

TIME TO CARE

WEALTH INEQUALITY AND
UNPAID CARE WORK FOR
WOMEN IN INDIA



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PREFACE

With growing inequality, it has become pertinent to address the ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor. Over the last decade, academics, policymakers and multilateral institutions have been striving to draw attention to the growing importance of the subject of shared prosperity. Oxfam India's commitment to reduce inequality has culminated into an annual inequality supplement being published by the organization. With India's top 1% population holding 42.5% of total wealth in India, it is imperative to solidify dialogue around the growing disparity in the world's largest democracy. This year the supplement focuses on inequality, in general, and women's unpaid care work, in specific, and how an unequal distribution of unpaid care work between men and women leads to time poverty for women and forces them either out of the work force or into unfavourable working conditions. Unpaid care work is always taken for granted and perceived as an 'act of love', ignoring the physical, mental and emotional effort that it can pose on an individual. The supplement starts with talking about the widening gap between the rich and the poor globally, as well as in India, narrowing the conversation to the persistent gender inequality in the country and the falling labour force participation rate of women. It then steers conversation around how unpaid care work further worsens gender inequality and poses an extra burden on women, bringing out some startling statistics around time-use by women and men, and its impact on gender-based violence.

ABBREVIATIONS

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICLS	International Conference on Labour Statisticians
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCS	National Creche Scheme
NSSO	National Sample Surveys Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey
PMMVY	Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

“ THERE IS EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE THAT LIVING IN UNEQUAL SOCIETIES WITH SOME PEOPLE BEING MUCH WORSE OFF, ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY, TENDS TO PRODUCE DEPRIVATIONS IN THE ABSOLUTE QUALITY OF LIFE THAT PEOPLE ENJOY.”

- Amartya Sen, 2017 while delivering a public lecture in Ohio State

GLOBAL CHANGE

The debilitating impacts of inequality globally have seldom been as evident as they have since the middle of 2018. Citizens across developed and developing nations have taken to the streets to question prevailing economic policies and systemic corruption, which skew beneficial outcomes in favour of a minuscule fraction at the top of the socio-economic ladder.

The grassroots *Gilets Jaunes* (yellow vests) movement erupted in France last November, triggered by a proposed increase in fuel taxes, which soon morphed into a mobilization against an unjust tax system, a high cost of living, tax cuts for the wealthy, and President Emmanuel Macron's pro-business economic programme.¹ Earlier that July, Haitians poured into the streets to vent their anger over food and fuel shortages and perceived corruption² in a nation where, the United Nations (UN) estimates, half the population remains undernourished.

In October 2019, what began as a protest against 3.5% subway-fare hike in Chile evolved into a slew of demonstrations against rising living costs and social and economic inequality.³ The country, among Latin America's richest, is also among the region's most unequal and ranks lowest among the 36 member states of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The same month, in Lebanon, a proposed tax on internet (specifically WhatsApp) calls became a cause for citizens to coalesce to protest against extreme income inequality in a country with poor public

services such as electricity supply and access to clean drinking water. Unsurprisingly, the top 0.1% of the Lebanese population earns nearly the same share of national income as the bottom 50%.⁴

Similar stories emerged from Egypt, Bolivia, and Ecuador as well in the latter half of 2019. At the time of this paper being written, Colombia is shutting its borders to contain planned mass strikes and protests against proposed austerity measures.

The subject of inequality has been increasingly focused on over the last decade with academics, policymakers and multilateral institutions regularly drawing attention to the importance of shared prosperity. Global platforms such as the World Economic Forum have noted that 'the world economy is not working well enough, for enough people.'⁵ The World Bank has identified six policy areas, which have been shown to be effective in inequality reduction. These are early childhood development, universal health coverage, universal access to quality education, cash transfers to poor families, rural infrastructure (roads and electrification), and progressive taxation.⁶ The UN has an entire Sustainable Development Goal – Goal 10 – that focuses on reduced inequalities.

Despite mainstream acceptance of the negative impacts of inequality, the chasm between the haves and the have nots does not appear to be diminishing anytime soon. Meaningful remedies for the affliction continue to remain politically elusive.

1 Chrisafis A., 'Who are the *Gilets Jaunes* and What Do They Want?', *The Guardian*, December 7, 2018. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/03/who-are-the-gilets-jaunes-and-what-do-they-want> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

2 Paultre A., *Explainer: What's behind Haiti's deadly protests, and possible outcomes*, Reuters, October 11, 2019. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-protests-explainer/explainer-whats-behind-haitis-deadly-protests-and-possible-outcomes-idUSKBN1WQ22P> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

3 Taylor A., 'Protests Erupt Across Chile', *The Atlantic*, October 22, 2019. Available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2019/10/photos-protests-erupt-across-chile/600502/> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

4 Rasmi A., 'Lebanon's extreme income inequality is fueling its huge protests', *Quartz*, October 23, 2019. Available at <https://qz.com/1733225/lebanons-extreme-income-inequality-fuels-huge-protests/> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

5 <https://www.weforum.org/focus/fixing-inequality> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

6 See 'Strategy' dropdown in overview section on Inequality and Shared Prosperity at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/isp/overview#2> (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

“It is difficult to even contemplate what a massive sum of money a billion pounds is: if I had saved a million pounds in today’s money every year since the Battle of Hastings, I would still be short. No one – however smart or hardworking – is worth a billion pounds or more. People only become billionaires because successive governments have organised our economic system, from taxes to property law to rights at work, to benefit the rich – often at the expense of the poor. In other words, their creation is a policy choice – or a choice not to make policies that distribute wealth more fairly.

- Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Member of Parliament (Labour) for Brighton Kemptown, United Kingdom⁷

GAP CONTINUES TO BE WIDE

The Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report 2019 continues to show that the global economic system remains broken with financial rewards accruing at the very top while millions continue to languish in poverty. While aggregate global wealth rose by US\$9.1 trillion to US\$360.6 trillion, a 2.6% increase over 2018, the bottom half of the world’s population collectively owned less than 1% of total wealth as of mid-2019. The top 10% is estimated to own 82% of global wealth with the top 1% owning 45%.⁸

While these are lower than the 2018 estimates of 85% and 47%, respectively, clearly the wealth gap is unlikely to close in the near future. The number of new millionaires rose by 1.1 million to 46.8 million and is projected to increase by 34% to nearly 63 million by 2024. The number of ultra-high net worth individuals – those with wealth above US\$50 million – is expected to increase by 66,000 to 234,000 between 2019 and 2024. The report estimates that assuming no change in wealth inequality, another 670 billionaires are likely to be added over the next five years bringing the total number to around 2,450.

Interestingly, the number of billionaires since the global financial crisis has nearly doubled with a new billionaire created every two days. Forbes estimates a total of 2,153 billionaires world-wide in 2019, 55 fewer than the previous year. While the wealth of the world’s billionaires decreased by US\$400 bn (INR 28,67,300 crore) over the last year to US\$8.7 trillion, the world’s richest man, Amazon-owner Jeff Bezos, saw his net worth rise to US\$131 bn (INR 9,390 bn or 9.39 lakh crore), up US\$19 bn from the year before. Just 1% of his fortune amounts to more than the entire proposed health budget of Nigeria, a country of almost 201 million people.

