

STATE OF WORKING INDIA 2026

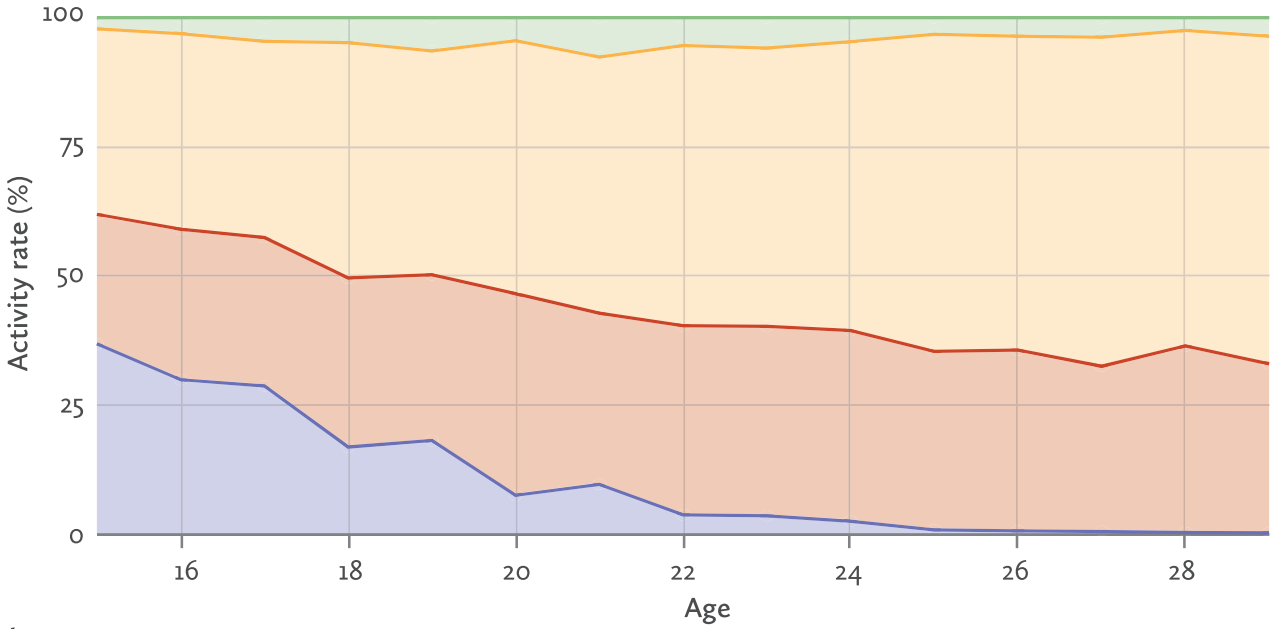
Youth in the labour market: Pathways from learning to earning



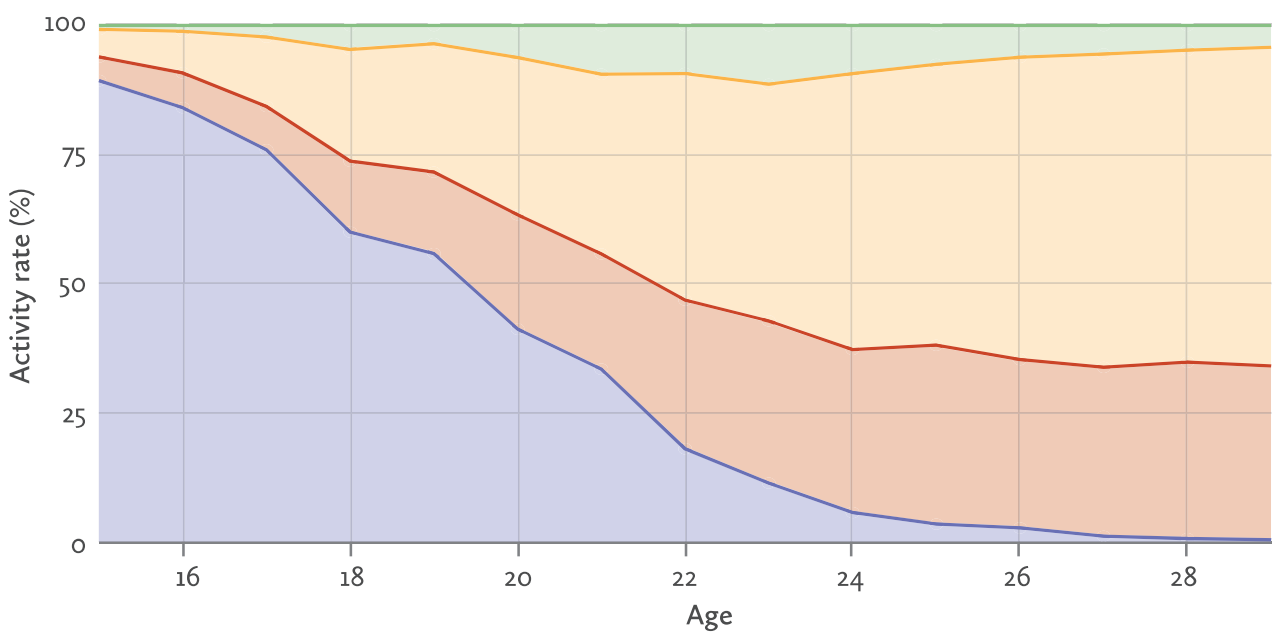
Figures

Figure 1.1: Activity status by age, in 1983 and 2023

a: 1983



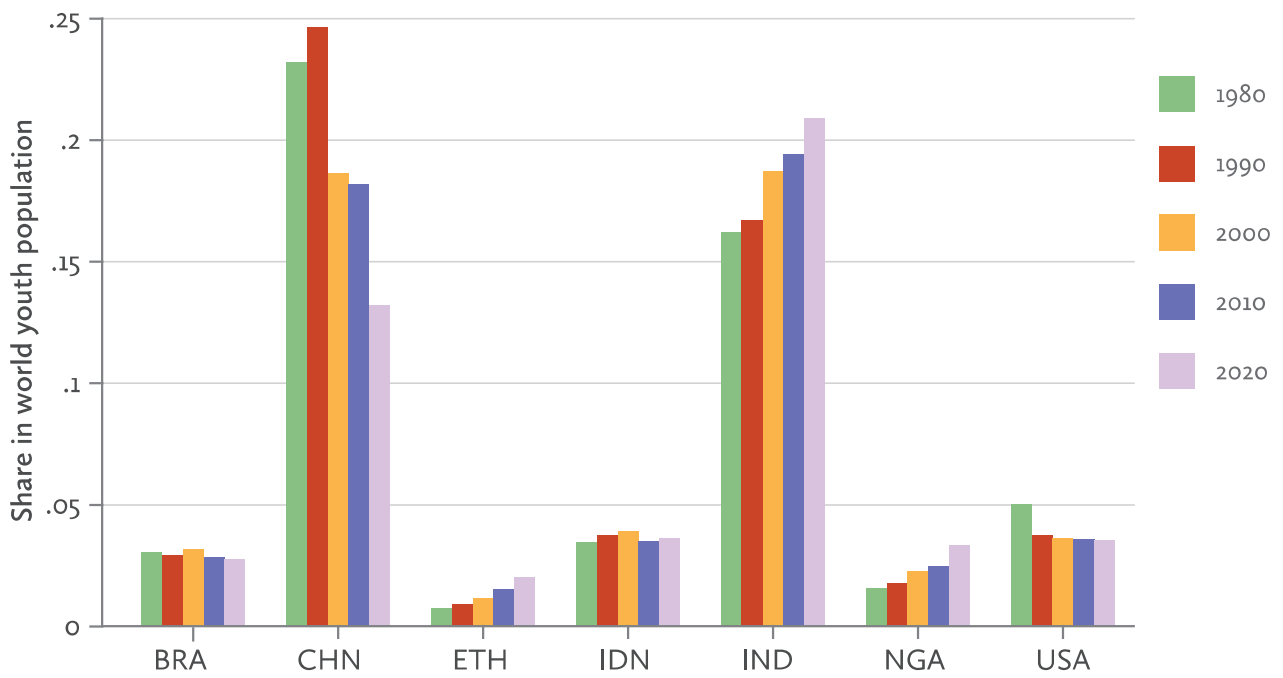
b: 2023



Education OLF, not in education Employed Unemployed

Sources and notes: EUS 1983-84, PLFS 2023-24

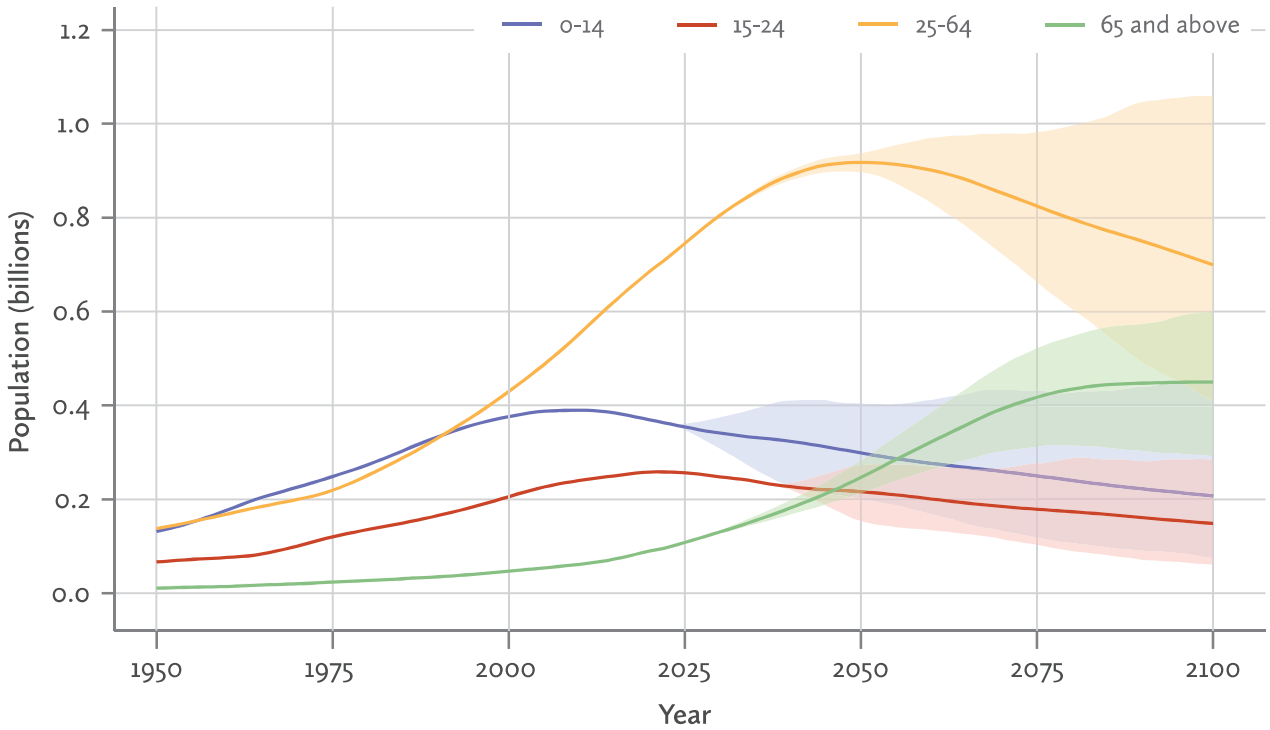
Figure 2.2 : One in five youth in the world is an Indian



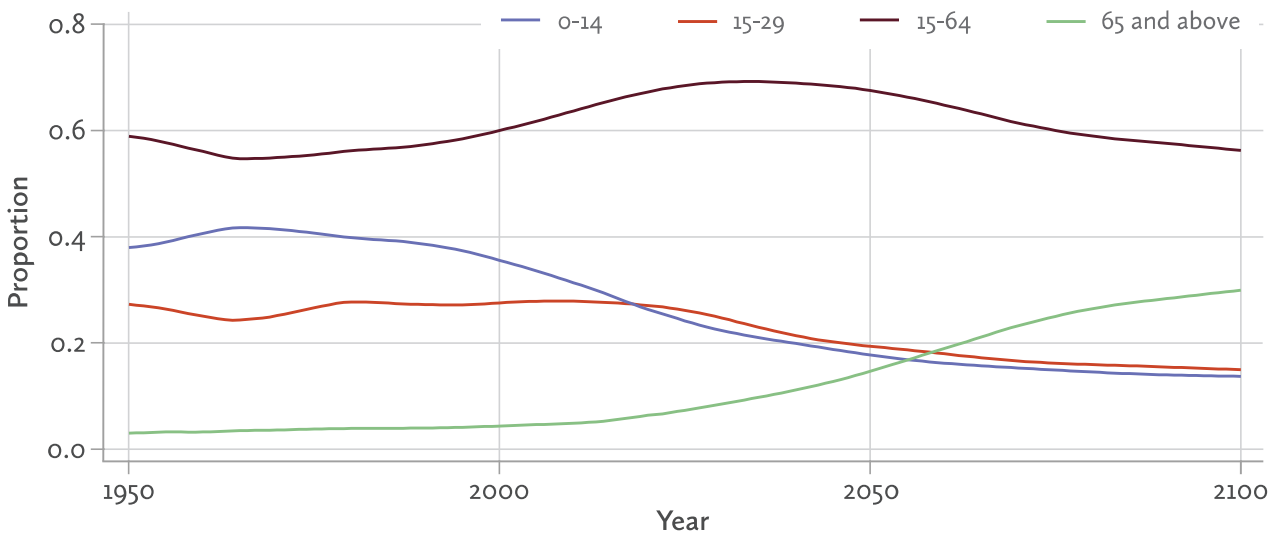
Sources and notes: World Development Indicators

Figure 2.3: India's historical and projected age structure

a: Absolute numbers

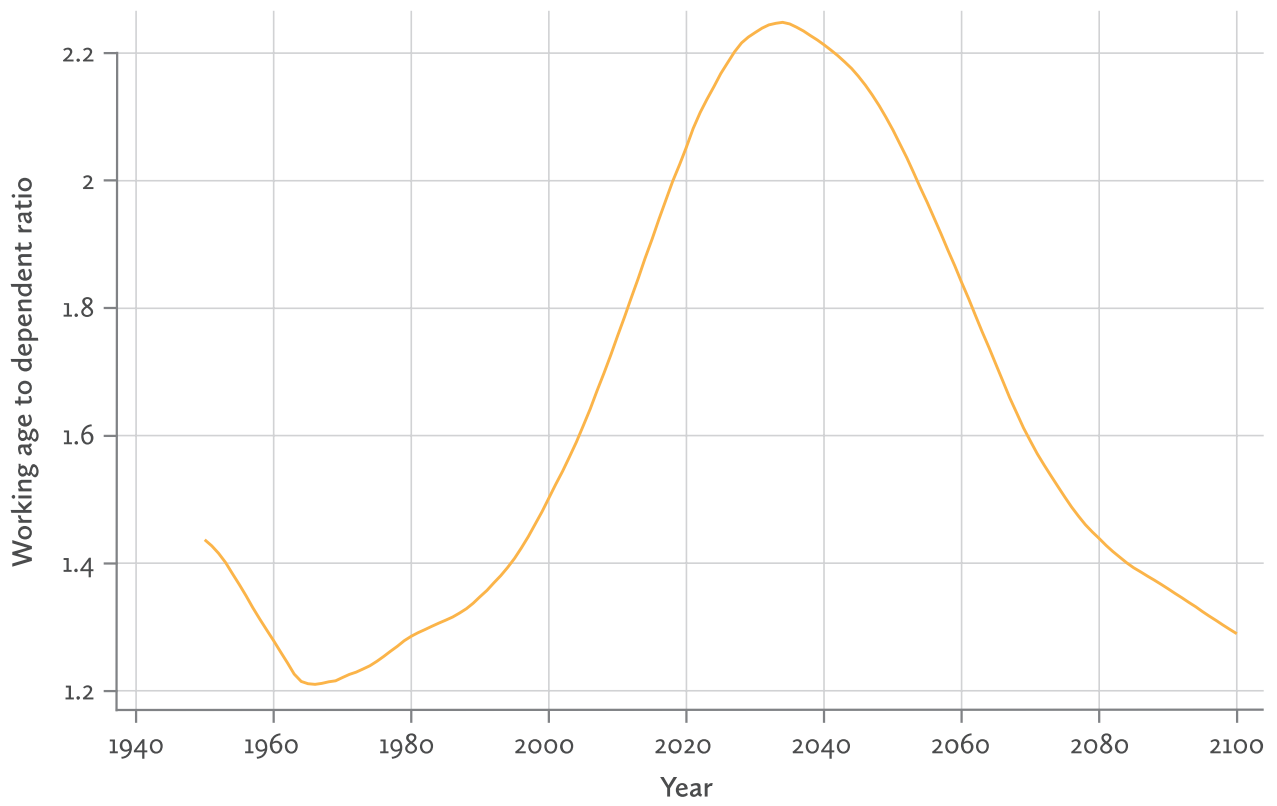


b: Proportion of youth and dependents



Sources and notes: World Population Prospects, 2024, UN Population Division. Shaded area corresponds to 95% prediction interval.

