

Women and Digital Access: India

Women in India make up 51.5% of its 1.2 billion population yet they remain behind men in so many respects: education, employment, legal rights, income, political participation and access to economic opportunity and financial services. Closing the gender gap will enable India to tap the enormous social, economic and political benefits of inclusion—but before that can be done, we must first understand her.

As one leading thinker put it “there is no single ‘Indian woman’ and we need to understand this to make any solution meaningful”. While the profiles of Indian women are broad and complex, they share certain attributes that financial institutions need to know to serve this market.

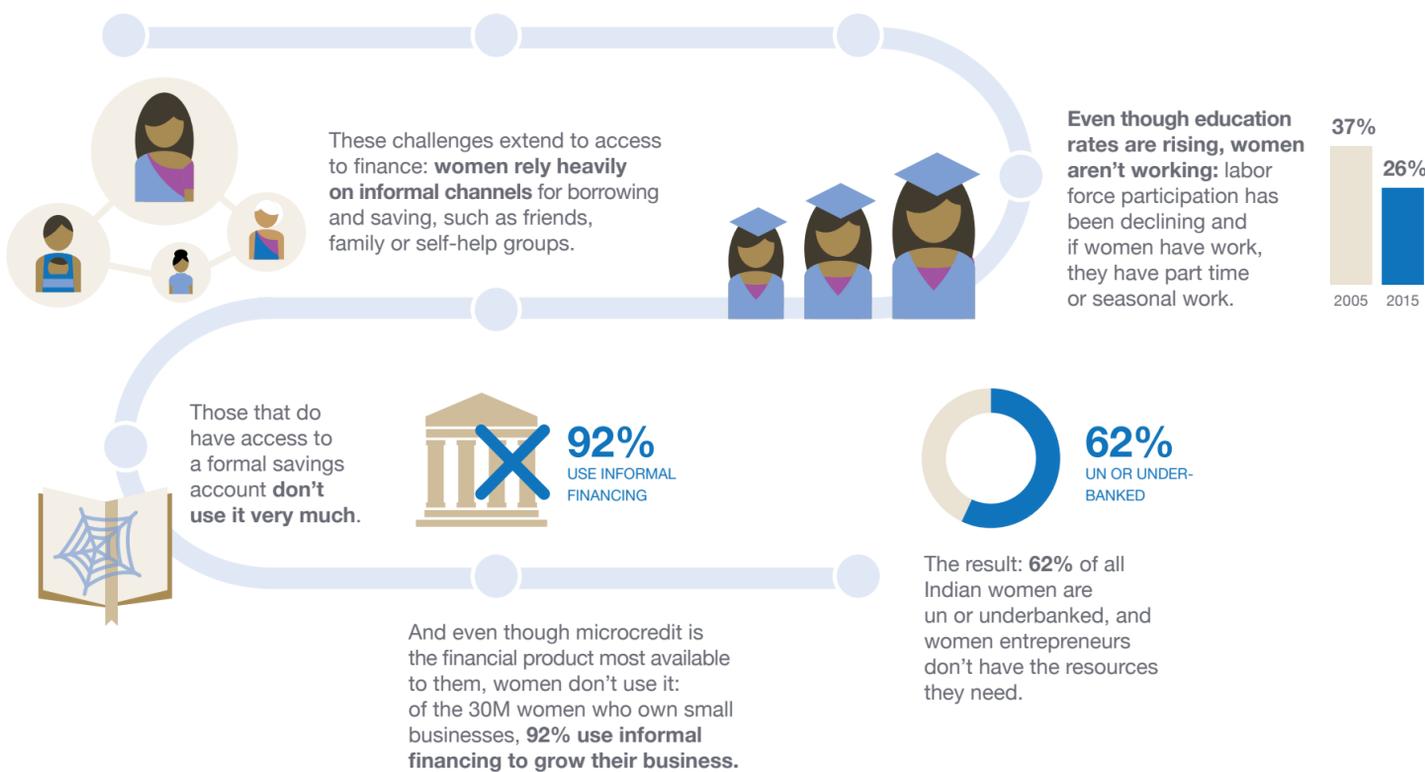


(Adult) Indian women make up **half the population**.



