

# Indian Journal of Modern Research and Reviews

This Journal is a member of the '*Committee on Publication Ethics*'

Online ISSN:2584-184X



## *Research Article*

## Rural-Urban Dynamics of Women's Employment: Evidences from Gujarat State

**Nisha Kakadiya**

Research Scholar, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

**Corresponding Author:** \* Nisha Kakadiya

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20200207>

### Abstract

The economic participation of women in the rapidly growing economy of India has been studied by many scholars from various aspects. However, the issue of persistent disparity between rural and urban female engagement remains a critical area of concern. The concern is not only a national phenomenon, but is also pronounced at the state level. Gujarat, India's highly advanced and industrial state with robust growth, has experienced a rise in female employment in recent years (after 2017-18). However, the state also faces the growing regional differences in female employment.

The study is based on the secondary data from National Sample Survey (NSS) rounds and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) reports, providing a longitudinal analysis of employment indicators spanning from 2011-12 to 2023-24. It also focuses on the determinants of female employment with respect to regional variations.

Results show that female employment is not only determined by economic transformation, but also by various socio-cultural, regional, and household forces, which hinder females' economic participation differently in rural and urban regions. These non-economic barriers often offset the gains made through industrialisation and development. Also, this paper argues for policy interventions to promote skill enhancement among females and thereby generate employment opportunities for females. Consequently, the paper argues that bridging the rural-urban employment gap requires more than just growth; it necessitates targeted policy interventions focused on skill diversification, vocational training, and the removal of mobility barriers. By addressing these unique regional challenges, the state can promote a more inclusive labour market that effectively supports its female human capital.

### Manuscript Information

- **ISSN No:** 2584-184X
- **Received:** 01-01-2026
- **Accepted:** 23-04-2026
- **Published:** 15-05-2026
- **MRR:**4(SP1); 2026: 186-190
- **©2026, All Rights Reserved**
- **Plagiarism Checked:** Yes
- **Peer Review Process:** Yes

### How to Cite this Article

Kakadiya N. Rural-Urban Dynamics of Women's Employment: Evidences from Gujarat State. *Indian J Mod Res Rev.* 2026;4(SP1):186-190.

### Access this Article Online



[www.mrrjournal.in](http://www.mrrjournal.in)

**KEYWORDS:** Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), rural-urban gap, female employment in Gujarat, female employment dynamics, regional disparity.

## INTRODUCTION

Gujarat stands as a pillar in the theories of India's development. The state is known for its high GSDP growth, and its model of development. The state's success is derived by extensive industrialisation. Gujarat ranks sixth in Health index (update), fifth in the percentage of population connected to internet (2019-20), fourth in SEQI (education index) (2016-17), and third in Ease of Doing Business Index (2017), among major Indian states. However, the state is behind seven major states in LFPR and WPR, and ranks eleven in terms of percentage of females connected to internet (2019-20) (PLFS Report, National Family & Health Survey-5). Only 30.8% of the total females in Gujarat are connected to internet (National Family & Health Survey-5).

The equal participation of females in the economy is a key to inclusive growth. In Gujarat, the period after 2017-18 saw a structural shift in the employment statistics. Yet, the problem of unequal distribution still persists. With reference to that, female employment in the state has taken a backseat, and rural – urban disparity in the female employment has widened. Females in the rural areas grapple with underemployment in the primary sector, whereas most often, urban women face barriers related to the income effect.

However, even after rapid economic transformation, the state is left behind in terms of female employment. The FLFPR and FWPR in the state is 50.9 percent and 50.3 percent, respectively (PLF Survey 2023-24, MOSPI). The LFPR of rural females is 63.8 percent and among urban females, it is 33.5 percent (PLF Survey 2023-24, MOSPI). This highlights the fact that an idea of equal female participation in both the regions, and equality of participation with their male counterparts is laid behind. Hence, the study is focused on the state of Gujarat, with an equal emphasis on regional disparity in females' economic participation.