Persistent inequality has negative implications for macroeconomic stability and inclusive economic growth. Wealth concentrations can lead to decision-making power being restricted to a few while also resulting in significant adverse social impacts such as rising crime. Rising inequality also compromises the pace of poverty reduction and compounds inequalities between various social groups such as men and women in terms of access to health, education, and opportunities.

⁷ The Guardian, November 1, 2019. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/01/viral-billionaires-super-rich-exist>. (last accessed on November 6, 2019).

⁸ See Global Wealth Report 2019, Credit Suisse Research Institute, October 2019. Available at <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html> (last accessed on November 15, 2019), p. 2.

THE INDIA STORY

The World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index (2018) ranks India at 62 out of 74 emerging economies behind neighbours Nepal (22), Bangladesh (34) and Sri Lanka (40), with only South Africa (69) and Pakistan (74) ranked lower among BRICS nations. The same report estimates that 6 out of 10 Indians live on less than US\$3.20 per day.⁹

Wealth inequality in India is rising with the Gini wealth coefficient having risen to 83.2% in 2019 from 81.2% in 2008, according to Credit Suisse. Based on the All India Debt and Investment Surveys, the Gini coefficient for wealth rose to 0.75 in 2012 from 0.67 in 2002.¹⁰ Wealth gaps appear to have, thus, widened according to multiple data sources.

According to Credit Suisse, 78% of the population has a net worth below US\$10,000 while 1.8% of adults, about 15.6 million people out of 1.36 billion, has a net worth above US\$100,000. The 2019 report estimates the country having a 1.6% share among the top 1% of global wealth holders which is 827,000 adults.¹¹

India added 416,000 new dollar millionaires over the last year and there are currently estimated to be 759,000 dollar millionaires in the country. The number of ultra-high net worth individuals – those possessing fortunes worth US\$50 million or more – is estimated at 4,460 with 1,790 of these having a net worth greater than US\$100 million. Both numbers have risen by 1,060 and 290, respectively. Forbes estimates 106 Indian billionaires in 2019.¹²

Over the last year, total wealth of India has increased by US\$ 625.5 billion (approx. INR 4,42,5900 cr).¹³ The wealth of the top 1% increased by 46% while the bottom 50% saw wealth increase at just 3%.¹⁴ The wealth of billionaires rose from US\$325.5 billion (INR 22,72,500 crore) in 2017 to US\$408 billion (INR 28,96,800 crore) in 2019. The total wealth of Indian billionaires is higher than the total Union Budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19 which was at INR 24,42,200 crore.

Analysis of billionaire wealth shows that there are 15 billionaires from the consumer goods industry and more than 10 billionaires from the pharmaceuticals industry in 2019—a rarity among developing countries.

The top 5 billionaire generating sectors in the Asia and Pacific according to Forbes are Real Estate (17% of fortunes), Manufacturing (14% of fortunes), Diversified (12% of fortunes), Technology (12% of fortunes) and Fashion and Retail (9% of fortunes).¹⁵ In terms of the gender spread among Indian billionaires, there are only five women billionaires in the Forbes 2019 list, constituting just 4.7% of Indian billionaires.

India's top 10% of the population holds 74.3% of the total national wealth. The contrast is even sharper for the top 1%. India's top 1% of population holds 42.5% of national wealth while the bottom 50%, the majority of the population, owns a mere 2.8% of the national wealth. In other words, the top 1% hold more than 4 times the amount of wealth held by 953 million people (or the bottom 70% of the population). The bottom 90

9 See 'The Inclusive Development Index 2018: Summary Data and Highlights', World Economic Forum. Available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Forum_IncGrwth_2018.pdf (last accessed on November 15, 2019), p. 3.

10 Dang, H. and P. Lanjouw, 'Inequality in India on the Rise', UNU-WIDER Policy Brief, 2012, conducted by NSSO. Available at <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Policy-brief/PDF/PB-2018-6-Inequality-in-India-on-the-rise.pdf> (last accessed on November 15, 2019), p. 2.

11 See 'Global Wealth Report 2019', Credit Suisse Research Institute, October 2019. Available at <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html> (last accessed on November 15, 2019), p. 46.

12 From the Forbes 2019 'List of Billionaires', March 5, 2019, available at <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/#10c198a2251c> (last accessed on November 15, 2019).

13 Exact figure INR 4,42,5900.

14 Estimated from the data available in the Global Wealth Report 2019, Credit Suisse.

15 Peterson-Withorn, Chase. 'How Billionaires Get Rich: Which Industries Make the Most Mega-Fortunes', Forbes (2016). Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2016/03/07/how-billionaires-get-rich-which-industries-make-the-most-mega-fortunes/#32660c0445e1> (last accessed on 17 December 2019).

percent holds 25.7 percent of national wealth. Wealth of top 9 billionaires is equivalent to the wealth of the bottom 50% of the population.

As an illustration, it would take a female domestic worker 22,277 years to earn what the CEO of India's top tech company makes in one year. With earnings pegged at INR 106 per second, the CEO would make more in 10 minutes than what the domestic worker would make in one year.

The gap between the rich and the poor is not uniform with certain social groups having been dealt a considerably poorer card. The distribution of wealth and income, while differing among these groups by gender, religion, caste, etc. also diverge with location that is, whether individuals are located in urban or rural settings. Distributional analysis based on consumption data in India derived from the National Sample Surveys (NSSO), shows an increase in consumption inequality since economic liberalization in the early 1990s. There is a marked rise between 1993-94 and 2004-05, particularly in urban settings, before a moderation. Income inequality is closely linked with wealth

inequality and data on incomes is more limited. Chancel and Piketty¹⁶ utilized multiple data sources including income tax data, NSSO consumption data, and National Accounts data, to create a long historical time series on income inequality which showed that income inequality have reduced between the years after independence in 1947 and the 1980s. The share of national income accruing to the top 1% increased sharply from 6% in the 1980s to 22% in the period between 1991 and 2015 while the top 0.1% of earners capturing a higher share of growth at 12% than the bottom 50% who were estimated to have captured 11%.

Incomes are intimately linked to wages and while real average daily wages almost doubled in India between 1993-94 and 2011-12, low wages remain the order of the day. The average wage in 2011-12 has been estimated at INR 247 per day with only a limited number of regular/salaried workers and highly skilled professionals mostly concentrated in urban areas earning substantially higher wages.¹⁷ Wage inequality remains high at 0.49. The gender wage gap, in particular, remains considerable at 34% in 2011-12 even though that is a decline from 48% estimated in 1993-94.¹⁸

GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

To limit our analysis to one of these social groups, this India Supplement focuses on the gap between men and women and attempts to understand the contours of gender inequality in the country with a specific analysis of women's unpaid care work and the impact

this has on women's ability to effectively participate in remunerative work and achieve financial agency. Lewis (1954) states that the transfer of women's work from the household to commercial employment is among the most notable features of economic development.¹⁹

16 Chancel, P. and T. Piketty. Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj (July 2017); World Inequality Database Working Paper Series No. 2017/11, World Inequality Lab. Available at <https://wid.world/document/chancelpiketty2017widworld/> (last accessed on November 16, 2019).

