



**Gender  
Centre**

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AHMEDABAD

विद्याविनियोगादिकासः



# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL : TOWARDS ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY (SDG 5)

SEPTEMBER 2024



How to cite this report:

Vemireddy, V. (2024). Women's Empowerment at the Sub-national Level: Towards Achieving Gender Equality (SDG 5). Gender Centre, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad.

# Message from the Chairperson

It is with great pleasure that we present the report, “Women’s Empowerment at the Subnational Level: Towards Achieving Gender Equality (SDG 5)”, prepared by the Gender Center at IIMA. This report serves as a vital tool in our ongoing efforts to understand the progress and challenges faced by women across India, particularly at the district level. It provides crucial insights into how local realities shape empowerment outcomes and highlights the regional variations that influence the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5): gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.



Empowerment is not a static goal but an evolving process that requires sustained and collective action. The findings in this report underscore both areas of progress and those where further work is needed, emphasizing the importance of localized, data-driven strategies. Only by understanding these district-level nuances can we develop targeted interventions to address the unique needs of women in different parts of the country.

As we move forward, we are confident that this report will inspire policymakers, researchers, and advocates to deepen their commitment to gender equality. Together, we must continue to translate the insights provided by this data into meaningful action that uplifts every woman and girl, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to achieving SDG 5.

We encourage all stakeholders to engage with the findings of this report and renew their efforts to make gender equality not just an ideal but a reality for all. We hope the insights gained will contribute to the ongoing dialogue and actions towards gender equality in India, fostering more equitable and inclusive development.

Thank You

Sincerely,  
Prof. Vidya Vemireddy  
Chairperson, Gender Centre



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

5DE	Five Domains of Empowerment
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CMIE	Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy
ECI	Election Commission of India
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GPI	Gender Parity Index
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labor Organization
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MoSPI	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
NCRB	National Crime Record Bureau
NEP	National Education Policy
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
PLFS	Periodic Labor Force Survey
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana
PMEGP	Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme
PMMY	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
PMUY	Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
PMVVY	Pradhan Mantri Vyay Vandana Yojana
SAG	Scheme for Adolescent Girls
SWPER	Survey-based Women's Empowerment Index
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEAI	Women Empowerment Agriculture Index

# Introduction

Empowerment can be defined as the process of increasing the personal, political, social, and economic strength of communities and individuals. Women and girls can act as positive and active change drivers, which can help in enabling their full, equitable, effective, and meaningful participation as decision-makers in addressing global issues (Kabeer, 1999).

During the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, it was emphasized that for achieving transparent and accountable governance, as well as sustainable development in all areas of life, women's empowerment and improving their social, economic, and political status is crucial. Both personal well-being and economic outcomes are impacted by power dynamics, which is a key factor among various factors that limit women's ability to lead fulfilling lives, and when their contributions are overlooked.

Empowerment is the process by which women make strategic choices, gain control over their lives, and influence the decisions that affect them. It is both an outcome and a process where women become more autonomous and also participate actively in reshaping societal structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Drafting domains of women's empowerment is essential due to the varied nature of empowerment. These domains consist of economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, legal, political, and psychological aspects. By addressing intersectionality and acknowledging the role of collective action in driving empowerment, these domains facilitate the measurement of empowerment, accounting for both short-term actions and long-term outcomes. (Malhotra et al., 2002).





Empowerment is often framed within the context of gender equality, where empowering women is essential for reducing disparities and promoting development. Studies show that when women are empowered, the effects goes beyond individuals. Economically empowered women tend to invest in their children's education and health, creating long-term developmental benefits (Kabeer, 2011). Additionally, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, increases in women's access to education, healthcare, and employment have been widely recognized as key drivers of progress (UN, 2020).

Women's empowerment has been found to have a profound impact on productivity, food security, and overall community well-being in rural and agricultural settings where women play a vital role in sustaining livelihoods. The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), developed by Alkire et al. (2013), emphasizes the importance of decision-making power, access to resources, and control over income as important indicators of empowerment. Empowered women in agriculture also exhibit greater agency in decisions related to family planning and reproductive health, which enhances their influence within both households and in the community.



The "G20 Action Plan on Sustainable Development through Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women" states that without a decisive gender-sensitive approach - where policy-making involves both women's and men's interests, the goals of achieving gender equality, women's empowerment, and women-led development will remain unrealized. To accelerate progress toward the 2030 SDG 5 agenda, it commits to advancing collective actions on gender equality. This includes ensuring safe and equal access to education, skills, decent work, and social protection; bridging the gender digital divide; eliminating gender biases in leadership; promoting gender-equal participation in climate action; and facilitating access to nutrition and food security (G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment, 2023).

In this report, we have consolidated district-level gender indicators into a unified database and created the Women Empowerment Index, which will offer a comprehensive perspective on SDG 5, which aims to empower all women and girls and attain gender equality. The Women Empowerment Index, which we came up with for subnational districts, provides a more granular and focused perspective as compared to state-level analysis. By district-level analysis, we can also recognize local variations in infrastructure, social conditions, economic activities, and demographics that might be neglected because of the broader aggregation of state-level data.

This district-level approach also enables a detailed understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges that women encounter in their various areas of life. The findings from the database thus indicate regions that require targeted interventions to address the disparities in gender empowerment and also a tool for identifying areas where there has been progress.

For the database, we have compiled data from multiple sources. The data for the social and economic dimension is obtained from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The crime-related data is sourced from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). For political participation, State Legislative Assembly data is extracted from the Election Commission of India. From the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), data on women in managerial positions, including women on boards of directors, is compiled. Furthermore, we have compiled time use data from the time use survey conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE).

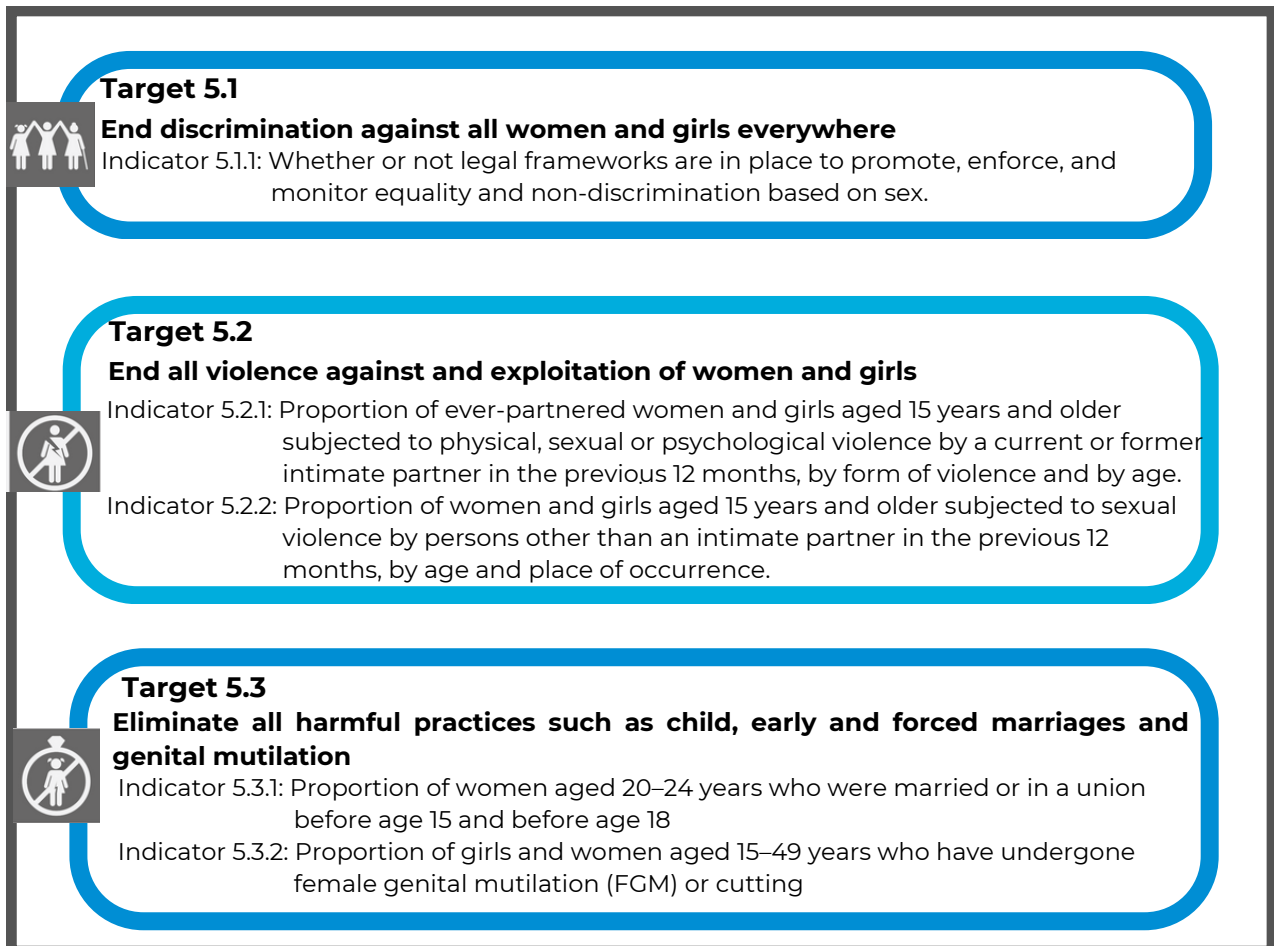
# SDG 5

According to SDG 5, there are 9 targets that need to be managed in order to achieve gender equality and ensure the empowerment of women and girls.

