



Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation

For Prelims: [Women's Labor Force Participation](#), [Wage Disparities](#), [Gender Disparity](#), [Female Labor Force Participation Rate](#), [Human Capital Development](#).

For Mains: Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the Tamil Nadu government has launched the **Kalaigiar Magalir Urimai Thogai Thittam**, a women's basic income scheme, recognizing **Women's Unpaid Labor**. The scheme will provide **Rs 1,000 per month to women** in eligible households

- In Marriages, the wife bears and rears children and minds the home, and therefore bears the brunt of unpaid care and domestic work, hindering their [Participation in Labor Force](#).

What are the Causes of Lower Women Participation in the Labour Force?

- **Patriarchal Social Norms:**
 - Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and **traditional gender roles often limit women's access to education** and employment opportunities.
 - Societal expectations may prioritize **women's roles as caregivers and homemakers**, discouraging their active participation in the labor force.
- **Gender Wage Gap:**
 - Women in India often face **wage disparities compared to men** for similar work.
 - According to [World Inequality Report, 2022](#), men in India **capture 82%** of labour income, while women **earn just 18%**.
 - This wage gap can **discourage women from seeking formal employment** opportunities.
- **Unpaid Care Work:**
 - The burden of unpaid care and domestic work **falls disproportionately on women**, limiting their time and energy for paid employment.
 - Married women in India spend over **7 hours per day on unpaid care** and domestic work, while men spend less than 3 hours.
 - This trend is consistent **across income levels and caste groups**, leading to a significant [Gender Disparity](#) in domestic responsibilities.
 - This unequal distribution of household responsibilities can be a significant barrier to women's participation in the labor force.
- **Social and Cultural Stigma:**
 - In some communities, there may be stigma or resistance associated with women working outside the home, leading to lower labor force participation rates.

What are the Statistics Regarding Unpaid Care of Women?

▪ **Female Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR):**

- Despite a surge in the enrollment rate for **girls in Class 10**, India's **Female LFPR** has declined **from 30% to 24%** over the past two decades.
- The burden of domestic work is **a key factor contributing to lower female LFPR**, even among educated women.
 - India's female LFPR (24%) is the **lowest among BRICS countries** and select **South Asian countries**.
 - **China**, with the highest female population, boasts the **highest female LFPR at 61%**.

▪ **Impact on Women's Employment:**

- Women not in the labor force **spend the most time on unpaid domestic/care work**, averaging 457 minutes (7.5 hours) per day.
- Employed women follow closely, spending **348 minutes (5.8 hours) per day on such chores**, impacting their **ability to engage in paid work**.

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An unequal burden

The charts are based on data collated from the World Bank website and the Time Use Survey (2019) by the National Sample Survey Office



Chart 1 | The chart shows female LFPR in India and the enrolment rate for girls in Class 10 since 1990

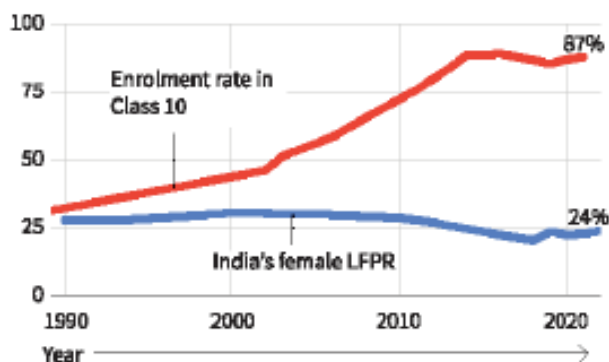


Chart 2 | The chart compares India's 2022 female LFPR to that of other BRICS countries and select South Asian countries

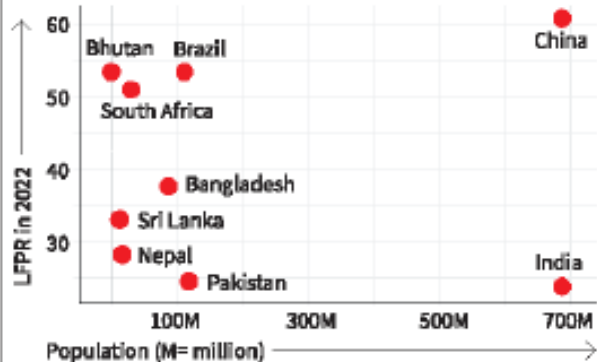


Chart 3 | Average time (in minutes) spent on unpaid care during a day for men and women across employment groups