Figure 2.4: India's demographic dividend



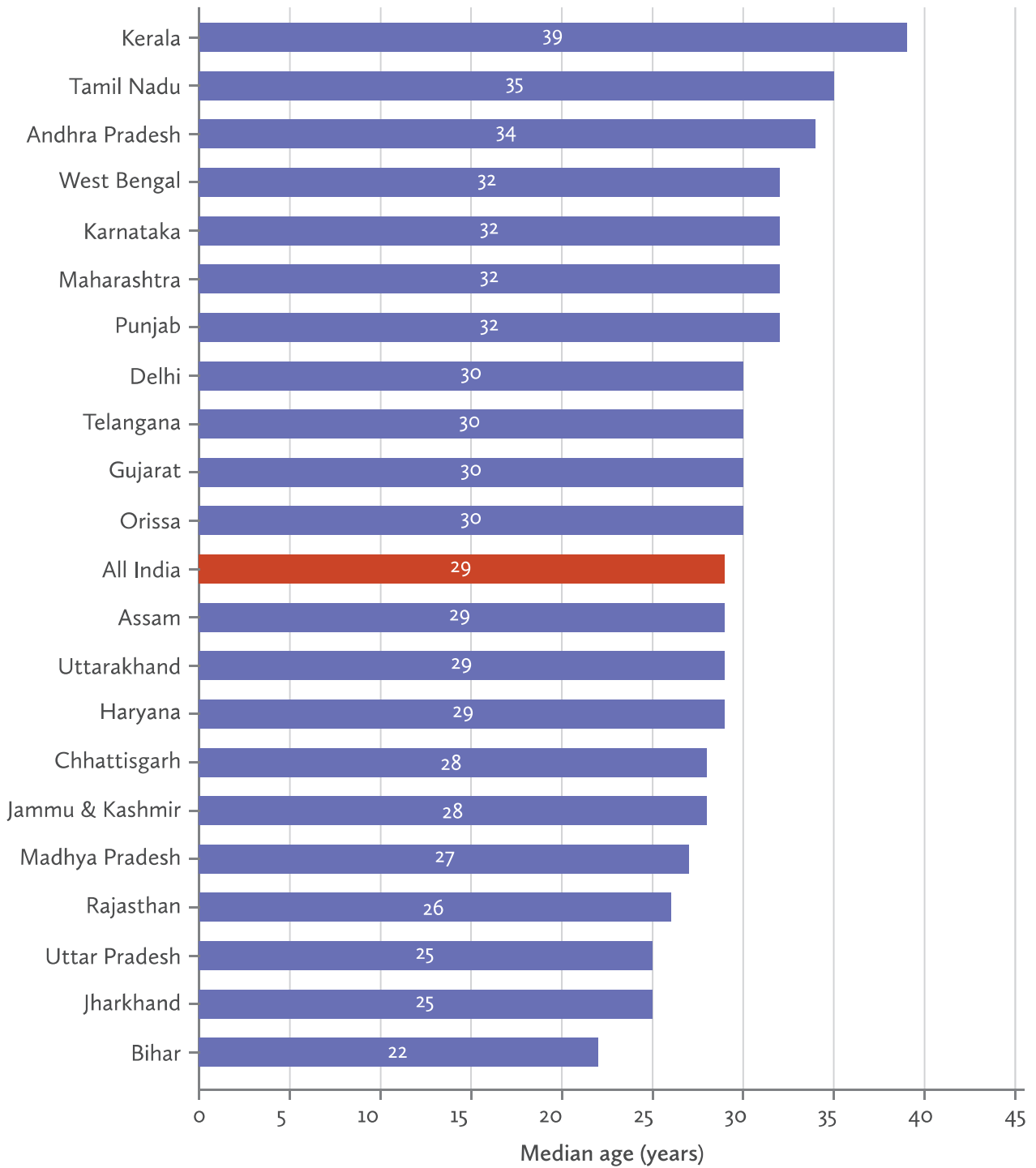
Sources and notes: World Population Prospects, 2024, UN Population Division

Figure 2.5: Youth population in India, 1981-2036



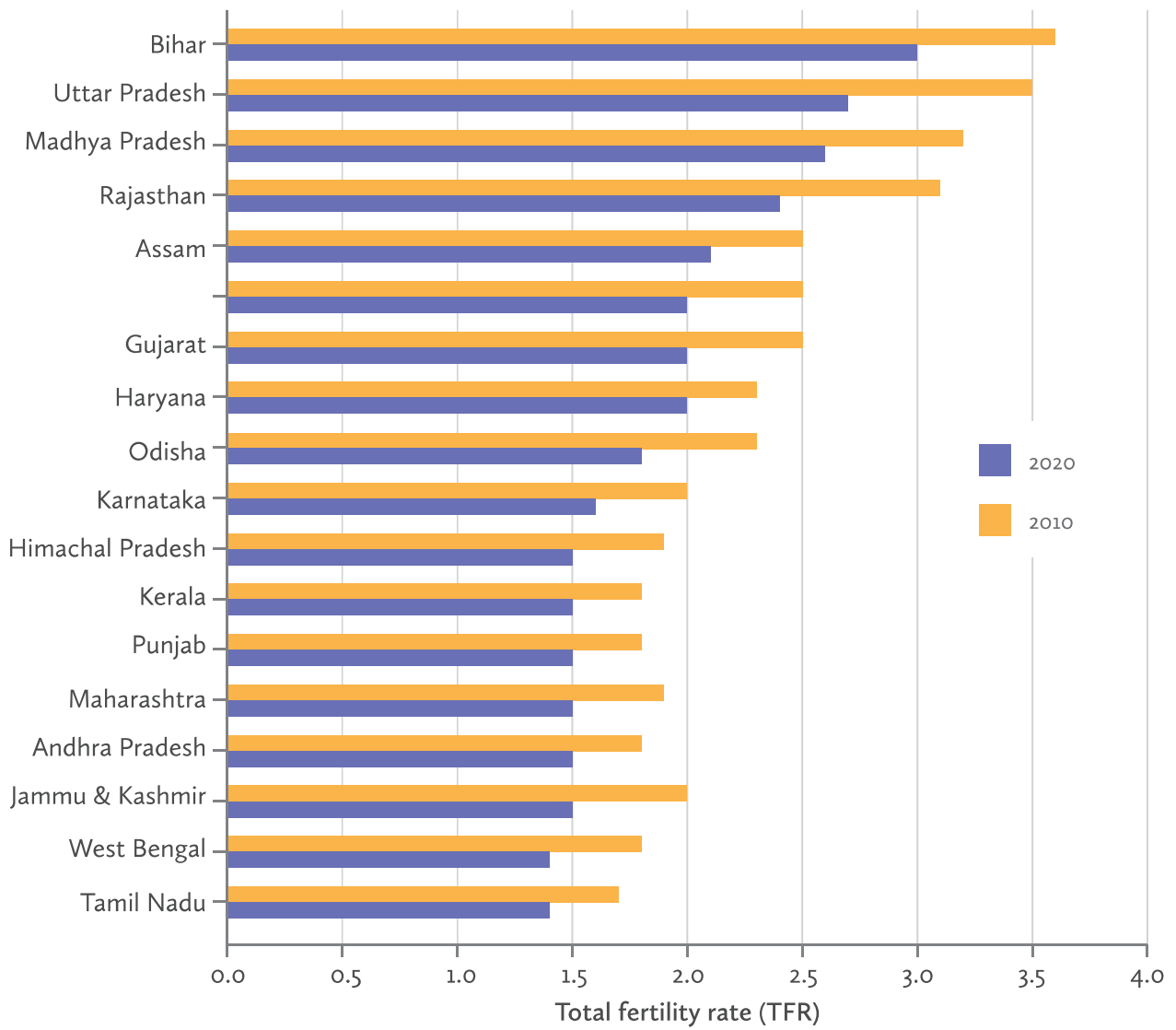
Sources and notes: Ministry of Family and Health Welfare, population projections

Figure 2.6: Median age population across states



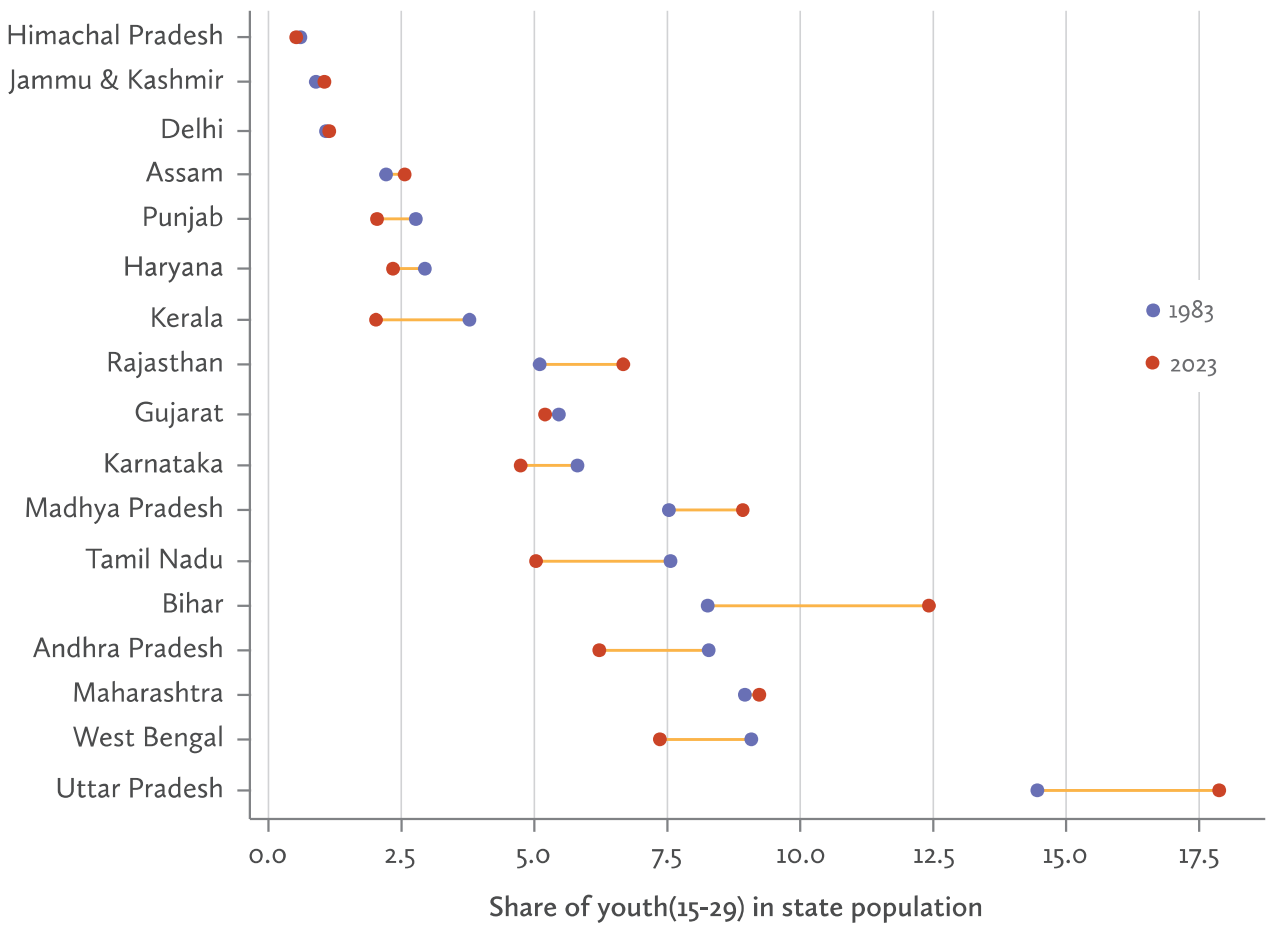
Sources and notes: PLFS 2023-24

Figure 2.7: Total Fertility Rate across major states



Sources and notes: Economic Survey 2024-25, Statistical Appendix Table

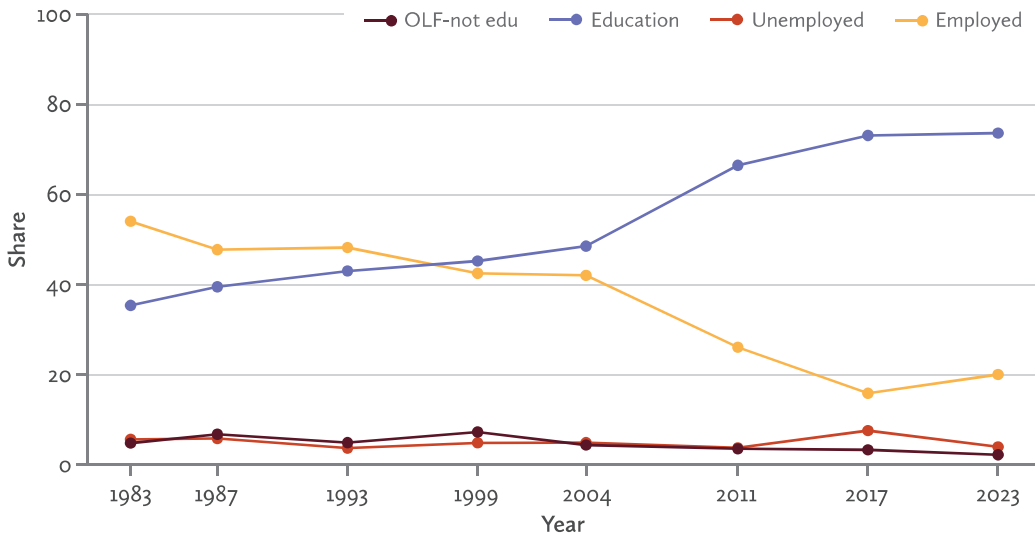
Figure 2.8: Youth population shares over time across states