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The fifth goal guarantees equal rights, opportunity, and treatment for each individual, regardless of their gender. We deprive half of the population of the opportunity to enjoy every aspect of life by denying them equal rights. Ensuring gender parity in education, healthcare, employment, and political and economic decision-making would lead to sustainable economies and yield multiple benefits for countries and humanity as a whole.

The United Nations has specified 9 targets and 14 indicators for the assessment of the objective where first six targets (Target 5.1 to Target 5.6) are outcome targets and another three (Target 5.A to Target 5.B) are means of implementation targets, and NITI Aayog has employed 26 indicators at the national level for determining the SDG 5 goal of India (Sustainable Development Goal 5, Targets and Indicators UN, 2016).

Figure. 1: SDG Targets as Specified by the United Nations





#### Target 5.4

##### Value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities

Indicator 5.4.1: Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location.



#### Target 5.5

##### Ensure women's participation and leadership in decision-making

Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local government

Indicator 5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions



#### Target 5.6

##### Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Indicator 5.6.1: Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care

Indicator 5.6.2: Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education



#### Target 5.A

##### Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources including land

Indicator 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

Indicator 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customer law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control



#### Target 5.B

##### Enhance the use of information and communications technology

Indicator 5.b.1: "Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex



#### Target 5.C

##### Adopt and strengthen policies and legislations

Indicator 5.c.1: Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

# Global Perspective

In many parts of the world, women's lives, health, and well-being are negatively impacted by the disproportionate burden of work they bear and their limited access to positions of power and influence. In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time, women's own knowledge, abilities, and coping mechanisms often go unrecognized.

Globally, women face compounded risks to their health, lives, and well-being, primarily due to the dual burden of excessive labor and limited agency in decision-making spheres. In many regions, women have less access to formal education than men, and their knowledge and skills are not recognized. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, over 40 years ago, declared that "everyone has the right to education," and governments at the 1990s World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, pledged to provide universal access to basic education, progress has been slow. Currently, about 960 million adults worldwide are illiterate, with women making up two-thirds of this population (UN Women, 1995).

In the global labor market, women still earn, on average, 23 percent less than men and spend about three times more hours on unpaid domestic and care work than men. Worldwide, it is estimated that approximately 50% of married women have decision-making power over their sexual and reproductive health and rights. At the current pace, it is estimated that it will take 300 years to eliminate child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protections and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to achieve equal representation in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to reach equal representation in national parliaments (United Nations, n.d.).

In light of these challenges, achieving meaningful progress toward women's empowerment requires a concerted and inclusive effort. Approaches rooted in evidence-based solutions are essential to unlocking the full potential of women globally as we strive toward the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5; it is crucial to create systems that empower women across all sectors, ensuring their contributions are recognized and their rights fully realized.

Women account for 50 percent of global food production and contribute approximately 60-70 percent to total food production in developing countries. However, their role in agriculture remains largely unacknowledged. Women farmers are compensated at lower rates compared to their male counterparts, with estimates indicating a wage disparity of around 22 percent as of 2016-17. In India, systemic challenges contribute significantly to gender disparities in agriculture. Women own only 10% of the land. Additionally, policies in the agricultural sector often fail to acknowledge women as 'farmers,' which limits their access to institutional credit. These systemic issues collectively hinder women's economic participation and advancement in agriculture (Borthakur and Thukral, 2021).

# Gender Inequality in India: A Statistical Overview

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21), for women aged between 15-49, indicates that the overall sex ratio in India is 1020 females per 1000 males, but the sex ratio at birth remains low at 929, highlighting ongoing sex selection. The NFHS-5 also reveals that 18.7% of women aged 15-49 are underweight, 21.2% are stunted, and nearly 53% are anemic. The female literacy rate is 70.3% compared to 84.7% for males.

The latest PLFS report indicates that only 37% of working-age women (15 years and above) were in the labor force in 2022-23. It increased by 4.2% from the last survey 2021-2022. The report suggested that the share of women working in the agriculture is decreasing while proportion of women entering service sector is increasing.

India has one of the widest gender wage gaps globally, with women earning only 21% of men's income on average, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021.

The number of women with salaried employment is increasing while women in informal wage work is decreasing, this has a positive impact on the gender gap in earnings which decreases with more women leaving the casual work.

Currently, women make up only 14.94% of Members of Parliament (MPs). As of December 2023, female representation in State Legislatures averages just 13.9%, according to the Election Commission of India. Data from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (April 2023) shows that around 46.94% of panchayat elected representatives are women, but the 'Sarpanch-Pati' culture often reduces the effectiveness of this representation.



The NCRB's "Crime in India" 2021 report recorded over 400,000 cases of crimes against women. NFHS-5 shows that 23.3% of women aged 20-24 were married before age 18.

# Key initiatives by the Indian Government

The Government of India has implemented various schemes to empower women across social, educational, economic, and political spheres.

Key initiatives include Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for girl child education, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for housing, and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana for providing clean cooking fuel. Pradhan Mantri Vyay Vandana Yojana (PMVVY), which also ensures pension to senior citizens aged above 60 years and Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) that supports adolescent girls' nutritional and health outcomes. Educational programs like Samagra Shiksha and the National Overseas Scholarship are there which focuses on ensuring girl-friendly schools, particularly for vulnerable sections of society. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 prioritizes gender equity, aiming for equitable access to quality education, especially for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

To improve women's employability, the government offers various training programs, including the Women Industrial Training Institute and Skill India Mission, which promotes inclusive skill development. Other programs, such as Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), and Stand Up India, support women entrepreneurs in establishing their own businesses. Additionally, the Swacch Vidyalaya Mission ensures that all schools have functional toilets for girls, promoting hygiene and safety. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) mandates that at least one-third of the jobs generated under the scheme (MGNREGA) should be given to women.

The Government of India has launched an Umbrella scheme for the safety, security, and empowerment of women under the name 'Mission Shakti.' This program aims to address women's issues throughout their life cycle, which empowers them to become equal partners in nation-building with the participative approach and coordinated efforts across different levels of governance (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2024).

# Data

We have consolidated district-level gender indicators into a unified database, aiming to provide a comprehensive overview of SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This database integrates critical indicators such as time use, crime rates, political participation, health metrics, and labor market participation at the district level. The database contains all the 14 indicators specified by the UN and 26 indicators specified by NITI Aayog, as well as a few additional indicators (such as possession of own house and land, own bank account, women who own mobile and have access to the internet, decision maker of earning) that were appropriate for the analysis (NFHS 5, 2019-21).



## National Family Health Survey

Data from the NFHS has been compiled for two rounds; the specific goals of the survey are to provide essential data on health and family welfare, along with data on emerging concerns in these areas. This includes information on fertility rates, infant and child mortality, maternal and child health, and other critical health and family welfare indicators broken down by various demographic factors at both the national and state levels.

The NFHS 4 (2015-16) data for 640 districts and NFHS 5 (2019-21) for the 707 districts have been utilized to illustrate a trend in the social and economic dimensions for which indicators such as literacy, employment, knowledge of contraception, use of mass media, ownership of assets, house, or land alone or jointly with her partner, decisions regarding the earnings, mobility freedom, ownership of bank accounts, mobile phones, and use of internet is taken. The data was converted to a per hundred (per 100) basis to standardize the representation of women across different districts.