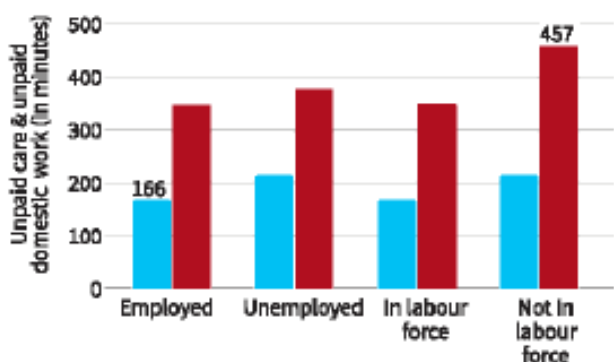
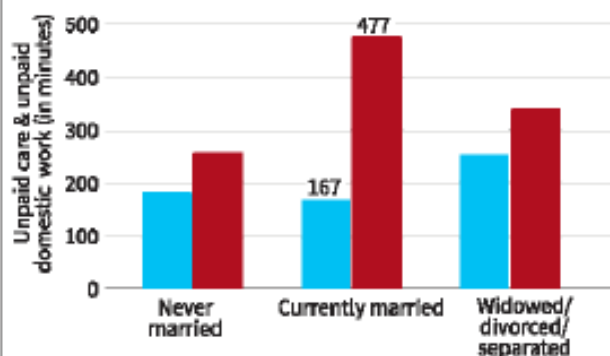


Chart 4 | Average time spent (in minutes) on unpaid care in a day by men and women categorised by marital status



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How can Higher Women Labor Participation Impact the Society at Large?

- **Economic Growth:**
 - Women's participation in the labor force is **directly linked to economic growth**. When a significant portion of the female population remains **underutilized, it results in a loss of potential productivity** and economic output.
 - Increased women's labor force participation can **contribute to higher GDP (Gross Domestic Product)** and overall economic prosperity.
- **Poverty Reduction:**
 - When women have access to income-generating opportunities, **it can lift households out of poverty**, leading to better living standards and improved well-being for families.
- **Human Capital Development:**
 - Educated and economically active women can **positively influence the education and health outcomes** of their children, leading to intergenerational benefits.
- **Gender Equality and Empowerment:**
 - Higher women's participation in the labor force can **challenge traditional gender roles and norms**, promoting gender equality.
 - Economic empowerment enables women to have greater control over their lives, decision-making power, and autonomy.
- **Fertility and Population Growth:**
 - Studies have shown that as women's labor force participation increases, fertility rates tend to decline.
 - This phenomenon, known as the "fertility transition," is associated with improved access to education, healthcare, and family planning, leading to more sustainable population growth.
- **Reduced Gender-Based Violence:**
 - Economic empowerment can enhance women's bargaining power and reduce their **vulnerability to gender-based violence** and abusive relationships.
- **Labor Market and Talent Pool:**
 - Increasing women's participation in the labor force can help **address skill shortages and labor market imbalances**, leading to a more efficient allocation of talent and resources.

What are the Government Schemes Related to Women Empowerment?

- [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme](#)
- [One Stop Centre Scheme](#)
- [SWADHAR Greh](#)
- [NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR](#)
- [Mahila police Volunteers](#)
- [Mahila Shakti Kendras \(MSK\)](#)
- [NIRBHAYA Fund.](#)

Way Forward

- Gender equality discussions should move **beyond compartmentalizing women's lives into work and life** and recognize the comprehensive valuation of all kinds of work, both formal and informal, that women do.
- Policy solutions must be derived from **women's own negotiations within their cultural context**, focusing on increasing autonomy and flexible work options.
- Promoting and supporting higher **women's labor force participation** is not only a matter of gender equality but also a **crucial driver of societal progress** and development.
- By unlocking the full potential of **women in the workforce, societies can reap the benefits of economic growth**, poverty reduction, improved human capital, and more inclusive and equitable communities.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. "Empowering women is the key to control the population growth." Discuss. (2019)

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