



## Married Women Out of Labour Force

The UN report on “**Progress of The World’s Women, 2019-2020**”, has stated that more than half the married women (aged 25-54) didn't participate in the global labour force. The report has cited data from the [International Labour Organization](#).

### Findings of the Report

- While families assume a central role in care provision, other institutions and actors like paid domestic workers, a care home for older people run by a municipality or a community childcare centre also play a part in financing and delivering care.
  - When these care services are inaccessible or of poor quality, much of the work falls back on women and girls when needs are not met.
- **Global performance:** The [labour force participation rate](#) for women who are married or in a union is particularly low in the Central and Southern Asia region (29.1 per cent), compared to the much higher rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (73.8 per cent), Europe and Northern America (78.2 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (60.3 per cent) .
  - **Sub-Saharan Africa** stands out as the only region where women who are married or in a union have a higher labour force participation rate than single/never married women.
- **Gender division:** With the women with young children (under age 6), the labour force participation reduces by 5.9 percentage points worldwide, while among men it increased by 3.4 percentage points.
  - The disparate outcomes are the product of traditional gender norms that classify childcare and domestic work (cooking, cleaning, etc) as maternal responsibilities and breadwinning as a paternal duty.
- **In low-income countries,** motherhood did not shrink women’s labour force participation in low-income countries as compared to middle-and high-income countries.
  - It could be because in poor countries poverty compels women to join or remain in the labour force to support their families even when young children are present.
- **In developing economies:** Despite witnessing an increase in economic growth, India and China have seen a significant decline in women’s labour force participation.
  - Women’s labour force fell by 6.9 percentage points in India, during the period 1997-2018, which is one of the largest globally.

### In the context of India

- **This story has distinct geographical features:** [women’s labour force participation](#) has stagnated in urban areas since the late 1980s and has seen a concentrated decline among younger (aged 25-40) married women in rural areas.
- **Quality of work:** The poor quality of the paid work that is available to women, often on top of long hours of arduous unpaid domestic chores, it is not implausible that some improvements in household income levels could have eased the pressure on women to seek outside employment.
- 26% of women according to the **Demographic and Health Survey** and 17% of women according

to the **National sample survey organisation** aged between 15–49, receives a wage or income of their own. The majority of women are financially dependent on their spouses, fathers, in-laws and other extended kin.

## Recommendations to Bring Equality at Home

- **National care system:** In developing countries, in particular, the existing care infrastructure, including professional care providers, is insufficient to meet existing care needs. In recognition of care as a 'public good' and to more **equitably redistribute care responsibilities** between women and men, and between families and other institutions, national care systems need to be built.
- **The policy components** that aim to provide families with time, money and services to support care work.
  - Time can be provided in the form of **paid maternity** and **parental leave** for parents with young children and **cash benefits** that enable self-employed workers in the informal economy to take time off.
  - Time and money should also be provided to those caring for **older family members** or those living with a disability.
- **Greater public investment:** It is needed in professional care-related services including early childhood education and care, long-term care for people living with disabilities and older persons.
- **Basic infrastructure** to reduce the drudgery of care work. These investments have significant pay-offs:
  - They build children's human capabilities.
  - Safeguard the dignity and human rights of people living with disabilities and older persons.
  - Create decent employment opportunities for women and men in the care sector.

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