Female Workforce in Manufacturing Sector

Mains Syllabus: GS I- Role of women and women's organization, associated issues, developmental issues, Social empowerment, Salient features of Indian Society;

GS II - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

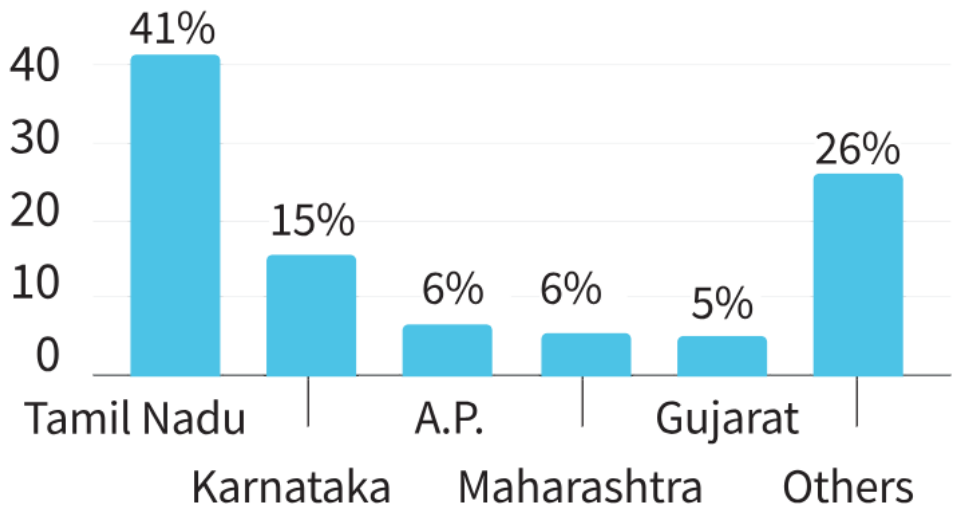
Why in the News?

The share of women in India's formal manufacturing sector fell recently.

What is the status of female labour force in manufacturing sector?

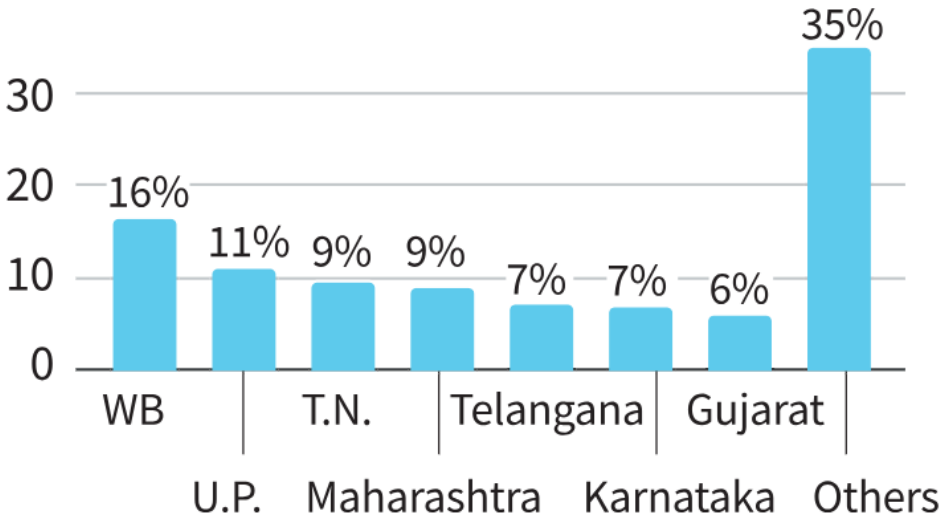
- **Significance of the manufacturing sector** - Manufacturing contributes almost one-fifth of India's GDP and is poised to be a key growth driver.
- **Declined female participation** - The share of women in India's formal manufacturing sector fell from 20.9% in 2015-16 to 18.9% in 2022-23 (1.57 million out of 8.34 million formal workers).
- **Global comparison** - Compared to other developing economies such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, India lags.
- **Dominance of southern states** - West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra contribute close to 50% of the informal women workforce in the manufacturing sector.
- Of all the women working in manufacturing, Tamil Nadu alone is employing 41%.