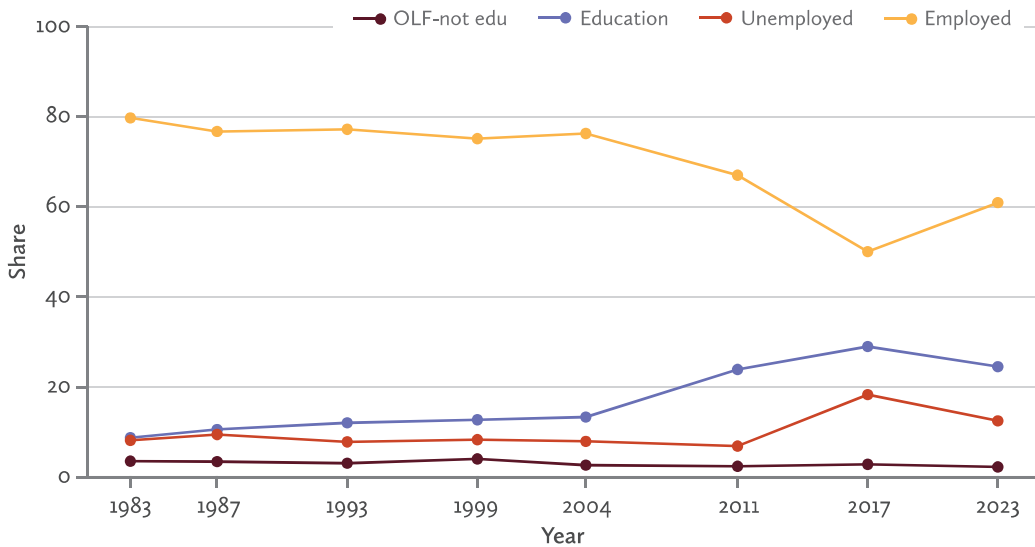
Sources and notes: NSS -EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24

Figure 2.9: Share of young men in education and employment over time

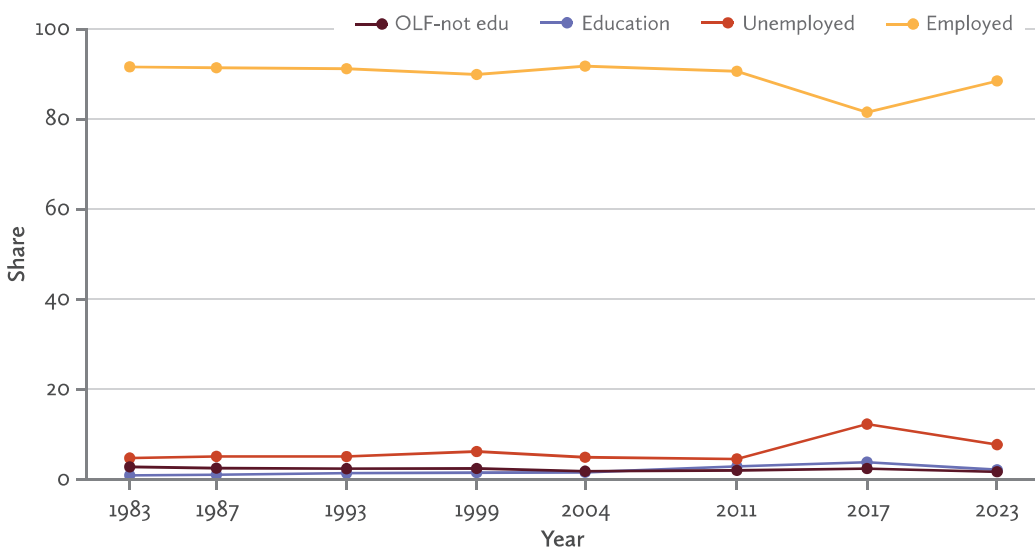
a: 15 to 19 years



b: 20-24 years



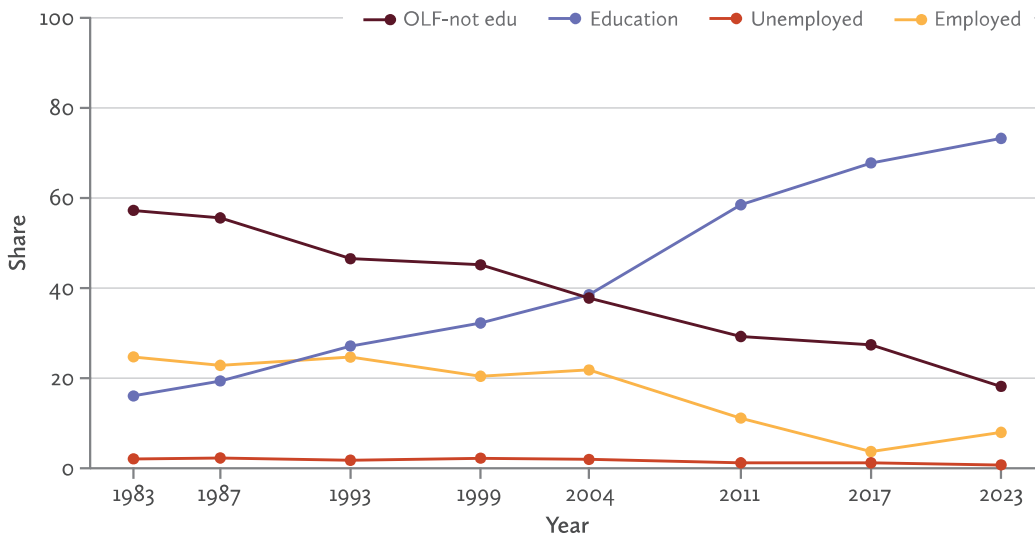
c: 25 to 29 years



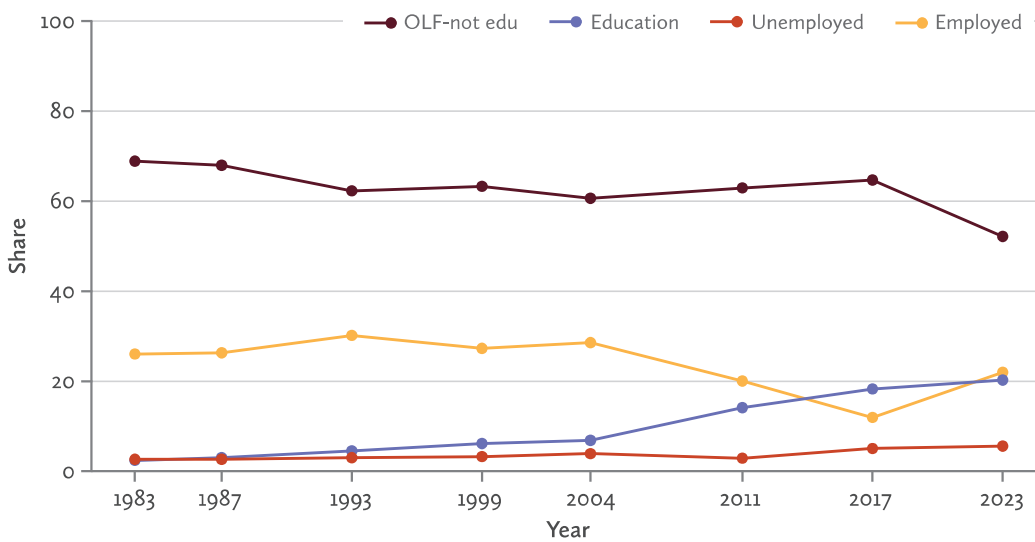
Sources and notes: NSS-EUS and PLFS various rounds. OLF-not edu : Out of labour force and not in education

Figure 2.10: Share of young women in education and employment over time

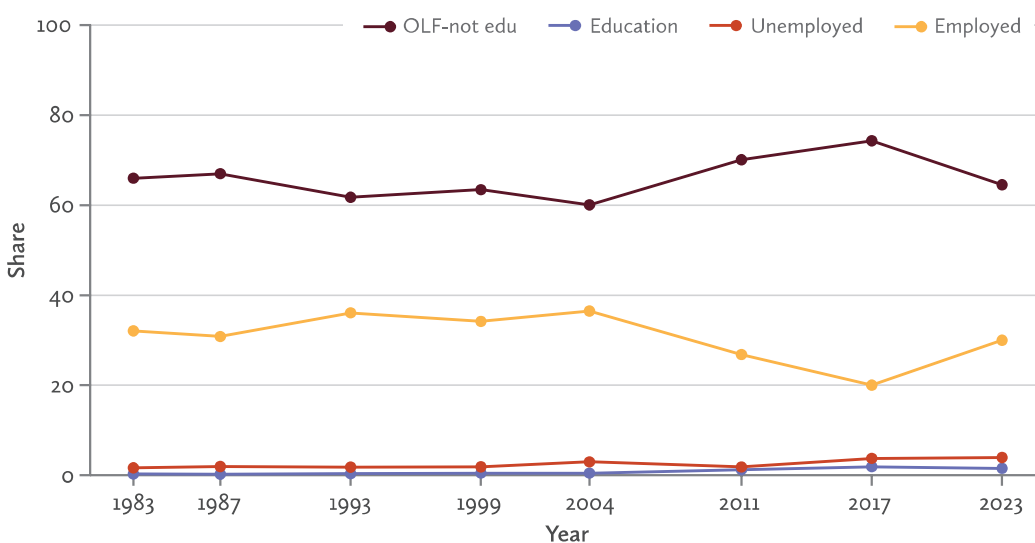
a: 15 to 19 years



b: 20-24 years

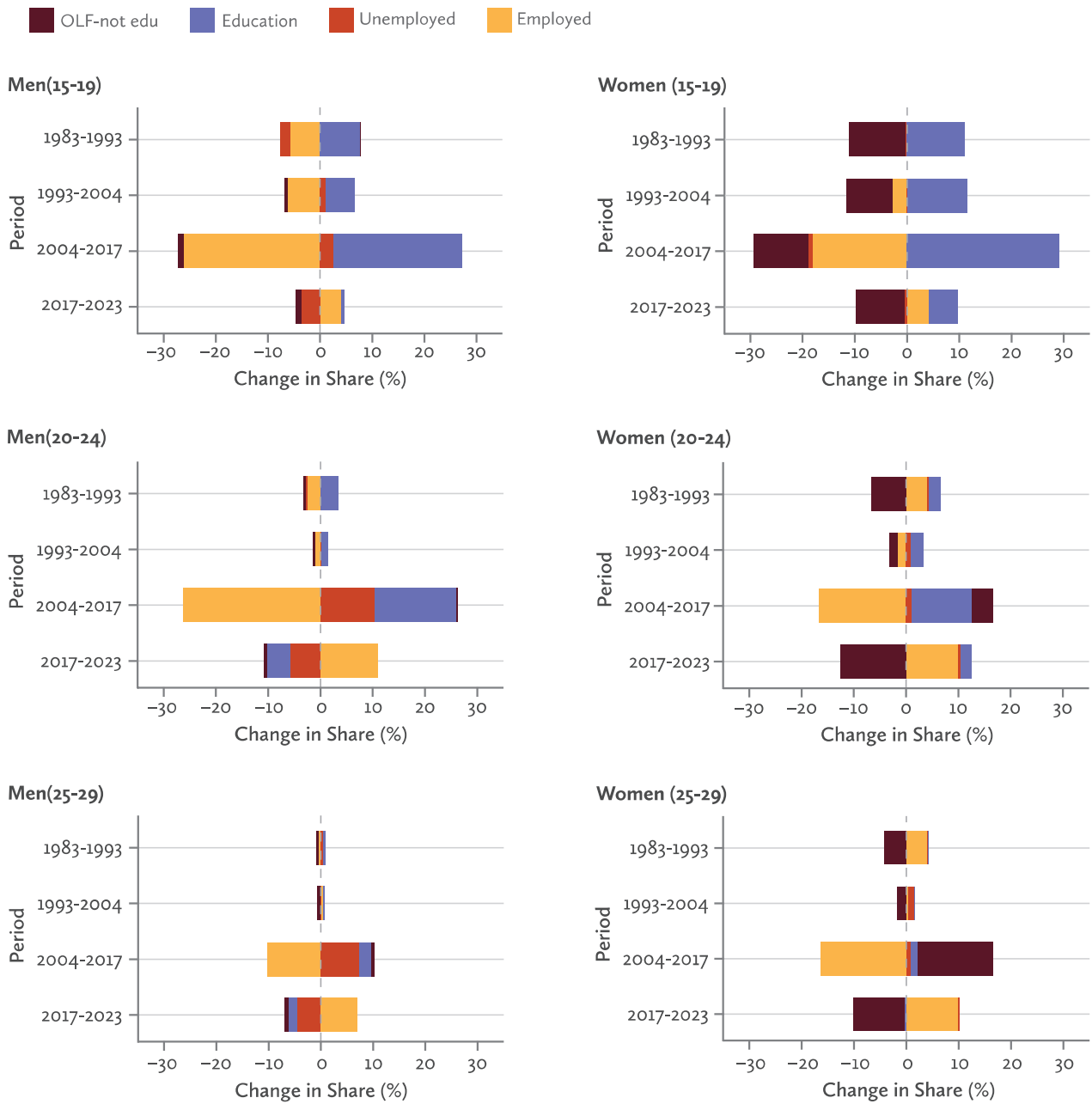


c: 25 to 29 years



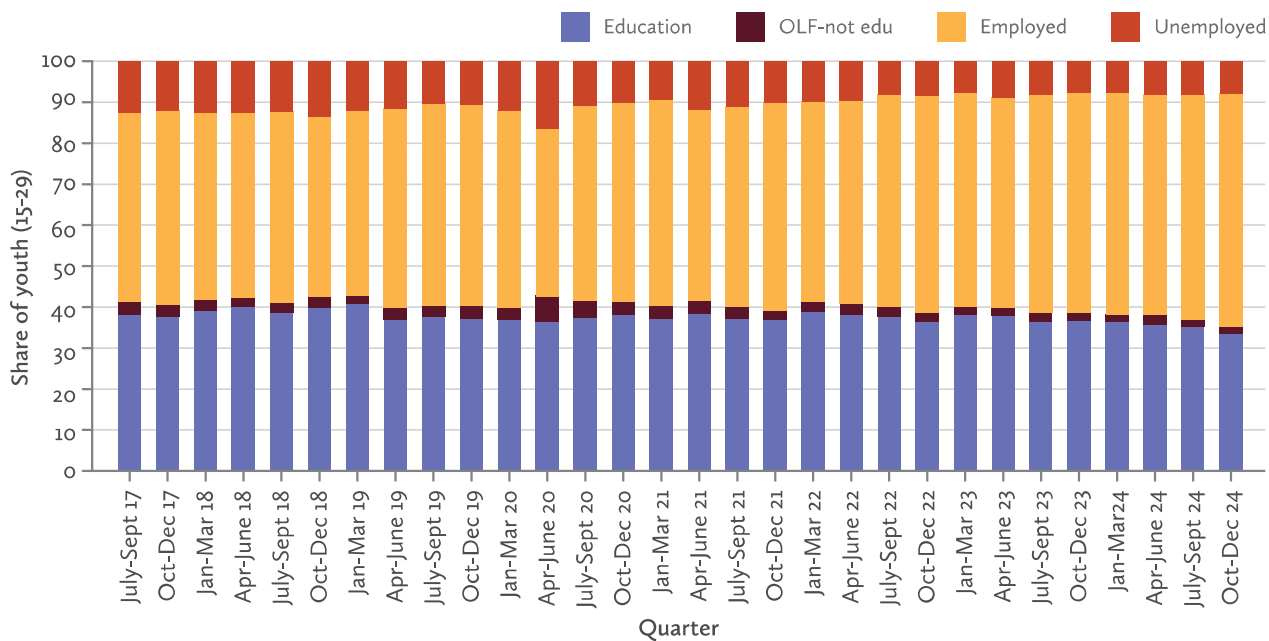
Sources and notes: NSS-EUS and PLFS various rounds, OLF-not edu : Out of labour force and not in education.