17 India Wage Report: Wage Policies for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth, International Labour Organization (2018). Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_638305.pdf (last accessed on November 15, 2019), p. xiii.

18 Ibid.

19 Lewis W.A. p.3, Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour, The Manchester School, Volume 22, Issue 2 (1954). Available at <https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/368/368lewistable.pdf> (last accessed on November 25, 2019)

The World Economic Forum estimates that while the largest gender disparity on average tends to be in terms of political empowerment, the gap for economic participation and opportunity, and health and survival, continues to be significant. In its annual Global Gender Gap Report (2020), India continues to be ranked poorly in terms of improving the gender gap at a low 112 out of 153 countries. The country fared poorly on three of the four measured segments that is, economic participation and opportunity (149), health and survival (150), and educational attainment (112), while ranking fairly high for political empowerment (18). The rank puts the country behind Bangladesh (50), Sri Lanka (102) and Nepal (101).²⁰

Households that depend on female workers as primary earners tend to be poorer on account of the wage gap because women who do the same work as men get paid less. Moreover, the impact of the wage gap itself is not likely to be uniform if viewed against the role religious, caste, class and spatial intersectionalities play among different groups of women. National data lays bare the regional variations within gender inequality. For example, the body mass index of a woman living in a rural area is likely to be below normal by as much as 11 percentage points as compared to a woman residing in the country's urban quarters. Educational outcomes appear to be different as well with only 27.3% of rural women likely to have completed 10 or more years of schooling as compared to 51.5% of urban women.²¹ A higher caste woman, for instance, is likely to live for almost 15 years more than a Dalit woman.

In terms of the proportion of working women in India, the picture painted by World Bank is discouraging:

female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) shows that India is just nine countries ranked below it with Egypt, Morocco, Somalia, Iran, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen behind India.²² Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) published by the NSSO estimated a dismal figure at 23.3% in 2017-18, which indicates that three out of four women aged 15 and above are not working nor seeking work. While the FLFPR for urban women has remained largely stable, sliding marginally from 20.5% in 2011-12 to 20.4% in 2017-18, it is the decline in workforce participation for rural women – from 35.8% to 24.6% over the same period – which should be of particular concern. It is important to contrast these figures with FLFPRs recorded for urban and rural women in 2004-05 which stood at 24.4% and 49.4%, respectively.

Further, the quality of work too is questionable with textiles-related vocations followed by domestic cleaning being the two most common professions among urban working women. Among rural workers, 73.2% of women were engaged in agriculture, implying that non-farm jobs for women in rural settings are rare or difficult to access.²³

According to the World Bank data on labour force and education for 2018, only 31% of women with a bachelor's degree or higher were in the labour force, while those who were unemployed and seeking employment was at a staggering 25%, the highest level of unemployment across all tiers of education (basic, intermediate, advanced).²⁴ It is argued that while higher wages encourage women to join the workforce because of a higher opportunity cost of time at home, an increase in education also increases women's relative bargaining

20 See The Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum, 2020, at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (last accessed on December 24, 2019), p. 9.

21 See <http://rchiips.org/nfhs/pdf/NFHS4/India.pdf> (last accessed on November 21, 2019).

22 World Bank Labour Force Participation rate. Available <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS> (last accessed on November 15, 2019).

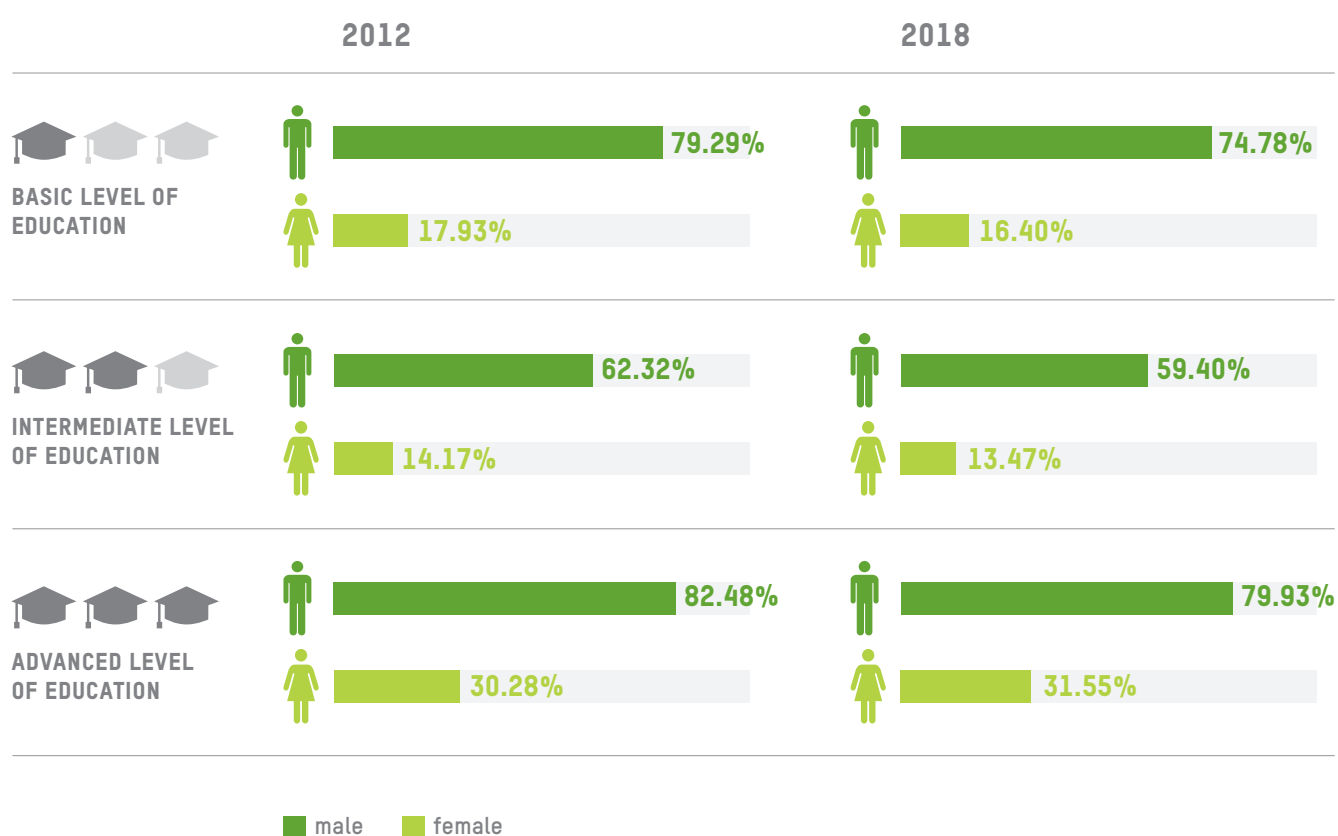
23 See Annual Report – Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) (July 2017 – June 2018), National Statistical Office, May 2019, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, p. iii.

