

**FEMALE WORK  
AND LABOUR FORCE  
PARTICIPATION IN INDIA**  
*- A Meta-Study*

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BMI</b>	-	Body Mass Index
<b>BPL</b>	-	Below Poverty Line
<b>BPO</b>	-	Business Process Outsourcing
<b>CMIE</b>	-	Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy
<b>DDU-GKY</b>	-	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
<b>EUS</b>	-	Employment Unemployment Survey
<b>FLWP</b>	-	Female Labour/Work-force Participation
<b>FLP</b>	-	Female Labour-force Participation
<b>FWP</b>	-	Female Work-force Participation
<b>GDP</b>	-	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICC</b>	-	Internal Complaints Committee
<b>IHDS</b>	-	India Human Development Survey
<b>JPAL</b>	-	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
<b>MNC</b>	-	Multi-National Company
<b>MNREGA</b>	-	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
<b>MoRD</b>	-	Ministry of Rural Development
<b>MoSPI</b>	-	Ministry of Statistics Program Implementation
<b>MSME</b>	-	Micro Small Medium Enterprises
<b>NCW</b>	-	National Commission for Women
<b>NGO</b>	-	Non-Governmental Organization

<b>NRLM</b>	- National Rural Livelihood Mission
<b>NSSO</b>	- National Sample Survey Office
<b>NULM</b>	- National Urban Livelihood Mission
<b>OBC</b>	- Other Backward Caste
<b>OECD</b>	- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PMKVY</b>	- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
<b>POSH</b>	- Prevention of Sexual Harassment
<b>PWD</b>	- Public Works Department
<b>SANKALP</b>	- Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion
<b>SC</b>	- Scheduled Caste
<b>SHG</b>	- Self-Help Group
<b>ST</b>	- Scheduled Tribe
<b>STEP</b>	- Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women
<b>STRIVE</b>	- Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement

# Executive Summary



## BACKGROUND

The Indian government has actively pursued labour market policies to increase the Female Labour/Workforce Participation (FLWP) rate in India for several decades. The policy-based approach has evolved from educational scholarships, reservations/quotas, to self-employment through self-help groups and more recently to capacity building through skill training programmes. Challenges in effective implementation coupled with deep-rooted social norms have constrained the impact of these policies on Female Labour/Workforce Participation rate which continues to dwindle. There have been numerous research projects and writings in the academic and public domain analysing the

various factors affecting female labour-force participation in India. However, there has been little by way of meta studies to take stock of these public programmes, data and research across disciplines to motivate further policy development. This study undertakes a meta-analysis by methodically and comprehensively scanning, documenting and analysing datasets and national policies as well as theoretical and empirical literature surrounding female workforce participation relevant to the national context. In total 13 national level databases, 58 research papers and 53 national level policies were reviewed, documented and analysed to derive policy implications.

# KEY INSIGHTS

01

Basic quantitative labour market indicators are well measured in existing datasets, but indicators related to the quality of the labour market such as terms of employment, job search methods and so on, are rarely documented. Metrics related to gender inclusion and workplace conditions such as access to transport, toilets, childcare and others are equally rare. Another important aspect missing from national databases are behavioural and perception-based data such as career aspirations and expectations from course/job.

02

There is an increasing trade-off between education and employment choices today. The trade-off is primarily driven by a lack of employment for educated women (at-least to secondary school level) and by non-alignment of job opportunities with the aspirations of women. This is coupled with weak secondary sector performance in job creation for women and challenges in migration for work for women.

03

Across the landscape of empirical literature, the efficacy of the Self Help Group (SHG) movement and peer effects have been duly highlighted for their potential to further the cause of women empowerment. Productive asset transfer and ownership has also been documented to have a positive impact of women's economic participation. Vocational training has been noticed to improve women's non-cognitive abilities, agency and bargaining power.

04

Competing outcomes of the household and labour market have resulted in women forgoing their employment. Further, deep-rooted social norms, lack of agency and gendering of occupations often leads to women having little choice in their employment and work decisions including care and domestic work.

05

While several policies exist to enable financial support, training, placements and other quantifiable outcomes, few national policies focus on providing support services, such as lodging, safe and convenient travel, migration support and childcare, that enable women to access skilling programmes or be part of the workforce. Budgetary focus on such programmes is comparatively low.

06

Studies are favourable towards the potential of gender quotas and reservations while discussing the need to prevent tokenism and enable inclusion actively through policy design. Of the total policies analysed, 35 % of the schemes seek to achieve inclusion by setting targets on the total beneficiary composition, 18 % by ear-marking funds and 29 % by "encouraging" inclusiveness as a policy mandate, but without actively designing policy components to bring about change. While 56 % of the policies analysed are exclusive to women, these policies do not dive further to identify more disadvantaged groups of women.

# POLICY IMPLICATIONS

## 1 Reorienting Policy Design

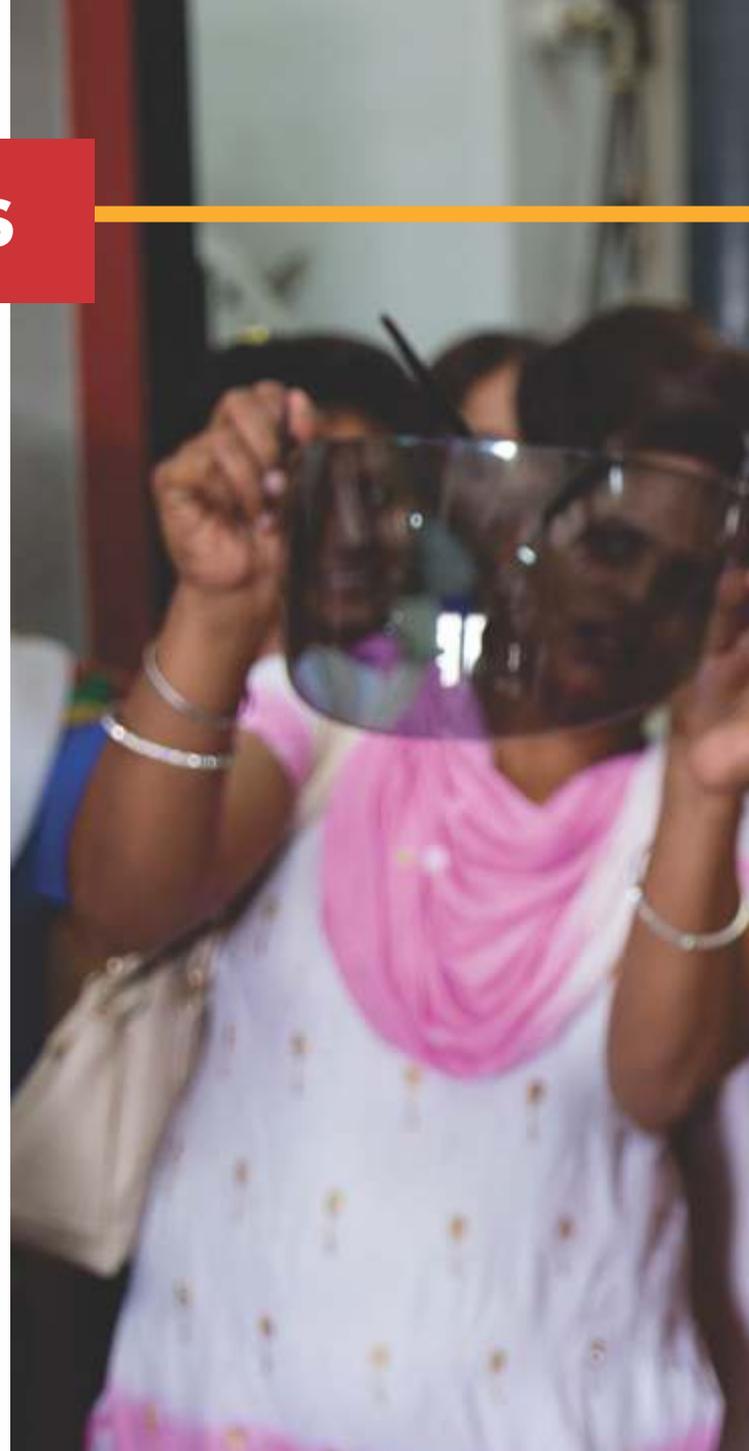
- Ensuring inclusion in programme design by universalisation of programmes where possible
- Modifying outcome metrics for labour market programmes away from the exclusive focus on placement rates and wage rates to also include enabling factors such as safety, aspiration alignment and so on
- Dovetailing or convergence with programmes for adult education, literacy and numeracy skills, advanced skill training and higher education

## 2 Programme Innovation

- Using tax policies to incentivise women into the labour market on both the demand and supply side
- Increasing employment opportunities for educated women in agriculture and in areas such as animal husbandry, milk cooperatives and allied sectors
- Increasing legislation around gender discrimination in the work place and in the labour market, particularly in the manufacturing sector

## 3 Communication and Behavioural Change

- Investing in largescale social campaigns for changing social norms which break gender stereotypes, which includes women working, especially in the manufacturing and secondary sectors as well as redefining the role of men in households
- Widespread mobilisation and incentivising mobilisers better for more effective and inclusive programme participation for women
- Providing information about the regional labour market as part of pre-training counselling. Understanding aspirations of candidates better and how they match with the labour market



## 4 Support Services for Entry and Continuation

- Providing arrangements for child care at training centres, better stipends for travel, lodging, boarding and other expenses incurred during programme participation
- Providing support to women who migrate in search of work and jobs
- Developing and encouraging forums for informal and formal mentorship and connections to female role models and women in leadership



# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Survey of India pointed out that the gender gap in the Indian labour force participation of 2018 is more than 50 % points. In 2011, as per the last published National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) survey, the Workforce Participation Rate (proportion of labour force employed) at an all India level was 25.5 % for females and 53.3 % for males (MoSPI 2012)<sup>1</sup>. The Indian government has actively pursued labour market policies to increase Female Work/Labour-force Participation (FLWP) rate in India for several decades. The approach to policy has evolved from educational scholarships and reservations/quotas, to self-employment through self-help groups, to capacity building through skill training policies.

Challenges in effective implementation coupled with the inability to address deep-rooted social norms have constrained the impact of these policies on FLWP which continues to dip to dangerous levels. It is therefore no surprise that there have been numerous research papers and reports in the academic and public domain analysing the various factors affecting female labour force participation in India. However, there have been few meta-level studies to take stock of this literature on public programmes and national data, or on research across disciplines to motivate further policy development.

**The primary objective of this study is to triangulate the findings from literature, policy and data on female labour force participation. Through this, the report aims to establish trends, summarise explanatory research, identify data gaps and areas for potential research, map the policy landscape and identify policy levers to improve FLWP. The secondary objective of the study is to create repositories/meta-data on policies, data and research on FLWP in India, which can form a basis for continuous sectoral analysis.**

Section 2 begins with a presentation of a metadata analysis on national labour surveys in India. It continues with a summary of patterns and trends, and ends with the various theories proposed in the literature on falling FLWP in India. Section 3 discusses the national labour policy landscape, financial

prioritisation and gaps in programme design. Section 4 presents a review of empirical literature by way of impact evaluations and observational studies on policies and programmes aimed at improving FLWP in India.

<sup>1</sup>Indian news media covering the unpublished NSSO survey of 2017-18, reported unemployment levels at 6.1% (Business Standard 2019). Of this, joblessness among female youth rise was 13.6% in rural India and 27.2% in urban.

## 2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

### 2.1. Metadata Analysis

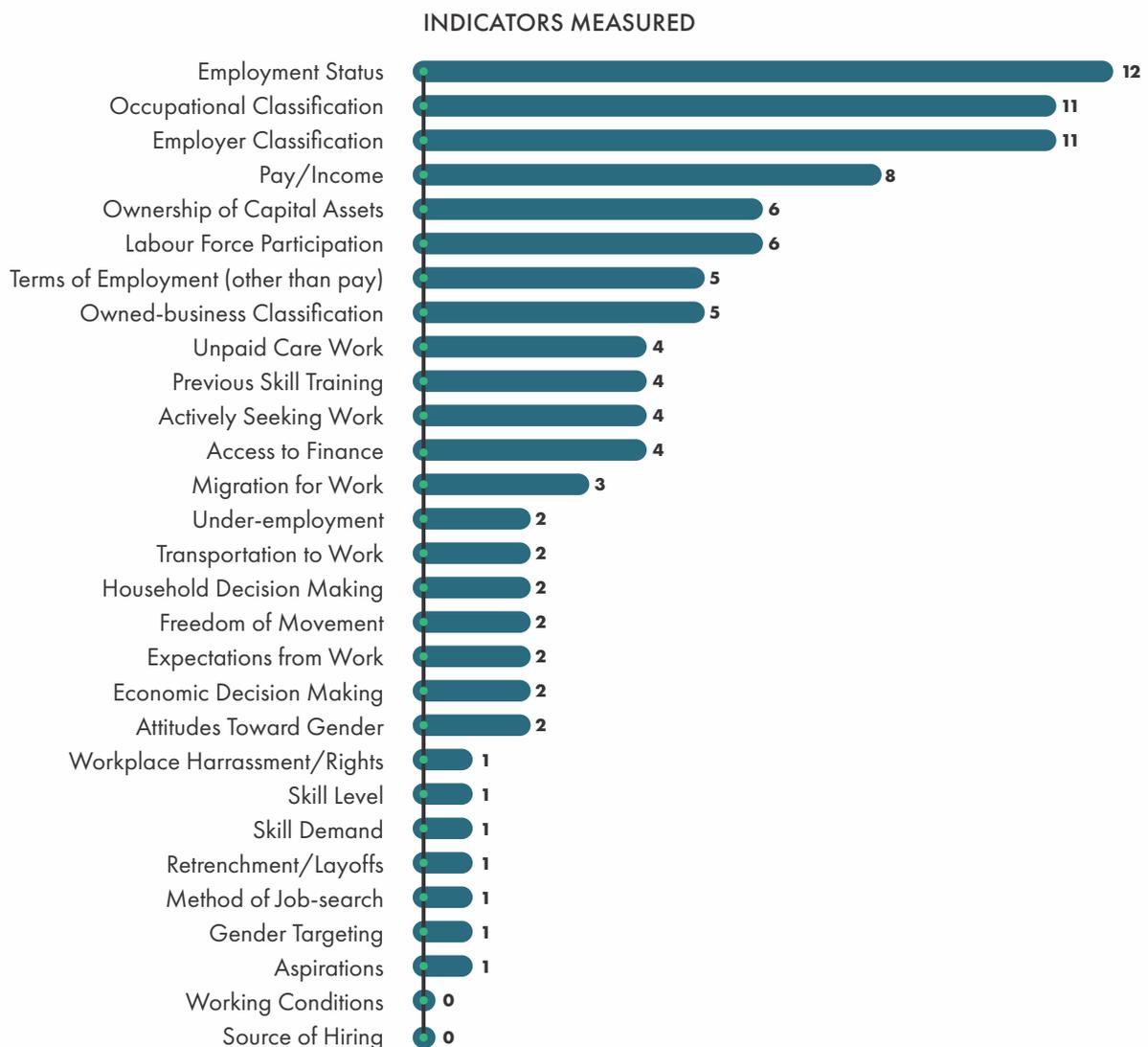
Through a meta-analysis of thirteen nationally representative labour data, this section presents a few insights into the national data pertaining to FLWP. The list of datasets scanned is as follows:

