

# A Complex Story of Indian Women in Education and Digital Access

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**Abstract :** India is home to nearly 700 million women and roughly half the population of Indian subcontinent. Yet, on nearly every major development indicator like education, technology access, land ownership, political representation and economic participation, women are continued to face deep structural disadvantages. Understanding the current status of women in India requires looking beyond broad national statistics and examining the persistent gaps that shape women's daily realities, their life choices, and their access to opportunity of education and digital access. The study goes into depth about the National Family Health Survey-6, Government of India and specifically delving the progress of women in India with significant gain in education, technology access and economic agency alongside persistent social constraints.

**Key words:** Education, Digital Access, Economic participation

## INTRODUCTION

Indian women are making significant, measurable progress in both education and digital access. However, deep-rooted gender norms and infrastructural disparities mean that while access has improved, true systemic and economic equity still lags behind. According to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) data, 2023-24, tell a complex story of Indian women are having with significant gains in education, digital access and economic agency, but also persistent social constraints including low property ownership, being married before the legal age of 18 and bearing the burden of family planning. The NFHS-6 will also be helpful to monitoring the UN sustainable development goal very particularly SDG-3 i.e., ensure healthy needs and promote well-being for all at all age groups.

The survey shows that 73.7% of women have attended school, an uptick from 71.8% recorded in NFHS-5 survey (2019–21), women with over ten years of schooling also went up from 41% to 46.4%, while internet use among women has nearly doubled from 33.2% to 64.3%. However, women's ownership of a house or land, either alone or jointly, has stayed below 20% rising from 14% to 18.8%. Deep-rooted gender norms continue to shape life outcomes. 20.1% of women aged 20-24 years were married before the legal age of 18, only a modest improvement from 23.3% in the previous survey. Female sterilisation remains the dominant form of family planning at 36.5% falling from 37.9%, raising questions about the unequal burden of reproductive responsibility.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to NFHS-6, India has recorded a notable decline in violence against women, particularly spousal violence. The survey found that 22.3% of ever-married women aged 18-49 reported having experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their spouse, down from 29.2% in NFHS-5 a decline of nearly 7 percentage points. Additionally, while States recorded decline in violence against women, Kerala saw an increase in reported spousal violence from 9.8% in NFHS-5 to 17.7% in the latest survey. Bihar 36.1%, Telangana 30.8%, Tamil Nadu 28.5%, Uttar Pradesh 28.5% and Andhra Pradesh 22.7% all clocked above the national average.

## ARE WOMEN REALLY EMPLOYED?

According to NFHS-6, the use of tobacco and alcohol in the country has continued to decline, although significant gender disparities remain. Among adults aged 15 years and above, 34.6% of men and 7.2% of women use any form of tobacco, compared with 38% of men and 8.9% of women in NFHS-5. Alcohol consumption remains far more common among men than women, with 18.2% of men and 0.7% of women reporting alcohol use, compared with 19% of men and 1% of women in NFHS-5. The survey indicates that tobacco and alcohol use are generally higher in rural areas and among socially and economically disadvantaged groups. While the decline reflects the impact of public health campaigns and tobacco-control measures, the continued prevalence of these risk factors remains a concern because they are closely

linked to non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory illness, and liver disorders.

## CONCLUSION

The NFHS is a key data source for India's monitoring of SDG indicators and several national programmes. Women's internet use saw its largest increase in Andhra Pradesh, from 21% to 63.6%. The gap between women and men in access to and use of digital technologies; the NFHS-6 doubling of women's internet use signals significant narrowing in India. The internet use among women has nearly doubled even now and it denoted to pointing a sharp narrowing of the digital gender gap. The big concern of the study is 20.1% of women aged between 20–24 years were married before the legal age of 18. The low property ownership among women, continued early marriage, and disproportionate burden of family planning. The real progress on gender equality of SDG, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, and women-focused schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, PM-JAY, etc are being witnessed that the women being empowered.

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