24 ISCED, 2011. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/india> (last accessed on November 15, 2019).

power and they might prefer to stay out of the market for home production or for leisure.²⁵ In India, we see the opposite effect as well. Due to a lack of decent and varied opportunities of work, many educated women are forced to drop out of the labour force because they

can't find a suitable job. For example, the daughter of a daily wage worker, educated through college, will not want to go back and work as a daily wagger.²⁶ Thus, there is a mismatch between aspirations and supply of quality employment for women.

TABLE 1: LABOUR FORCE (%) BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND SEX

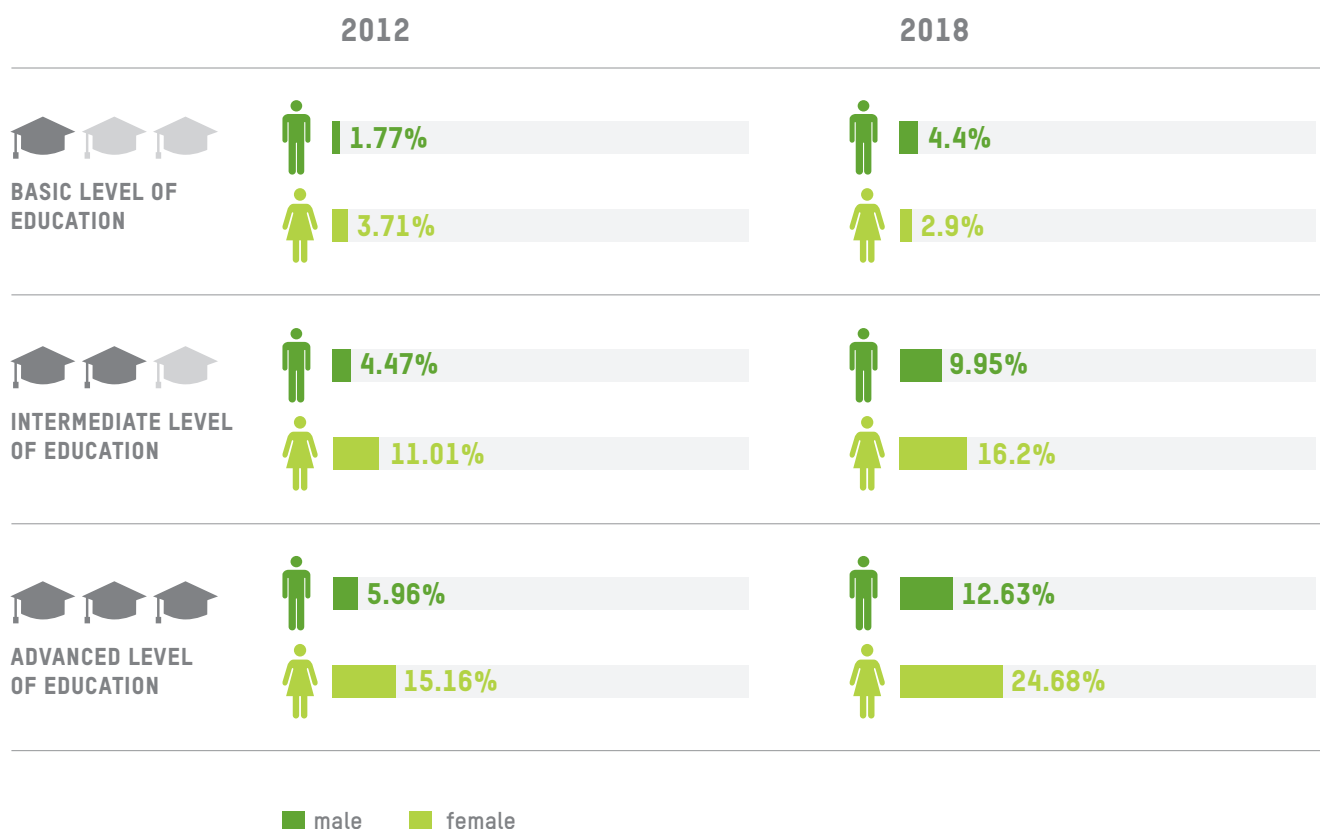


Source: Data for India, World Bank, 2019²⁷

25 Cameron, L. A., Malcolm Dowling, J., and Worswick, C. Education and labor market participation of women in Asia: Evidence from five countries. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 49(3), (2001), pp. 459-477.

26 Dutta, Diya. 'The State of Employment in India: A Political Narrative', Oxfam India: New Delhi, (2019). Source: <https://www.oxfamindia.org/working-papers/overview-unemployment-india>. Accessed on 17 December 2019.

27 Data for India, World, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/india> (last accessed on November 15, 2019).

TABLE 2: UNEMPLOYMENT (%) BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND SEX

Source: Data For India, World Bank, 2019 ²⁸

Among the reasons cited for the declining FLFPR is higher educational enrollment.²⁹ While this could certainly be valid for those in the 15-29 age group, which saw an 8% fall between 2011-12 and 2017-18 to 16.4%, the PLFS data indicates a fall in workforce participation for older women, that is, those between 30-50 years of age where two out three women were reported as not working. The decline is most pronounced in women aged between 35-39 years, the fall recorded at 9% to 33.5%.

The ILO has earlier focused on the main drivers of the declining FLFPR in South Asia which, besides increased enrollment of young women in secondary education and availability and access to non-farm employment opportunities, includes rising household incomes causing a change in work preferences ('income effect') and the lack of child care options. There could also be issues of measurement.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid.


²⁹ Rangarajan, C., P.I. Kaul, and Seema. 'Where is the missing labour force?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(39), (2011), p. 68-72.

³⁰ Verick S. (2014), Women's labour force participation in India – Why is it so low?, International Labour Organisation. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--asia/--ro-bangkok/--sro-new_delhi/documents/genericdocument/wcms_342357.pdf (last accessed on November 21, 2019)

Interestingly, most women in the prime working age category (between 30-50 years) reported 'attending to domestic duties only', implying running the household and taking care of children and/or elderly family members. Intersectionality shows up in the data as well with upper caste Hindu women and Muslim women recording lower workforce participation than other identity groups. Both inferences point to wider social norms around a woman's role in society as well as religious conservatism at keeping women out of the workforce. Geographically, Bihar ranks lowest among India's states with an FLFPR of 4.1% while Meghalaya (51.2%), Himachal Pradesh (49.6%), Chhattisgarh (49.3%), Sikkim (43.9%), and Andhra Pradesh (42.5%) record the highest rates of women's workforce participation.