- 1 Annual Survey of Industries
- 2 Census of India
- 3 Labour Bureau Employment Unemployment Survey (EUS)
- 4 Gender Institutions Development Database
- 5 Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS)
- 6 National Family Health Survey
- 7 NSSO Employment Unemployment Survey (EUS)
- 8 Trade Apprenticeship Training Database
- 9 Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) - Unemployment Survey
- 10 Wheebox Employability Skill Test (India Skills Report)
- 11 Enterprise Survey
- 12 Labour Bureau's Quarterly Employment Survey
- 13 Rural Economic and Demographic Survey

Since its discontinuation in 2011 by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, it is the Ministry of Labour and Employment that is continuing the official Employment Unemployment Surveys of the country, thus moving from an ad-hoc to an annual frequency. The Labour Bureau also carries out a quarterly survey of select industries (firm level) to gauge employment statistics. Apart from the household surveys of NCAER and CMIE, there are no panel surveys, i.e., wherein the same households are surveyed in each round. Two of the 13 datasets reviewed were global datasets, namely Gender Institutions Development Database and Enterprise Survey.

In total, 29 metrics related to gender and workplace were identified and cross-checked with the listed surveys. While some basic quantitative labour market indicators like Employment Status, Type of Employment/ Occupation, Salaries/Wages and Vocational training are well measured in the existing datasets, other fundamental indicators related to the quality of the labour market such as media for job search, terms of employment, working conditions, access to finance, underemployment, retrenchment and hiring practices are rarely documented. (See Figure 2.1)

**Figure 2.1: Indicators measured by Labour Market Surveys**



(Source: Authors' analysis) ● Number of National Surveys

Similarly, in the context of female FLWP, it is clear that the metrics related to gender and workplace such as care work, household/ economic decision making, use of time, workplace harassment, freedom of movement and social norms are equally rare. These indicators are often studied by smaller thematic surveys, usually by international organisations, but not in large sample employment surveys. For example, while the National Family and Health Database does have some gender-related variables, it does not have comprehensive employment data. The reverse is true of the NSSO EUS.

Another important aspect missing from national databases is behavioural and perception data such as career goals, aspirations, attitudes and expectations from course/job. Datasets differ in their method of measuring certain indicators as well. For instance, while NSSO EUS measures employment levels uniquely by recording “intensity of activity”, IHDS uniquely measures household income at a household member level (where it is possible to disaggregate female income from male income in the same household).

Working conditions such as safety and sanitary conditions are also under-measured in India. Consider the International Labour Organization (ILO) global statistics database on occupational injuries, 52 countries across the development spectrum reported cases of fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers by sex and migrant status in 2015. The last measured figure from India for the same parameter is from as far back as 2007.

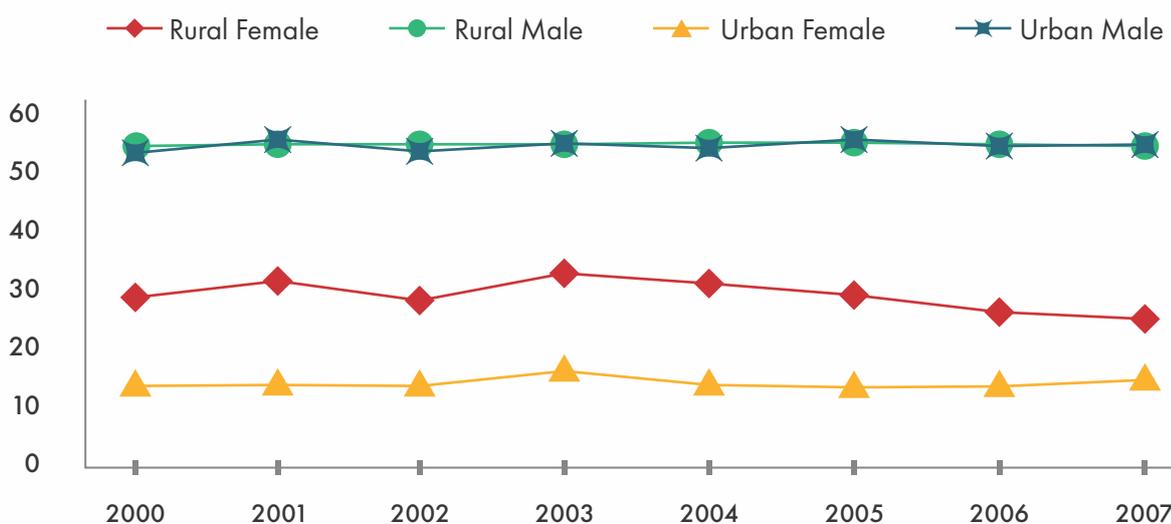


## 2.2. Summary of Patterns and Trends

While there is a strong consensus in the available literature that FLP rate has fallen significantly from previous NSSO rounds namely 2009-10, 2005-06 and 1999-2000, the magnitude of the fall has been estimated differently by different authors based on the operational definition of employment used, years of reference and construction of metrics. The drop in FLP rate has been estimated within the range of 20 million (Kannan and Raveendran 2012) and 22 million (Himanshu

2011) for the period between 2004-05 and 2009-10. Estimates for the period between 2004-05 and 2011-12 are similar between 19.2 million (Andres et al. 2017) and 19.7 million (Abraham 2013). It has also been suggested that 53 % of this drop occurred in rural India within the 15 to 24 year age group (Andres et al. 2017). That the drop in FLP is sharper in rural India has also been confirmed by multiple reports (ILO 2011) (Rawal and Saha 2015). (See Figure 2.2)

**Figure 2.2: Gender and Geography-wise Work Force Participation Rates (2000-2007)**



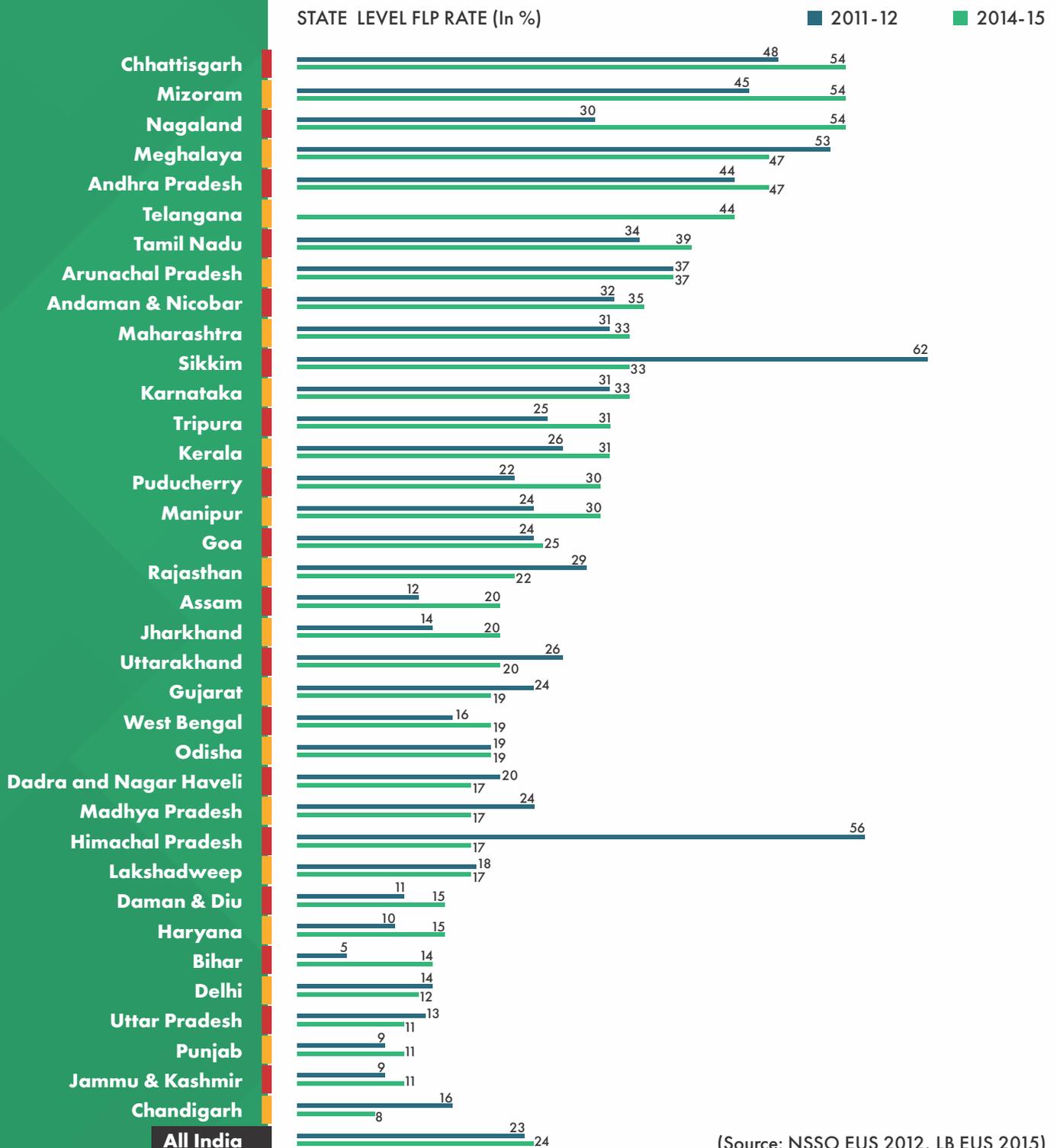
(Source: MoSPI 2012)

Using more recent data from the Labour Bureau EUS surveys, a similar trend of falling FLWP has been established for the last half decade. As per estimates, around 7.3 million women left the workforce between 2013-14 and 2015-16. 79.4 % of this drop took place in rural India (Abraham 2017). The largest decline in employment was experienced in

the primary sector. In contrast, the services sector grew in employment by 6.6 million. However, this growth was concentrated in mainly two sectors - wholesale and retail trade and motor repairing. Finally, from CMIE data we know that FLP rate has fallen from 15.75% to 10.7% between 2016 and 2018 (Business Standard 2018).

Figure 2.3 describes female labour force participation (through usual principal status approach), by State. Chhattisgarh is best performing state in 2015 at 65% participation, followed by Mizoram at 54%. However, Bihar has exhibited the largest change in participation between 2011 and 2015. Himachal Pradesh on the other hand, which was among the best performing states in 2011, fell in participation rate between the NSSO and LB EUSs.

**Figure 2.3: FLP rate by State (Usual Principal Status Approach (ps))**



(Source: NSSO EUS 2012, LB EUS 2015)

## 2.3. Explaining the Drop in FLWP

Several theories have been proposed to explain the drop in FLWP in India. This section summarises these theories and their supporting evidence.