## Crime against women

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which collects and analyzes crime statistics based on the Indian Penal Code and local laws, has been gathered for two decades (2001 to 2020) to examine various crimes against women. The data was converted to a per lakh (per 100,000) basis to standardize the representation of women across different districts. This conversion ensures equal representation by normalizing the data to a common unit, allowing for accurate comparison and analysis of rates or proportions irrespective of the varying population sizes across districts. These include assault with intent to outrage modesty, dowry deaths, cruelty by husbands or relatives, rape, importation of girls, and kidnapping and abduction. District, state, and national averages for different crimes have been calculated.



## Time Use

The time usage data has been compiled using information from both MoSPI and CMIE. The data covers the time allocated to various activities by individual women over 24 hours. These activities include time spent on paid work or working for an employer, time spent on learning, unpaid domestic work and caregiving, self-maintenance activities, and others. MoSPI provides data for the year 2019, while CMIE provides data for the years 2020 to 2022. District, state, and national averages of time spent on different activities have been calculated.



Image generated using Bing Image Generator

## Political Participation

State legislative assembly data has been taken from the Election Commission of India at the district level for the year 2019 for analysis, except for Jammu and Kashmir, due to the unavailability of data.

## Women's Occupation

The data for women occupation has been taken from Periodic Labor Force Survey for the year 2017 to 2023. The data for 29 occupations has been displayed on the database. The occupations are classified as Chief Executives, Senior Officials and Legislators, Administrative and Commercial Managers/ Production and Specialized Services Managers, Teaching Professionals, Market-Oriented Skilled Forestry, Fishery and Hunting Workers, Stationary Plant and Machine Operators, Personal Service Workers, Business and Administrative Professionals, Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals, Business, Administration, Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate Professionals, Models, Sales Persons and Demonstrators, Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Labourers, Science and Engineering Associate Professionals, Cleaners and Helpers / Street Vendors and Related Workers, Labourers in Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and Transport, Customer Services Clerks, Market-Oriented Skilled Agricultural Workers, Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators, Metal, Machinery and Related Trades Workers/ Electrical and Electronics Trades Workers, Food Processing, Woodworking, Garment and Other Craft and Related Trades Workers, Personal Care Workers, General and Keyboard Clerks, Protective Services Workers, Handicraft and Printing Workers, Science and Engineering Professionals/ Information and Communication Technology Professionals, Subsistence Farmers, Fishers, Hunters and Gatherers, Building and Related Trade Workers, Assemblers, Health Associate Professionals and Health Professionals. This analysis also includes the calculation of the average number of women in various occupations at the district, state, and national levels.

# Data Analysis

## Time Use Survey

The time-use data records how women allocate their time to activities such as paid employment, household tasks, caregiving, and leisure. The analysis reveals important insights into how women distribute their time across different activities over a 24-hour period. This data is crucial for analyzing economic contributions and identifying gender disparities.

**Unpaid Caregiving Work** - The Time Use Survey data reveals that, on average, women in India dedicate approximately 2.33 hours per day to unpaid caregiving for household members. However, this average masks significant regional differences. In particular, women in certain districts of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh spend more time on caregiving tasks compared to the national average.

**Paid Employment Related Activities** - In India, women spend an average of approximately 5.96 hours per day on paid employment-related activities. However, this average varies significantly across different regions. The data indicates that women in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Bihar spend more time on paid employment compared to the national average. This regional variation highlights the diverse economic engagements of women across states and suggests that regional factors may influence their participation in the labor market.

**Learning** - Across India, girls and women spend an average of 7.23 hours on learning activities. However, many states fall below this national average, indicating significant regional disparities in educational engagement. Factors such as socio-economic barriers, limited access to quality education, and cultural restrictions may contribute to the lower learning time in these areas. Despite this, a few states, including Leh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, and some districts of Uttar Pradesh, show progress, with women and girls in these regions exceeding the average learning hours.

**Socializing and Communication, Community Participation, and Religious Practices** - In India, women dedicate an average of 2.06 hours per day to socializing, community participation, and religious practices. However, there are notable regional differences. Districts in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh report higher-than-average time spent on these activities, suggesting a stronger cultural or community engagement in these areas. Conversely, many other districts across India fall below this average, indicating limited time spent by women on social and religious activities. This disparity may be influenced by factors such as regional socio-economic conditions, work-life balance, and varying cultural practices.

**District performance at India level**

**District performance at State level**

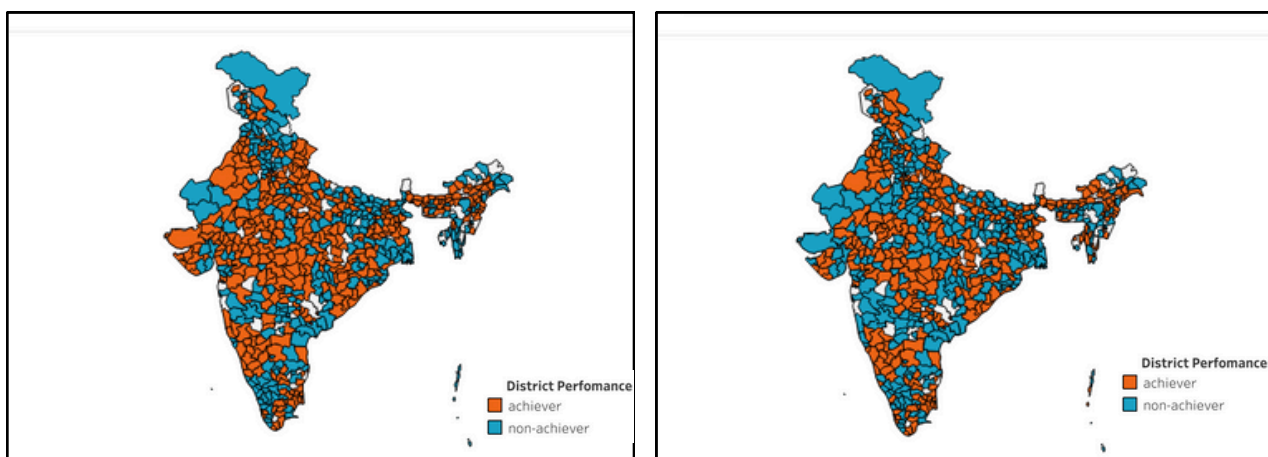


Figure 1: Subnational Analysis of Time Spent on Unpaid Caregiving for Household and Family Members in 2019

Figure 1 above shows the hours spent in providing unpaid caregiving for household and family members at the sub-national level for 2019. In the visualization, districts shaded in orange represent "achiever" districts, where the district average hour is less than both the national average (district performance at the India level) and the state average hours (district performance at the state level). Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

**District performance at India level**

**District performance at State level**

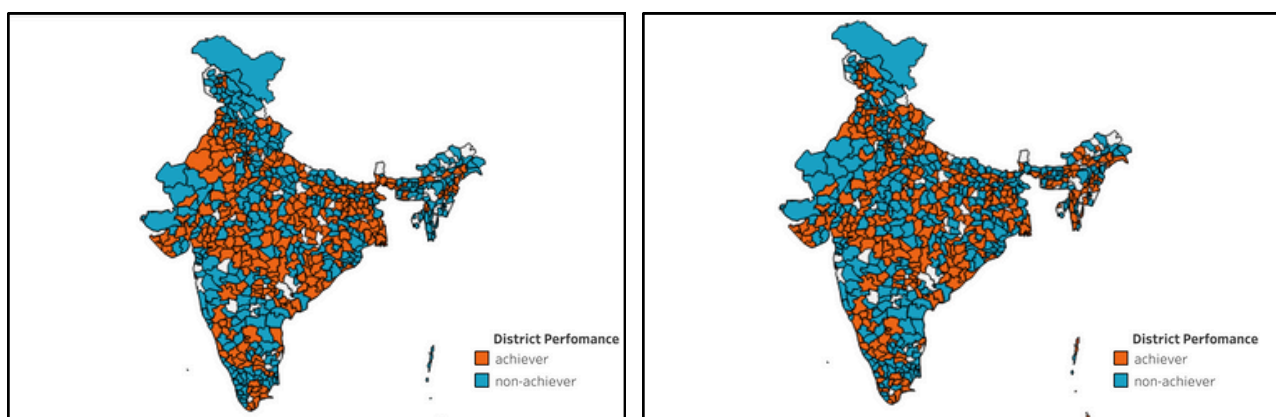


Figure 2: Subnational analysis of time spent on Self-Care in 2019

Figure 2 above illustrates hours spent in self-care and maintenance at the subnational level for the year 2019. In the visualization, districts shaded in orange represent "achiever" districts, where the district average hour is more for this activity than both the national average (district performance at the India level) and the state average (district performance at the state level). Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

The following section presents a state-level analysis of the hours spent on unpaid caregiving work, using Gujarat and West Bengal as examples.

