

Female Labour Force Participation Rate

Female Labour Force Participation (FLFR) is a driver of growth and economic development and therefore, participation rates indicate the potential for a country to grow more rapidly. However, women's engagement in the labour market and broader development outcomes is difficult to understand. The participation of women in the labour force varies considerably across developing countries and emerging economies, far more than in the case of men. This is driven by a wide variety of economic and social factors including economic growth, increasing educational attainment, falling fertility rates and social norms. Besides labour market gender gaps are more distinctive in developing countries.

In India, much of the discussion on the falling trends has focused on some of these key explanations: 1) rising educational enrolment of young women; 2) lack of employment opportunities; 3) effect of household income on participation. Over the last few years, India has made considerable progress in increasing access to education for girls. Nonetheless, the nature of economic growth in the country has meant that jobs were not created in large numbers in sectors that could readily absorb women.

Table 1: Female Labour Force Participation Rate per 1000 of Age 15-plus Years as per Usual Status

NSSO Rounds	Rural	Urban
1993-94	491	238
1999-2000	364	180
2004-2005	497	246
2009-2010	378	194
2011-2012	358	205

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment rounds.

With over a large proportion (NSSO 2011–2012, 68th round) of the female labour force being concentrated in rural areas. According to the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) Employment and Unemployment Survey, the rural female Labour Force Participation Rate (RFLFPR) has been almost half of the rural male LFPR, while in the urban areas, the FLFPR is even less than half of the male LFPR (Table 1). While the FLFPR marginally revived in urban areas in 2011–2012, in the rural areas, the declining trend continues except for the year 2004–2005.

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