Figure 2.11: Changes in education and employment shares in each period



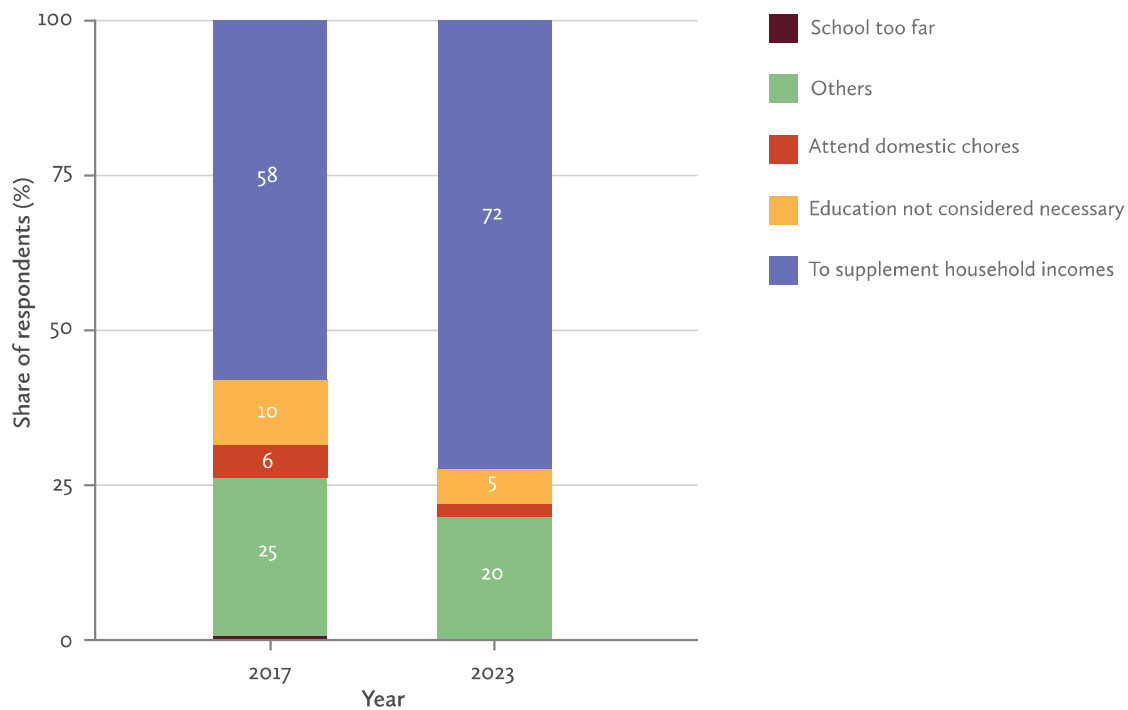
Sources and notes: NSS-EUS and PLFS various rounds, OLF-not edu : Out of labour force and not in education.

Figure 2.12: Increase in young men’s employment has come with a reduction in their share in education



Source and notes : Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), all quarters, 2017–18 to 2023–24 and OLF-not edu : Out of labour force and not in education.

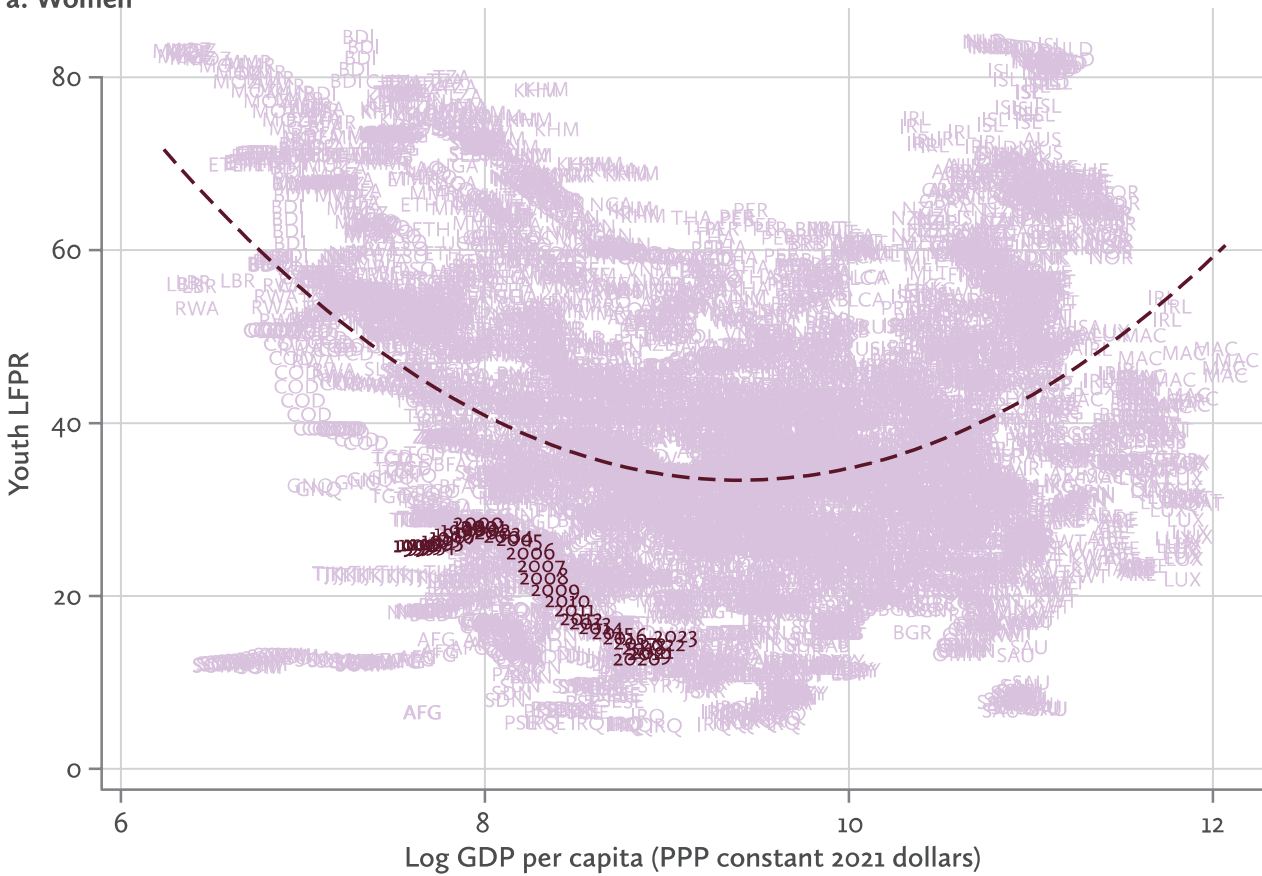
Figure 2.13 Increasing share of young men cite supplementing household incomes as reason for withdrawing from education



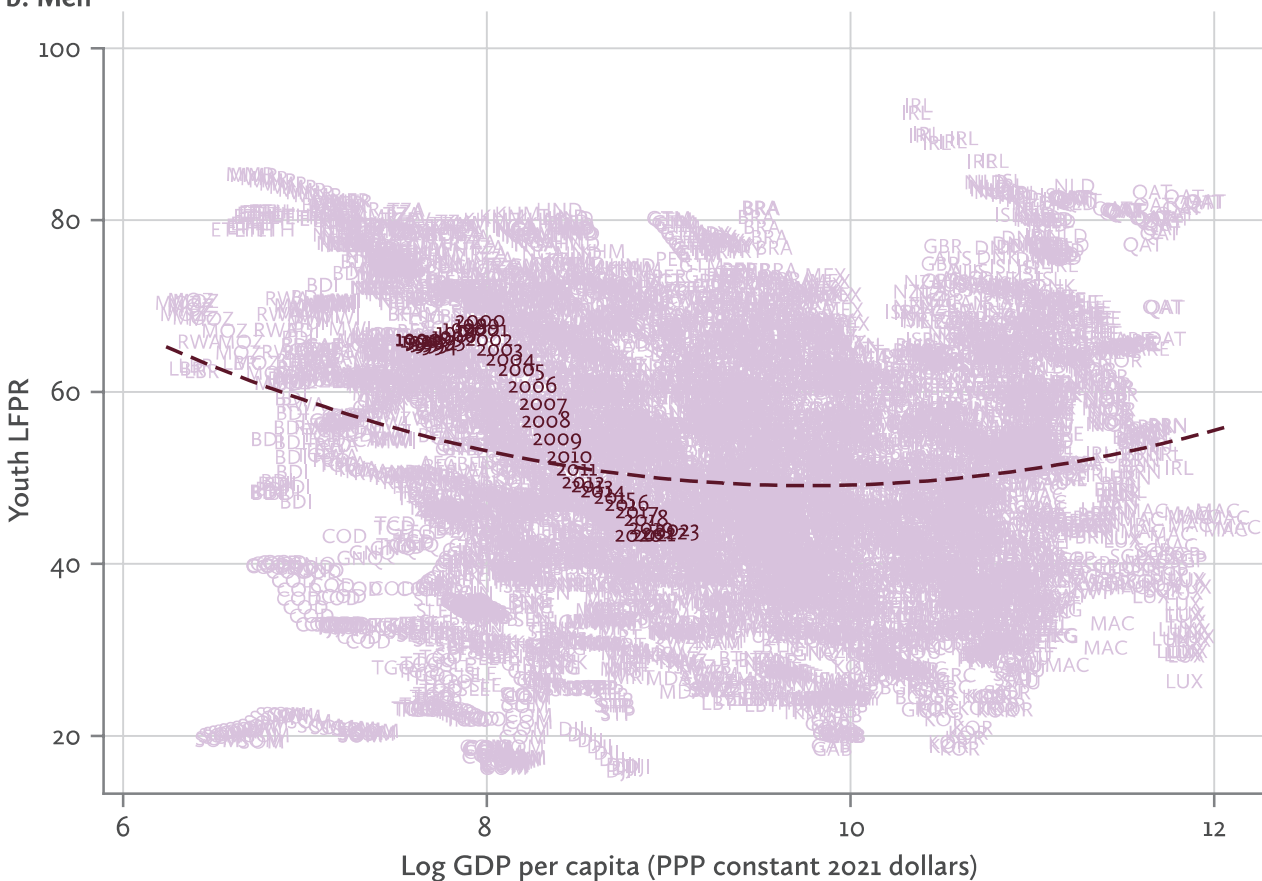
Sources and notes: PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

Figure 2.14: Youth labour force participation in India in international perspective since 1991