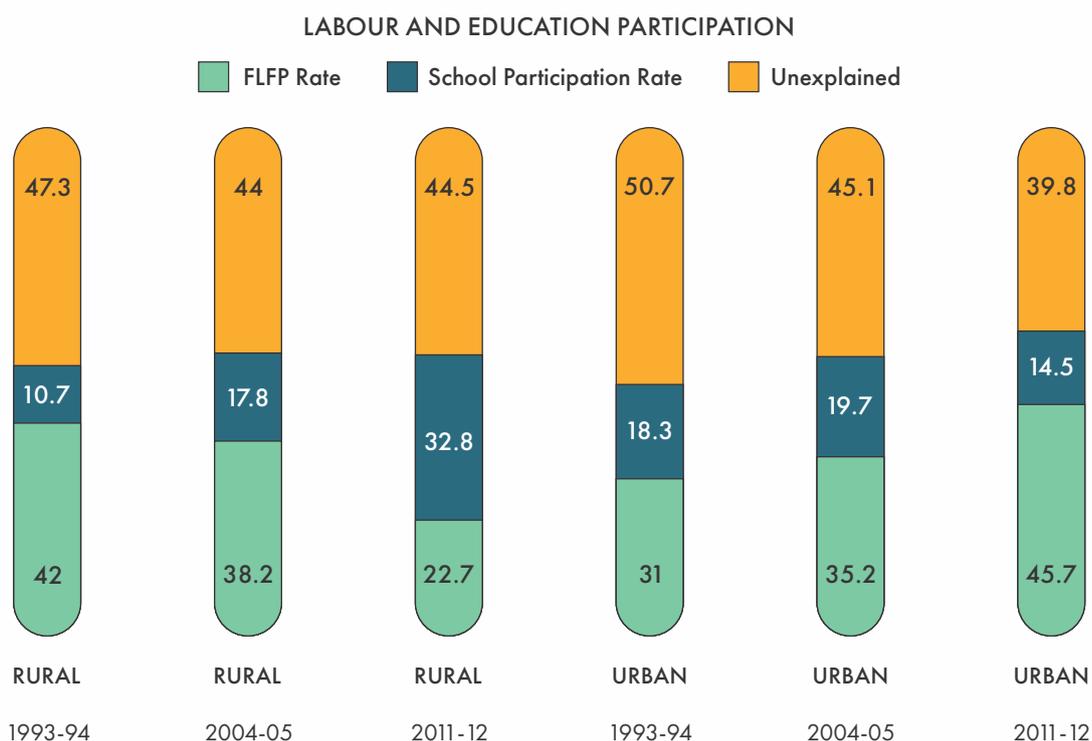
### 2.3.1. Education-Employment Trade-off

An oft-cited cause for the drop in FLWP has been the U-shaped relationship between education and participation which grows positively for low and very high levels of education but negatively for moderate levels of education (secondary and high-school). The lowest incidence of FLP rate is among those who had attained secondary and post-secondary (10+2) levels of education, followed by those with levels of education below the secondary level (Andres et al. 2017). However, the last decade (Andres et al. 2017) finds that the largest drop in the FLP among illiterate women and college graduates. This pattern holds true for both rural and urban areas.

The U-shaped relation may also be indicative of several other underlying mechanisms affecting the decision to join/leave the labour market. For instance, reports point out that the

number of male and female child labourers has consistently fallen (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017). This primarily includes children in the age group of 6-14 years which is the elementary and secondary-school going age. The authors calculated a fall of 10.6 million children participating in child labour to 3.7 million between 1999-00 to 2011-12. They also find that the share of female children engaged in child labour has declined in this period. However, it has been found that combined participation rates (labour-market and/or educational participation) even restricted to a young cohort (15-24 years) still includes only 55-60% of the female population. These figures cannot explain why 40-45% of the young female population are out of the workforce (Andres et al. 2017). (See Figure 2.4)

**Figure 2.4: Female Participation in Labour and Education (1993-2012)**



(Source: Andres et al. 2017)



One other explanation is that more educated women do not wish to work in jobs that do not match with their aspirations and there are not enough salaried opportunities available for women with moderate levels of education like clerical and sales jobs. This is an issue concerning not just actual constraints in the labour market but also perceptions about supply and appropriate jobs for educated

women. Jobs that are perceived to be low-skilled are not aspirational for women with medium to higher levels of education, and it is important to enable women to overcome stigmas attached to certain job-roles, especially menial jobs in manufacturing and construction, or in domestic services (Klasen and Pieters 2015).



### 2.3.2. Competing Outcomes of the Household and Labour Market

A large proportion of the women who left the labour market is married and within the 25-65 age group. Some of the arguments in the available studies suggest that husband income (and education) contributes to the withdrawal of women from the labour force through a household income effect. The greater the income women's households have apart from their own earnings, the lower the chances of the women being in the labour force (Chatterjee et al. 2018)(Sarkar et al. 2017). Similarly, it has also been shown that if women's perceived productivity at home is greater than their returns in the labour market, women are likely to withdraw from the labour

force and engage in domestic work (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017).

One constraint in capturing this effect is insufficient documentation of family income versus women's own earnings in national surveys. As a result, the inverse relationship between participation rates and household income is not clear in available studies. For instance, it has been shown that there are some income levels that are positively associated with female labour participation in urban areas, i.e., the relationship follows a U-shape pattern. In rural areas however, the relationship is negative across all income levels (Abraham 2013).

### 2.3.3. Structural Constraints in the Labour Market

One strong theory around the drop in FLP is that the female labour force of the early 2000s included a significant number of women who had joined the labour market under distress.

**For instance, it has been argued that 14.6 million women entered the labour market in 2000-06 as unpaid family workers because farming households were in distress when agricultural growth had dropped below 2% (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017). Of this, 1.65 million women were over the age of 60 years.**

Rural female manufacturing employment increased after the year 2010. Of those women who are employed in non-agricultural work, 34% of women are employed in manufacturing. In contrast only 22% of men who are not engaged in agriculture, work in manufacturing and the rest work in services (Sarkar et al. 2017). Yet the growth of female employment in manufacturing was primarily driven by the growing number of small-scale, home-based businesses and not job creation (Klasen and Pieters 2015). In contrast, skilled

and formal employment opportunities for women in the secondary sector have not grown adequately (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017).

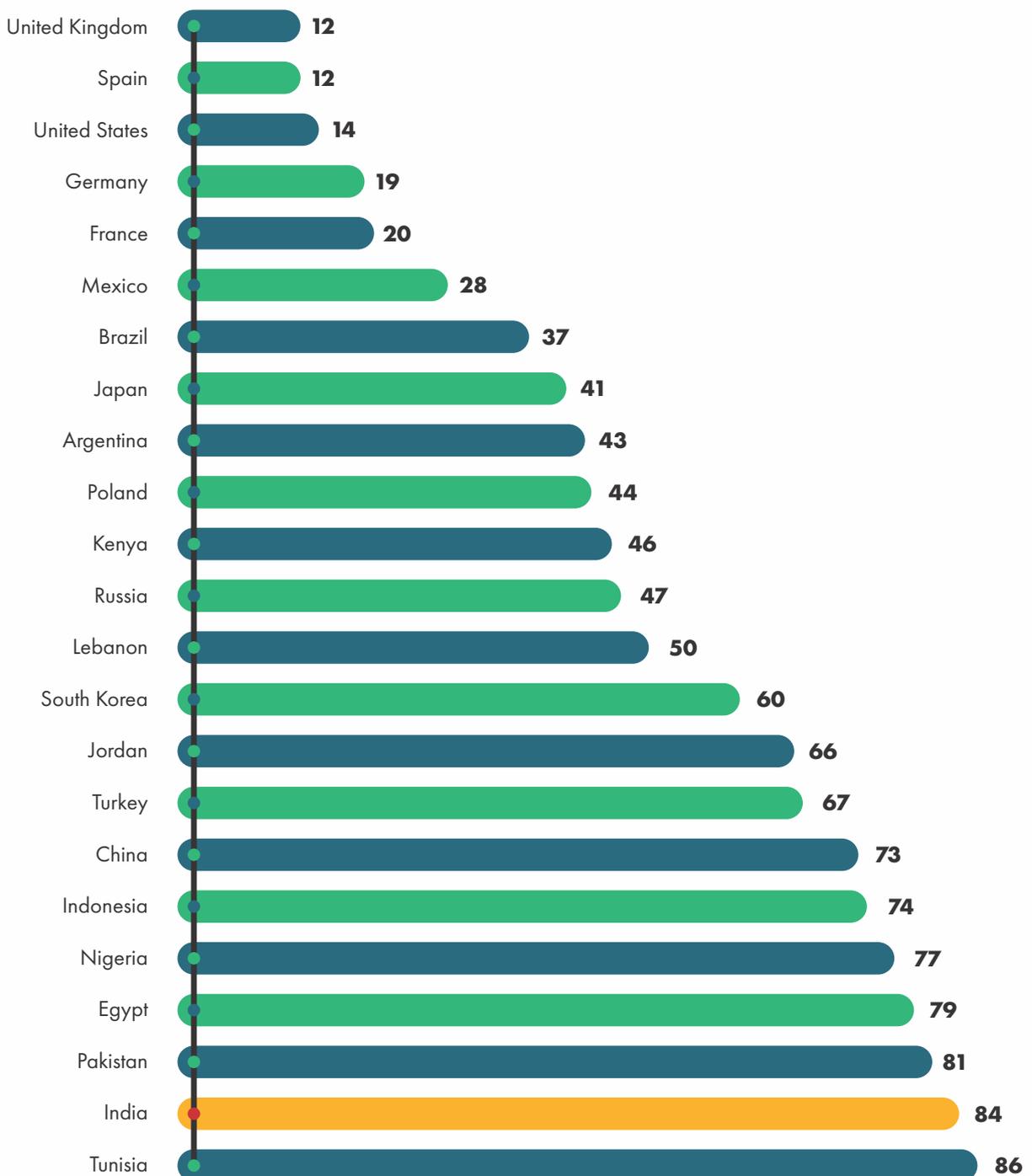
Further, there are several barriers to migration for women in the workforce, especially from rural India. In the last decade, there has been only a marginal increase in the proportion of rural women (of working age) who worked in urban areas, from about 0.22% in 1999-2000 to about 0.46% in 2011-12 (Rawal and Saha 2015). Even international migration for work remains a challenge for women, as seen in the gender ratio of the total Indian migrant stock that has remained the same for the last two decades (with the exception of Qatar) (ILO 2018). Women comprise less than one-fourth of the total Indian migrant stock in 2015 (UNDESA 2015).

A related data issue is that in the NSSO survey, the codes used for location of workplace are defined in such a way that they cannot be used to identify rural to rural and urban to urban migration. The survey maps only rural to urban (and urban to rural) migration.

### 2.3.4. Social Norms and Agency

Occupational gendering occurs on both sides of the labour market. There is a strong belief that when there is job scarcity, men have more right to opportunities than women. 84% of respondents in a Pew research study in India validate this belief. (See Figure 2.5)

**Figure 2.5: Percentage of respondents who agree with 'When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women' (%)**



(Source: Tzvetkova et al. 2018)

Gendering on the employer side takes place in the form of gender discrimination in hiring women, terms of employment and so on. Studies find that the gap cannot be explained only by differences in education, experience and skills, but the unexplained aspect could be attributed to discrimination (Chakraborty 2016). In the manufacturing sector, it has been estimated that 42% of the wage gap is due to explicit gender discrimination (Sarkar et al. 2017).

Further, research has shown that most women who are engaged primarily in domestic work do so because there is no other family member or hired help (due to affordability) to assist with the same (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017).

While national surveys record whether the respondents are actively seeking work, they do not record whether they are employed by choice. Typically, in India, the socio-economic disaggregation of participation rates suggests that more disenfranchised social groups have higher rates of labour market participation. Therefore, participation rates by themselves do not signal decent work or work by choice. For example, in the Labour Bureau EUS 2014-15, it is clear that participation rates are higher for rural areas than urban areas, higher for transgender persons than female persons and higher for reserved castes than general categories. (See Figure 2.6)

**Figure 2.6: Labour Participation by Social Group (2015)**

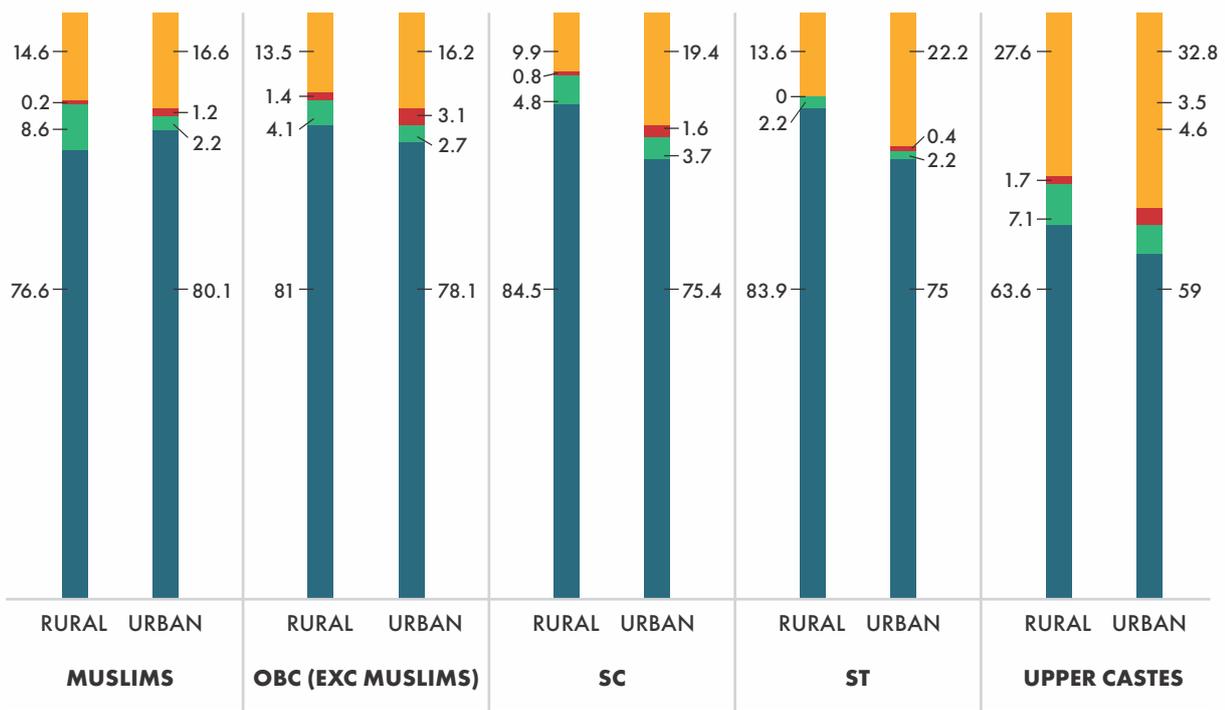


In a similar vein, it is clear from previous work that socially disadvantaged women are more likely to be in roles without written contracts, with less paid leaves and shorter periods of engagement. (See Figure 2.7)

