women in India who have historically worked in very low paying agriculture jobs now have opportunities for other skilled work in industry and other fields, but overall participation is still very low. In fact, recent findings show that not only are women not going to work, working women are actually leaving the labor market at climbing rates.

In spite of this decline and marginalization for working women, positive changes in education and social welfare could mean that these disparities are temporary and that women currently pursuing higher education will soon join the workforce with even more opportunity for success. Male dominated social expectations, however, remain an obstacle for women who are reluctant to spend their lives as full-time homemakers. The civic health of this quickly growing nation is dependent on thoughtful inclusion of half of its potential workers, ensuring that the voices of Indian women are part of these solutions.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories

- [How One Woman Found the Courage to Say No to Domestic Abuse \(NPR\)](#)
- [Oklahoma City-Based International Development NGO Focuses on Women \(NPR\)](#)
- [Meet India's Female "Seed Guardians" Pioneering Organic Gardening \(The Guardian\)](#)



Articles

- [Why are Millions of Indian Women Dropping Out of Work? \(BBC\)](#)
- [Why Indian Workplaces are Losing Women \(The Wire\)](#)
- [Why Indian Women are Out of Work \(Times of India\)](#)
- [The Longer Indian Women Work, the More They're Underpaid \(Quartz\)](#)
- [More Indian Women Could Go to Work if They Found Alternative Caregivers \(Scroll\)](#)
- [The Indian Women Who Took on a Multinational and Won](#)
- [India's Consumer Caste System](#)
- [India's Half a Billion Jobs Conundrum](#)

Data and Maps

- [Women in the Labor Force: India](#)
- [Budget 2017: India's Missing Women Workers](#)
- [UN Women -- Data on Women in Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [Precarious Drop: Reassessing Patterns of Female Labor Force Participation in India \(World Bank\)](#)

Websites

- [UN Women: Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [CARE India](#)
- [UN India Library](#)

Photos and Videos

- [Hearts and Minds: Women of India Speak \(UN Women Photo Essay\)](#)
- [India: Women Struggle to Find Work \(CNN\)](#)
- [What is it Like to Be a Working Woman in India? \(Youth Ki Awaaz\)](#)
- [The Rights of Women in India \(vs. the Rest of the World\)](#)

Solutions

- [Letting \(Some of\) India's Women Own Land \(Solutions Journalism\)](#)
- [From Untouchable to Organic: Dalit Women Sow Change in India \(Al Jazeera\)](#)
- [Female Police Squads Tackle Street Harassment in India \(News Deeply\)](#)