This paper answers following questions: What is the status of female employment in Gujarat? What is the scenario of women employment at rural and urban levels in Gujarat? What are the possible determinants of female employment decisions in Gujarat? This study is exploratory in nature, and is based on secondary data obtained from government reports, websites, and journals. The reports of National Sample Survey (NSS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) are utilised. The data used from the reports have been accumulated for the period 2011-12 to 2023-24.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's employment has always been an area of interest for social science researchers. It has been looked at from national level and local level perspective. At the national level, studies increasingly link women's employment with economic growth (Nikore, 2019; Der, *et al.* 2012; Abraham, 2013; Siddiqui, *et al.* 2017) [11, 19, 1, 17]. The studies have also pointed out the gender wage gap which is sticky with the female wage being 60-65 per cent of the male wage (Banerjee, 2019; Singh, 2017; Borkar, 2013; Shami *et al.*, 2020) [2, 18, 3]. A higher wage gap

deteriorates the status of women employment and often drives them out of the labour force. Empirical evidence and cross-country studies (for example, Desai, and Joshi, 2019; Abraham, 2013; Sanghi, *et al.* 2015) [6, 1, 15] emphasizes the “supply side effects” of economic growth. The increase in male income and the improving economic status of the household have led women to withdraw from the labour market (Verick, 2014; Banerjee, 2019; Shami *et al.*, 2020) [20, 2]. Alternatively, Der, *et al.* (2012) [19] point out that having older children contributing to family income decreases the need for mothers to join the workforce. Furthermore, the gender gap in education is associated with high fertility rates and lower saving rates (Der, *et al.* 2012) [19]. A study by Sanghi, *et al.* (2015) [15] shows that the average age of marriage for women in India is 21 years (Census of India, 2011) [4], and many rural women are found to be engaged in household tasks in matrimonial families after marriage.

Abraham, (2013) [1] observed that the withdrawal of women from the workforce enhances household status and in turn, ascertains economic security for women. It is also mentioned that in the richest segment of the population, females are purely confined to domestic boundaries and with a rising household level in the societal hierarchy, the boundaries imposed by the society appear to be more rigid.

## ANALYSIS

The recent data reveals a pivotal moment for women's employment in Gujarat. While the overall participation is rising, the quality of employment and the rural-urban gap remains the primary areas of concern.

### Female Employment in Gujarat

The provided data offers a comparative snapshot of the socio-economic landscape of Gujarat relative to the national Indian average in 2023-24, providing critical context for analysing rural-urban female employment dynamics. A primary observation is Gujarat's superior performance in Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) (50.9 percent) and Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) (50.3 percent) compared to India's lower figures of 45.2 percent and 43.7 percent, respectively. This indicates a more robust integration of the population into the economy, further evidenced by a significantly lower Unemployment Rate of 1.1 percent in Gujarat against the national 3.4 percent.

Table 1: Status of Gujarat in India

Sr. No.	Indicators	Gujarat	India
1.	Labour Force Participation Rate	50.9	45.2
2.	Workforce Participation Rate	50.3	43.7
3.	Unemployment Rate	1.1	3.4
4.	Employment in Primary sector	61.1	64.4
5.	Employment in Secondary sector	18.9	15.4
6.	Employment in Tertiary sector	19.9	20.1
7.	Women-led Start-ups (with at least one women director)	1431	17001

