



## 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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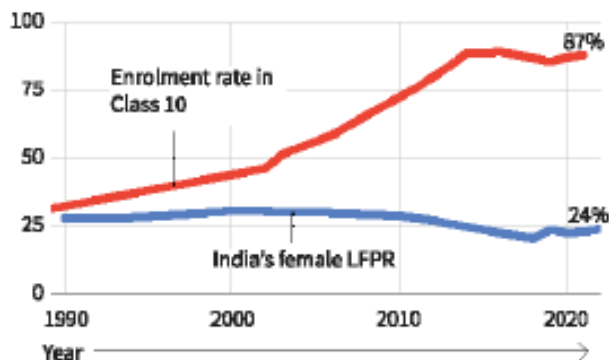


# An unequal burden

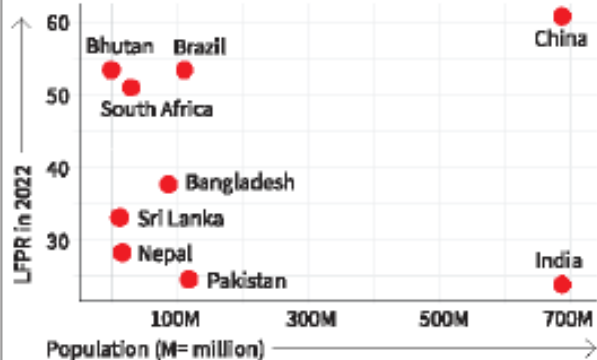
The charts are based on data collated from the World Bank website and the Time Use Survey (2019) by the National Sample Survey Office



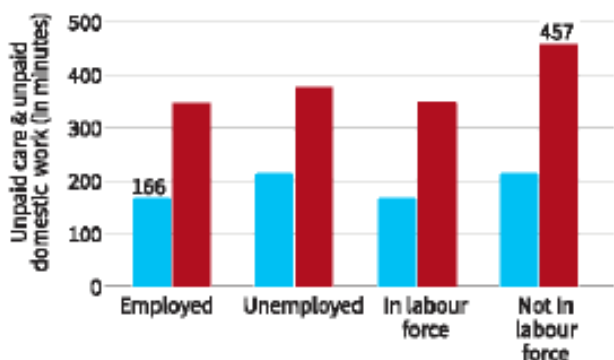
**Chart 1** | The chart shows female LFPR in India and the enrolment rate for girls in Class 10 since 1990



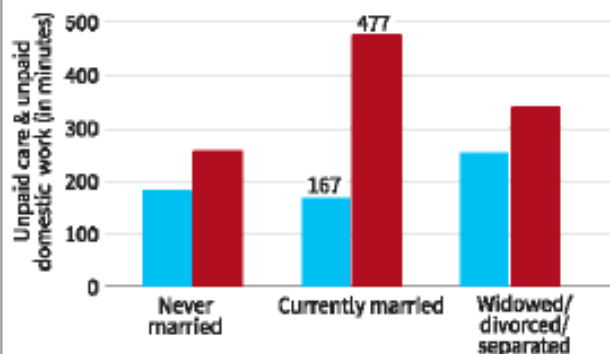
**Chart 2** | The chart compares India's 2022 female LFPR to that of other BRICS countries and select South Asian countries



**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)**

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**Mains**

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

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