### Figure 2.7: Distribution of Women across Social Groups by Terms of Employment

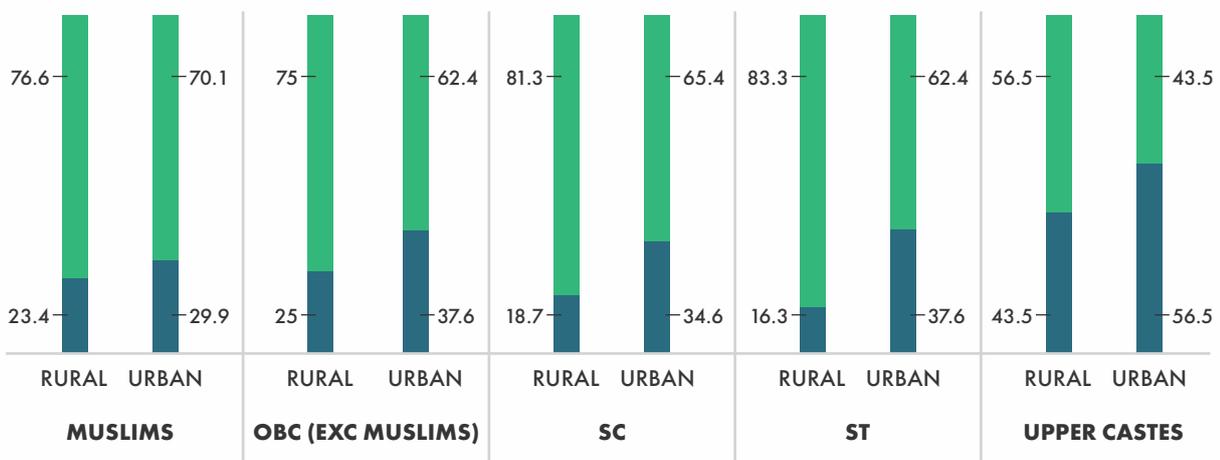
#### FORMAL JOB CONTRACT

- No written job contract
- Written job contract: for one year or less
- More than one year to three years
- More than three years



#### PAID LEAVE

- Eligible for paid leave
- Not eligible for paid leave



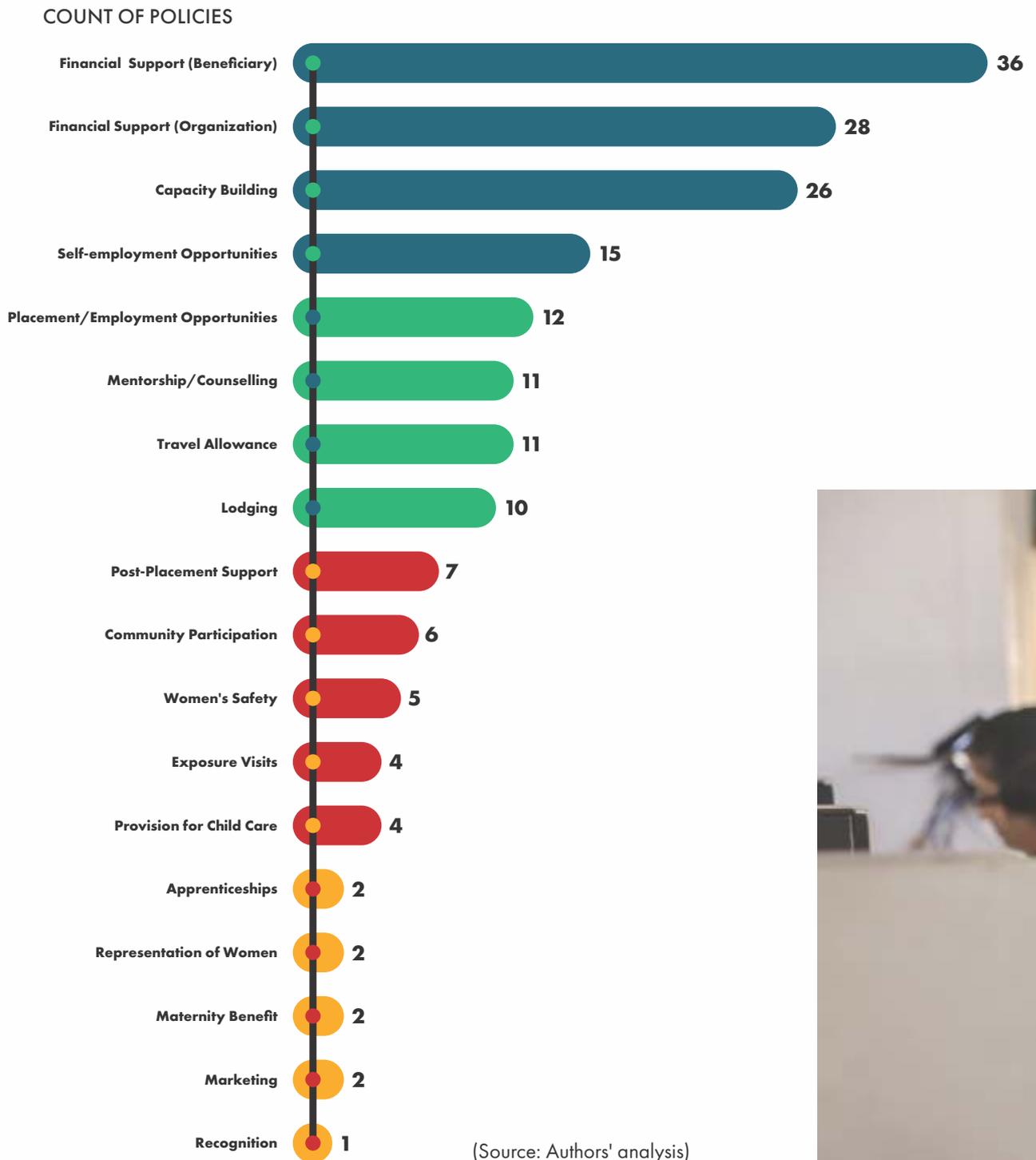
### 3. MAPPING THE POLICY LANDSCAPE



### 3.1. Background

This section is an overview of all enabling policies for improving the FLPR in India. Using repositories like <http://nari.nic.in/> and <https://wep.gov.in/schemes/> and through a review of the 2018-19 budget document and several gender budgeting reports on the country, a database of 53 policies and legislations was created along with a documentation of their gender focus, targeting strategy, inclusion mechanisms, eligibility criteria, geographic focus, number of beneficiaries, allocated and spent budget and budget prioritisation of the programme. Additionally, the following programme components were recorded as present/absent in each policy. (See Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1: Count of policies for each programme component studied



India's policy approach towards women empowerment has evolved over time. The policies of the day are reflective of the strategic outlook towards women's empowerment. Women are being recognised for their potential to further the country's economic progress. This shift has been complemented with many legislative efforts in the recent years, for instance, Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005, the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017 and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.



Another notable aspect of this evolution has been conversion of small policy components that furthered women's economic participation into full-fledged independent schemes. Female entrepreneurship, for instance, has outgrown its initial mandate of resolving abject poverty to today being a policy objective itself. Initiatives like Mudra Scheme and Women Entrepreneurship Platform are a testament to the role of female self-employment as a policy lever for both women empowerment and the economic advancement of the country in general. The twin success of the SHG movement and the

bank linkage programme has prompted their invariable inclusion in all capacity-building and livelihood promotion schemes.

Some transforming policy successes notwithstanding, it is undeniable that women-oriented policies need more thought. Gains for women have by no means been holistic; a dwindling FLP rate is juxtaposed with ever-improving educational outcomes for women. This is despite efforts to articulate a synchronised vision for women's upliftment namely, National Policy for Women 2001 and Draft National Policy for Women 2016.



This section, therefore, is an exercise in understanding the current policy landscape and evaluating commonly used programme tools, budgetary focus and thematic range of the current initiatives in order to shed light on existing policy gaps and their implications.

The list of policies scanned, are as follows:

- ◆ Mahila Coir Yojana
- ◆ MUDRA Scheme (Women Enterprise Programme)
- ◆ Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students
- ◆ Pragati Scholarship Scheme
- ◆ Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child
- ◆ Deen Dayal Antodya Yojana - NRLM
- ◆ Deen Dayal Antodya Yojana - NULM
- ◆ Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)
- ◆ National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- ◆ Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana
- ◆ Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres (ACABC)
- ◆ National Livestock Mission
- ◆ National Food Security Mission
- ◆ Farm Mechanisation Scheme
- ◆ Nai Roshni
- ◆ Seekho aur Kamao
- ◆ Nai Manzil
- ◆ Financial Assistance for Skill Training of Person with Disabilities
- ◆ Working Women Hostel
- ◆ Support Training & Employment Programme (STEP)
- ◆ Mahila E-haat
- ◆ Mahila Shakti Kendra
- ◆ Nari Shakti Puruskar
- ◆ SHE-BOX
- ◆ Women Helpline
- ◆ Mahila Police Volunteers
- ◆ Swadhar Greh
- ◆ Maternity Benefit Programme
- ◆ Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- ◆ Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)
- ◆ Scheme of Community Development through polytechnics
- ◆ Directorate General of Employment - Women's Training Scheme
- ◆ Integrated Skill Development Scheme
- ◆ Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
- ◆ Financial Support to MSMEs in ZED Certification Scheme
- ◆ Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme (ESDP)
- ◆ Micro & Small Enterprises Cluster Development (MSE-CDP)
- ◆ NABARD - SHG - Bank Linkage Programme
- ◆ Complaint & Investigation Cell
- ◆ Mahila Adhikarita Yojana
- ◆ Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEF)
- ◆ Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETI)
- ◆ Stand-up India scheme
- ◆ Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
- ◆ National Crèche Scheme
- ◆ National Rural Health Mission's - Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)
- ◆ Anganwadi Services Scheme
- ◆ Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017
- ◆ Section 149(1)(b) of Companies Act, 2013
- ◆ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- ◆ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
- ◆ Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions
- ◆ National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme
- ◆ National Apprenticeship Training Scheme

## 3.2. Findings from Policy Analysis

### 3.2.1. Financial Assistance

Financial support to a beneficiary in the form of stipends, cash transfers (conditional or otherwise), fee waivers, scholarships and so on is seen as the most commonly occurring programme component in skill development and capacity building initiatives (See Figure 3.1). There are almost 25 such programmes run by the central government and almost all are conducted by engaging external specialist agencies.

Financial assistance to such organisations is often conditional on the completion of policy milestones, for instance, realising target level of placements, as in the case of DDU-GKY Subsidies and credit schemes continue to be used to encourage self-employment among women. The MSME Ministry, for instance, offers a range of programmes for the sector, with women benefiting from subsidies on credit and softer capital requirements. A positive change has been the recognition of the need for qualitative support for entrepreneurship. For instance, the Mudra Yojana scheme—its mammoth capital commitment aside, aids beneficiaries with strategic support, mentoring and handholding, with financial and business literacy initiatives being a few of its many facilitating programme components.



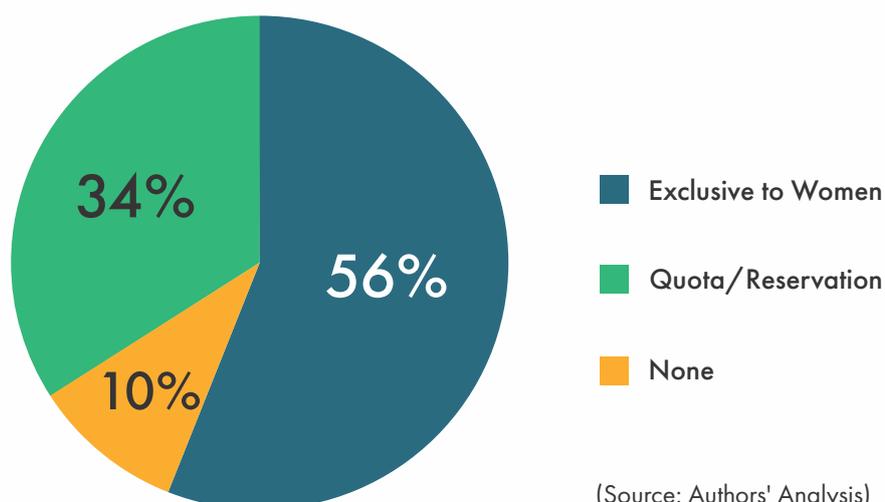
### 3.2.2. Absence of Support Services

There are very few public policies tackling the social and familial obstacles preventing women from joining the labour force. Also, there are very few public safety and workplace security initiatives, and very few public policies that make alternative arrangements for domestic duties and care work. Not only are these facilities insufficiently available as standalone schemes, they are sparsely present as policy components of initiatives meant for capacity building and livelihood generation. A glaring omission is the absence of childcare facilities in skilling initiatives—a strong deterrent for young mothers interested in undertaking skill-training.