Numerous studies have shown the strong positive impact of gender equity on labour force participation and its impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Lower gender inequality is associated with higher GDP per capita across nations at all levels of development with the strongest relationship in middle income countries, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).³¹ The World Economic Forum estimates that raising women's participation in the labour force can increase India's GDP by 27%.³² Per capita incomes are estimated to rise by as much as 14% by 2020 and by 20% by 2030 if women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's in 15 major developing economies. This would have a reciprocal effect on raising household savings and result in increased consumption while also raising aggregate output through higher productivity.

TABLE 3: VALUE OF UNPAID CARE WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP BY SEX, 1998-99, INDIA³³

	MALE	0.4%
	FEMALE	3.1%
	TOTAL	3.5%

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), 2018³⁴

It is important to note that gender equality in the labour market is not an end but a means to holistically achieve wider human development goals including reductions in poverty, infant mortality, fertility and child labour. More gender equal labour market outcomes would also provide the impetus for greater decision-making and bargaining power for women within and outside their households.³⁵

Determining causation for the declining imprint of women's participation in the labour force is challenging. In addition to the aforementioned factors for sliding FLFPR, there are demand side factors including legal and economic constraints to work, for example, laws governing which industries and work shifts women can work in and during. Such legal drawbacks effectively skew women's marketplace engagement capabilities

31 Kochhar K., S. Jain-Chandra and M. Newiak. Women, Work and Economic Growth: Leveling the Playing Field, International Monetary Fund (2017), p. 19. Available at https://www.elibrary.imf.org/doc/IMF071/23146-9781513516103/23146-9781513516103/Other_formats/Source_PDF/23146-9781475579062.pdf?redirect=true (last accessed on November 21, 2019).

32 Gender parity can boost India's GDP by 27%: WEF co-chairs, Press Trust of India (January 21, 2018). Available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/gender-parity-can-boost-indias-gdp-by-27-wef-co-chairs/articleshow/62589586.cms?from=mdr> (last accessed on November 21, 2019).

33 The last time-use survey in India was conducted in 1998-99. There is an ongoing project at a second time-use survey being conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India. At present, data for time-use survey in India is available from 1998-99 survey.

34 Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work, International Labour Organization, (2018), p. 50

35 Mehrotra, S. and S. Sinha. Towards higher female work participation in India: What can be done?, CSE Working Paper 2019-02, Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University (2019), p. 3. Available at https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Mehrotra_Sinha_Towards_Higher_Female_LFPR.pdf (last accessed on November 21, 2019).

with the result that equally qualified men may often be preferred for similar or the same roles. Gupta, for example, shows how a reduction in trade barriers led to a reduction in women's employment through laws that prohibited women working during certain shifts, namely Section 66(1)(b) of the Factories Act, 1948,³⁶ which has since been struck down by a number of states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Goa.

However, on the supply side, social norms often dictate the pattern and capacity of women to work. A prioritization of housework, societal expectations of

women as caregivers, the potential for being subjected to violence are among the many social norms-based reasons why women either face opposition to participating in the workforce or choose to stay out of it on account of an internalization of prevailing norms.

Social norms thus affect both the demand for and supply of female labour. Of these, gender inequality in unpaid care work negatively reinforces gender gaps in labour market outcomes by severely limiting both women's ability to work while also curtailing available formal or informal employment opportunities.

UNPAID CARE WORK REINFORCES GENDER INEQUALITY

Unpaid care work can be defined as all unremunerated services provided for the members comprising a household, which includes housework and taking care of dependents such as children, the sick or the elderly to ensure well-being, protection, and maintenance. Such activities are considered to be work since they require physical, mental and emotional effort, are costly in terms of time utilization, and can be outsourced to a member outside the household for a payment for performing the same services.

Such work has been addressed under SDG 5, which attempts to achieve gender equality and which recognises the value of unpaid care work as positively contributing to societal well-being. It recognizes the imbalance between men and women in terms of the burden of such work. Target 5.4 states, 'Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and

social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.'³⁷

Care work, thus, is an essential activity but is often unaccounted for at the household level or in GDP calculations owing to it being taken for granted as an intrinsic role for women and perceived as an 'act of love'.³⁸ A heavy burden of care duties can have an adverse effect on girls and women's education as well as their physical and mental health and well-being. It can also raise the risk of assault, say for women going out to fetch fuel or firewood or water while also preventing those women experiencing domestic violence from accessing support.

At a policy level, it is often considered to be difficult to measure given the nature of activities comprising unpaid care work such as the time spent on rearing children, looking after the elderly or the indisposed,

36 Gupta, A. Effect of Trade Liberalization on Gender Inequality: The Case of India, Indian Statistical Institute Chennai, (2015), p. 6. Available at <https://uh-ir.tdl.org/bitstream/handle/10657/1129/GUPTA-DISSERTATION-2015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (last accessed on November 21, 2019)

37 See <https://indicators.report/targets/5-4/> (last accessed on November 21, 2019).

38 Rost, L., K. Bates and L. Dellepiane. Women's Economic Empowerment and Care: Evidence for Influencing, WE-Care Baseline Research Report, Oxfam (2015). Available at <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/578732/rr-baseline-report-we-care-200715-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (last accessed on November 23, 2019).

cleaning the household, or cooking for the family. The lack of policy and political resonance, in turn, negatively affects the evolution of meaningful narrative and approaches to reducing gender inequalities in employment specifically and women's economic empowerment more generally.

On average, women tend to spend a disproportionately greater amount of time, often twice as much, than men on household work and almost five times more than men on childcare.³⁹ Men also tend to take on the kinds of household work that fit within their formal work schedules while women do not generally possess the choice of not performing household tasks even if there are other constraints. The unequal distribution of unpaid care work, effectively, allows men to participate in the labour market while limiting a woman's capacity to do the same even though men and women in a household spend the same total amount of time 'working'. The difference lies in formal work being recognized and remunerated with the result that traditional gender roles tend to be reinforced at the household level itself with women's bargaining power consequently reduced.

This fact has been empirically borne by time-use surveys, which have shown women bearing the brunt in terms of participation and time spent on unpaid care work, men having a higher burden of paid work which as a result is also distributed unequally, and women overall shouldering a larger burden on total work which includes paid and unpaid work.⁴⁰ The implications on women as a result of unpaid work are manifold. Given their repetitive and daily nature, such work is drudgery without any avenue of upward mobility or benefits in terms of remuneration or accessing opportunities in the world outside the household. With women comprising half of the global population, this would

imply a considerable part of the labour force being stuck in low productivity work which, in turn, deprives national economies of valuable potential for economic and social growth.