a: Women



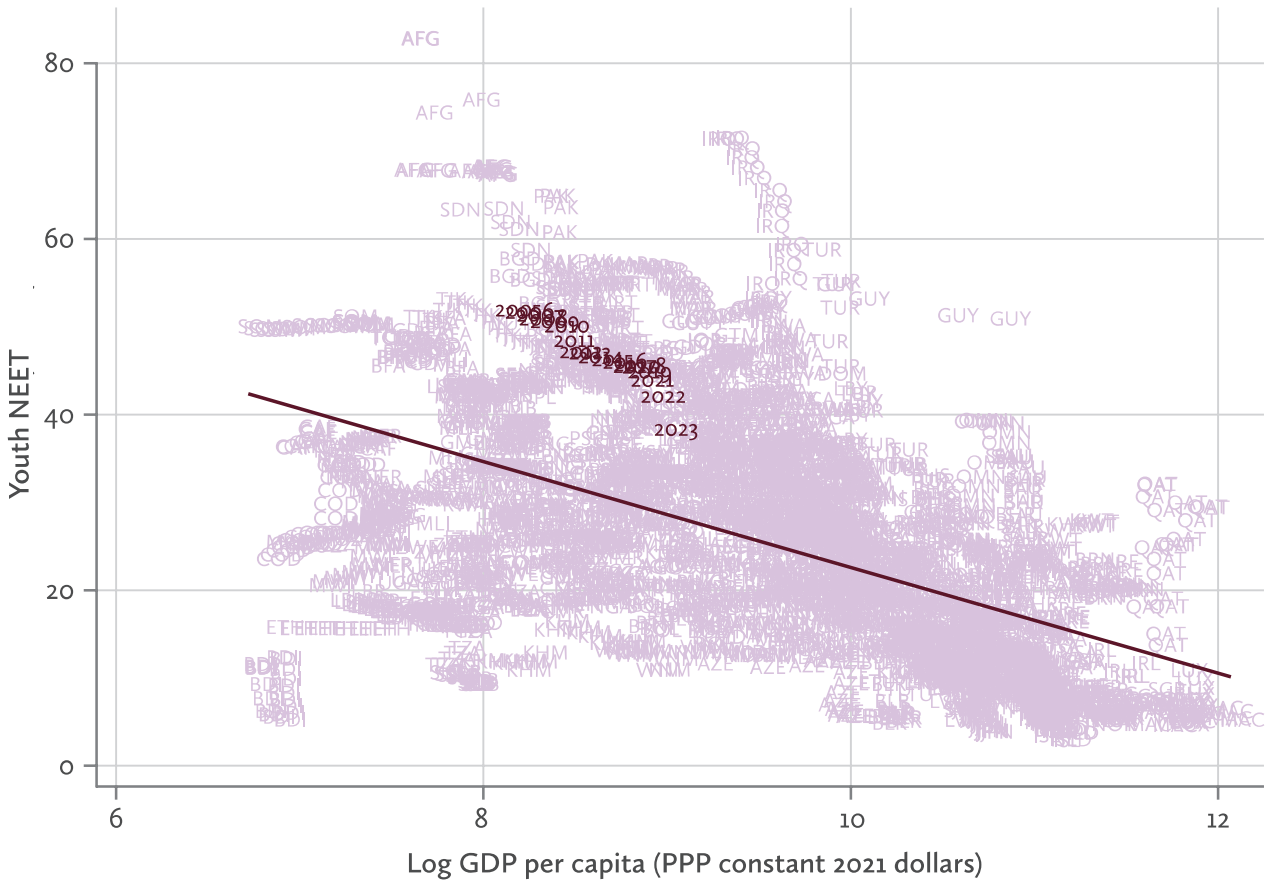
b: Men



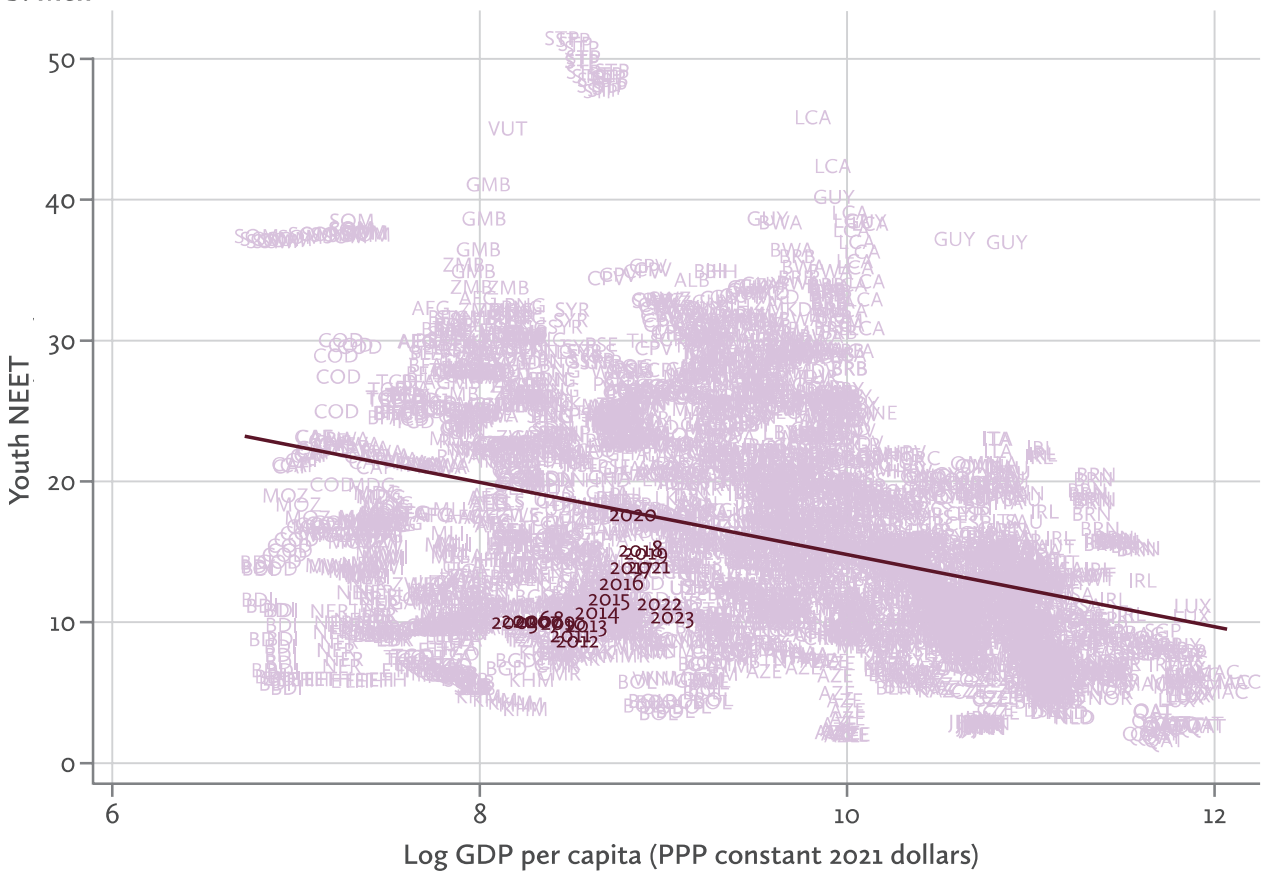
Sources and notes: World Development Indicators. Darker colours represent India across various years.

Figure 2.15: Youth NEET in international perspective

a: Women



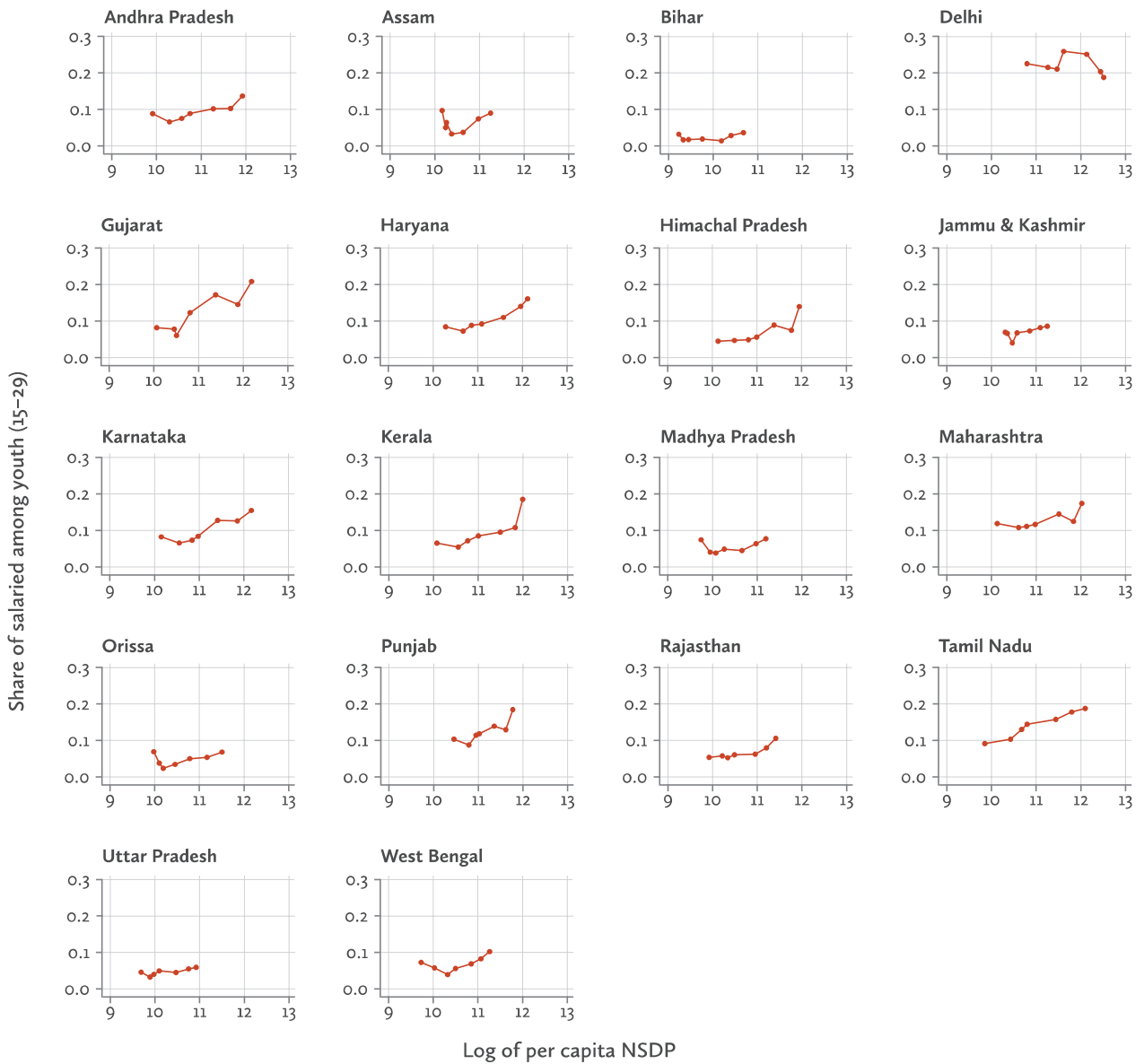
b: Men



Sources and notes: World Development Indicators

Figure 2.17: Relationship between log NSDP per capita, proportion of youth in salaried employment and share of youth.

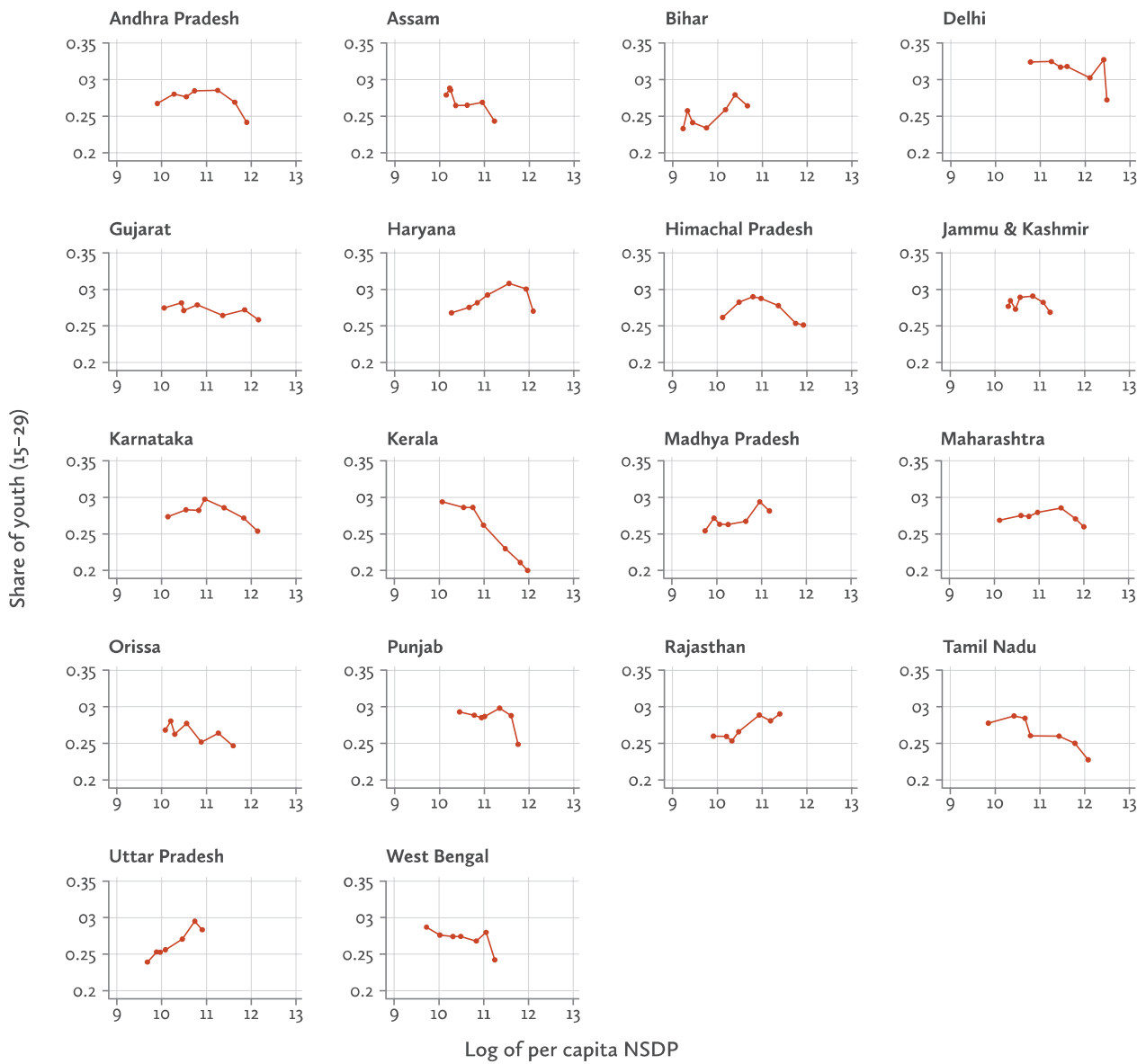
a: Proportion of youth in salaried work versus log NSDP



Sources and notes: NSS EUS-PLFS various years and RBI Database of Indian Economy

Figure 2.17: Relationship between log NSDP per capita, proportion of youth in salaried employment and share of youth.