### 3.2.3. Absence of Sub-Targeting in Women-Specific Initiatives

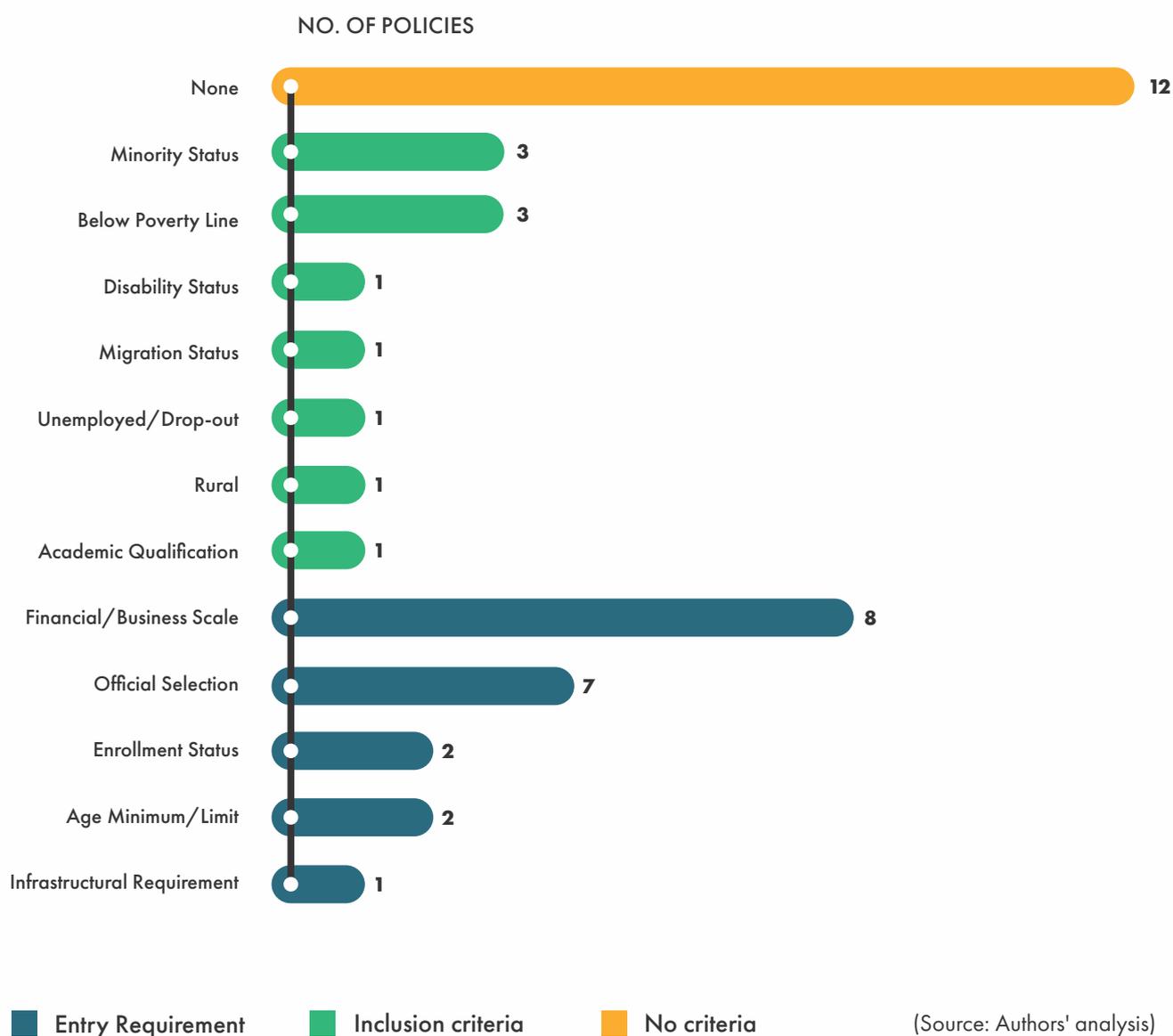
Of the total schemes/legislations studied, 56 % cater exclusively to women, 34% have either a women-specific target to achieve or quotas for women and 10% have no proactive gender component. (See Figure 3.2)

**Figure 3.2: Gender focus in the schemes analysed**



Policies that cater exclusively to women include programmes such as scholarships for girls for higher studies, maternity benefits, women-oriented training policies, emergency/security services, child-care policies and more. The need for sub-targeting is rather straightforward - given that social, economic backwardness further accentuates the burdens imposed by gender, policies must recognise that some women are prone to more vulnerabilities than others.

**Figure 3.3: Types of inclusion and exclusion criteria**



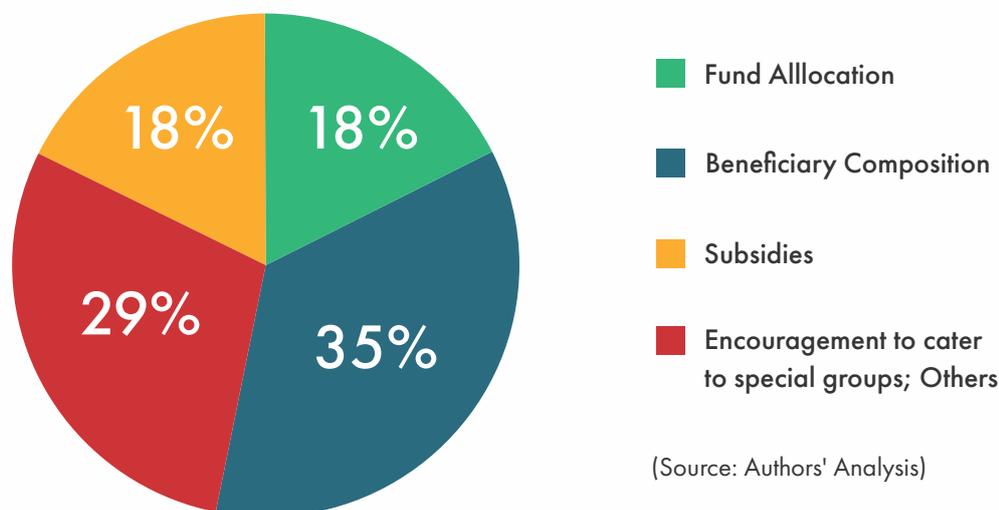
This is emphasised in the eligibility criteria of the policies analysed. 12 policies do not have an eligibility criterion, 24 policies have an entry requirement based on age, income, enrollment status and so on. Only 10 policies have an inclusion criterion such as minority status, BPL, disability status and others.

### 3.2.4. Absence of Active Policy Design for the Vulnerable

35% of the schemes seek to achieve inclusion by setting targets on the total beneficiary composition and 18% by ear-marking funds for various social groups. 29% of the schemes “encourage” inclusiveness as a policy mandate, but without actively designing policy components to affect the same - like universal mobilisation, pre-programme/post-programme support and more - to achieve this inclusion.

### Figure 3.4: Policy strategies for minority targeting

PERCENTAGE OF POLICIES



(Source: Authors' Analysis)

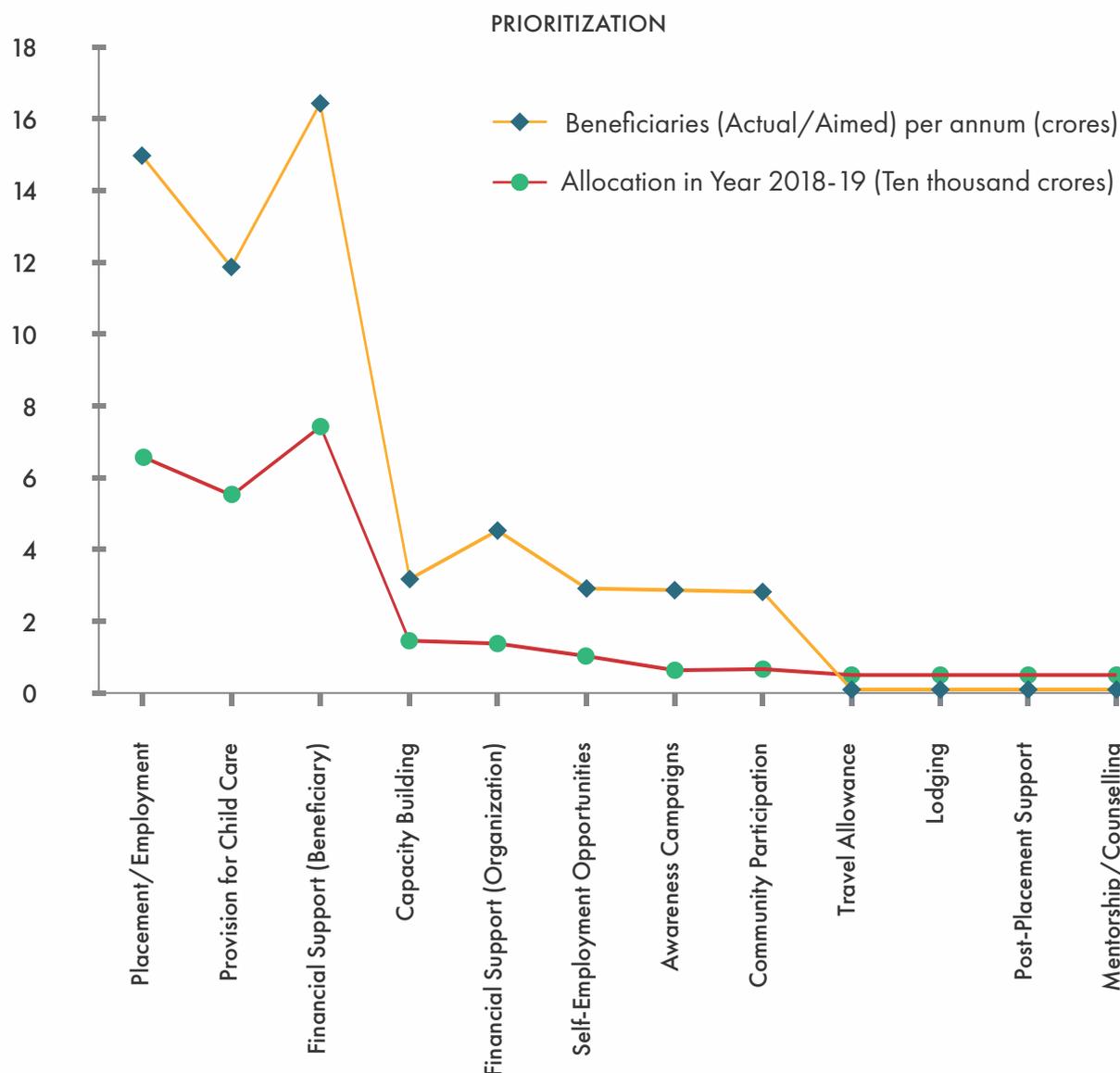
Blanket allocations without a thorough roadmap, that appreciates contextual realities of the marginalised, are likely to yield sub-optimal results. India has a well-documented history of low utilisation rates of programme funds and this has been particularly true for allocations intended for disadvantaged groups (The Hindu 2017). The importance of more involved policy design can be further illustrated with the following example: PMKVY offers post-placement support of INR 1450 (per month, for at the most two months

for men and three months for women) for special groups comprising women, PWD and candidates in special areas. However, by lumping together the intended beneficiaries as “special groups”, this policy feature does not factor in the widely different needs (disability-friendly accommodations can be punishingly difficult to find, women have issues such as security, availability of care-work to be cognizant of) and consequently their implications for the quantum of support offered.

#### 3.2.5. Budgetary Focus on Quantifiable Outcomes

Allocations corresponding to support facilities, such as lodging, travel allowance, counselling and maternity provisions are much lower than allocations for placement, cash transfers and capacity building. (See Figure 3.5)

**Figure 3.5: Budgetary allocation and beneficiaries reached/aimed to reach per annum**



(Source: Authors' Analysis)

Investment in interventions to tackle social norms through gender sensitisation, awareness campaigns, community participation and women's safety is also lacking. Communication guidelines for most flagship programmes are a case in point. Other than a few branding guidelines such as information on size of the placards, logos and pictures to be displayed, there is very little focus by means of instruction, on aspects like

inclusiveness, gender-positive messaging and so on. Indeed, except for the sizable investment in the national crèche scheme, it is evident that current policy prioritisation is motivated by securing more quantifiable outcomes, such as placements, occupations or skill sets as opposed to investing in more enabling policies that focus on improving the ecosystem.

### 3.2.6. Exclusionary Effects of Quantifiable Outcomes-Driven Approach

There is an inordinate focus on quantifying outcomes which can often prove counter-intuitive and likely perpetuate exclusion. Consider, for instance, DDU-GKY - in order to recover the full cost of training, skilling agencies must ensure placement of at least 70% of the total training target of the project. The scheme incentivises even higher placements by promising additional payments of INR 3000 and INR 5000 per candidate if the placements exceed 75% and 85% respectively. It is quite likely that mobilisers will be biased to select those candidates who are already pre-disposed to being placed/completing the course, in other words, more employable all along. This could mean that the mobilisers may exclude the neediest while simultaneously complying with the mandate of the scheme. In the context of women, such an approach can further entrench gender stereotypes and feminise certain occupations as skilling agencies will likely mobilise women to take up traditionally "female" roles, such as tailoring, beauty and health, in order to achieve their targets with relative ease.