State-wise share of the formal female manufacturing workforce

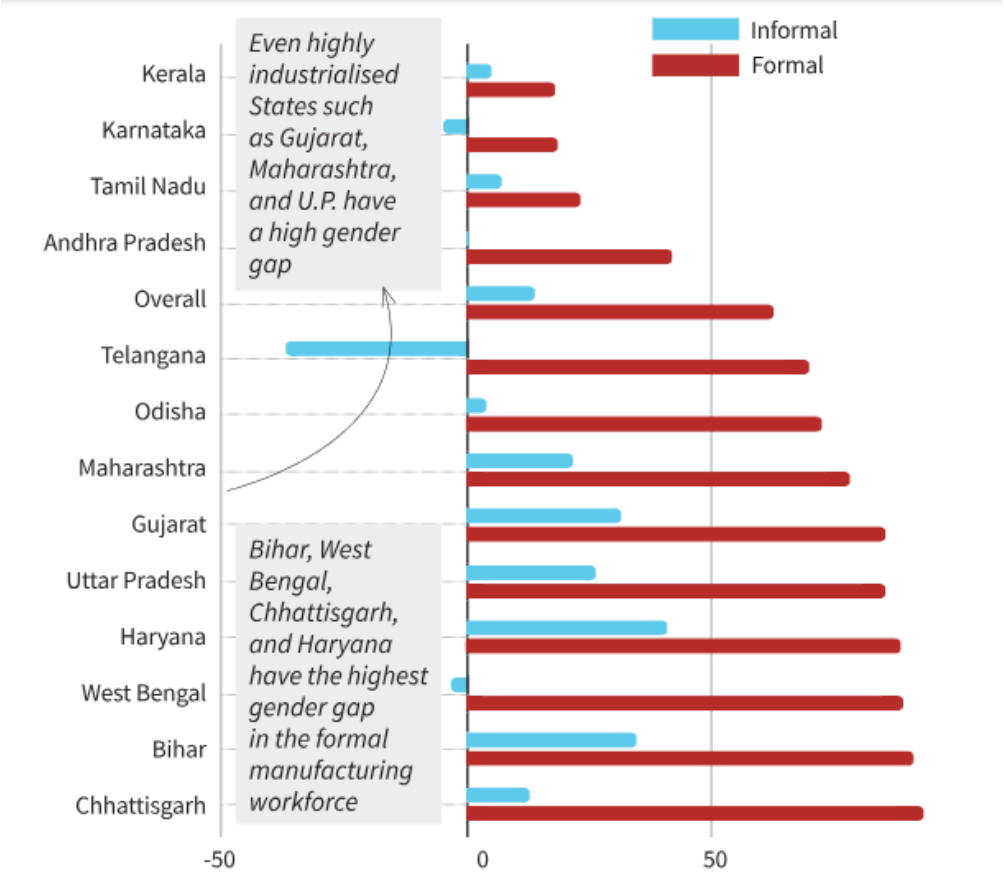


- **High presence in the informal sector** - In informal manufacturing, women form 43% of the workforce.

State-wise share of the informal female manufacturing workforce



- **Gender gap in formal workforce** - Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and Haryana have the highest gender gap in the formal manufacturing workforce, with women making up less than 6% of the workforce.



Why is the female labour force declining in the manufacturing sector?

- **Inadequate skill training**- According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, about 6% of women in the sector have either formal vocational training or training on the job.
- **Incomplete higher education** - Nearly 47% of men in manufacturing have completed secondary education or higher, compared to just 30% of women.
- **Safety and security issues** - In 2022, the National Crime Records Bureau NCRB data reported 419 cases of sexual harassment at the workplace, representing an increase from previous years.
- **Gender segregation of employment**—There is significant homogeneity across industries in which women are employed in the formal and informal sectors.
- Within the formal sector, 60% are employed in textile, wearing apparel, and food processing.
- This segregation reduces the opportunities for women's participation in the manufacturing labour force.
- **Workplace discrimination** - Gender-based discrimination in wages and promotions discourages women's participation in the labour force.
- **Social norms and gender roles** - Traditional gender roles often prioritize women's responsibilities at home over their participation in the workforce.
- **Technological advancements** - Automation, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence have reduced the demand for labor-intensive jobs, which traditionally employed more women.

What lies ahead?

- It is important to transition women from the informal to the formal sector to ensure a decent pay and work environment.
- Given the high degree of informality and lack of heterogeneity in women's manufacturing workforces, skill training is the first step to boosting participation.
- Upskilling women is imperative to improve both participation and productivity.
- Sectors where women are employed need to be diversified to increase their participation.
- It is salient to make work environments safe to improve workforce participation.
- Specific interventions are needed in each State to address their unique challenges.

Reference

The Hindu | Why are women missing from the factory floors in India?

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