**Percentage of time use at district level**

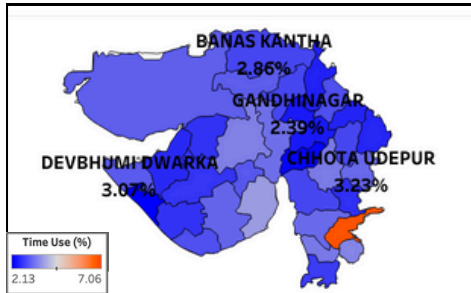


Figure 3: Percentage of daily hours spent on unpaid caregiving services for the household in Gujarat

**Trends across districts**

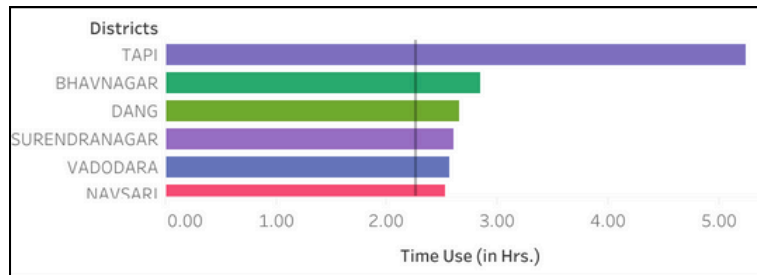
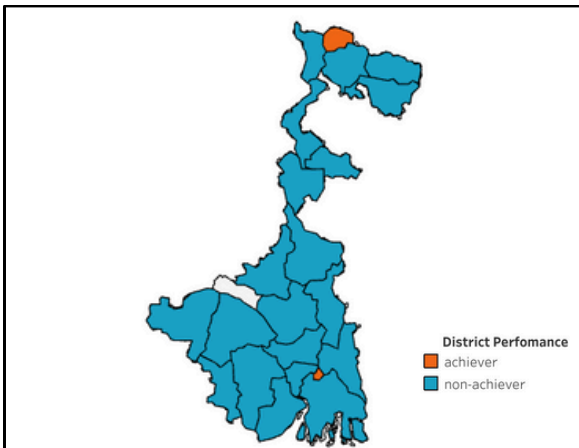


Figure 4: Districts with the average hours spent on unpaid caregiving services in Gujarat

Figure 3, the graph above, shows the percentage of 24 hours of the entire day spent in unpaid caregiving services to the household and family members for the Gujarat state. In this map, the blue color depicts the minimum percent while the orange depicts the maximum percent.

Figure 4, another graph shows the districts of Gujarat with the average hours spent on unpaid caregiving services.

**District performance at India level**



**District performance at State level**

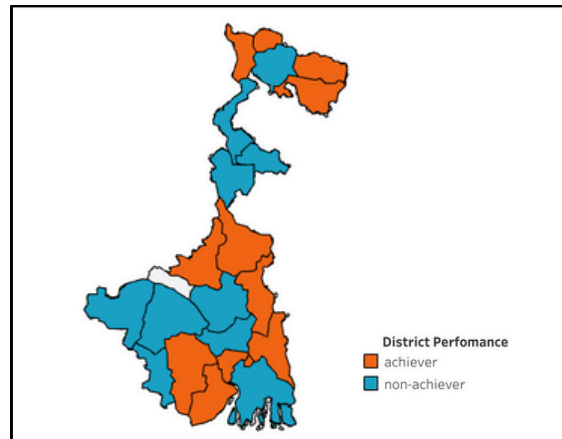


Figure 5: Daily hours spent on unpaid caregiving services for the household in West Bengal

Figure 5 illustrates hours spent in unpaid caregiving services to household and family members in West Bengal. In the map, districts shaded in orange represent "achiever" districts, where the district average hour is less than both the national average (district performance at the India level) and the state average (district performance at the state level). Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

# Crime

The analysis of crime data on women provides valuable insights. While some variables show the need for more attention, others show positive trends in development. A striking feature evident from the district-level data analysis is a substantial number of districts reporting no incidents of crime against women in specific categories like incidents of assault on women with the intent to outrage their modesty has doubled over the two decades, but 28 districts reported no incidents of such assaults during the year 2020 revealing significant variations across different regions.

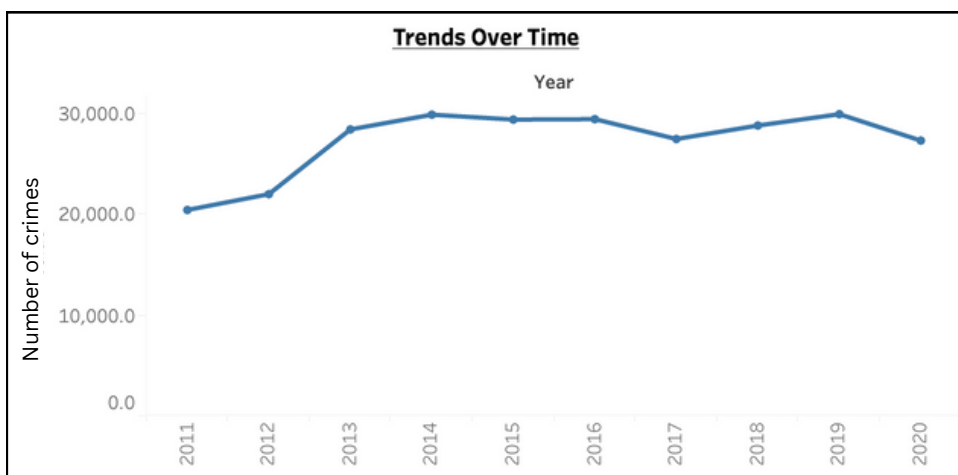


Figure 6. Trend in over all crime from 2011 to 2020

Figure 6 above illustrates the trend in subnational overall crimes from 2011 to 2020. Over this period, fluctuations are observed with both declines and increases in the number of reported cases. The crime rate is standardized and calculated per lakh population

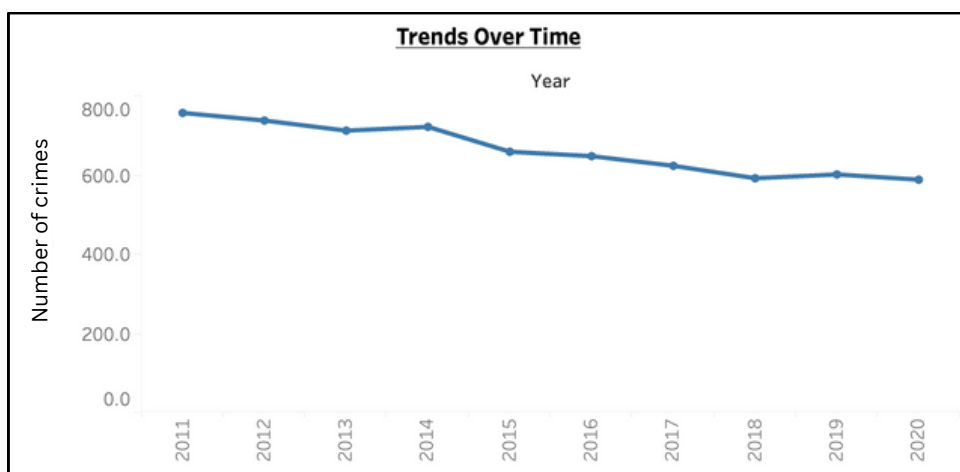
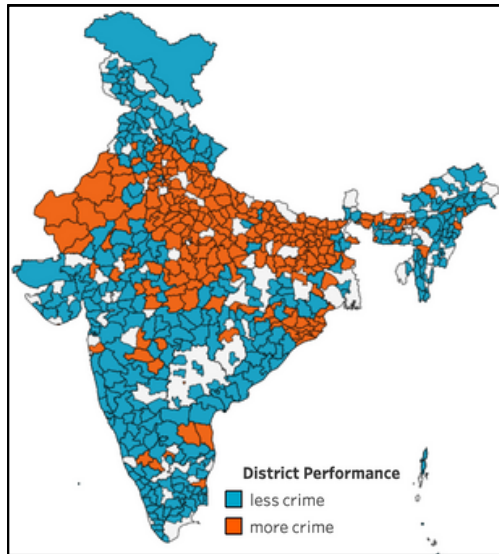


Figure 7. Trend in dowry deaths from 2011 to 2020

Figure 7 above illustrates the trend in subnational dowry death cases from 2011 to 2020. A decline in the number of cases is evident over this period. The crime rate is calculated per lakh population.