Sources: PLFS Survey 2023-24 (MOSPI); Women and Men in India- 2023

From a sectoral perspective, the dominance of the Primary sector (61.1 percent in Gujarat) underscores the persistent reliance on agriculture and allied activities, which typically serve as the backbone of rural female employment. However, Gujarat shows a slightly higher concentration in the Secondary sector (18.9 percent) compared to the national average (15.4 percent), suggesting a more developed industrial base that potentially absorbs labour transitioning out of rural agricultural roles. Interestingly, the Tertiary sector remains almost identical for both (approximately 20 percent), indicating that service-led urban growth is a shared national trend. Finally, the presence of 1,431 women-led start-ups in Gujarat, while representing roughly 8.4 percent of the national total, highlights an emerging, though still developing, urban entrepreneurial avenue for women that contrasts with traditional rural labour patterns. In the context of the rural-urban employment landscape, the data reveals that Gujarat maintains a highly efficient, though moderately sized, labour market compared to its regional peers. With a Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of 50.9 percent and a Worker Population Ratio (WPR) of 50.3 percent, the state demonstrates a remarkably tight correlation between those seeking work and those who are employed.

Table 2: Status of Gujarat among Major States

States	LFPR	WPR	UR
Assam	52.8	52.5	4.4
Bihar	32.0	31.5	1.5
Chhattisgarh	63.6	62.0	2.5
Gujarat	50.9	50.3	1.1
Haryana	27.7	27.1	2.3
Himachal Pradesh	73.9	67.5	8.6
Jharkhand	53.4	53.1	0.5
Karnataka	43.6	42.7	2.0
Kerala	46.0	39.6	13.9
Madhya Pradesh	55.9	55.5	0.7
Maharashtra	44.4	43.1	2.9
Odisha	53.5	51.9	3.0
Punjab	34.8	32.2	7.5
Rajasthan	54.1	51.7	4.5
Tamil Nadu	47.0	44.9	4.3
Uttarakhand	47.7	45.5	4.6
Uttar Pradesh	35.8	34.8	2.8
West Bengal	44.7	43.3	3.1

Sources: PLFS Report 2023-24 (MOSPI)

Most notably, Gujarat records the lowest Unemployment Rate (UR) in the dataset at a mere 1.1 percent, significantly outperforming industrialized counterparts like Tamil Nadu (4.3 percent) and Maharashtra (2.9 percent), as well as high-participation states like Himachal Pradesh (8.6 percent). For a study on female employment dynamics, this 1.1 percent figure suggests that Gujarat's economic infrastructure - likely bolstered by its unique rural-industrial clusters - is exceptionally capable of absorbing labour force entrants. While states like Chhattisgarh show higher overall participation (63.6 percent), often tied to rural subsistence, Gujarat's data points toward a more streamlined transition into active economic

roles, leaving almost no "frictional" gap between entering the market and securing a position.

• **Rural – Urban Scenario of Female Employment in Gujarat**

A longitudinal analysis of female employment in Gujarat reveals a complex V-shaped trajectory, where a decade-long stagnation has recently been replaced by a significant rural-led surge. Historically, between 2011–12 and 2017–18, Gujarat followed the national trend of declining female participation, often attributed to the income effect and a "U-shaped" hypothesis where increased education initially leads to a withdrawal from the workforce before a later re-entry into high-skill roles. However, the 2023–24 data marks a radical departure from this trend. The rural Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) climbed to an unprecedented 63.8 percent, nearly tripling since 2017–18. This surge is critically linked to the formalization of rural "invisible labour" through dairy cooperatives and the *Mission Mangalam* (SHG) framework, which effectively moved women from the "domestic duties" category into "self-employed" status.

Table 3: Regional distribution of Female Employment in Gujarat

Category / Years	2011-12		2017-18		2023-24	
	R	U	R	U	R	U
FLFPR	38.4	18.0	25.0	17.8	63.8	33.5
FWPR	40.5	18.7	23.9	17.0	63.6	32.3
FUR	0.3	1.9	4.2	4.5	0.2	3.4

Sources: NSSO Report 2011-12, PLFS Reports 2017-18 and 2023-24.

Despite these gains, a comparative analysis highlights a persistent and widening rural-urban disparity. While rural areas exhibit a near-zero Unemployment Rate (0.2 percent), implying total labour absorption, the Urban FLFPR lags significantly at 33.5 percent with a higher Unemployment Rate (3.4 percent). This disparity suggests that while the rural economy has successfully localized employment, urban centres continue to present high barriers to entry, including safe transit costs and a lack of flexible, proximity-based work models.

