



## Disproportionate Burden on Working Women

**For Prelims:** [Women's Labor Force Participation](#), Wage Disparities, [Gender Disparity](#), [Female Labor Force Participation Rate](#), [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#)

**For Mains:** State of Women Participation in Workforce, Corporate, Challenges and Barrier to Women's Labor Force Participation.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

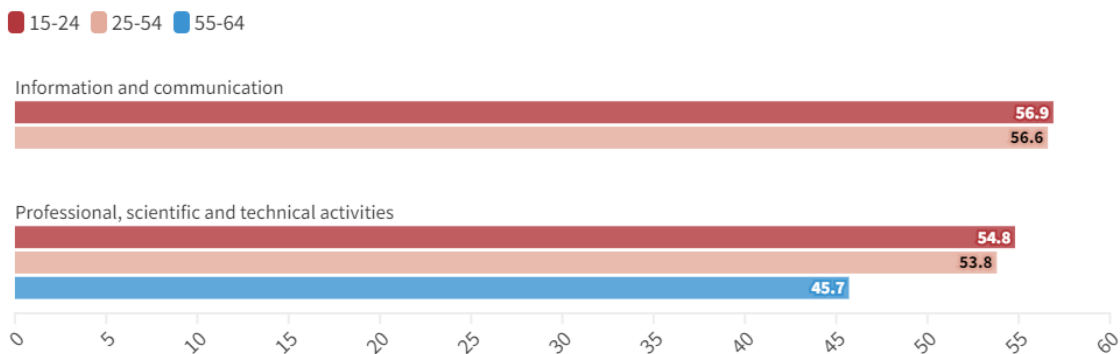
The recent tragic death of a 26-year-old female Chartered Accountant at Ernst & Young (EY), has reignited discussions about the **excessive workload** and stress faced by **young women professionals (white-collars) in India**.

### What is the State of Working Women in India?

- **Work Hours and Stress Levels:**
  - According to the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#) report, young **professional Indian women work** an average of **55 hours per week, with 9-11 hours daily**, leaving **only 7-10 hours for rest** due to household responsibilities.
    - Compared globally, in **Germany** women in IT and media work for 32 hours, and in **Russia**, for 40 hours.
- **The Younger Professional Women Work More:**
  - Women aged **15-24 in ICT/media** roles worked approximately **57 hours weekly**, while those in **professional, scientific and technical activities logged about 55 hours**.
    - This data suggests that as age decreases, the number of hours worked increases, highlighting a **concerning trend** for younger women entering the workforce.
- **Gender Imbalance in Professional Roles:**
  - Only **8.5% of women hold professional scientific and technical jobs**, and **20% are in ICT sectors**.
    - India ranks **15th lowest among 145 countries** in women's representation in professional scientific and technical roles.

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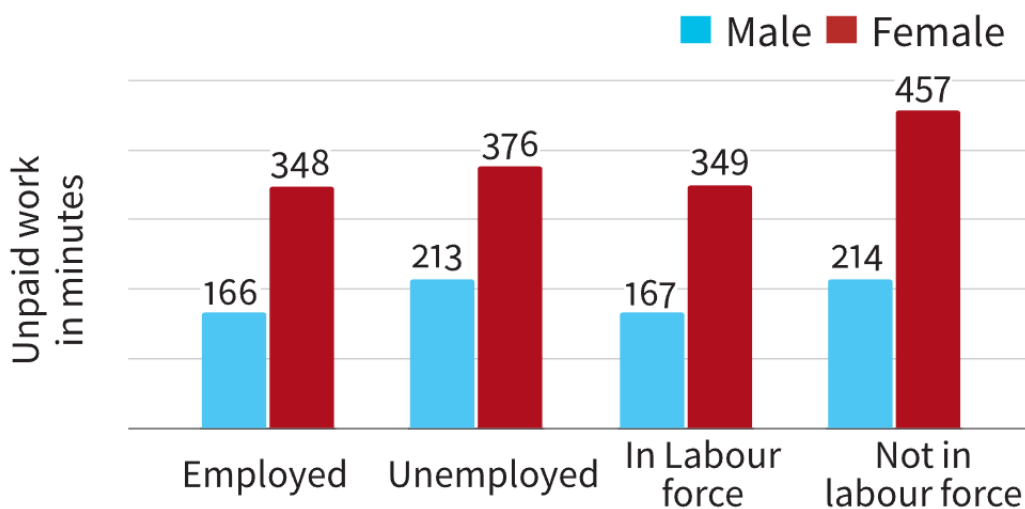
Chart 2 shows the mean weekly hours of across various ages in 2023.