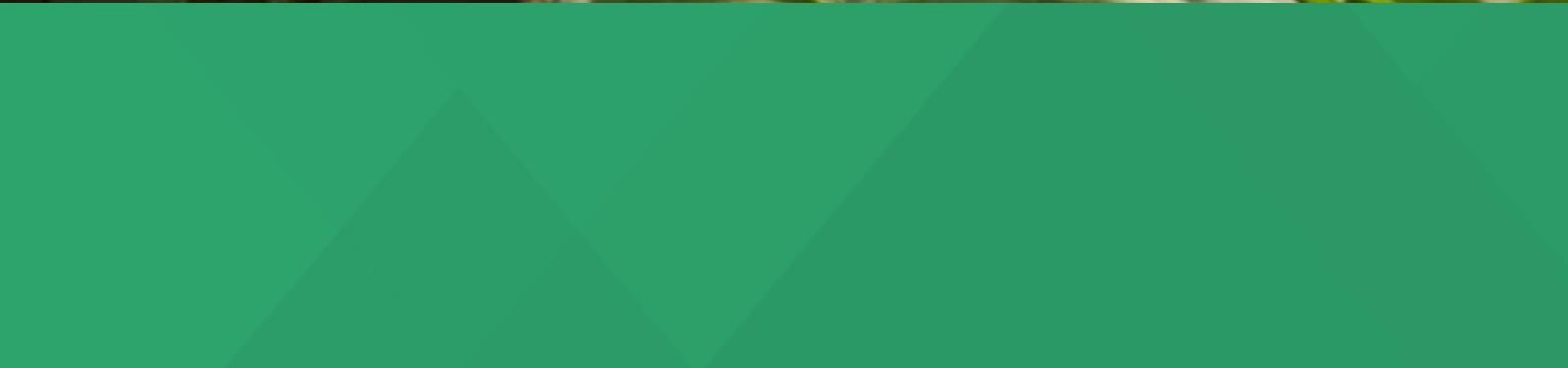






# 4. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

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## 4.1. Impact Evaluations

In this section, an empirical review has been conducted by summarising the findings of 20 recent papers that discuss active labour market interventions in the Indian context (or comparable context). These papers were identified through a scan of evaluation repositories such as JPAL and 3ie. Table 4.1 lists the magnitude of effect of 10 studies in the review that had a positive effect on FLWP.

**Table 4.1. Summary of Empirical Review**

Reference	Intervention/Policy	Measure of positive change as a result of intervention			
		Employment		Self-Employment	
(Banerjee et al. 2011)	Microfinance programme	1	Hour of labour	2	Owned live-stock
(Bursztyn et al. 2018)	Correcting beliefs; Information	2	Percentage point employment (not statistically significant)		
(Ghani et al. 2014)	Female Leadership; Quotas; Political Reservation	1.5	Percentage employment (not statistically significant)	0.4	Percentage increase in new business ownership
(Health and Tan 2016)	Property Rights; Legal Measures; Inheritance Laws	6.8	Percentage point probability employment last week	2	Percentage point self-employed (not statistically significant)
(Jensen 2012)	Recruitment Services; Information; Mobilization	4.6	Percentage point employment		
(Kumar et al. 2018)	SHG Membership	15	Percentage likelihood to use NREGA		
(Maitra and Mani 2014)	Vocational Training	11	Percentage point likelihood of employment	7	Percentage point likelihood of self-employment
(Mobarak and Heath 2014)	Access to Employment; Proximity to Factory	15	Percentage point employment		
(Field et al. 2015)	Peer Participation			17	Percentage labour supply
(McKelway 2018)	Generalized Self-Efficacy	6.1	Percentage point employment		

(Source: Authors' Analysis)

The common thread across all studies evaluating vocational training programmes for women is the positive impact on their incomes. Less consistent, but discernible has been the effect on women's non-cognitive skills. Women who have been exposed to vocational, business or soft skills training showed improvement in their levels of self-efficacy, aspirations and agency, among others. Improvements in non-cognitive abilities is a precursor to ensuring sustained efforts in improving one's own socio-economic standing. Not only do the studies

convey a more nuanced effect of training programmes than one would suppose a priori, they also highlight the need for a conscious policy effort to nurture these behavioural changes among women. There are other overarching effects that training schemes, employment fairs and placement programmes can potentially have, namely delayed marriage and motherhood decisions, improved happiness and satisfaction levels and accumulation of more human capital, among others.



Figure 4.1. Labour market outcomes of impact evaluated interventions

	Vocational Training	Empowerment Training	Soft-skills	Information	Access to Employment
Employment	+	+	+	+	+
Self-Employment	+	+			
Job-search	+	+		+	
Employability	+		+	+	+
Access to Resources	+	+			
Aspirations		+			
Self-Efficacy		+			
Productivity			+		
Mobility/Migration	+	+	+	+	+
Income	+		+	+	+
Bargaining Power	+	+	+	+	+
Attitudes	+	+	+	+	+
Time Use		+			
Work place Satisfaction			+		
Retention	+	+	+		
Asset Generation	+				

Figure 4.1 represents all the various established chains of causality (positive and statistically significant) between labour market interventions and their outcomes. In addition to identifying the impact of these interventions, the studies also detect the mechanisms through which the programmes create this impact. For instance, reservations for women work as a policy tool, not only by granting women more representation in the political sphere but also by creating spill

	Peer Effects	Microfinance	Female Leadership	On-the-job Training	SHG Membership	Mentorship	Property Rights
Employment		+			+		+
Self-Employment	+	+	+				
Job-search							
Employability				+			
Access to Resources							
Aspirations			+			+	
Self-Efficacy						+	
Productivity	+		+	+			
Mobility/Migration							
Income	+	+					
Bargaining Power	+				+		
Attitudes		+					
Time Use	+		+				
Work place Satisfaction				+			
Retention				+			
Asset Generation		+			+		

(Source: Authors' analysis)

overs by way of having a role model effect. Legislations like the Hindu Succession Act improve women's intra-house bargaining power (and by extension her labour supply) by creating an autonomy effect from her unearned income. It is important to note that the absence of linkages between indicators and interventions also signals gaps in the literature.





## 4.2. Review of Findings

### 4.2.1. Efficacy of Self-Help Groups

Across the landscape of empirical literature, the efficacy of the SHG movement has been duly praised and its potential to further the cause of women empowerment consistently underscored. A study set in rural Bihar attempts to understand women's attitudinal change from before to after joining an SHG by capturing responses from women along five metrics - socio-economic upliftment, education and training, marketing and entrepreneurship qualities, technology adoption and participatory research and banking/credit aspects (Meena and Singh 2013). A comparison of the two scenarios suggests improvement along all five metrics when a woman joins an SHG. SHGs have indeed proven to have far-reaching positive impact for women. For instance, one paper notes that SHG women are more likely to hold public offices accountable (Kumar et al. 2018), vote out of their own agency and, interestingly, more likely to avail of entitlement benefits despite having the same level of information as their non-SHG counterparts. It is worth mentioning, however, that studies note that external agencies play a crucial role in effective dissemination of training programmes and realising potential levels of empowerment for SHGs (Bali and Varghese 2014).

#### 4.2.2. Skill Training: Placement and Peer Effects

The past few years have seen a policy thrust on skilling initiatives - Skill India campaign, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) and Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), among others. These initiatives have seen substantial investments.

Studies indicate that skill-building programmes have a positive effect on women's FLWP in India. The effects of participating and completing a subsidised vocational training in tailoring and stitching is noted on low-income women. It is observed that six months after the completion of the course, "women who were offered the programme are 6% more likely to be employed, 4% more likely to be self-employed, work 2.5 additional hours per week and earn 150% more per month than women in the control group". The results are sustained in a review a year later. An evaluation paper studying the impact of the Mahila Samakhya scheme—a community-level programme to empower women through vocational education—in Uttarakhand finds a marked improvement in women's overall bargaining power manifested through uptake of employment opportunities outside of home, enhanced agency and higher political participation (Kandpal et al. 2012). The paper also notes a "spill over" effect, wherein women who did not participate in the scheme but were part of the same social networks as those who did, displayed improved agency and a hitherto absent desire to work.





Vocational training and placement programmes, apart from having direct economic returns for the participants, are also observed to generate strong peer effects. One study conducted a recruitment experiment in rural north-India where sufficiently qualified women were offered BPO jobs. While the women in the employable-age cohort (18-24) responded to the experiment by deferring their marriage and fertility decision and enrolling in more training programmes, the effect on the younger cohort of women (6-17) is manifested as higher enrollment in schools and improved BMI (Jensen 2012). A similar experience is recounted in the context of Bangladesh, where the rise of the ready-made garment industry resulted in a positive impact on older girls' marriage and fertility decisions, and motivated parents of younger girls to invest in their education (Mobarak and Heath 2014).





### 4.2.3. Skill Training: Dropouts and Lack of Wage Effects

Evaluations of vocational programmes are noted to have a more pronounced impact in developing countries due to low baseline values (Maitra and Mani 2012).

Additionally, it is worth considering whether the skill sets and jobs on offer through these programmes are perceived as valuable by the job-seeker and whether these jobs have been newly created in the economy or exist simply by crowding out those who did not avail of these programmes (McKenzie 2017).

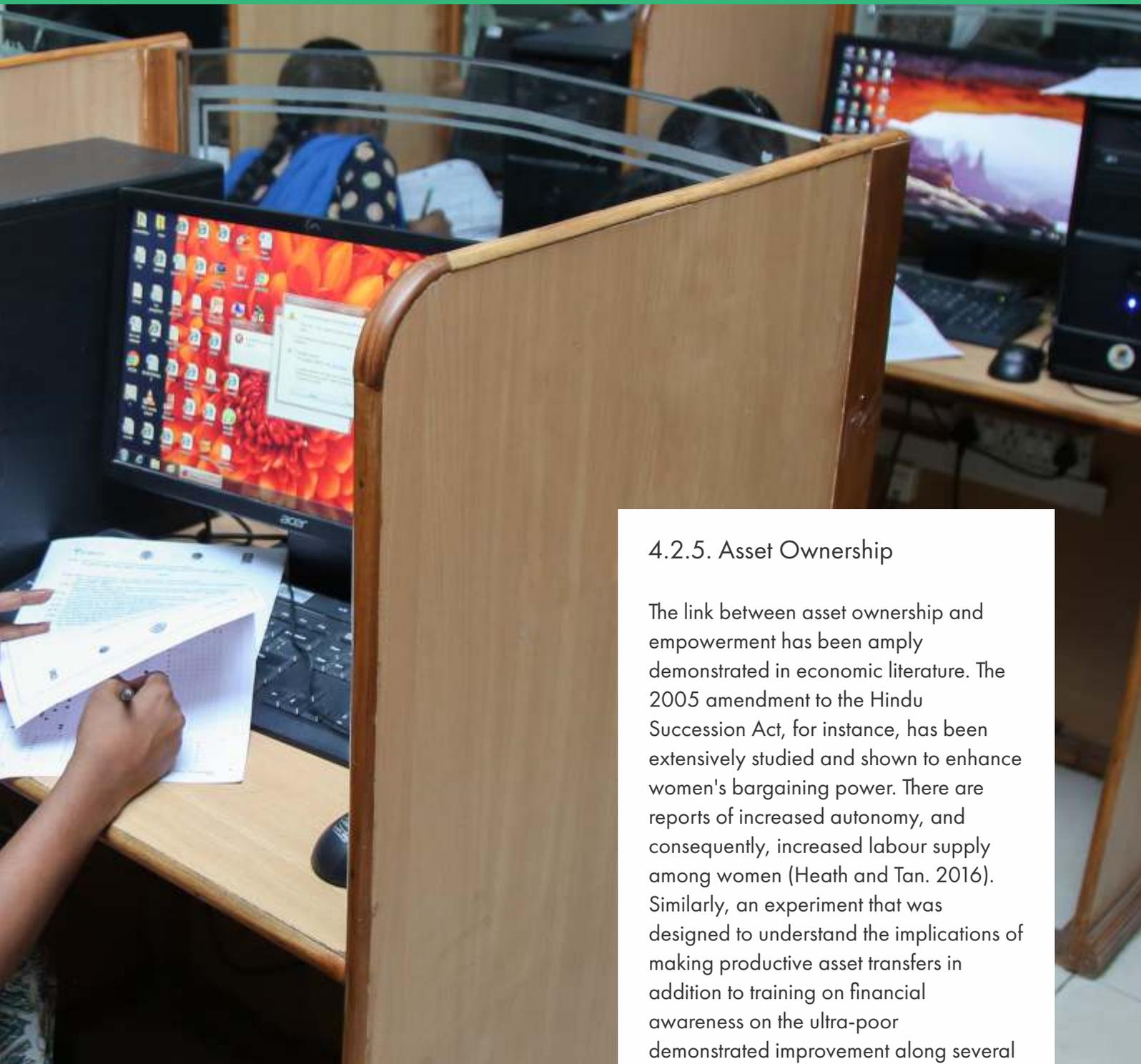
Several shortcomings of vocational training and placement programmes in India have been highlighted in meta-analysis papers (Fletcher et al. 2017). “Leaks from the labour-force” imply the inability of participants in skilling programmes to sustain them in the labour force for long. On an average, after over nine months of work, 74% of the survey respondents had quit the jobs they were placed in and only 20% of them had found new roles. The reasons for discontinuation of work differed starkly across the sexes. While the male respondents quit primarily due to insufficient pay, a majority of female respondents cited workplace concerns (difficulty of the role, personal problems at work, among others) as their reason. Not only did more women leak out of the labour force in comparison to men, women were made fewer job offers (72% female, 85% male) to begin with, and even fewer women eventually accept the offers (56% female, 70% male).

Women in a garment factory in urban Bangalore were given on-the-job soft skills training, resulting in massive productivity gains among the workers. However, there was no discernible impact on their wages. Meanwhile, the net return for the firm was 258%, eight months after the programme completed (Adhvaryu et. al 2017). These results raise several questions on the effectiveness of post-placement, post-migration support offered by these schemes.