69% of them live in rural areas.

Their economic participation is limited by social norms: gender violence, limited mobility, unacceptable to work outside home, expectation to drop out of workforce to take care of kids.



India is making strong strides in committing to greater financial inclusion and developing an advanced ecosystem of digital use:



Government initiative (PMJDY) is working to give all Indians access... **BUT...** outreach to women is lagging

- Only **38%** of women have accounts
- There's less penetration in rural areas where most women live: only **34%** of rural households have accounts
- There is a **14%** gender gap in the usage of financial services



Mobile technology presents a promising opportunity for financial inclusion... **BUT...** women either don't own phones or are not allowed to use them freely

- Only **44%** of women own phones, only **29%** have sent an SMS and less than **2%** have mobile accounts
- Social norms discourage women's use of phones, with some villages **banning women's ownership and usage**

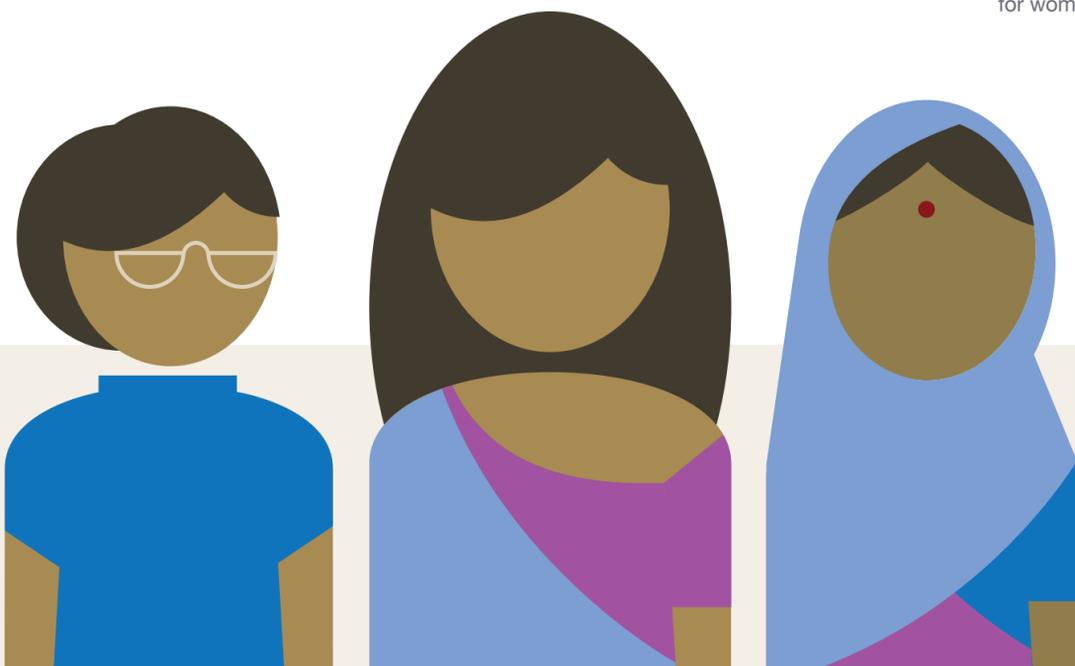


The government is investing in interoperability, infrastructure and giving support to businesses and innovators... **BUT...** women's access to benefits are inconsistent and policies do not apply a gender lens

- There are only about **600,000** agents for a population of over 1 billion people
- Access points within the community are **uneven**

How can India ensure that women are engaged as a core engine of opportunity for themselves and the country as a whole?

- 1 Develop and enhance financial solutions that support asset building for women,** such as increasing PMJDY outreach to women and encouraging use of the account.
- 2 Use mass and social media** to address norms of individual financial participation and deliver broad, low-cost financial education.
- 3 Create better access points for women's participation in the community** by ensuring women can access agent networks or developing distribution channels, such as e-commerce models, for women-owned businesses.



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