▪ **Women Leading in Unpaid Domestic Work:**

- As per [National Family Health Survey \(2019-21\) data](#), in 2019, women not in the labour force spent 7.5 hours daily on unpaid domestic and care work.
- Employed women spent an average of 5.8 hours daily on unpaid domestic work.
  - Unemployed men contributed 3.5 hours, while employed men spent only 2.7 hours daily on domestic work.

Chart 1 | Average minutes spent per day in 2019 on unpaid domestic and care activities across employment groups



▪ **Regional Variations:**

- About 85% of women aged 15-59 do unpaid domestic work, showing little difference between urban and rural areas.
- Male participation is below 50% in many areas, in states like Haryana and Rajasthan as per [NFHS \(2019-21\) data](#).

Table 3 | The table shows the % of men/women aged 15-59 who participated in select activities in 2019

Area	Gender	Employment and related activities	Unpaid domestic services
Rural	Male	69.7%	29.2%
Rural	Female	22.5%	93.2%
Urban	Male	73%	22.5%
Urban	Female	19.9%	88.8%
Total	Male	70.7%	27%
Total	Female	21.7%	91.8%

## What is the Scenario for the White-Collar Jobs in India?

### ▪ Current Situation of Regulation:

- **White-Collar Worker** refers to a salaried professional, typically performing administrative or managerial tasks.
- Currently, several central legislations, such as the [Industrial Disputes Act, 1947](#), the [Shops and Establishments Act, 1954](#), and the [Factories Act, 1948](#), govern the rights of private employees.
- The **lack of standard contract templates** leads to differences between companies, **causing inconsistencies in employee rights and complicating regulations.**

### ▪ Need for Regulation:

- A 2023 [ASSOCHAM](#) study found that **42% of Indian white-collar workers** exceed the legal limit of 48 working hours per week.
- Additionally, a 2022 TeamLease survey (India-based HR company) revealed that 68% of professionals struggle with work-life balance, affecting their mental health and personal relationships.
- The **rise of the gig economy further complicates** matters, as many freelancers lack access to essential benefits like paid leave and health insurance.

### ▪ Concerns Against Stricter Labour Laws:

- **Impact on Innovation and Adaptability:** Stricter regulations may hinder the flexibility and rapid response essential for dynamic sectors like IT.
- **Employer-Employee Relationships:** Open communication and mutual trust are considered more effective for achieving work-life balance than rigid regulations.
- **Effect on Job Creation:** Increased compliance costs could lead to reduced hiring or layoffs, negatively affecting the employment landscape.

## What are the Challenges to Women's Participation in the Labor Force?

- **Patriarchal Social Norms:** Deep-rooted **patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles** restrict women's access to education and employment. Societal expectations often prioritise their roles as caregivers and homemakers, discouraging active participation in the workforce.
- **Gender Wage Gap:** Women in India face significant wage disparities compared to men. According to the [World Inequality Report 2022](#), men earn **82%** of labour income, while women capture only 18%. This wage gap discourages women from pursuing formal employment.
- **Safety Concern:** Women often face **safety concerns in the workplace**, including harassment and violence, which deter their participation in the labour force.
- **Underrepresentation in Leadership Roles:** Women are often underrepresented in leadership

and decision-making positions which perpetuate gender biases in organisational policies and **hinder the advancement of other women** in the workforce.

## What Can be Done to Improve Working Conditions for Women in White-Collar Roles?

- **Focus on Women's Inclusion and Support:** Policies ensuring [gender equality](#), including **paid maternity leave, flexible hours, and safe workplace environments**, are essential to improving conditions for women in white-collar jobs.
  - Companies should work to **eliminate gender bias in hiring, promotion, and pay** to foster equal opportunities.
- **Cultural Transformation:** Promoting employee well-being through CSR initiatives like arrangements **for women's mental health support, and discouraging excessive work hours** can enhance work-life balance and reduce burnout.
- **Legal Reforms and Enforcement:** Strict enforcement of existing [labour laws](#) is crucial, along with **updating regulations** to address **gig and freelance work**. This includes ensuring **minimum wage, addressing safety concern** of women, social security benefits, and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms for non-traditional workers.
- **Government Policies and Awareness:** Governments should create policies that **encourage flexible work environments**, ensure **health coverage**, and promote **diversity**.
  - **Awareness campaigns** on employee (including women) rights and employer responsibilities can also help in maintaining fair working conditions.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

What are the challenges faced by women in the workforce in India, and what measures can be implemented to address these issues?

## 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)**