Furthermore, a critical concern remains regarding the *quality* of this employment: while rural women are statistically "employed," a vast majority are classified as self-employed or unpaid family helpers, whereas urban female employment, though lower in volume, tends to be more concentrated in regular salaried roles. The sectoral distribution of females in rural and urban areas is presented in Table 4.

The longitudinal data from 2011-12 to 2023-24 reveals a stark and widening divergence in the sectoral composition of employment between rural (R) and urban (U) sectors in Gujarat. In the rural landscape, there is a pronounced re-agriculturalization trend, where female participation in the Primary sector surged from 75.2 percent to 81.69 percent, indicating a narrowing of livelihood options and a heavy reliance on subsistence or farm-based labour. Conversely, the urban Primary sector saw a sharp decline from 11.2 percent in

2011-12 to a mere 3.85 percent in 2023-24, signalling a near-total transition away from agriculture in city centres.

**Table 4:** Sectoral distribution of Female Workers

Category / Years	2011-12		2017-18		2023-24	
	R	U	R	U	R	U
Primary	75.2	11.2	81.3	7.69	81.6	3.85
Secondary	16.5	33.7	9.36	39.9	10.6	42.3
Tertiary	8.4	55.1	9.26	52.3	7.67	53.8

Sources: NSSO Report 2011-12, PLFS Reports 2017-18 and 2023-24.

The Secondary sector highlights a similar divide; while rural participation experienced a net decline from 16.5 percent (2011-12) to 10.6 percent (2023-14), the urban workforce saw a steady expansion in industrial and manufacturing roles, rising from 33.7 percent in 2011-12 to 42.3 percent in 2023-24. This suggests that industrial growth in Gujarat is concentrated in urban clusters, failing to absorb the rural labour surplus. Interestingly, the Tertiary sector remains the dominant engine for urban employment, consistently hovering around the 53–55 percent mark, whereas it has remained stagnant and marginal in rural areas at under 10 percent. Collectively, this data suggests that while urban female employment is successfully diversifying into high-value service and industrial roles, rural female workers are increasingly confined to the traditional primary sector, highlighting a critical gap in the regional rural-urban economic transition.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research underscores that while Gujarat's industrial growth acts as a catalyst for labour demand, it has not automatically translated into equitable employment for women across the rural-urban divide. To move from participation to empowerment, the following strategic interventions are proposed:

### 1. Decentralized Skill Development

To bridge the urban-rural gap, skill-building initiatives must be localized. In rural areas, focus on non-traditional agricultural roles and food processing industries should be focused on to align with the existing rural economy. In urban areas, prioritizing digital literacy and service-sector training to tap into the gig economy and formal corporate roles can help.

### 2. Strengthening the Care Economy

The "double burden" of household labour and professional work is a primary deterrent. Expanding affordable, state-backed childcare facilities (Anganwadis) and elderly care centres can significantly reduce the "time poverty" experienced by women, particularly in urban industrial hubs.

### 3. Enhancing Mobility and Safety

Regional variations in participation are often linked to the ease of commute. Implementing or ensuring safe connectivity can increase the geographic radius within which women are able to seek employment.