**District performance at India level**



**District performance at State level**

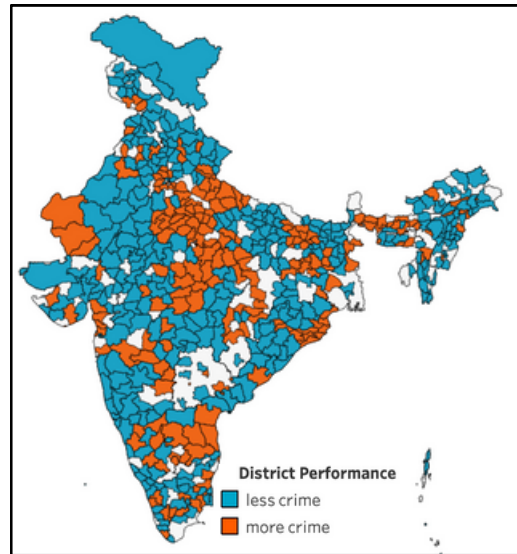
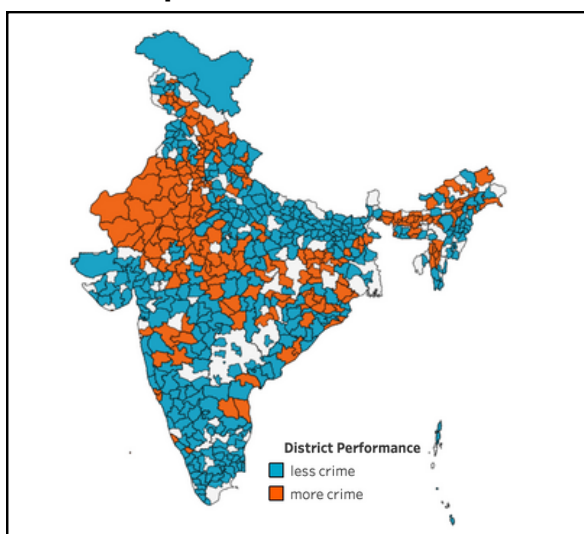


Figure 8: Comparison of Dowry Deaths in India at the National and State Level in 2020

Figure 8, above illustrates subnational dowry death cases in 2020. In the visual, districts shaded in blue indicate a lower incidence of dowry death in that particular district when the average number of crimes is compared to the national average in the left graph and the state average in the right graph. Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

The analysis of dowry death data at both national and state levels reveals alarming trends. Nationally, states such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Haryana, as well as certain districts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra report the highest incidences of dowry deaths. The state-level analysis further highlights that regions within Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka consistently exhibit dowry death rates that surpass their respective state averages.

**District performance at India level**



**District performance at State level**

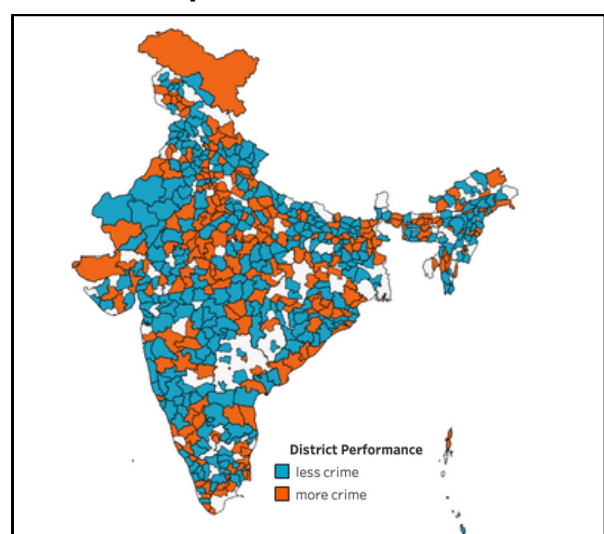


Figure 9: Subnational rape cases in 2020

Figure 9, illustrates subnational rape cases from 2001 to 2020. In the visual, districts shaded in blue indicate a lower incidence of these rape cases in that particular district when the averages are compared to the national average in the left graph and the state average in the right graph.

At the national level, districts in Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, and certain areas of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra report higher incidences of rape cases compared to the national average. When analyzing state-level data, the crime is distributed across various regions in India, with numerous districts in each state exhibiting rates of rape cases that exceed the respective state averages.

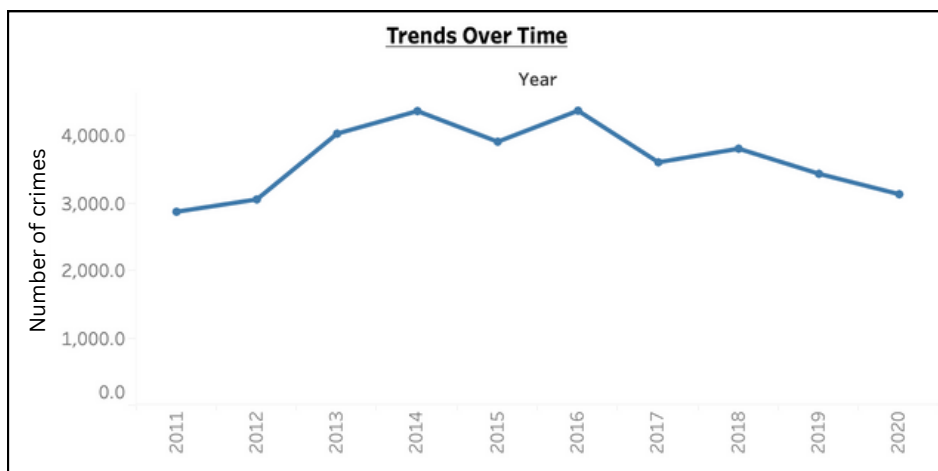


Figure 10. Trends in the reported rape cases from 2011 to 2020

Figure 10 illustrates the trend in reported rape cases between 2011 and 2020. The data indicates a general upward trend in cases from 2011 to 2016, followed by a noticeable decline in reporting after 2016.

# Political Participation

State legislative assembly data has been taken for the year 2019 from the Election Commission of India at the district level for analysis, except for Jammu and Kashmir, due to the unavailability of data. There's no state that has more than 20% women representation in its legislative assembly.

Figure 11, highlights the number of women MLAs. In the visualization, districts are shaded in blue and orange to represent this data, with blue indicating 0 and orange representing 6, the extreme values. Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