Time forms a conceptual point of assessing impacts of unpaid care work and serves as an indicator of well-being. Being a limited resource that is divided into paid and unpaid work and leisure and labour, a minute spent on unpaid care work represents a reduction in the equivalent amount of time that a woman could have potentially spent on education, vocational skill-building, and remunerative employment. This constitutes 'time poverty' which is a concept that refers to reduced ability of individuals to make choices on how they allocate their time. More than a qualitative loss of individual choices, it is a loss of time for leisure. It is also further material deprivation of an income-poor household on account of a loss in earnings, which negatively impacts consumption. This could be a different scenario where many unpaid activities such as collection of fuel wood and drinking water are outsourced.⁴¹

Time-use data is not a regular feature of national statistical systems. India's last and only such survey was conducted in 1998-99 although the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is in the process of collecting time use data over the course of 2019. This is important to assess the contours of time use for women since such data slices poverty experienced by women specifically and the gendered role in unpaid care work, which puts a check on economic empowerment. The 1998-99 survey conducted across six states showed women suffering from time poverty in terms of having less time to sleep, eat, drink, further personal hygiene, or exercise than men. Women from the poorest households had ten fewer hours of personal

39 Duflo, E. Women empowerment and economic development, *Journal of Economic Literature*, World Bank, (2012), p. 1052. Available at <https://economics.mit.edu/files/7417> (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

40 Hirway I. Unpaid Work and the Economy: Linkages and their Implications, Working Paper No. 838, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College (2015), p. 5. Available at http://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/wp_838.pdf (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

41 Ghosh J. Time poverty and the poverty of economics, *METU Studies in Development* (2016). Available at <http://www2.feas.metu.edu.tr/metusd/ojs/index.php/metusd/article/view/879> (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

time each week than men in the same economic category. Such households also tend to be the most burdened by unpaid care activities.⁴²

It is worthwhile to also note that unpaid work serves as a means to absolve the state of its responsibilities as many activities focused on basic provisioning and care should be an administrative and not a personal burden. These include taking care of the elderly and the infirm and providing or looking after the health, nutrition and education of children.

Such forms of work also fill infrastructure gaps. For instance, through the fetching of drinking water and fuel wood over long distances or taking on care services effectively close the administrative delivery gap with regard to access to quality public services and health services, respectively. Hirway (2015) refers to this phenomenon as unpaid work subsidizing government by provisioning to households.⁴³

The burden of unpaid care work that is largely shouldered by women not only splits the labour market by gender but ultimately leads to a lower accumulated human capital in terms of education, skills and health for women. This sets off the proverbial vicious cycle whereby women's ability to enter the workforce and perform adequately in structured roles and forms of employment is constrained. When they do enter the workforce, they are usually expected to continue overseeing unpaid care duties alongside employment.

This results in an overwhelming concentration of women in low productivity work, lower wages, and a limited capacity for upward economic and social mobility. The full potential of the labour market remains under-utilized. Gender parity in the workforce, as estimated by McKinsey Global Institute, could see India boost its GDP by as much US\$700 billion by 2025 or 1.4% per year of incremental growth if the FLFPR is raised by 10% points or 68 million women.⁴⁴

DATA FOR THOUGHT

Just how disproportionate is the quantum of unpaid work done by women as compared to men? The ILO estimates that globally women and girls perform more than 3/4ths of the total quantity of such work and that 2/3rds of care workers are women. Across regions, women spend more time in unpaid care work than

men with Asia and the Arab states faring poorly in particular at 4.1 times and 4.7 times, respectively. As a corollary, the paid work ratio between women and men is low for both regions at 0.16 and 0.57, though the latter ratio applies to Africa and the Pacific region as well.⁴⁵

42 Ibid.

43 Hirway, I. Unpaid Work and the Economy: Linkages and their Implications, Working Paper No. 838, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, (2015), p.11.

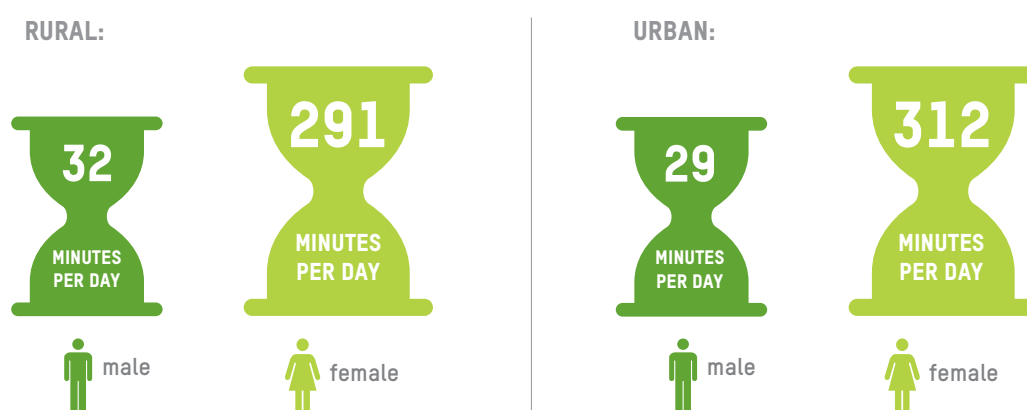
44 This estimate is derived as a "best-in-region" scenario where all countries match the progress towards gender parity of the fastest-improving country in their region. It is also based on estimating India's female labour force participation rate at 31% in 2015. See McKinsey Report. The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in India, McKinsey Global Institute (November 2015) available at https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Employment%20and%20Growth/The%20power%20of%20parity%20Advancing%20womens%20equality%20in%20India/MGI%20India%20parity_Full%20report_November%202015.ashx (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

45 ILO. Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work, International Labour Organization, (2018), p. 56. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

Men in the Asia and Pacific regions spend the least time engaging in unpaid care work among other regions at 1 hour and 4 minutes. India's position in this regard is dismal with women on average estimated to spend 297 minutes per day on unpaid work as against 31 minutes spent by men. Such work also appears to be

more burdensome for women in urban areas (average of 312 minutes per day) as against those in rural areas (291 minutes). The total value of unpaid care work as a percentage of GDP was estimated at 3.5% (3.1% for women and 0.4% for men).⁴⁶

TABLE 4: TIME SPENT (MINUTES PER DAY) IN UNPAID CARE WORK IN INDIA, BY SEX AND LOCATION, 1998-99



Source: ILO, 2018.

Note: As can be expected, with more hours spent on unpaid care work, the participation of women in the labour force is likely to decline. The OECD⁴⁷ has earlier found a negative correlation between the amount of time spent on unpaid activities and female labour force participation to the extent that in countries where women spend an average of five hours on unpaid work, 50% of working-age women are either employed or looking for employment (active). A two-hour decrease results in a 10 percentage point increase in the number of active women.⁴⁸

There is also a positive correlation between inequalities in unpaid care work and gender wage gaps whereby, in countries where women spend a larger amount of time on unpaid activities and there is a larger gender gap in performing such duties, the gender wage gap

in hourly wages is likely to be higher. In countries where women undertake five times as much care work as men, they are estimated to earn 40% of what men make for the same work. When the figure declines to double the work, the wage gap is estimated at 65%.⁴⁹

46 Ibid., pp. 44-46.

47 Ferrant G., L.M. Pesando and K. Nowacka . Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes, OECD Development Centre, (2014), p. 5. Available at https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf (last accessed on November 24, 2019).