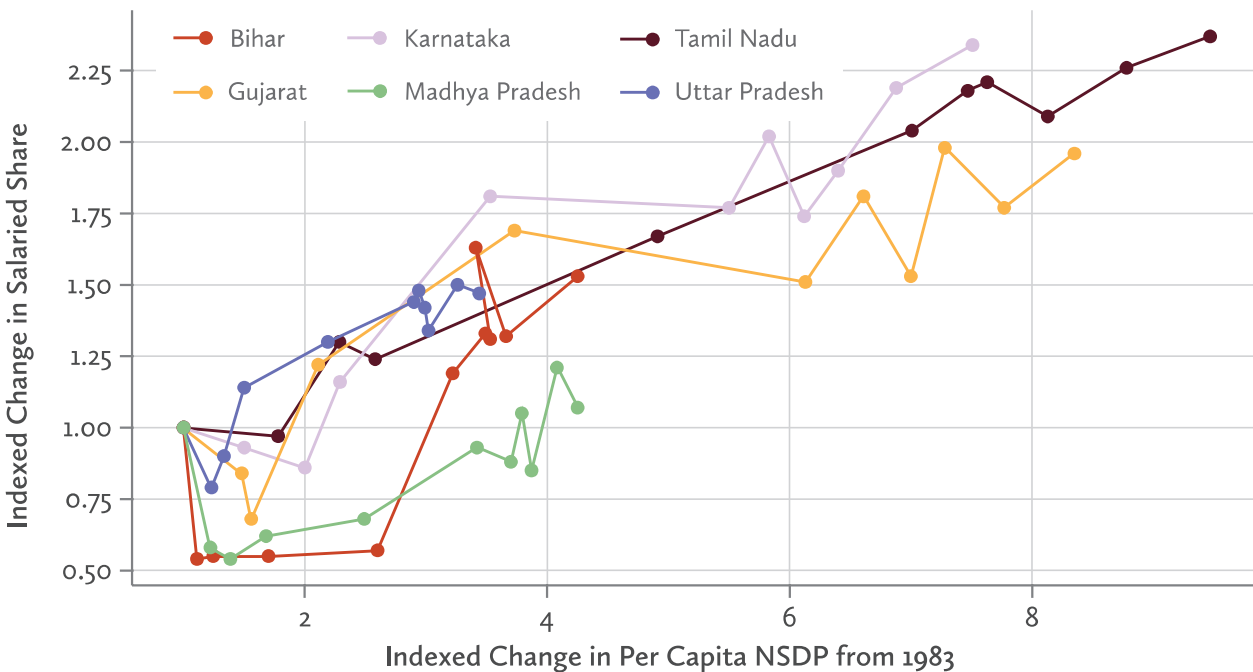
b: Proportion of youth by NSDP



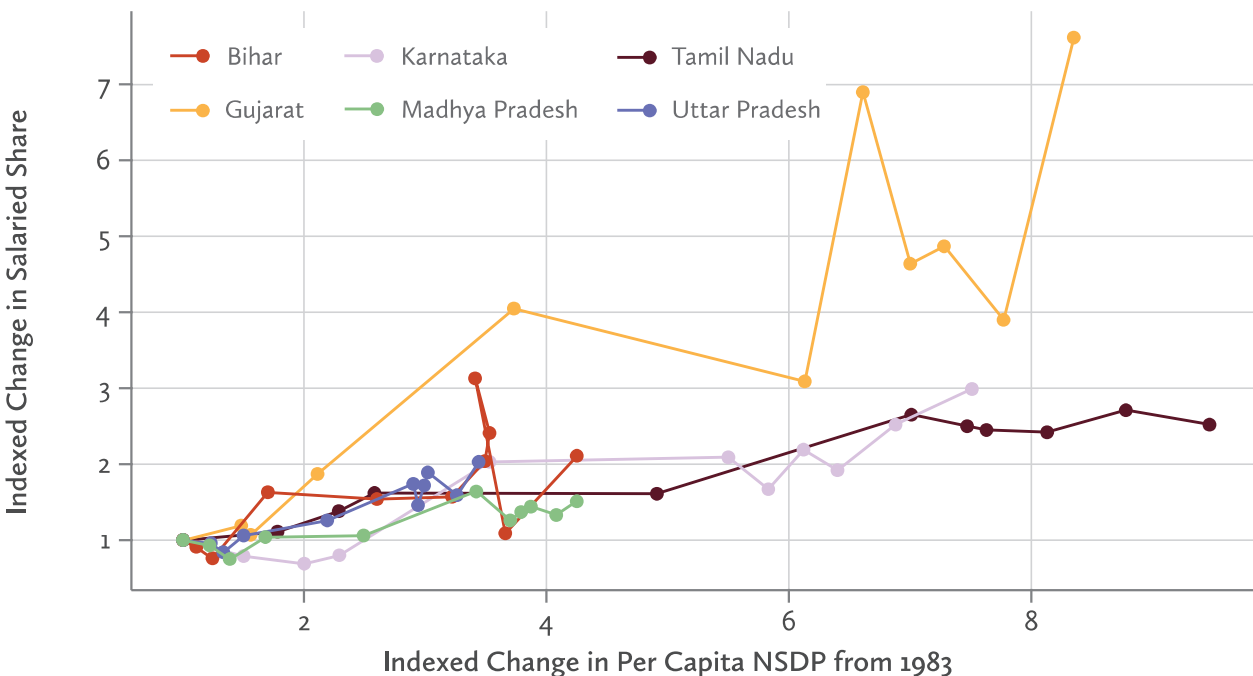
Sources and notes: NSS EUS-PLFS various years and RBI Database of Indian Economy

Figure 2.18: States' salaried employment share growth vis-a-vis economic growth

a: Male

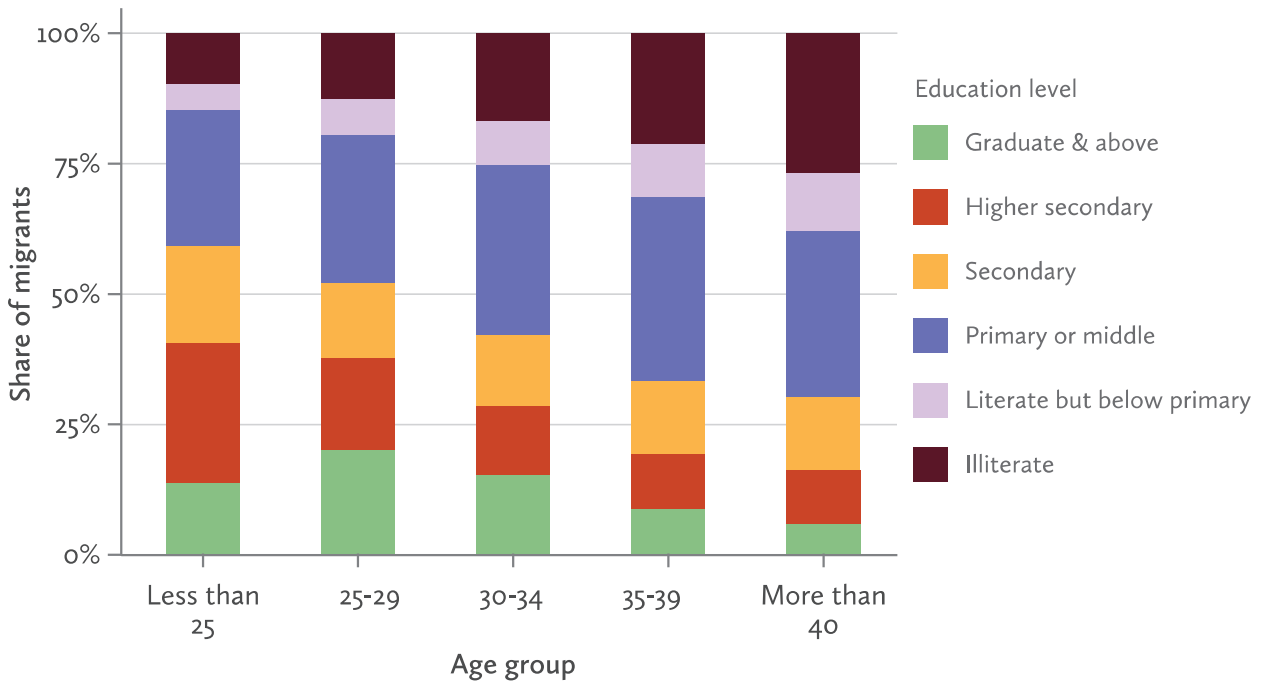


b: Female



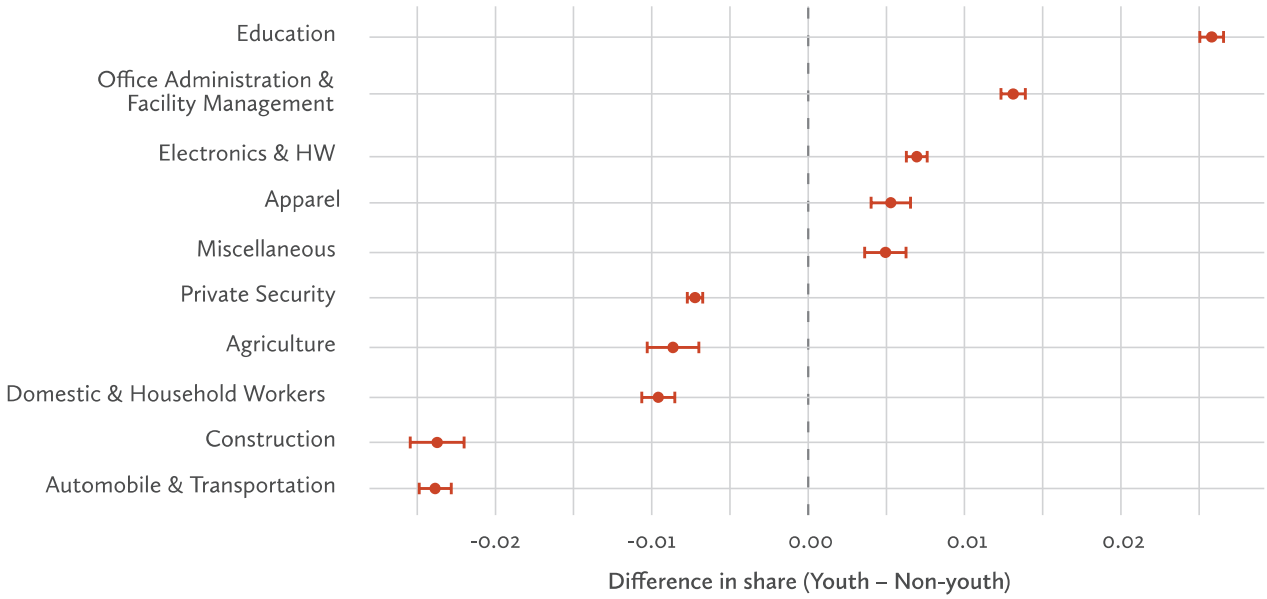
Source and notes : NSS EUS-PLFS various years and RBI Database on Indian Economy

Figure 2.19. Educational Distribution of Migrants (by Age)



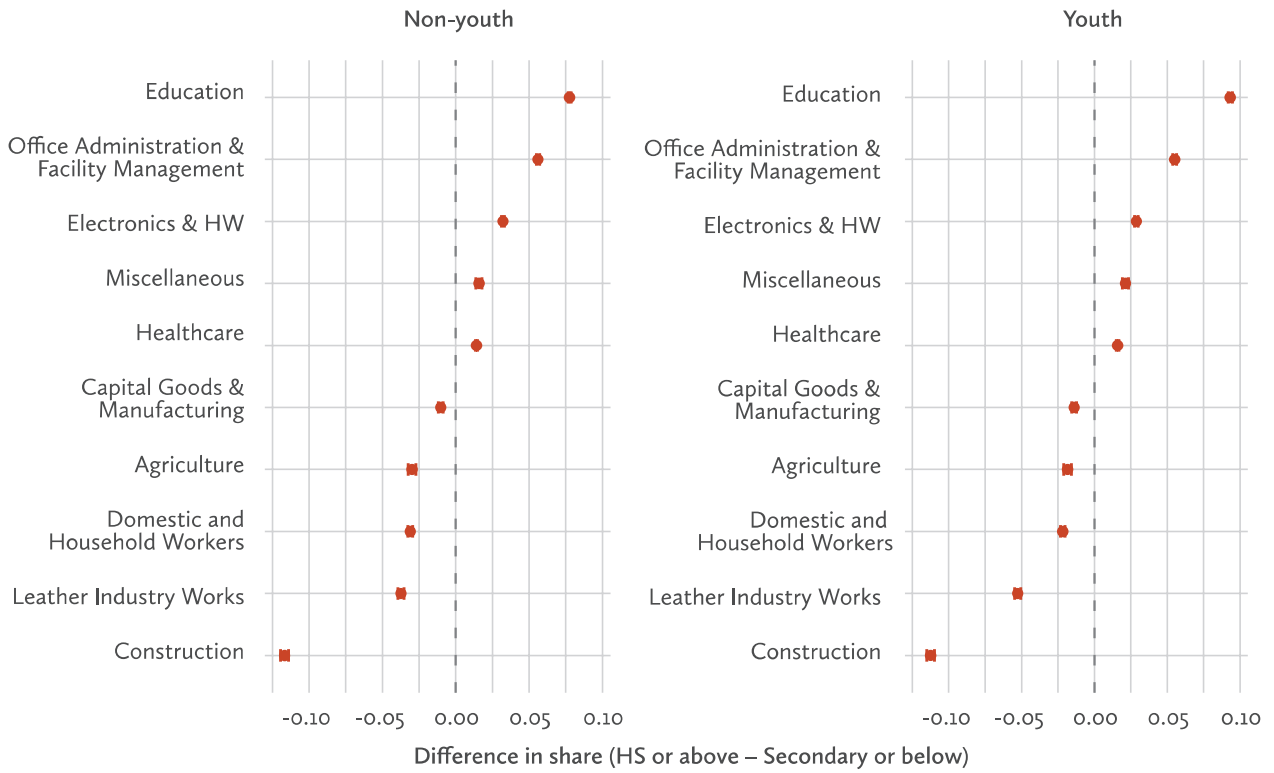
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov)

Figure 2.20: Young migrants more likely to be in education and office administration



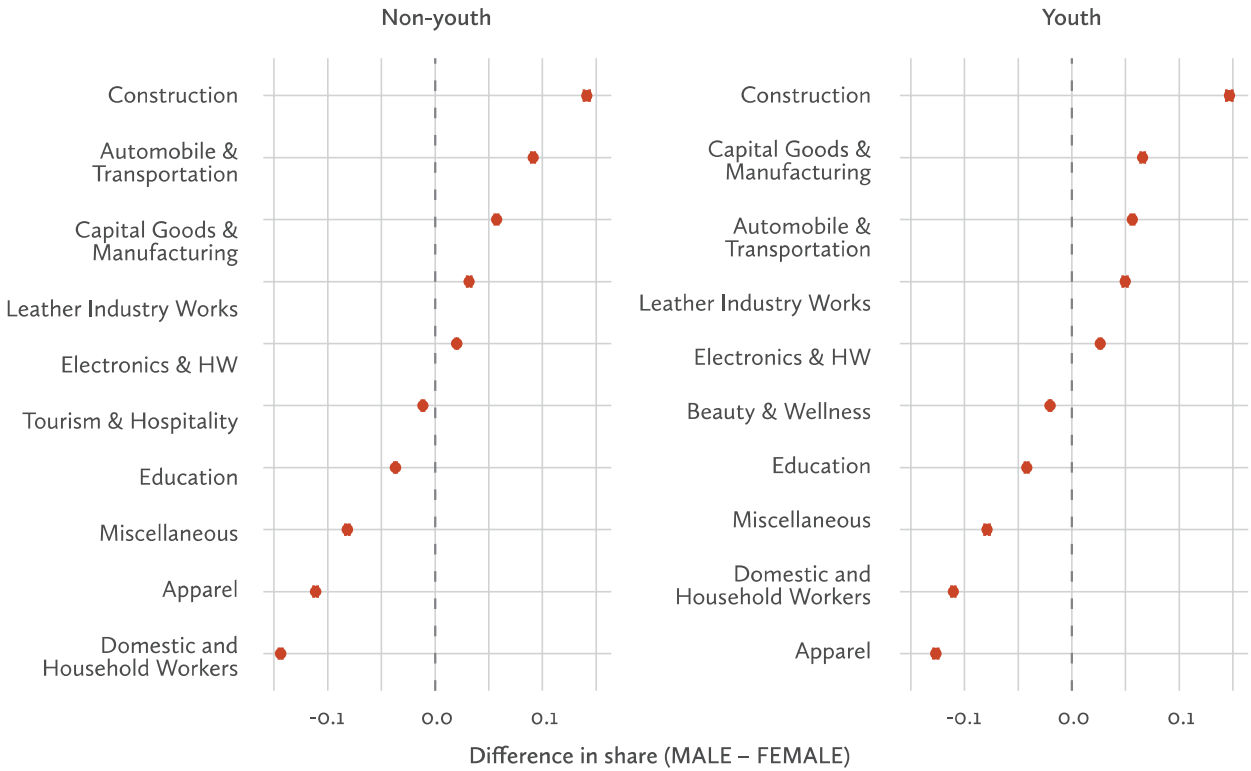
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov)