## Female Political Participation

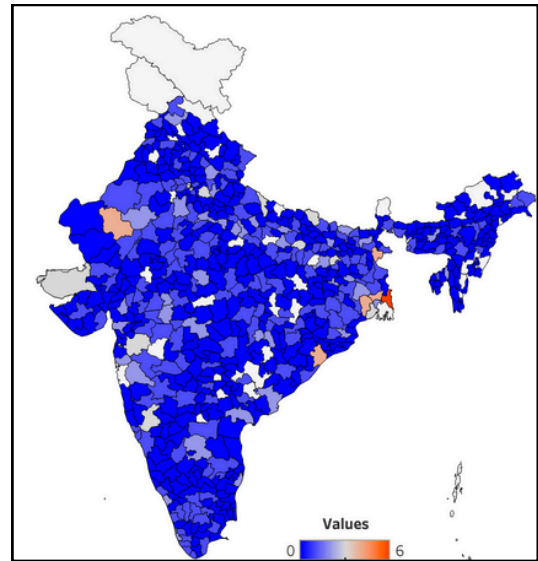


Figure 11: Number of Women MLAs

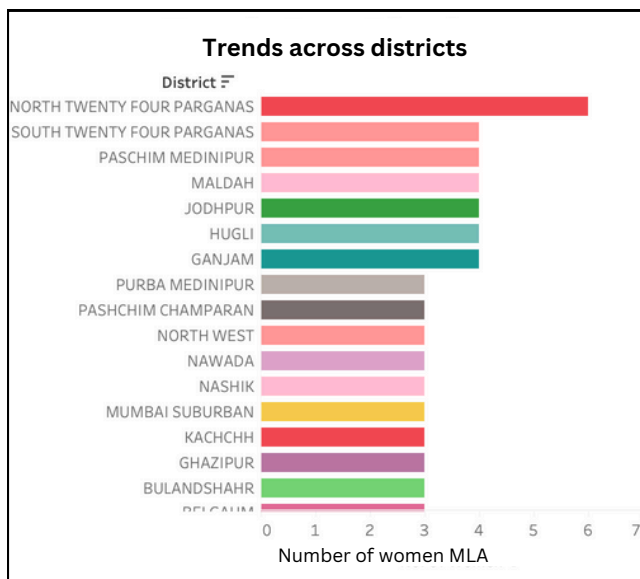


Figure 12: Districts with highest number of women MLAs

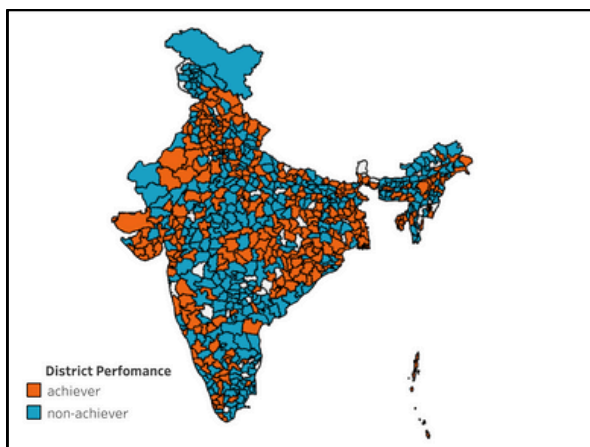
Figure 12, displays the districts with the highest number of women MLAs where the top three districts are from West Bengal, followed by Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Hugali (West Bengal), Ganjam (Odisha), Nawada (Bihar), Nashik (Maharashtra), Kachchh (Rajasthan), Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh), Bulandshahr (Uttar Pradesh), and Belgaum (Karnataka) sorted in descending order.



# National Family Health Survey

The National Family Health Survey provides a comprehensive analysis of key indicators related to women's empowerment, such as education, land ownership, and health. In the following section, we present insights into women's participation in household decision-making, financial inclusion through bank account ownership, and access to resources, highlighting critical dimensions of gender equality and socio-economic progress.

**District performance at India level**



**District performance at State level**

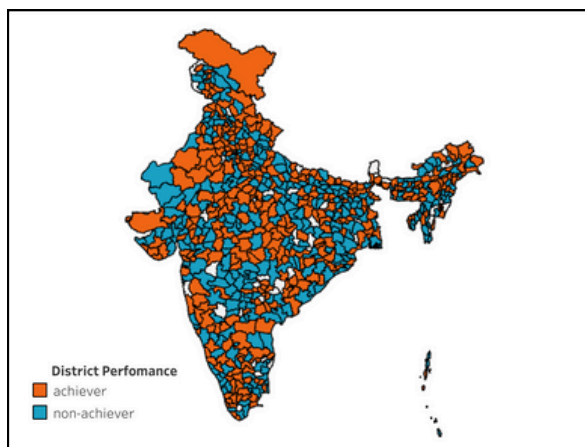


Figure 13: Number of women who have a say in their partner's earnings in the year 2021 at the National and State Level

Figure 13 displays the districts with the number of women who have a say in their partner's earnings for the year 2021. In the visual, districts shaded in blue represent those districts with fewer women having a say in their partner's earnings when compared to the national average shown in the left graph and the state average depicted in the right graph. Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

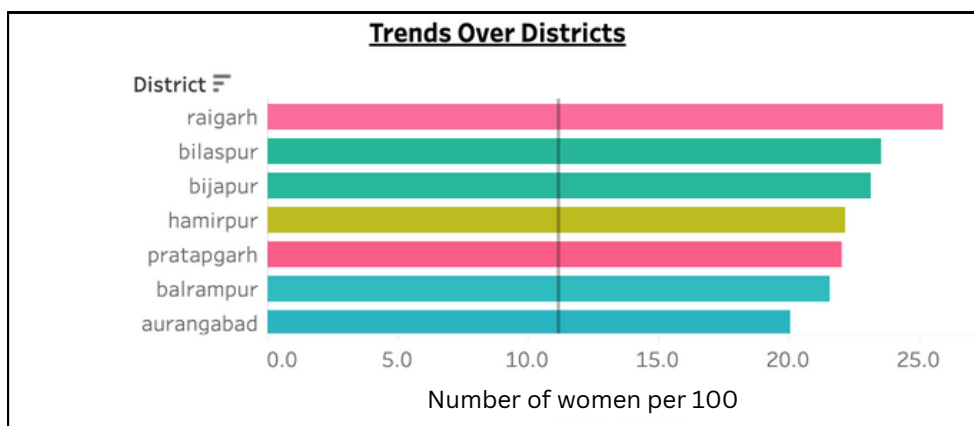
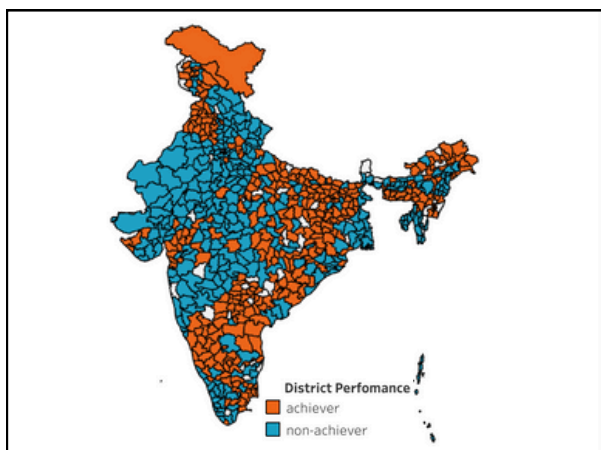


Figure 14: Number of women who have a say in their partner's earning in the year 2021

### District performance at India level



### District performance at State level

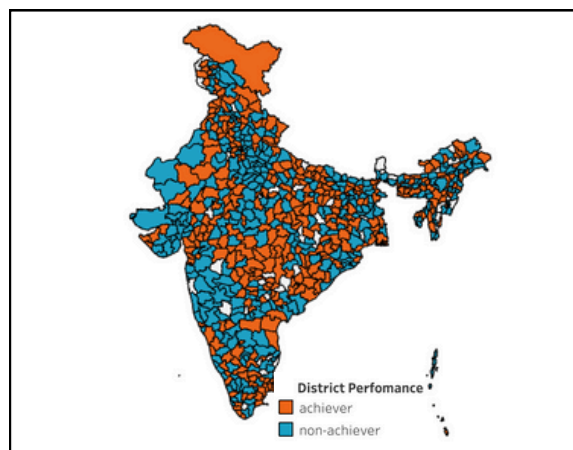


Figure 15: Number of women who own the house or land alone or jointly for the year 2021

Figure 15, displays the districts with the number of women who own a house or land alone or jointly for 2021. Districts shaded in blue indicate districts where the number of women house or land owners falls below the national average (as shown in the left graph) and the state average (as depicted in the right graph). Districts shaded in white indicate that data is unavailable for those particular districts.

At the national level, several clusters of districts across states like Punjab, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and districts of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh exhibit notable levels of women owning land or houses, either independently or jointly. Compared to the national level, the state-level analysis reveals additional clusters of districts with high rates of women's land or house ownership, either independently or jointly, in states such as Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, alongside those already identified at the national level.

This expanded distribution underscores regional variations in property ownership by women, influenced by a combination of local cultural norms, legal frameworks, and targeted government initiatives aimed at enhancing women's property rights and economic empowerment.

