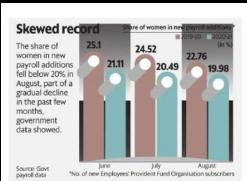


Media Coverage

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Women's workforce participation drops

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omen's share in new payroll additions fell below the 20% mark in August, part of a gradual decline in female participation in formal work over the past few months, according to government data.

The latest monthly data showed a sharp decline from 2019-20 when women's participation in formal work was almost 23%. The reasons, according to industry experts and economists, include a general dearth of jobs, discrimination against women in a patriarchal society, the lack of a family support system in an environment marked by quarantined living conditions, and employers aiming to reduce the cost of employees by increasing working hours.

According to payroll data collected from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), 669,914 people joined the formal workforce in August, and only 133,872 of them, or just 19.98%, were females-down marginally from 20.49% in July and 21.11% in June.

In the year-ago months, the percentage of women in fresh payroll additions was 22.76% in August, and 24.52% in July.

To be sure, the formal sector job creation in India has been lagging for quite some time and more prominently, post the coronavirus outbreak.

"The low female payroll additions as a percentage of total additions in the last few

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Return of women to workspaces slows

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months is a worrying sign. If youlook back at 2019-20, then you realize how the current pandemic and business loss save impacted women more,

ket inequalities, and countrie het inequalities, and countries may lose some gains made in previous years on women's work participation rate. There are three main factors suppressing women's partici-

pation in the pandemic, said K.R. Shyam Sundar, a labour

h.R. Shyam Sundar, a fabour economist and professor at XLRI Jamshedpur. "First, because of discrimi-nation by the patriarchal structure of our society, the pandemic has increased the work pressure on women. Sec-ond, in a pandemic environ-



ILO has warned the pandemic will widen labour market inequalities, RAMESH PATHAMIA/MINT

manufacturing are preferring male workers as they are able to put in extra hours of work,"

said Shyam Sundar. "And third, the cost to the company for women workers, mainly frontline staff of manmainly frontline staff of man-ufacturing sectors, has gone up because of the need for transport, giving statutory maternity benefit in a sub-dued business environment, and the general safety precau-tions for women workers," said Sundar.

However, he added that However, he added that women's participation in information technology jobs and the overall internet-driven knowledge work should have gone up, unlike in manufacturing and hospital-

Household

say analysts

chairman and managing directorofGen work and online schooling in the absence of schools have kept ius Consultants Ltd, a leading mothers occupied. h u m a n resource and staffing com-pany, was more forthcoming.

R.P. Yaday

forthcoming.

The general job environment is slowly improving as lockdown has seased, and the festive season has kicked in. But women's participation is still very low. In the organized employment space, women in early and up-to-prid covers two form the mid-career stage form the bulk of the women workforce, and this is where the participation is very low in

in factories," said Yadav.
"We have seen young
women who have children are esitating to join work because of the fear of infection, and this

rof infection, and this is creating a divide— life or job? This is where they are fall-ing behind. Second, the work of a woman has gone up signifi cantly post the cocupied, ysts india. The house-hold work and online schooling in the absence of physical schools

have kept mothers occupied. Lastly, with the above two rea Lastiy, with the above two rea-sons keeping them occupied, if a company is insisting on work from an office, they are either quitting or not joining fresh work, "said Yaday, who is also board member of the Indian Staffing Federation, an umbrellabody of staffing com-