#### 4.2.4. Women's Representation

Another issue studied keenly in empirical literature is that of women's representation. Despite the socio-political contention around quotas in general, studies show that communities are in favour of empowering marginalised groups, particularly women. It has been observed in rural West Bengal that while there's a preference for male leaders and a negative bias towards female leaders in the gram panchayats (on account of caste-based discrimination towards women and entrenched gender norms), this bias eases when a female leader is re-elected or has had a chance at demonstrating her work (Beaman et al. 2009). For the same sample, female leaders are perceived as role models by the younger generations and their presence in the political sphere positively affects girls' educational outcomes. This impact is both direct - female leaders responding to the cause of women empowerment more than their male counterpart and indirect, by being role models and setting precedents of self-improvement (Ghani et al. 2014). In the context of Indian corporates, it is widely held that increasing women's representation in leadership roles is linked positively to the firm's financial performance (Low et al. 2015) (Haldaret al. 2015). Despite gender diversity known to have strong economic translations (extensively studied and proven in the US context), Indian board rooms continue to be male-dominated. Only 13% of the directors in the NIFTY 500 are women (IiAS 2017).





#### 4.2.5. Asset Ownership

The link between asset ownership and empowerment has been amply demonstrated in economic literature. The 2005 amendment to the Hindu Succession Act, for instance, has been extensively studied and shown to enhance women's bargaining power. There are reports of increased autonomy, and consequently, increased labour supply among women (Heath and Tan. 2016). Similarly, an experiment that was designed to understand the implications of making productive asset transfers in addition to training on financial awareness on the ultra-poor demonstrated improvement along several parameters, namely income, consumption, assets, nutrition and food security, health, financial behaviour, labour supply and knowledge and empowerment (Banerjee et al. 2011).



#### 4.2.6. Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

In the wake of a fervent social media movement calling out sexual abuse faced by women, it can be argued that the current systems in place to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace are still wanting an impact. In a survey targeting senior executives from business functions including internal audit, human resources, finance and the legal and compliance domains (EY 2015), it was observed that almost half of the respondents' organisations had not displayed important guidelines and penal consequences of harassment clearly at prominent places within their premises. Around 31% of the respondents were not compliant with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act (POSH), which mandates "Internal Compliance Committees" (ICCs) being constituted to address complaints relating to sexual harassment. While 47% of Indian companies had not given necessary training to the members of ICCs, the number was 34% for MNCs. A general "nonchalance" was reported on the part of organisations to enforce guidelines of the Act. In an exploratory piece that sheds light on women's experiences of harassment, it is

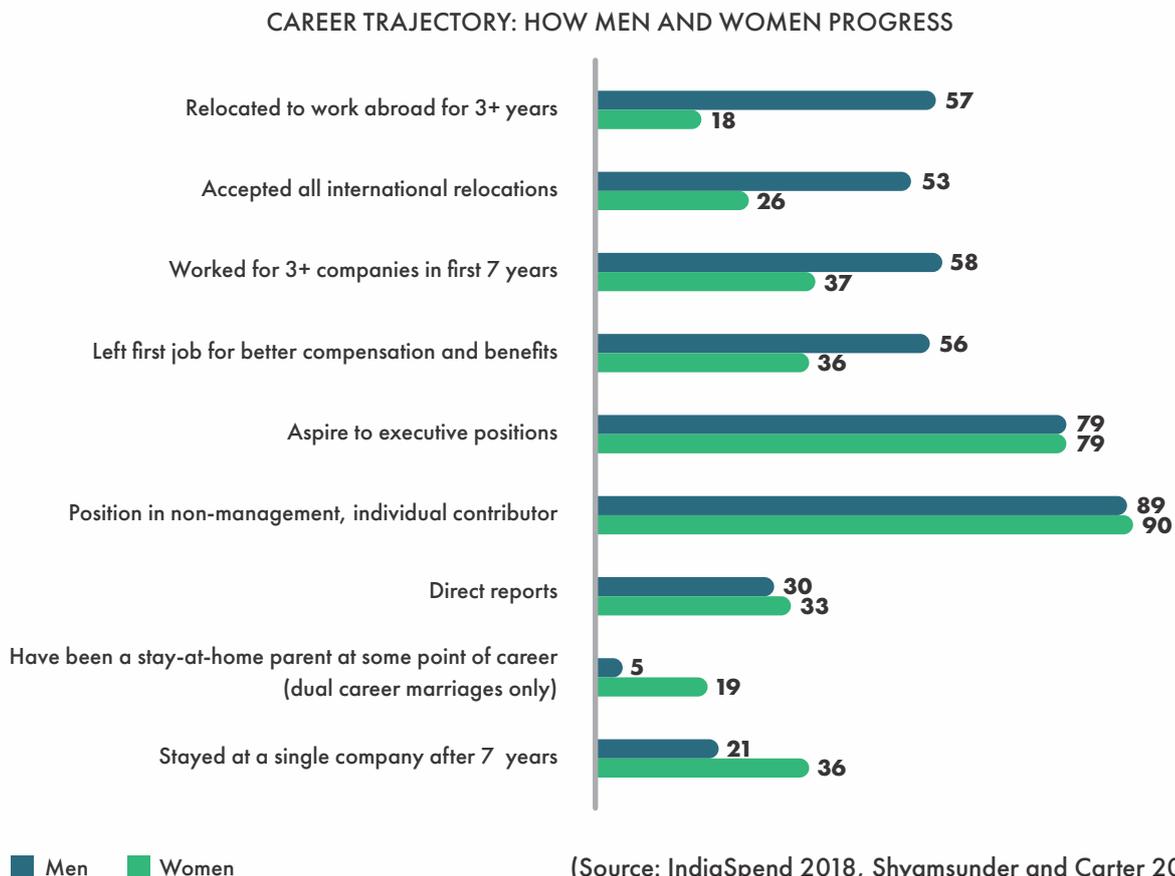
evident that there are dynamics at play when it comes to women wanting to report or confront the aggressor and societal reaction to such events (Sahgal and Dang 2017). The authors observe shame and self-blame to consistently be part of women's own reaction to abuse, regardless of whether these women eventually seek recourse or not. In a lot of instances, organisational and people support is absent, especially if the aggressor is an individual of consequence. Familial support was also observed to be absent in some cases. It was also noted that there was an undue reliance on men to help raise complaints, and women often found their support to be crucial to the process of seeking justice. In a study undertaken to understand the economic trade-off of street harassment for women (Borkar 2017), it was noted that women studying at Delhi University chose colleges of lesser quality in favour of ensuring travel safety. It has also been observed that reports of sexual harassment are higher in employment sectors with higher gender diversity, for example, the education sector and entertainment industry (Bhandare 2017).

### 4.2.7. Career Progression in Science and Technology

Shyamsunder and Carter (2015) describe the stark difference in the career progression of 713 men and women working full-time in high-tech organisations and/or technology roles in India. These employees had been identified by their organisations as high-potential employees “in a range of pipeline-to-leadership positions.” By definition, this is a small and select group of people in any organisation. Yet the gender disparity within this sub-sample of educated, relatively young employees is conspicuous. It was found that women are typically less likely to relocate abroad for work. They are also less likely to have worked for more than three companies in the first seven years of their career. They are less likely to leave their first job for better compensation and benefits. Women are more likely to have stayed in the same organisation

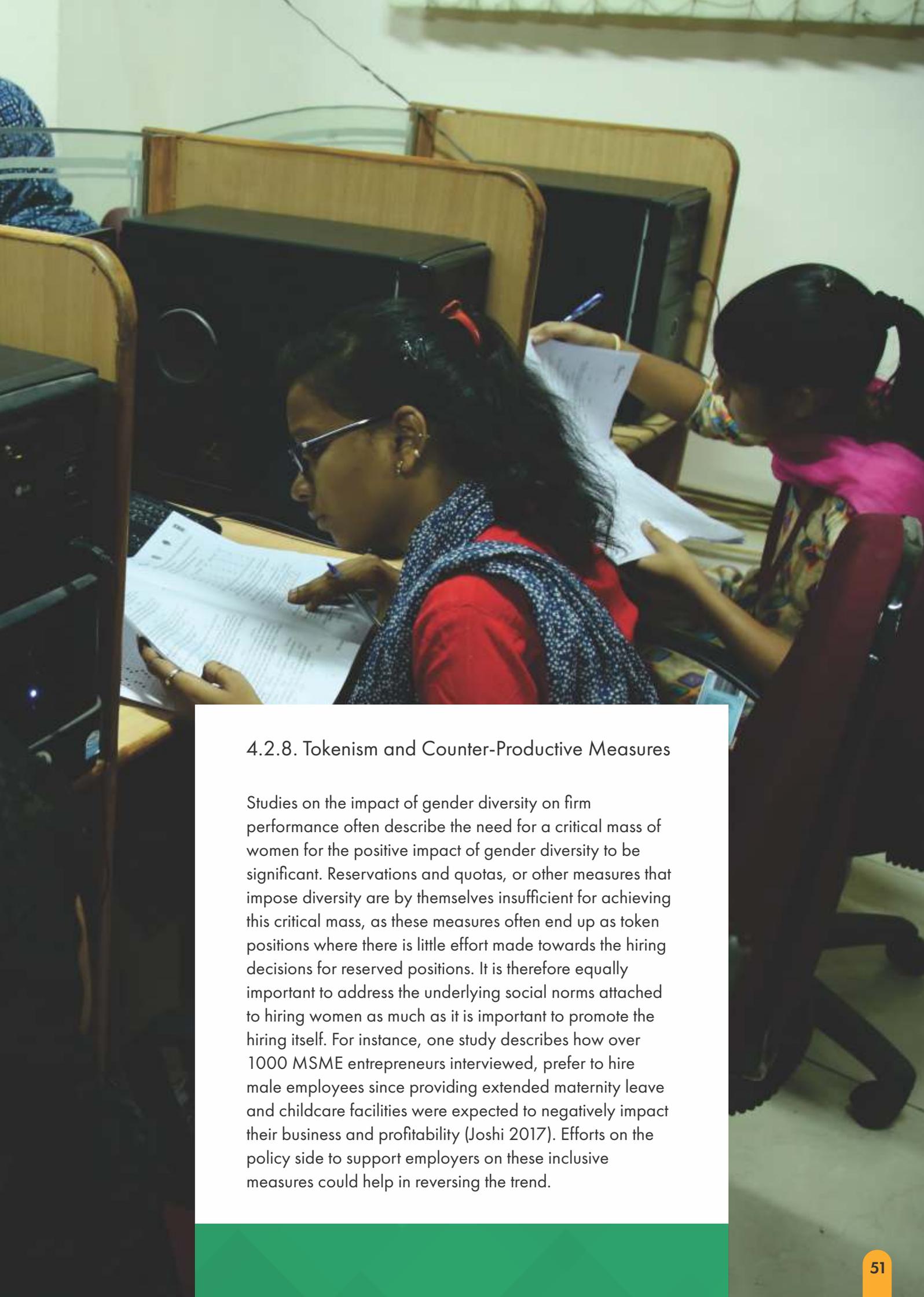
for over seven years. Women are also more likely to have been a stay at home parent at some point in their lives. Interestingly, women and men are equally matched in their aspirations toward executive positions. They are also equally likely to be individual contributors, i.e. independent consultants. In short, careers in technology and science are still characterised by a gender glass ceiling. Even though gender gaps in job levels, pay and aspirations at a starting level are absent, over time, gaps emerge in pay, opportunities and responsibilities in home care (Shyamsunder and Carter 2015). Pay gaps as later discussed have been repeatedly shown to have no underlying explanatory cause (apart from discrimination) like skill level/productivity. (See Figure 4.2)

**Figure 4.2: Career Progression by Gender (2015)**



(Source: IndiaSpend 2018, Shyamsunder and Carter 2015)