### Geographic Breakdown by District

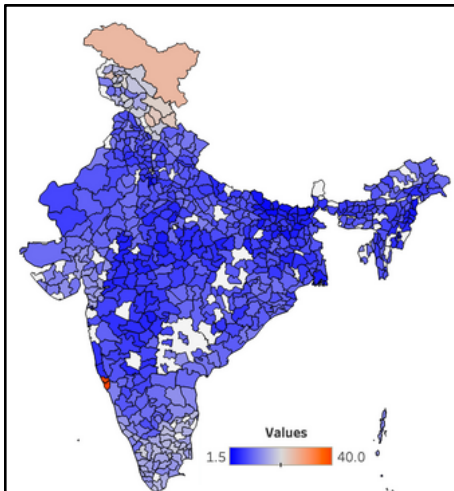


Figure 16. Number of women who have a bank account in the year 2016

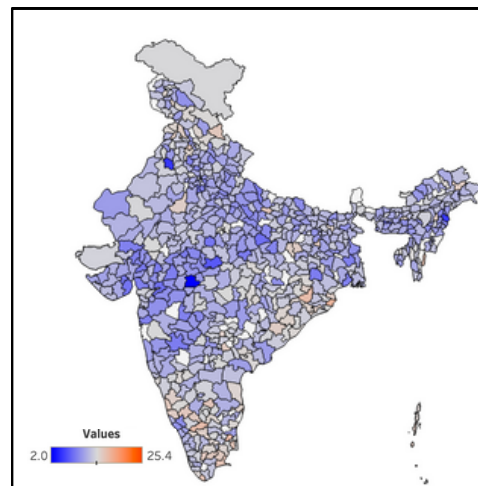


Figure 17. Number of women who have a bank account in the year 2021

Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the distribution of districts based on the number of women with a bank account for the years 2016 and 2021, respectively. In the visualization, districts are shaded in blue and orange to represent this data, with blue indicating the minimum and orange representing the maximum number of women per 100 women who have a bank account. The visuals show an increase in the number of women with bank accounts over this period, highlighting positive progress in financial inclusion.

## Existing Women Empowerment Index

Several women's empowerment indices have been developed over the years., It also includes the Survey-based Women's Empowerment Index (SWPER) for 34 African countries, utilizing Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). Researchers employed principal component analysis to extract components, assigning higher values to responses indicating greater empowerment. Orthogonal varimax rotation ensured consistency across surveys, allowing for the creation of a universal index applicable to all countries. The study's external validity was assessed by correlating the index with the Gender Development Index and analyzing health indicators using Poisson regression, adjusting for household wealth. The findings highlighted three key aspects of empowerment: attitudes toward violence, social independence, and decision-making (Ewerling et al., 2017).

Miedema et al. (2018) employed a multi-step approach to measuring empowerment. Spearman's rho correlations were used to evaluate the relationships between variables. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done on random split-half samples from each country. The EFA examined several factor structures, emphasizing the need for theoretical explanation and evaluating fit indices such as RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and Chi-square. The measurement models were further confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), employing variance-adjusted weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimation with GEOMIN rotation and evaluating fit indices. A final factor invariance test assessed the model's cross-country applicability, restricting factor loadings and measurement invariance. The resultant measurement model, with 12 items across three latent factors, was comparable and invariant, giving a standardized measure of women's empowerment for East African cross-national monitoring.

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics carried out a study to develop a women empowerment index in Kenya. This index was put together using a systematic process, and the indicators were taken from the Kenya Demographic and Health Surveys (KDHS) of 2014. The analysis of women's empowerment utilized descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to create the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI). Descriptive statistics covered all indicators, and EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) identified latent domains of empowerment using orthogonal rotation. The WEI construction included assigning equal weights to defined domains, with the weights evenly distributed among the constituent indicators. A woman was considered empowered if she met the criteria for empowerment in at least 80% of the total weighted indicators.

UN Women introduces two indices: the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) as well as the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI). The WEI assesses women's empowerment across five domains: health and well-being, education, economic and financial inclusion, decision-making participation, and freedom from violence. It involves three steps: normalizing indicators, averaging them within dimensions, and calculating the overall index using the geometric mean of the dimension indices. The GGPI measures gender parity by comparing female and male values in health, education, inclusion, and decision-making, with the overall GGPI calculated as the geometric mean of dimension indices (UN Women, 2023).

The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) provides a comprehensive measure of empowerment at the country or subnational level through two key subindices. The first subindex, Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE), evaluates women's empowerment across five areas: access to and control over resources, decision-making in agriculture, leadership, control of income, and time allocation. This is measured with ten indicators, where individuals are scored binary (1 or 0) based on their achievements, and a person is considered empowered if they meet adequacy in four of the five domains or achieve an 80% overall adequacy score. The second subindex, the Gender Parity Index (GPI), compares the empowerment levels of women to men within households, showing the extent of gender disparity and what needs to be addressed. The WEAI combines these subindices with weights of 0.90 for 5DE and 0.10 for GPI to provide a comprehensive picture of women's empowerment (Alkire et al., 2013).

# Sub-national Level: Women Empowerment Index

## Our Approach

The Women Empowerment Index that we developed is at the subnational district level and offers more detailed and specific insights compared to state-level analysis. By focusing on districts, it becomes more possible to capture local nuances in demographics, economic activities, infrastructure, and social indicators that might be masked at the state level as a result of aggregation. The magnitude of variation among districts within a single state can be significant, with some districts experiencing greater challenges or opportunities in terms of women's empowerment.

This more refined level of analysis will enable policymakers to design and implement targeted interventions, addressing specific regional disparities and fostering a more equitable allocation of resources.

Moreover, district-level analysis can highlight areas that require immediate attention, allowing for a more efficient allocation of funds and efforts toward women's empowerment. By adopting a localized approach, stakeholders can develop tailored strategies that consider the cultural, social, and economic contexts unique to each district. This can lead to more impactful and sustained changes, as policies and programs can be customized to the specific needs and challenges of the population at a district level rather than applying a one-size-fits-all solution across an entire state.

The selected dimensions and indicators must successfully promote policy change, so the final selection of domains and indicators was based on a careful tradeoff. They reflect the essential capabilities of individual development and empowerment while being conceptually appropriate, simple to comprehend, methodologically straightforward, and reliable. The indicators are comparable between districts based on the most comprehensive data available (Murray, 2024).

For the index, we have cumulated four dimensions: namely, decision-making and physical mobility, educational and informational empowerment, economic empowerment, and time allocated for unpaid work for the year 2019 due to the availability of most of the data. (Table 1)

The variables used in this study were drawn from various sources, each based on the methodologies presented by different authors. Variables for the domain of decision-making and physical mobility were adapted from Alvi et al. (2020) to assess the extent of women's autonomy and their ability to make decisions affecting their lives (if decisions are taken either alone or jointly with a partner). The variables for educational and informational empowerment were inspired by the work of Miedema et al. (2018), Ewerling et al. (2017), and Alvi et al. (2020). measures access to and control over educational and informational resources, reflecting women's ability to acquire knowledge and stay informed, economic empowerment followed the approach of UN Women (2023) to evaluate women's economic autonomy and participation in the economy and time allocation were based on the framework provided by Alkire et al. (2013) which examines the distribution of time, specifically focusing on unpaid work such as household chores and caregiving responsibilities.

The study is conducted in over 705 districts in 28 states and 8 union territories in NFHS 5 and 676 districts in time use. The NFHS data was merged with time-use data at the district level. The NFHS and time use data were compiled for women aged between 15 and 49. The National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5), the fifth in the series, provides comprehensive data on population, health, and nutrition in India, covering every state, union territory, and 707 districts. The time use data was surveyed in 676 districts, and the primary goal of time use data was to analyze how men, women, and other groups of people engage in paid and unpaid activities. The study also explains how people spend their time doing unpaid caregiving, unpaid volunteer work, unpaid domestic service, learning, socializing, leisure activities, and self-care activities.

For our analysis and to maintain consistency between the NFHS and time-use data, we combined Purbi Barddhaman and Paschim Barddhaman into a single Barddhaman district in West Bengal, aligning it with the time-use dataset. A similar approach was applied in Meghalaya, where East Jaintia Hills and West Jaintia Hills from the NFHS were merged to correspond with the time-use data. As a result, the total number of districts decreased from 707 to 705.