48 Ibid. The analysis is valid for countries for a given level of GDP per capita, fertility rate, female unemployment rate, female education, urbanisation rate and maternity leave.

49 Ferrant G., et al. (2014). p. 6.

It is interesting to note that the data for women appears to not be considerably determined by levels of educational attainment. When divided by educational qualifications, Indian women with no education were found to spend 110 minutes per day on unpaid activities while those having attained tertiary education spent 104 minutes. Those having completed primary and

secondary education are estimated to spend 101 and 103 minutes, respectively. For men, there is a small divergence in terms of educational attainment and the time spent on such work with those with no education spending 66 minutes per day while those with higher education spending between 53 (secondary) and 55 minutes (tertiary) daily.⁵⁰

TABLE 5: TIME SPENT (MINUTES) IN UNPAID CARE WORK BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND SEX, 1998-99



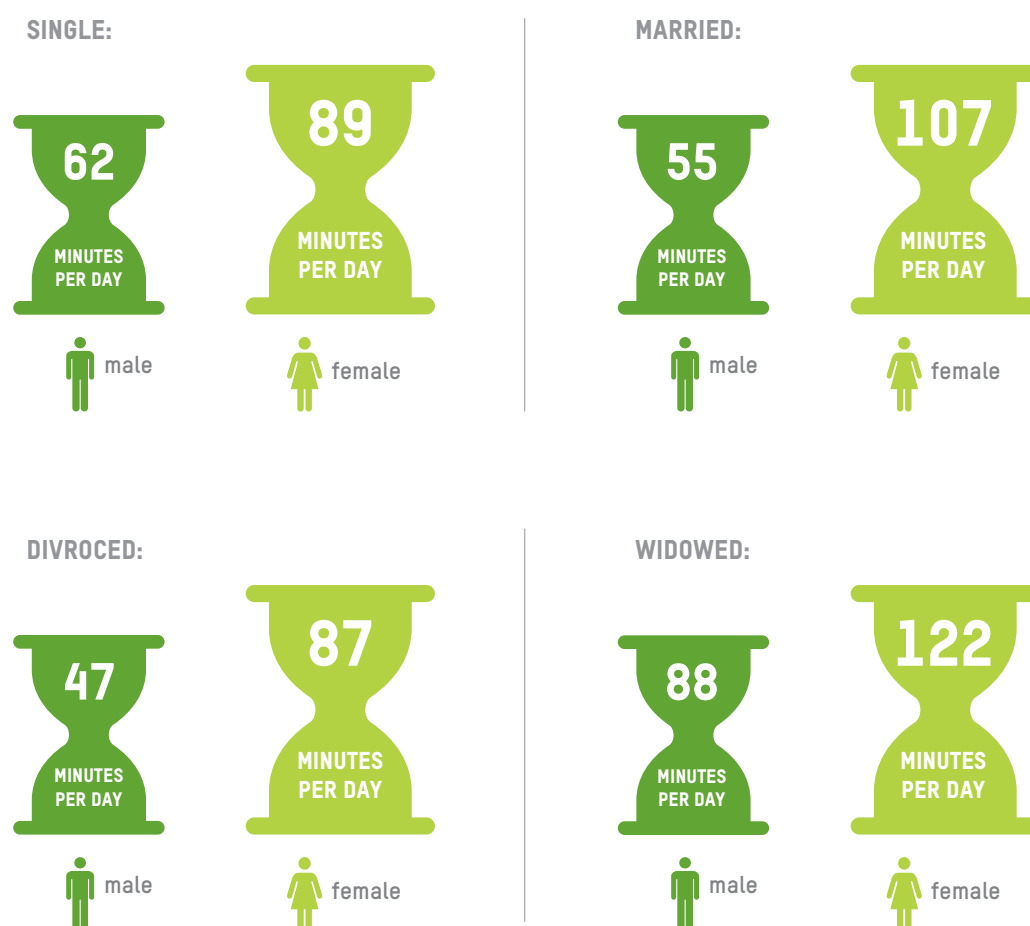
Source: ILO, 2018

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

As can probably be gauged, marital status and children significantly impact the amount of time spent on unpaid work. While single women are estimated, on average, to spend 89 minutes daily on unpaid care work, it rises to 107 minutes for married women and 122 minutes for widowed women. Of particular interest is the fact that married men tend to spend less time on unpaid work after marriage (55 minutes) as against

when they are single (62 minutes). The data point reinforces the patriarchal norms prevalent in much of South Asia wherein the role of the wife is often relegated to taking care of the household. This trend is reversed in almost every country except a few African nations such as Ghana, Cameroon, South Africa, Tanzania and Benin.⁵¹

TABLE 6: TIME SPENT (MINUTES) IN UNPAID CARE WORK BY MARITAL STATUS AND SEX, 1998-99



Source: ILO, 2018

51 Ibid., p. 66.

Oxfam India's 2019 household care survey brought to light a different dimension whereby it correlated social norms – particularly in terms of violence against women and girls – and unpaid care work. The survey, undertaken across four Indian states (Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh) with 1,107 respondents, was an attempt to fill an existing gap in the literature on unpaid work and the vulnerability of women to be subjected to abuse and violence on account of lower social mobility and a lack of financial independence. The results were startling. For instance, findings included the fact that 42.2% of women who failed to fetch water or fire wood for the household and 41.2% of women who failed to prepare meals for males in the family were physically beaten. Nearly 65% and 68% of them were harshly criticized for the same reasons.⁵²

Dutta⁵³ found that in households where men and women expressed greater acceptability of physical violence against women, women in the household spent 42 minutes longer on both care and paid work and 48 minutes less on leisure activities. More than half the survey respondents – 53% – felt it was acceptable to harshly criticize a woman for failing to care well for the children in a household while 33% thought it acceptable to beat a woman for the same reason. The figures were just as worrisome for not attending to a dependent or ill adult member of the family at 60% (harshly criticize) and 36% (beating).

The survey also found that Government interventions such as the provisioning of clean drinking water had a positive effect on reducing the time spent on unpaid care work. The amount of time saved ranged from less than 30 minutes a day (51% of 281 respondents or 143) to between 30 and 40 minutes per day (31% or 86