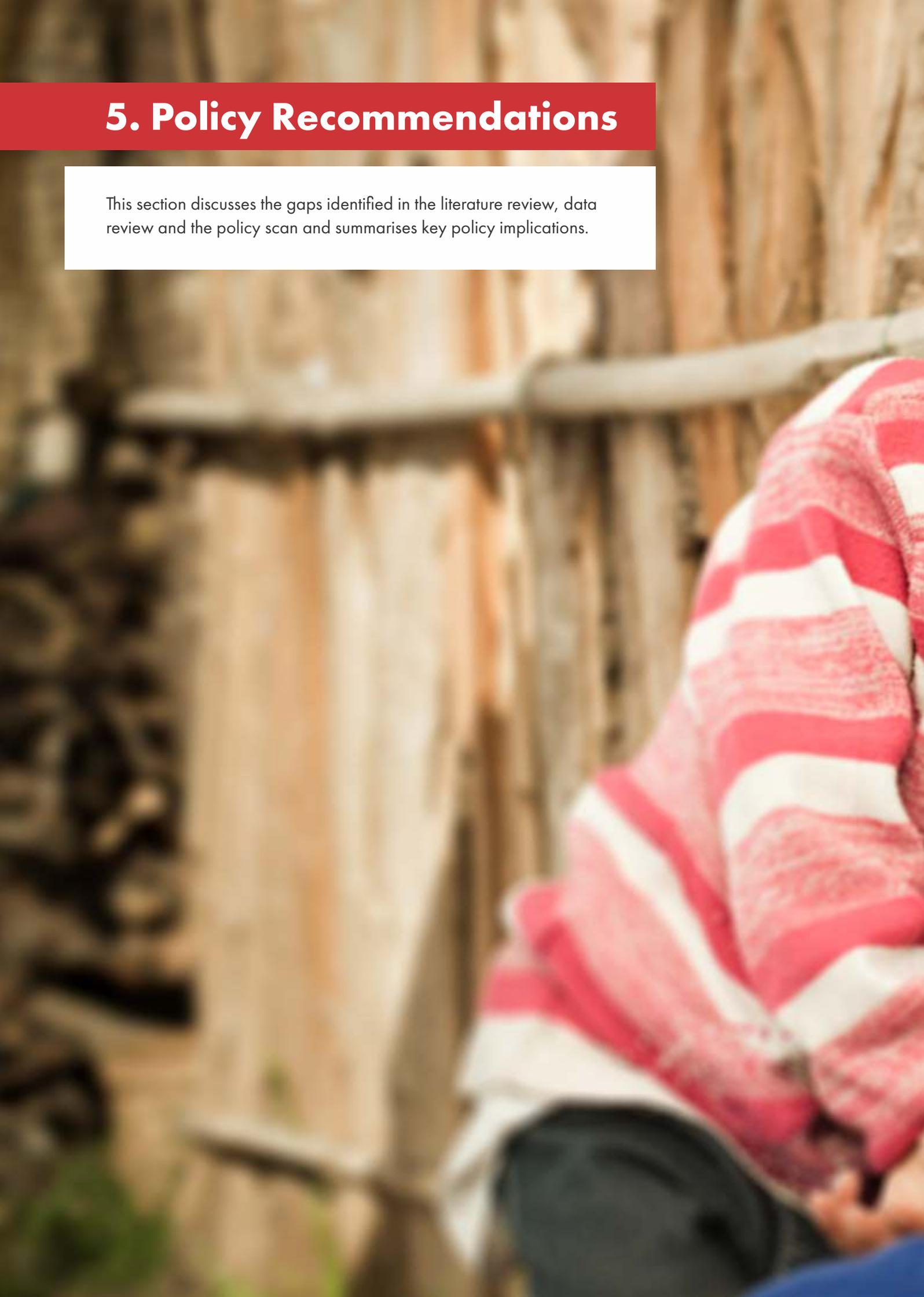


#### 4.2.8. Tokenism and Counter-Productive Measures

Studies on the impact of gender diversity on firm performance often describe the need for a critical mass of women for the positive impact of gender diversity to be significant. Reservations and quotas, or other measures that impose diversity are by themselves insufficient for achieving this critical mass, as these measures often end up as token positions where there is little effort made towards the hiring decisions for reserved positions. It is therefore equally important to address the underlying social norms attached to hiring women as much as it is important to promote the hiring itself. For instance, one study describes how over 1000 MSME entrepreneurs interviewed, prefer to hire male employees since providing extended maternity leave and childcare facilities were expected to negatively impact their business and profitability (Joshi 2017). Efforts on the policy side to support employers on these inclusive measures could help in reversing the trend.

## 5. Policy Recommendations

This section discusses the gaps identified in the literature review, data review and the policy scan and summarises key policy implications.







## 5.1. Ensuring Inclusion through Targeting and Policy Design

India has always struggled with policy targeting, especially with identifying and tracking the poor. This led to the idea of universalisation with exclusion (of rich) (Drèze 2012) instead, so that individuals in need can self-target into anti-poverty programmes. However, in the absence of resources to universalise a public policy, targeting needs to be careful not to channel the discriminations of the labour-market. Inclusion cannot be achieved solely by pre-fixing beneficiary/fund composition but by strategically designing the policy to appeal to different social groups. Further, it is important to identify specific challenges faced by marginalised/ minority groups and ensure that the policy provides for these challenges. They could be lack of regular transportation, need to earn a daily wage or familial discouragement. A recent study proposes that women-oriented labour market interventions should take into account the agricultural seasonality of their participation (Kulkarni et al. 2016). In their evaluation of the Skills for Market programme (Cheema et al. 2013), they found that there is a substantial uptake in training (30% points) when the training facility is within the same village of the female participants. Group transport was also effective in raising uptake by 20%.

## 5.2. Ensuring Effective Information Dissemination and Improving Efforts of Behaviour Change Communication

70% of working age youth is unaware of the skill development programmes run by the government (Mishra et al. 2018). Most women-oriented or skill-building schemes have mobilisation as a programme component and yet little is known about their efficacy. An experiment (Ravallion et al 2013) that seeks to explain low uptake of MNREGA in Bihar, despite the absence of alternative employment opportunities concludes that mobilisation efforts, however thoughtful in their design, can often struggle to move their targets past “groupthink”: where the programme or scheme is perceived as effective as a community but not at an individual level. As pointed out in Section 4, communication guidelines accompanying important schemes are currently void of direction on effective behaviour change communication.



### 5.3. Mapping Aspirations to Job Market

The primary reason for women to drop out of the labour-force is work-related challenges. It would not be a stretch to assume that such difficulties are indicative of ineffective skill and interest mapping of candidates (McKenzie 2017). Most skill training programmes in India decide on which courses and jobs roles to offer based on sector skill gap surveys and availability of employment in those job roles. While this is perhaps a practical approach, especially when training

organisations see placement as the end goal, it is not sustainable to ignore aspirations, as eventually women may choose to drop out of the course/labour-market precisely because the job roles do not suit their long-term expectations. Secondly, the training institute is a great opportunity to provide candidates the time and environment to reflect on their aspirations and elicit career goals, especially if they have never done so before.





#### 5.4. Providing Pre-training, In-training and Post-training support

The high need demand for core skills, that is, numeracy and literacy among people that aspire for vocational training and entering the labour market has been well documented in South Asia (Cheema et al. 2012) (Mobarak and Heath 2014). It is thus essential to dovetail any adult education/ higher education schemes with vocational training schemes so that vocational training programmes with core skills of literacy and numeracy as pre-requisites should be able to re-direct interested candidates to adult education courses offered elsewhere. Similarly, it is also important to offer support during the training by way of alternative arrangements for care work, for instance, basic crèche services to mothers during the time of the training. In Section 3, the report discusses how despite the large investments in

the national crèche scheme, skill training institutes are still not within their coverage. Women who wish to drop out or actually drop out of the course also need to be tracked and provide support in returning to the course. One way to minimise dropouts is by providing stipends for the course period to compensate for wage hours lost during the course period and for other expenses like alternative arrangements for child care. Finally, while most training institutes help with placement of candidates, not all help with job search and job-market information. Training institutes should not only help candidates appear for the interviews arranged by the training institute but teach them how to use job exchange platforms, prepare CVs, basic computer skills and other job market information.

## 5.5. Employment Opportunities in Secondary and Primary Sectors

As summarised in the theoretical literature, there is a large employment opportunity gap for educated women in India. It has been suggested, for instance, that a more female-intensive, export-oriented growth strategy as pursued by other South and East Asian countries could be worth exploring in the Indian context (Mehrotra and Sinha 2017). Skilled employment in agriculture, such as extension work, farmer training, weather

forecasting and so on are sub-sectors worth exploring in order to absorb the underemployed/unemployed female labour-force in the agricultural sector. Apart from offering good working conditions, basic support services like transport to/from work and flexibility of working hours are important factors for attracting and retaining a female labour-force.





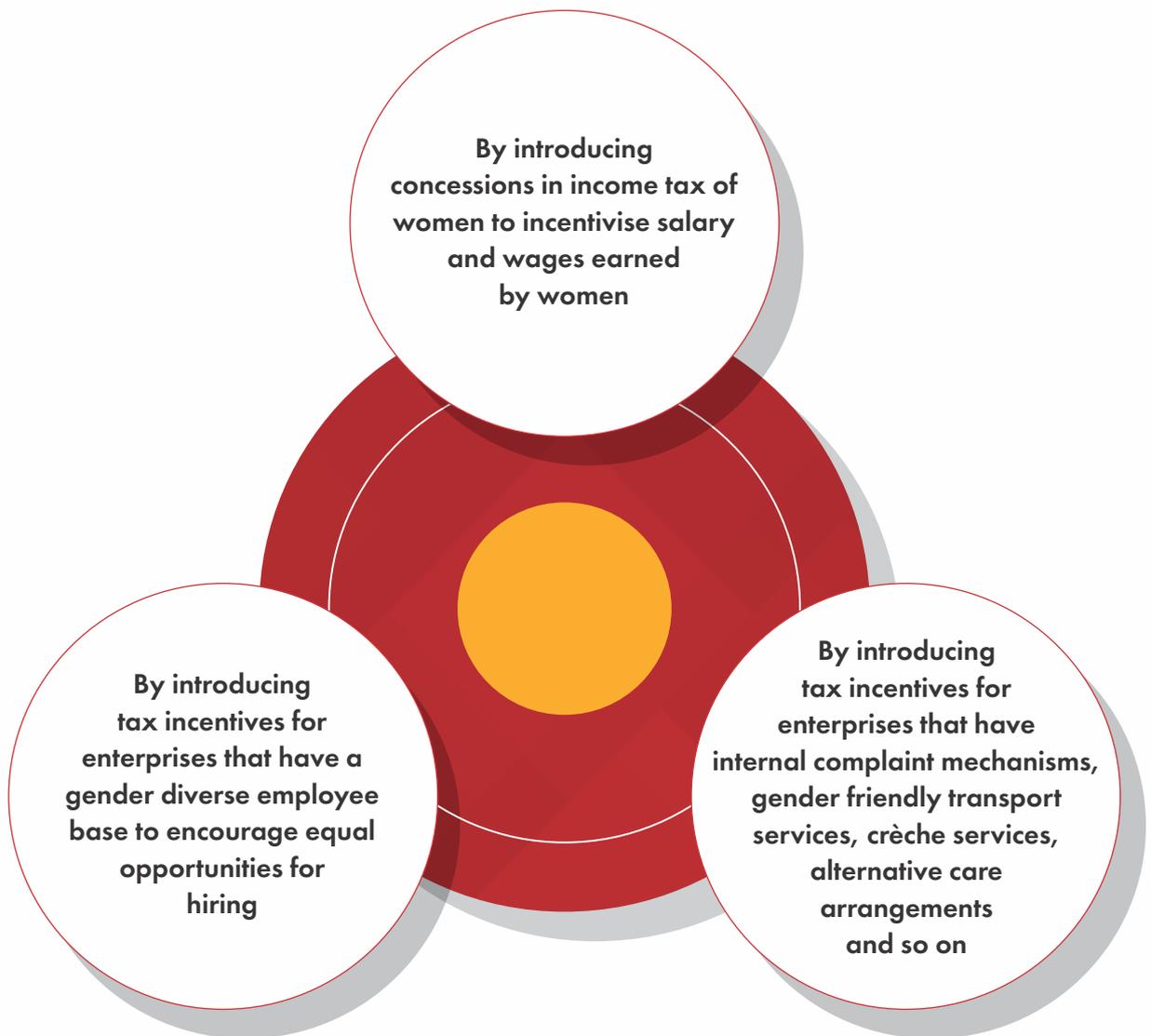
## 5.6. Unintended Consequences on Labour Market and Beneficiaries

If new jobs are not being created in the economy, skill training is likely to displace those who have not availed of these schemes in favour of ones who have, for the limited jobs available (Crepon et al. 2012). Improved productivity through skill training need not translate to improved earnings if firms are able to suppress wages. Consider an experiment conducted to study the impact of

soft skills training for women in a garment factory in urban Bangalore: provision of on-the-job soft skills training, resulted in massive productivity gains among the women. However, there was no discernible impact on their wages. Meanwhile, the net return for the firm was 258%, eight months after the programme completion (Adhvaryu et al. 2017).

## 5.7. Leveraging Tax Incentives

Preferential tax rates for women as an idea has floated in the media for many years (Business Standard 2013, 2018), but formal proposals and discussion around the same has been limited. The few suggestions in the available literature about how tax and other financial incentives may be utilised to improve FLWP are as follows:



## 5.8. Women in Leadership, Role Models and Mentors

In many ways when government bodies, training institutes, SHGs and other labour market organisations pre-select job roles and courses for female candidates, they perpetuate gendering of occupations. One way to enable higher hiring of women is by having more women in leadership roles. However, it is important that “women in leadership” is achieved not by tokenism (Ban and Rao 2007) but by increasing the ease of economic and political participation. This is why gender reservation in the work place is inadequate without actually expanding the skill training and education opportunities for women in manufacturing and the secondary sector in general.



## 5.9. Measuring Success Differently

As shown in the metadata analysis, most data and indicators collected by national surveys also pertain to labour demand/job-supply indicators that help measure success of programmes through rates of certification, placement, drop-outs and more. Incentives tied to quantifiable outcomes, such as higher placement rates indirectly pressurise implementing agencies to recruit those trainees who are believed to be more employable and less likely to dropout. Monitoring and evaluation of labour-market programmes thus need to be much more comprehensive and should include qualitative indicators such as diversity of classrooms, course satisfaction, learning outcomes and so on as metrics of success.



## Conclusion

The focus of this report has been to understand the continuing problem of low FLWP for women in India despite massive investments in employment and skill-building initiatives. This analysis reveals that it is not so much the policies that provide employment as ones that facilitate employments, which are the need of the hour. Low budgetary allocation to support services, such as travel, lodging and maternity benefits suggest that the current policy mix is incognizant of the grass-root realities faced by women. As long as programmes fail to reflect a micro-level consciousness of the problem faced by women, they are likely to yield sub-par results. Effort, therefore, is needed to amplify the gender-sensitivity of programmes. This can be achieved for a policy by enhancing its quotient of programme components that cater to women's all-round needs.

Another element conspicuously absent from

the current policy landscape is a proactive focus on the issue of entrenched gender-norms and discrimination. Correction of social norms that perpetuate gender inequality is a non-negotiable precursor for policy success and therefore requires immediate policy, legislative and even pedagogical interventions.

While resolving "behavioural and outlook related problems" is a gradual process, what can be tackled immediately is smoothening the programmatic rough edges as highlighted by this report. Envisioning an impactful mobilisation strategy, ensuring proper implementation of programmes and investments with support services seem to be the low hanging fruit when it comes to optimising the current policy mix.





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