Figure 2.21: Top occupations of migrants, by level of education



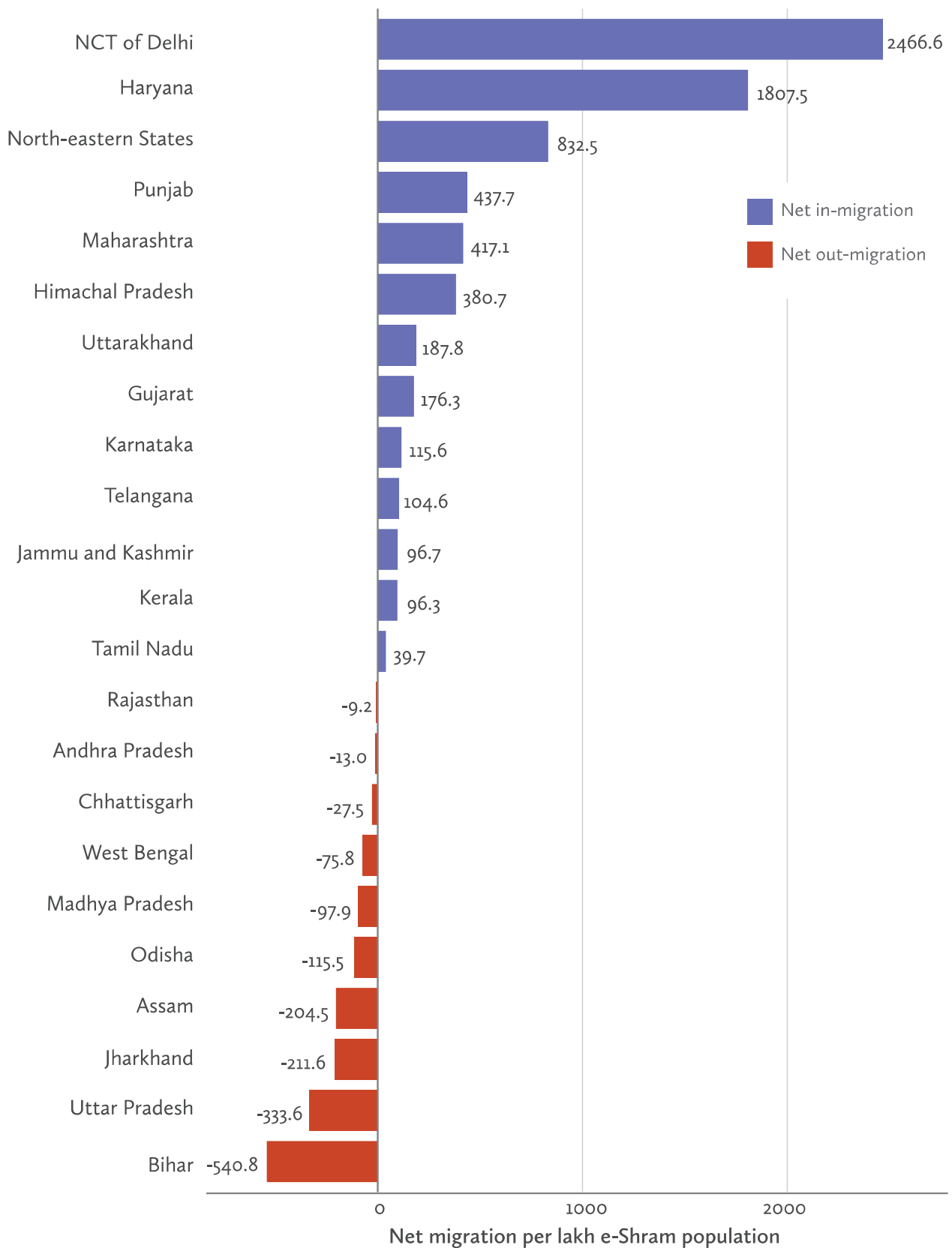
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov). Top 5 occupations per age group (95% CI) that favours HS+ or Below 10th Workers.

Figure 2.22: Within male and female migrants, major occupations are the same for young and old



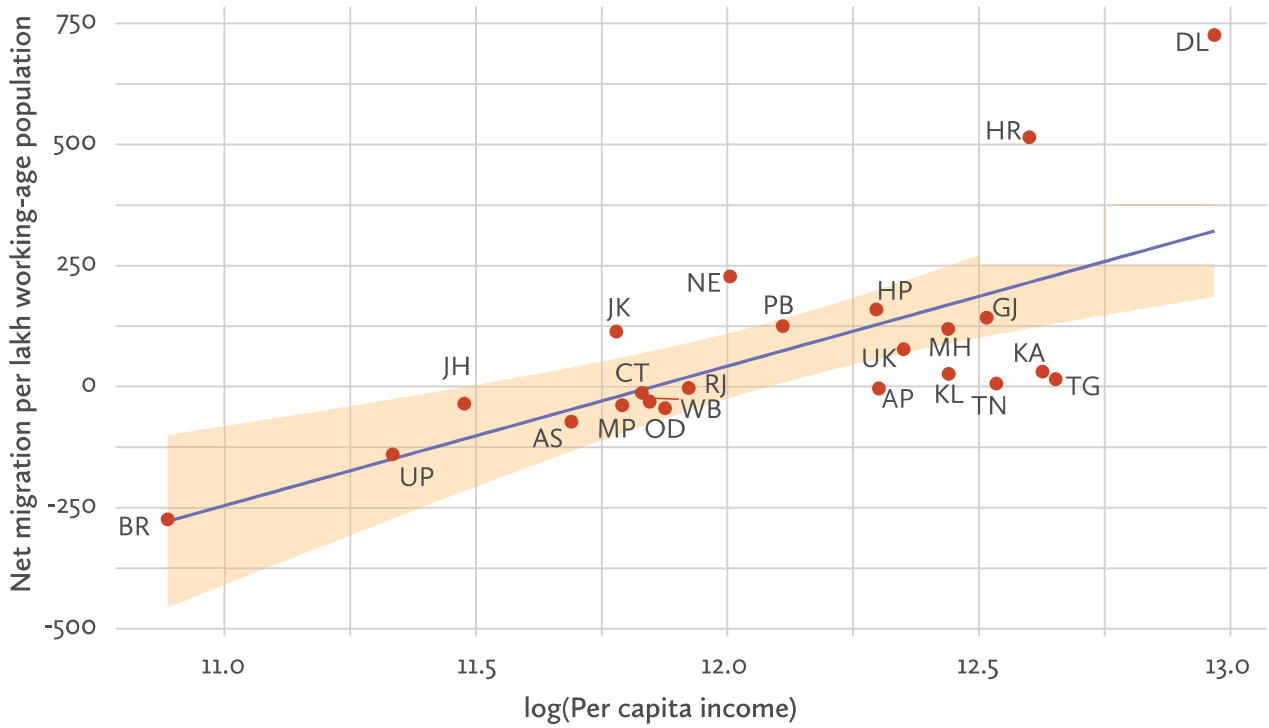
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov)

Figure 2.23: Net migration flows by state



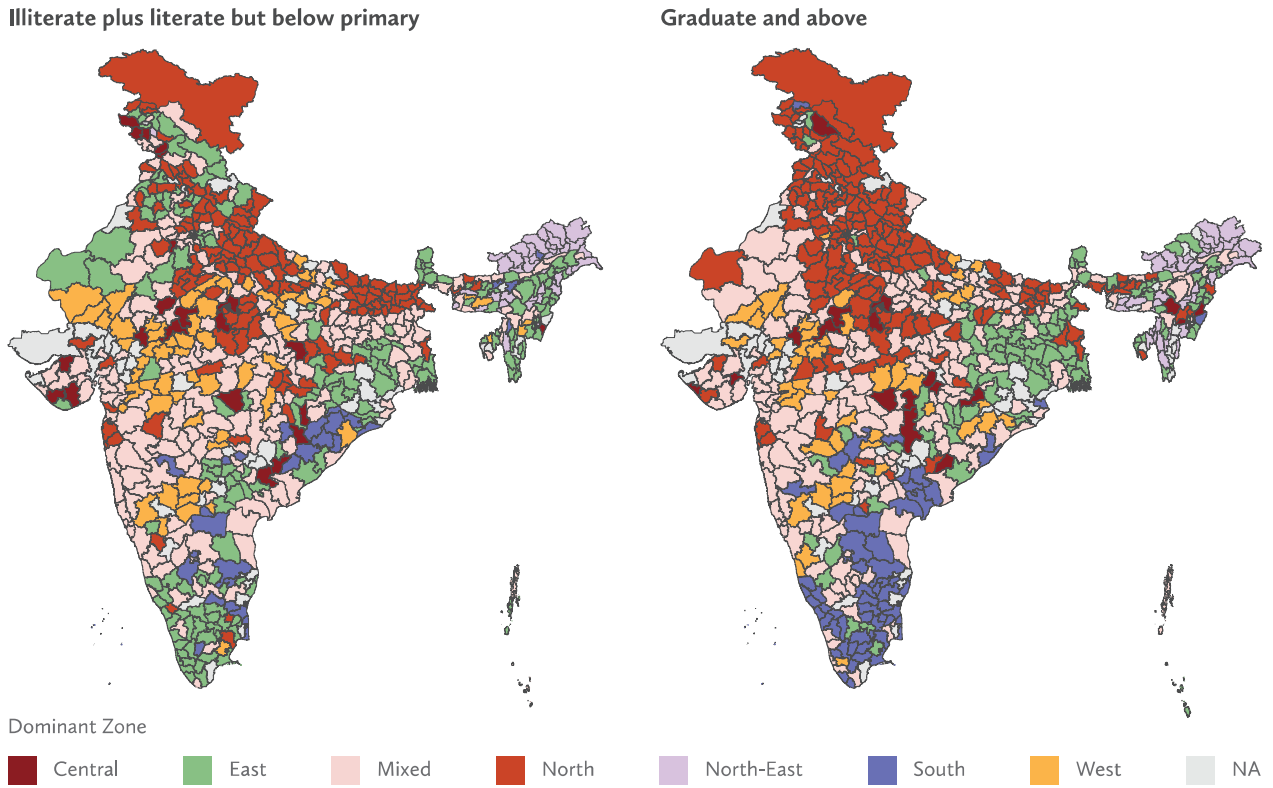
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov)

Figure 2.24: Workers move from economically poorer to relatively richer states



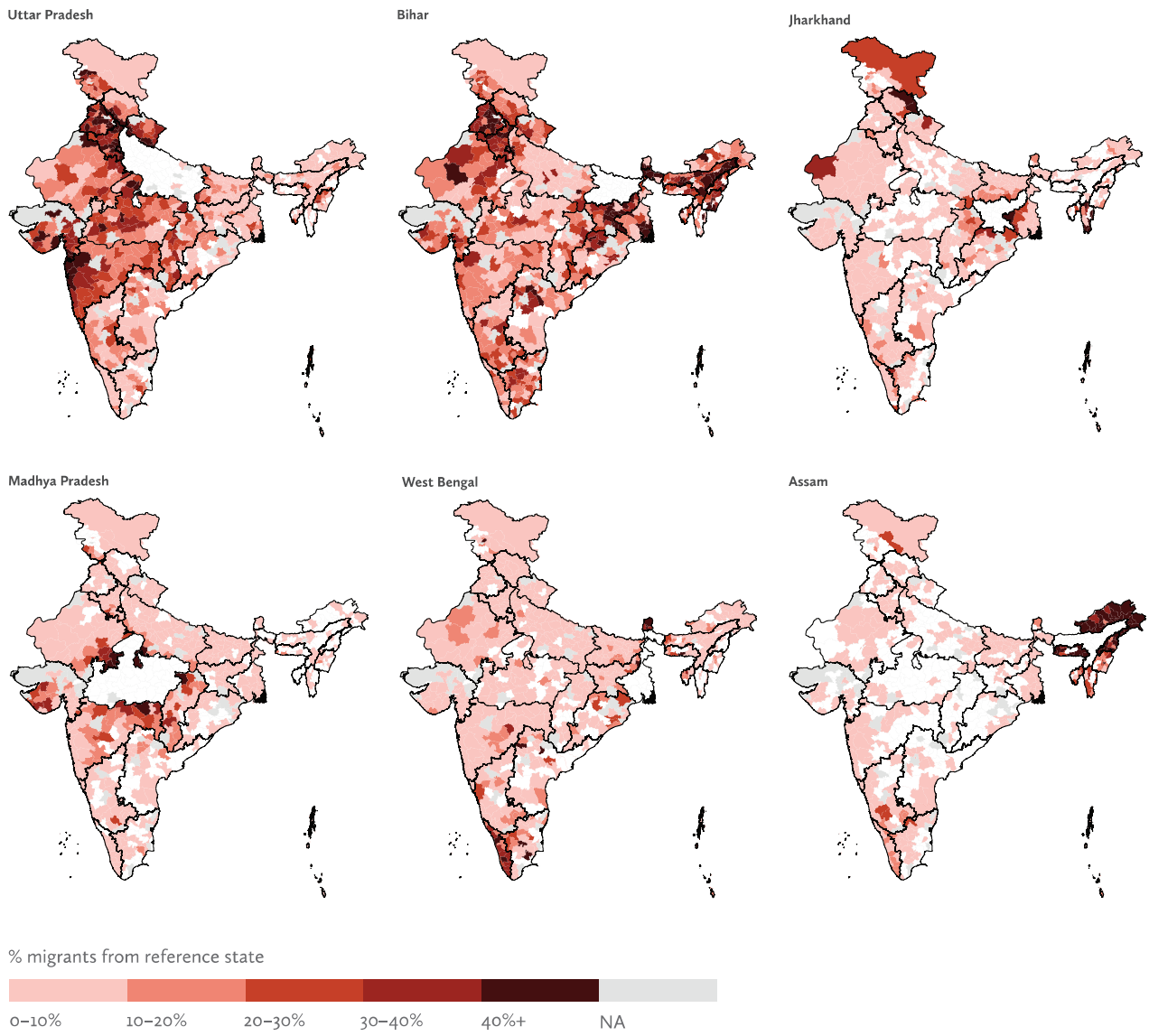
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov) and NSDP from RBI Database on Indian Economy

Figure: 2.25: More educated migrants travel less distances



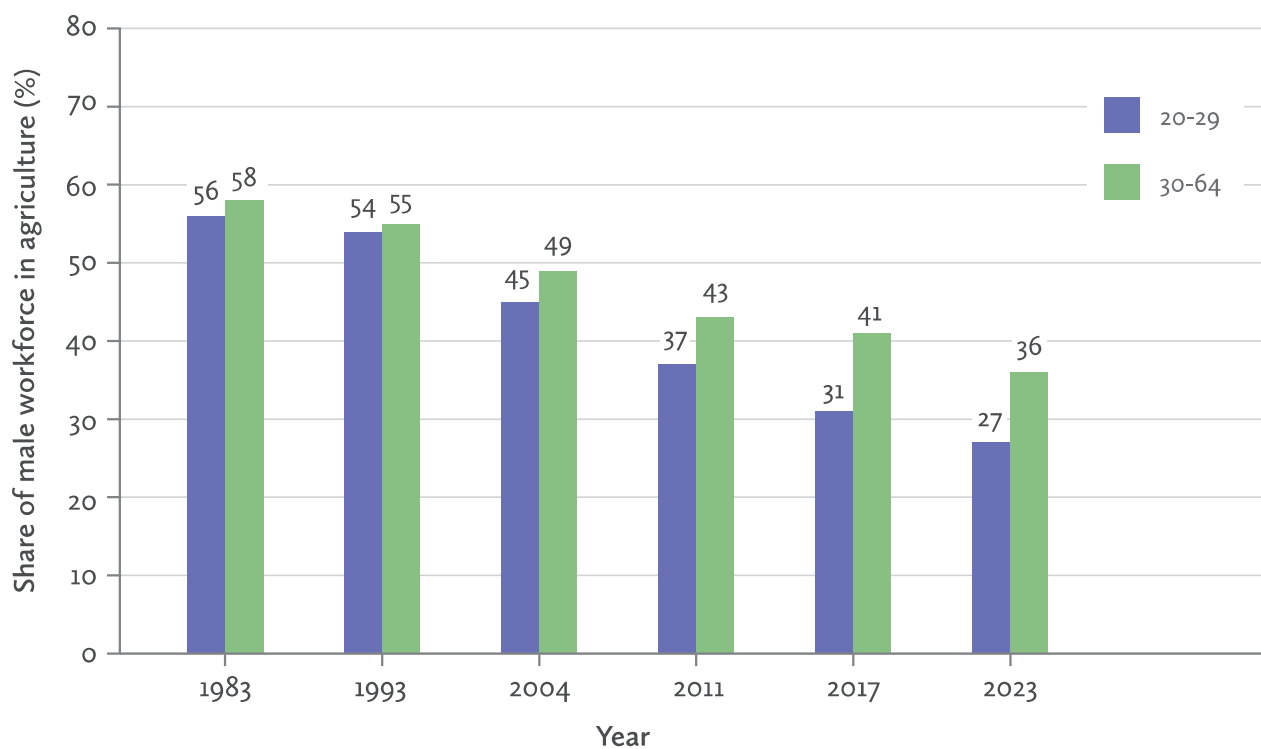
Sources and notes: e-Shram portal

Figure 2.26: Destination of a migrant depends on a variety of factors including distance and networks