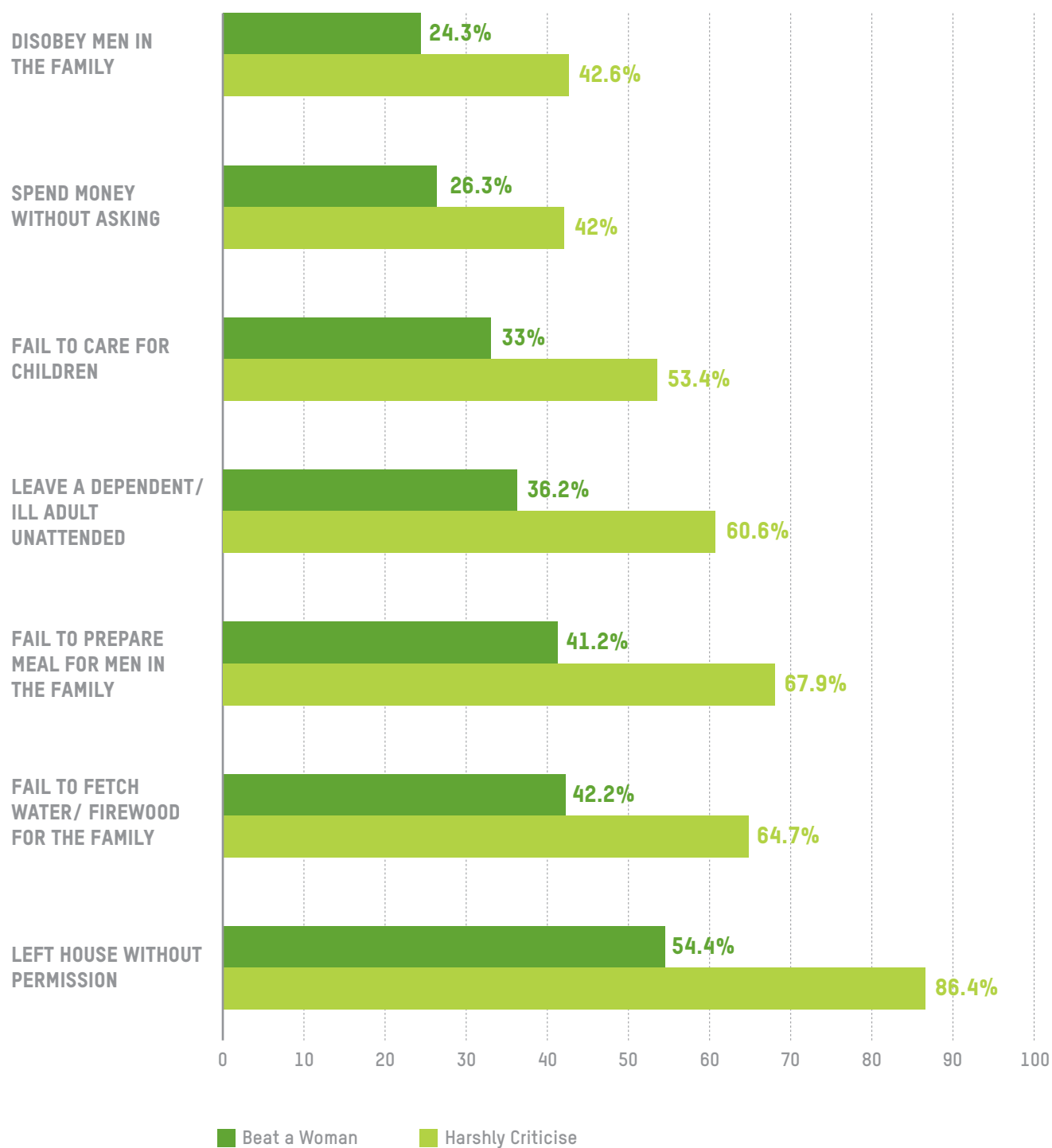
respondents). Importantly, the time saved on account of improved access to drinking water was spent on income-generating work by 24% of respondents and 25% on educational and training activities. The rest of the time saved was, however, ploughed back into unpaid activities. Women below the poverty line and those above the age of 35 were particularly benefited by the provision of drinking water.

The survey also revealed how nuclearization of families is leading to greater work pressure for women since with fewer male members in a particular household, the number of adult women in a household has also declined, which prevents the sharing of unpaid activities. Further, with increased migration of men outside their villages and small towns for work, the survey found that women spent 40 minutes more on paid work and 1 hour less on care work, implying that the absence of men positively impacts a woman's remunerative capacity.⁵⁴

52 Dutta, D., 'No Work is Easy! Notes from the Field on Unpaid Care Work for Women', Mind the Gap: The State of Employment, New Delhi: Oxfam India, 2019. Available at <https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Full%20Report%20-%20Low-Res%20Version%20%28Single%20Pages%29.pdf> (last accessed on November 25, 2019).

53 2019.

54 Ibid., p. 112.

TABLE 7: SOCIAL NORMS, WOMEN'S UNPAID CARE WORK AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Source: Oxfam India Household Care Survey 2019.

A CENTRAL ISSUE

The issue of unpaid care work is central to women's economic empowerment and not accounting for it in national statistical systems and economic growth measurements is likely to meaningfully impact policy interventions aimed at improving access to opportunities for women to further their economic agency and decision-making capacity.

The agreement reached by the International Conference on Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013 whereby unpaid work should be classified as work is a firm starting point to mainstream the issue in national discourse. The 4Rs of unpaid care work – recognize, reduce, redistribute and represent – should be the framework guiding policies and programmes which seek to address the skewed distribution of unpaid activities among men and women.

The state plays an important role in reducing the skewed distribution of unpaid work between men and women and the issue should be viewed as a shared responsibility between households and governments. There are certain steps that have been taken by the government to ensure greater participation of women in the workforce. For instance, the amended Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, stipulates employers providing female employees with 26 weeks of paid leave. It has attempted to guarantee women's right to an equitable and safe workplace through the enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. It has also endeavoured to help mothers through maternity benefit schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY). Finally, initiatives such as the National Creche Scheme (NCS) attempt to help working mothers by providing day care facilities for children aged between 6 months and 6 years while also providing supplementary nutrition and healthcare inputs for the children.

While the administration's initiatives must be recognized, a few recommendations to begin recognizing, acknowledging and tackling the issue of inequalities in unpaid care work distribution and to ensure that more women enter and stay in the workforce are provided below:

1. The Indian government should make care a universal right through the provision of a holistic social protection plan in consultation with State governments. The plan must include community participation and should be largely publicly funded.
2. Adopt the ICLS definition of work to revise the definition of work by the NSSO.
3. Ensure periodic time-use surveys with not more than a three-to-five year lag between such national studies.
4. In addition, reduce the burden of travelling long distances, budgetary support for programmes on piped drinking water and cooking gas for poor and ultra-poor families must be provided to ensure that households falling on or under the poverty line receive such services.
5. Implementation of centrally-funded schemes need to be improved. For instance, the NCS operates on a cost-sharing model with the Centre contributing 60% of funds and States covering the remaining 40%. However, payment delays have been common across States which in turn renders daily operations undertaken largely by non-profits unfeasible and uncertain. This is borne out by the closure of more than 8,000 creches between 2013-14 and 2016-17.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ See <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=160666> (last accessed on December 17, 2019).

6. Legislate on paternity leave to be extended to at least three months that can be claimed over the course of a financial year in order to redistribute unpaid care work more equitably among men and women. The law, as it stands, reinforces the gender stereotype of care work.
7. Extend the PMMVY to beyond the first-born child to ensure wider coverage for working and non-working mothers. Further, the recognition of only institutionalized deliveries must be removed to include women who deliver at-home with the help of nurse or mid-wives and the births are registered, as should the age stipulation of coverage for only women aged above 19 years.

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