## Domains and Indicators

Table 1: Domains and Indicators

Domains and Indicators	Indicator Adequacy Cut-off	Domain Empowerment Cut-off
<b>Decision-Making, autonomy over income and Physical Mobility</b>		
Decision regarding household purchases	Empowered if the respondent decides alone or along with the partner	Empowered if at least 2 in (Control over sexual relation, Decision regarding visit to family or relatives, Decision regarding respondent healthcare, Decision maker for using contraception) + any one in (Allowed to go market, Allowed to go outside village) + any one in (Decision regarding household purchases, Decision on what to do with husband's money.)
Decision on what to do with husband's money	Empowered if the respondent decides alone or along with the partner	
Control over sexual relation	Empowered if can say no to your husband do not want to have sexual intercourse	
Decision regarding visit to family or relatives	Empowered if the respondent decides alone or along with the partner	
Decision regarding respondent healthcare	Empowered if the respondent decides alone or along with the partner	
Decision maker for using contraception	Empowered if the respondent decides alone or along with the partner	
Allowed to go market	Empowered if allowed to go to the market alone	
Allowed to go outside village	Empowered if allowed to go outside the village alone	
<b>Educational and Informational Empowerment</b>		
Literacy	Empowered if able to read only parts of sentence or able to read whole sentence	Empowered in literacy + any one of the 3 in (Mass Media, Owns mobile phone, Use internet and Information about credit program)
Mass Media (Newspaper, radio or television)	Empowered if exposure to any media less than once a week / at least once a week	
Owns mobile phone	Empowered if owns a mobile telephone	
Use internet	Empowered if use internet in last 12 months	
Information about credit program	Empowered if know of any programmes in this area that give loans to women to start	
<b>Control over Income and Economic Empowerment</b>		
Decision on own earning	Empowered if respondent decides on own earnings lone or along with partner	Empowered in decision on own earning + any one of the of the 3 in (Women's access to employment, Ownership of an asset, Taken a credit or loan)
Women's access to employment	Empowered if respondent worked in last 12 months or currently working	
Ownership of an asset	Empowered if owns an asset either alone, jointy or both alone and jointly	
Taken a credit or loan	Empowered if ever taken a loan, in cash or in kind	
<b>Work Balance</b>		
Duration of hour spent on unpaid work	Hours spent conducting unpaid activities, mean of all the individual women is taken for the district.	If works in unpaid activities less than the district average.



## Methodology

For creating the index, we followed 5DE, which is derived from the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) developed by OPHI with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which focuses on assessing women's empowerment across five key domains. The 5DEs are assessed using 10 indicators where each indicator has a specific weight. Each person is evaluated on those 10 indicators with a binary score which indicates if they meet the criteria for adequacy. An individual's empowerment score is calculated by adding the weights of the indicators when the person achieves adequacy, which results in a score ranging from 0% to 100%. A person is considered empowered in the 5DE if they achieve adequacy in at least four of the five domains or if their weighted score across indicators shows 80% total adequacy or more.

For our index, we have adopted this methodology; however, rather than using the original five dimensions, we have opted for four dimensions (4DE) due to data limitations, because, unlike the 5DE calculations, which were based on primary data, our index is constructed exclusively from secondary data. These four domains ((i) Decision-Making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility, (ii) Educational and informational empowerment, (iii) Control over income and economic empowerment, and (iv) Work balance) provide a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of women's empowerment in different contexts as it does in 5DE. In our methodology, we began by assigning a binary value of 1 to each variable for every individual if they were considered empowered in a particular indicator and 0 if they were not empowered (Refer to Table 1). These individual values were then aggregated at the district level, and then we added the total number of empowered individuals for each indicator. To adjust for population differences, we calculated the percentage of women meeting the empowerment criteria within each district by dividing the total number of empowered individuals by the district's total female population for that specific indicator.

We applied a 50% adequacy cutoff, meaning that if 50% or more of the women in a district met the criteria for any key indicator, the district was classified as "empowered." If fewer than 50% of women met the criteria, the district was classified as "disempowered." In the case of unpaid labor, women who performed less unpaid work than the district average were considered "empowered," while those who performed more were classified as "disempowered."

These individual indicators were then used to calculate the overall empowerment score for each domain (Refer to Table 1). If the number of indicators for a domain met the established criteria, the domain was assigned a score of 1 for that district; otherwise, it was assigned a 0. This binary classification was essential for translating complex data into a simplified district-level empowerment score. This district score enabled us to make cross-district comparisons, highlighting key indicators and domains that influence empowerment levels across regions.

# Key Findings

This section outlines the key findings from our district-level women's empowerment analysis based on the selected domains. Our analysis revealed significant variations in women's empowerment across districts. While some districts exhibited high levels of empowerment across multiple indicators and domains, others fell short.

Table 2: Empowerment Indicators by District: Distribution and Percentages

Empowerment Domains	Empowered Districts	Percent	Number of districts
Decision-Making, autonomy over income and Physical Mobility	476	67.52%	705
Control over Income and Economic Empowerment	436	61.84%	705
Educational and Informational Empowerment	325	46.10%	705
Work Balance	218	32.25%	676

The table 2 illustrates the distribution across four key empowerment domains: 1. decision-making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility; 2. control over income and economic empowerment; 3. educational and informational empowerment; and 4. work balance. Each domain represents an aspect of women's empowerment, with data presented in terms of frequency of districts where women are empowered, the percentage of empowered women, and the number of districts analyzed.

## Decision-making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility:

476 districts out of 705 show empowerment in this domain. This domain includes 67.52% of the 705 districts where women are empowered in decision-making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility. This indicates higher progress in this domain than in others, this highlights that many districts have improved in women's personal agency and control over their financial and physical freedoms.

## Control over Income and Economic Empowerment:

436 districts out of 705 show empowerment in this domain, which represents that 61.28% of the 705 districts report empowerment in control over income and economic activities, indicating that women in these districts have control over their financial resources and economic participation. Although the proportion is significant, it represents slightly fewer empowered districts compared to those achieving empowerment in decision-making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility.

### **Educational and Informational Empowerment:**

325 districts out of 705 show empowerment in this domain which suggests that 46.10% of the 705 districts reflect empowerment in education and access to information. This percentage is notably lower compared to the domains of decision-making, autonomy over income, and physical mobility, as well as control over income and economic activities. The following disparity highlights that greater attention and targeted interventions are required to enhance women's empowerment across districts.

### **Work Balance:**

217 districts in the analysis out of 676 are empowered in this domain, which means 32.25% of the 676 districts have women who are empowered in managing unpaid work, indicating that only these percent of women are achieving balance in this area. Among all the domains, this is the lowest percentage, which highlights that unpaid work among women continues to be a significant barrier to women's empowerment in most districts.

The indicators used in each domain are very important for understanding where the efforts are required to be made and the districts are progressing, which will help us know the areas where women's empowerment is lagging. This can help guide targeted interventions to address the specific barriers women face in different regions.

# Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global agenda that is aimed at addressing challenges like gender inequality, poverty, and climate change. SDG 5 focuses on achieving gender equality and also empowering women and girls. It also emphasizes eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal opportunities, and promoting women's participation in all spheres of society.

In this report, we have presented a detailed district-level analysis of women's empowerment by leveraging a range of indicators to measure progress and identify gaps. The key findings from our report offer valuable insights into the state of women's empowerment in India and the specific areas where more efforts are needed.

The analysis highlights several important areas that are needed to improve women's empowerment across districts. There are many districts that need to enhance women's access to educational and informational resources to support empowerment. Even though a significant proportion of districts show progress in women's autonomy and decision-making power, there is still a need to increase women's control over their economic contributions. The disparity within the districts suggests that even though women may be participating in income-generating activities, their influence and control still remain limited in some districts. Additionally, due to the high burden of unpaid domestic work, women's ability to engage in paid work is restricted, which impacts their economic independence. To achieve SDGs by 2030 it is crucial that we address these issues through targeted interventions for advancing women's empowerment.

The study highlights the importance of localized approaches, which are helpful in policy-making. The variations in empowerment levels within different districts within the state indicate that district-specific strategies are required to address the varied challenges that are faced by women in different geographies. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to target interventions that can address the specific needs of women at the district level, is required. Such localized efforts will foster more equitable and inclusive development.

**Empowering women is not just a goal; it's a long journey towards a fairer and more inclusive society. By coming together, challenges can be converted into opportunities, which will ensure every woman has the chance to thrive and lead. As we progress, let us remain committed to progressing towards gender equality and creating a world where the potential of every woman is realized. The path to Sustainable Development Goal 5 is paved with our collective efforts, dedication, and unwavering resolve.**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Gender Centre

The Gender Centre at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, was set up in October 2018 with the intention of creating and promoting scholarships related to women and studying issues of gender equality. The center serves as a dynamic catalyst for change; it fosters interdisciplinary research, facilitates collaborations, and engages with diverse stakeholders. The centre is a thriving hub of research focused on understanding gender-related issues and promoting equality and inclusivity in all aspects of life. As the nation's sole gender centre within a management institution, we lead the charge, providing cutting-edge research, transformative insights, and best practices in this area. Our visionary interdisciplinary expertise empowers organizations to cultivate evidence-based strategies, driving a future of women empowerment.

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We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the **International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)** and the **CGIAR Gender Impact Platform** for their invaluable support and funding, which made the creation of this comprehensive database possible.

We thank Nicky Johnson, Hanna Stanley, Bhaumik Vyas and Sayali Yadav for their contribution to the report.

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