### 4. Encouraging Female Entrepreneurship

Beyond wage employment, fostering a culture of self-employment can bypass certain socio-cultural barriers. Strengthening Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through easier access to credit for women-led start-ups in Gujarat's manufacturing corridors can be beneficial.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE FOR RESEARCH

While the use of National Sample Survey (NSS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data provides a robust longitudinal perspective, several limitations are acknowledged during the study:

- **Changes in Survey Methodology:** The transition from the quinquennial rounds of the NSS to the annual PLFS in 2017-18 involved changes in sampling design and data collection frequency. This may create challenges in direct comparative consistency across the 25-year period.
- **Measurement errors:** Standard labour surveys often struggle to capture the full extent of women's economic contributions, particularly in rural Gujarat. Activities like livestock management, fetching water, or subsistence farming are often categorized as "domestic duties" rather than "economic activity," potentially leading to an underestimation of the rural workforce.
- **Scenario of post-2017 employment:** The sharp rise in female employment seen in recent PLFS reports has been debated by economists. Some argue it reflects a genuine increase in opportunities, while others suggest it reflects a shift toward low-productivity self-employment due to household economic pressure.

To build upon the findings of this paper, future researchers could:

**Conduct a district-level analysis:** A comparative primary field study in various districts of Gujarat to identify *what* the trends are, *why* the individual motivations, psychological barriers, or specific cultural nuances varies locally.

## REFERENCES

1. Abraham V. Missing Labour or Mismeasured Labour? The Case of Female Labour Force Participation in India. 2013.
2. Banerjee M. Gender equality and labour force participation: Mind the gap. *ANTYAJAA: Indian Journal of Women and Social Change*. 2019;4(1):113-123.
3. Borkar S. Women's workforce participation in India: A study. *International Journal of Science and Research*. 2016;5(8):769-771.
4. Census of India. Census of India 2011. Government of India; 2011.
5. Chaudhary R, Verick S. Female Labour Force Participation in India and Beyond. ILO Research Paper; 2014.
6. Desai S, Joshi O. The paradox of declining female work participation in an era of economic growth. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*. 2019;62:55-71.

7. Goldar B, Aggarwal SC. Informalization of Industrial Labour in India. 2012.
8. Himanshu. Employment trends in India: A re-examination. 2011.
9. Kannan KP, Raveendran G. Counting and profiling the missing labour force. 2012.
10. Lahoti R, Swaminathan H. Economic development and female labour force participation in India. 2016.
11. Nikore M. Where are India's working women? Irrational Economics | Lifestyle, The Times of India. 2019.
12. National Sample Survey Office. NSS Report 2011-12. Government of India; 2012.
13. Periodic Labour Force Survey. PLFS Report 2017-18. Government of India; 2018.
14. Periodic Labour Force Survey. PLFS Report 2023-24. Government of India; 2024.
15. Sanghi S, Srijia A, Vijay SS. Decline in rural female labour force participation in India: A relook into the causes. *Vikalpa*. 2015;40(3):255-268.
16. Shami AS, Islam T, Rayhan I. Investigating the macroeconomic factors that determine a female worker to participate in the labor force: Evidence from the South Asian countries. *Journal of Business*. 2019;4(2):12-18.
17. Siddiqui MZ, Lahiri-Dutt K, Lockie S, Pritchard B. Reconsidering women's work in rural India: Analysis of NSSO data, 2004-05 and 2011-12. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2017;52(1):45-52.
18. Singh P. Impact of growth in education level on female labour force participation in India after economic reforms. *International Journal of Research in Economic and Social Sciences*. 2017;7(12).
19. van der Yana MR, Zveglic JE Jr. Inclusive Growth and Gender Inequality in Asia's Labour Markets. ADB Economics Working Paper Series No. 321; 2012.
20. Verick S. Women's labour force participation in India: Why is it so low. International Labour Organization; 2014.

**Creative Commons License**

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–Non-commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License. This license permits users to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and the source. No modifications, adaptations, or derivative works are permitted.

**Disclaimer:** The views, opinions, statements, and conclusions expressed in the papers, abstracts, presentations, and other scholarly contributions included in this conference are solely those of the respective authors. The organisers and publisher shall not be held responsible for any loss, harm, damage, or consequences — direct or indirect — arising from the use, application, or interpretation of any information, data, or findings published or presented in this conference. All responsibility for the originality, authenticity, ethical compliance, and correctness of the content lies entirely with the respective authors.