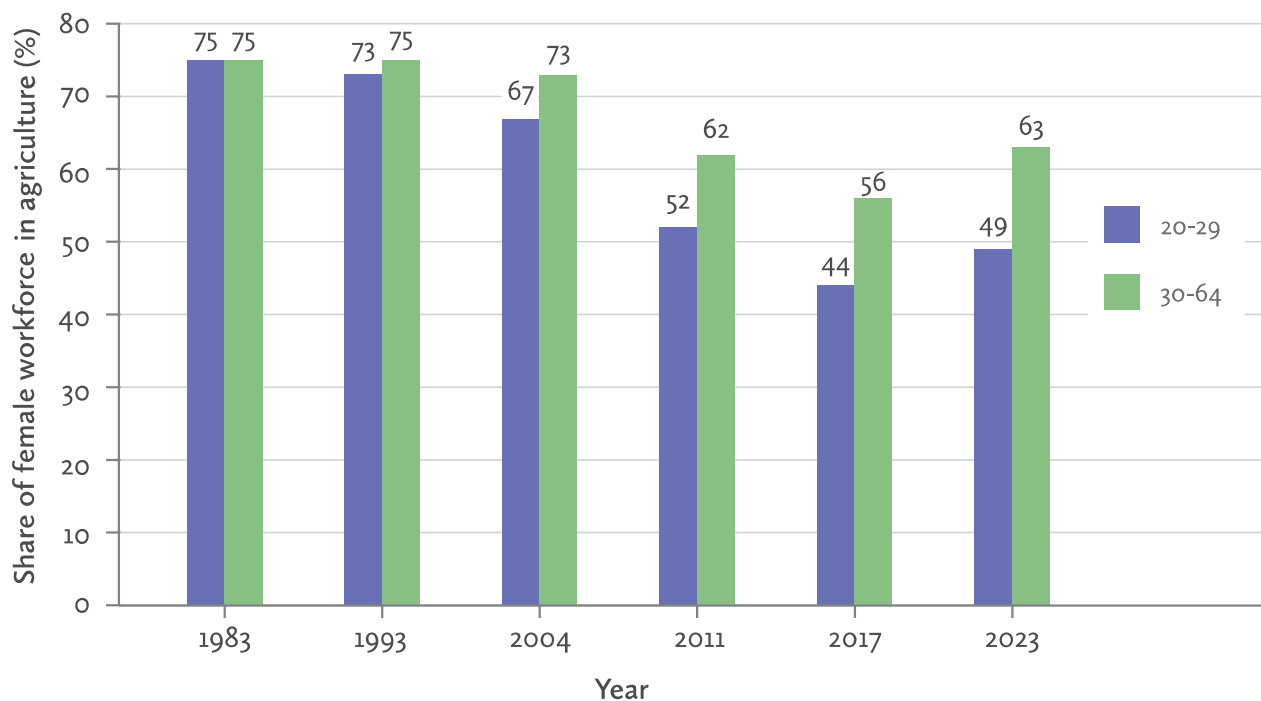
Sources and notes: e-Shram database (accessed via Datagov)

Figure 3.1: Younger men have exited agriculture faster than older men



Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

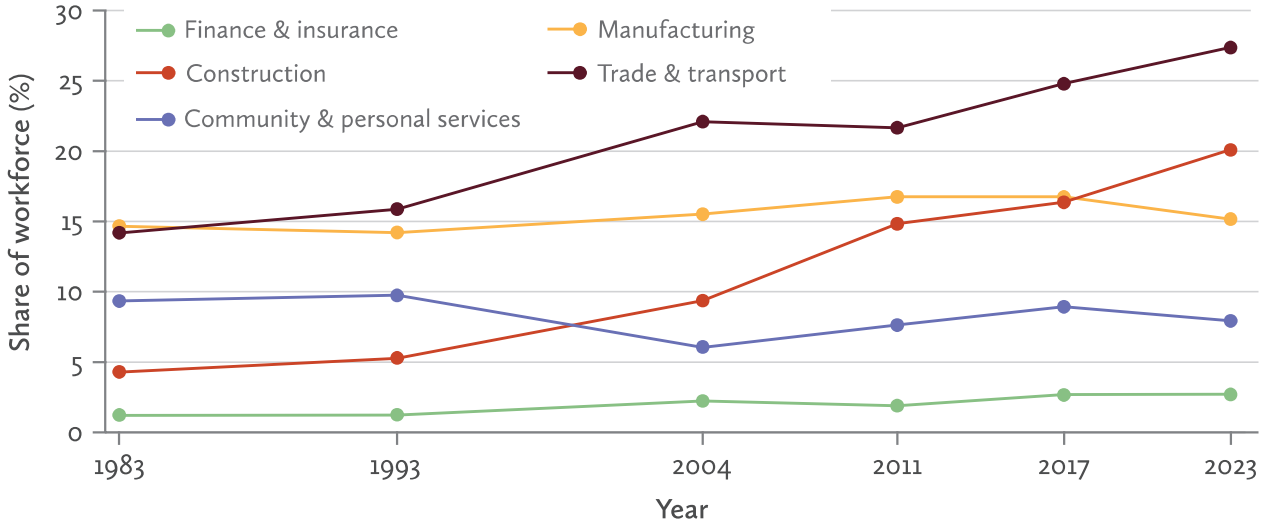
Figure 3.2: Recent structural regression seen for both young and older women



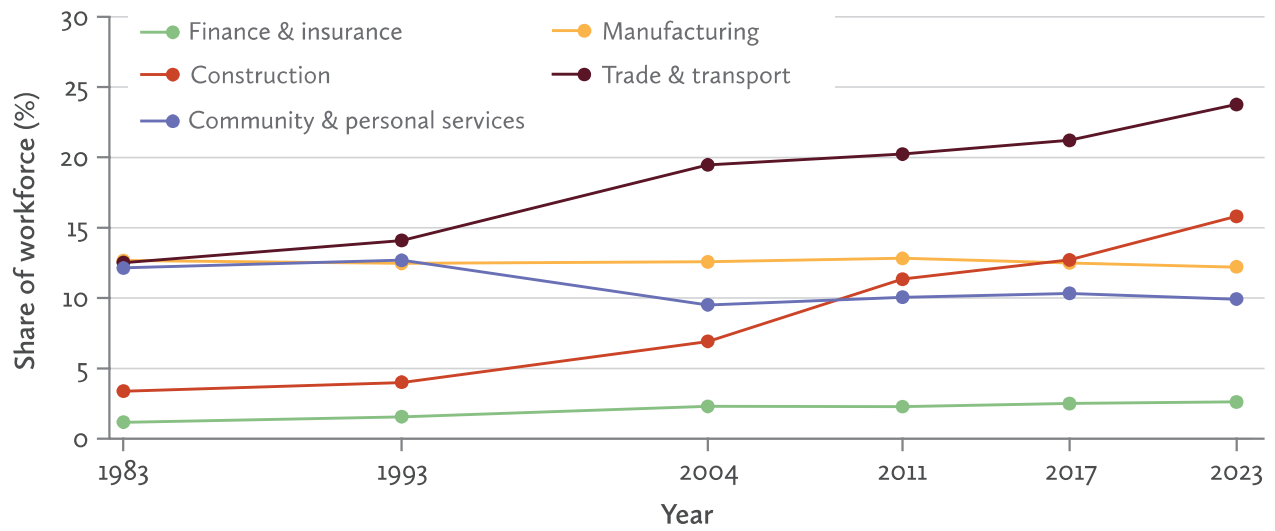
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

Figure 3.3: Major non-agricultural employers are not very different between young and old men

a: Young men (20-29 years)



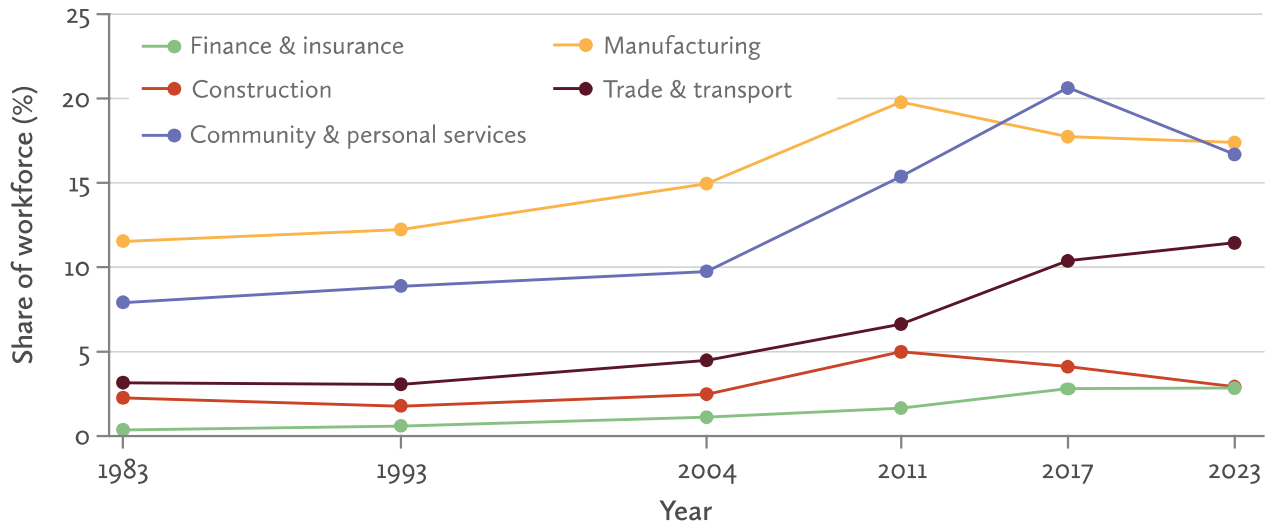
b: Older men (30-64 years)



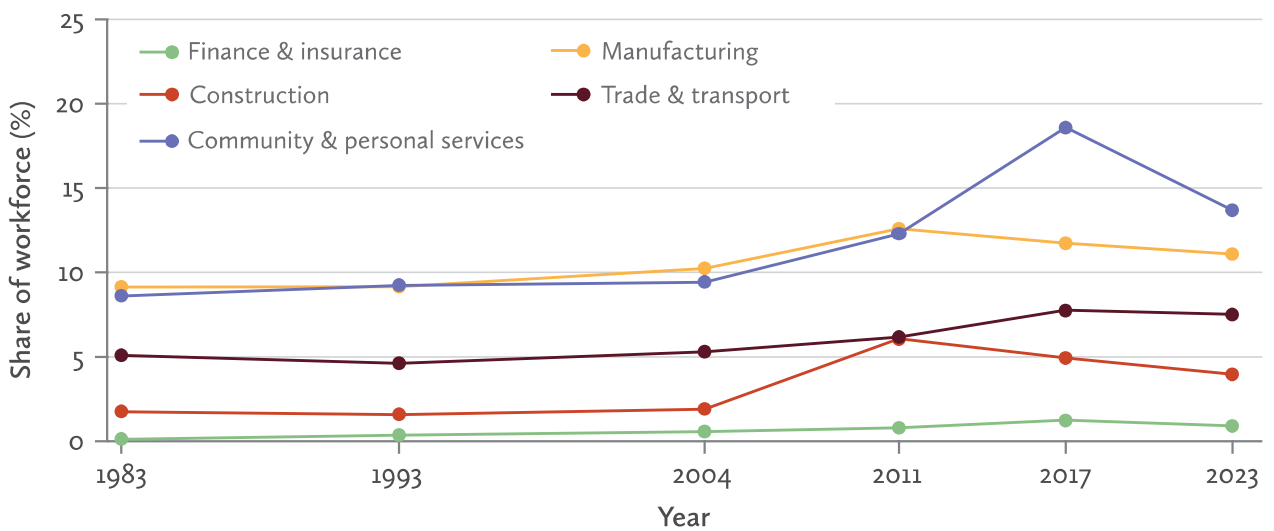
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

Figure 3.4: Manufacturing has emerged as a major employer for young women in recent years

a: Young women (20-29 years)



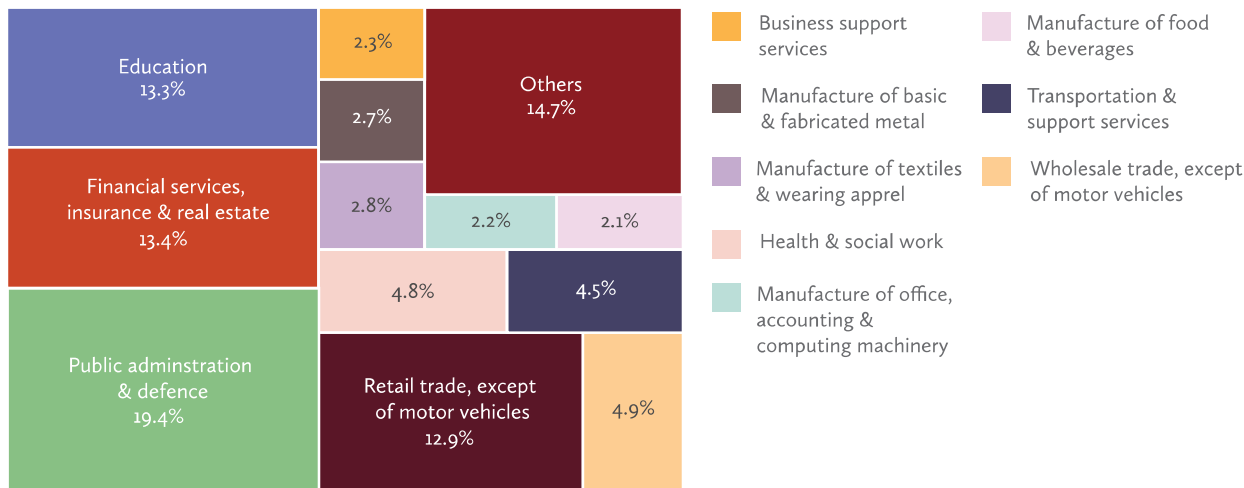
b: Older women (30-64 years)



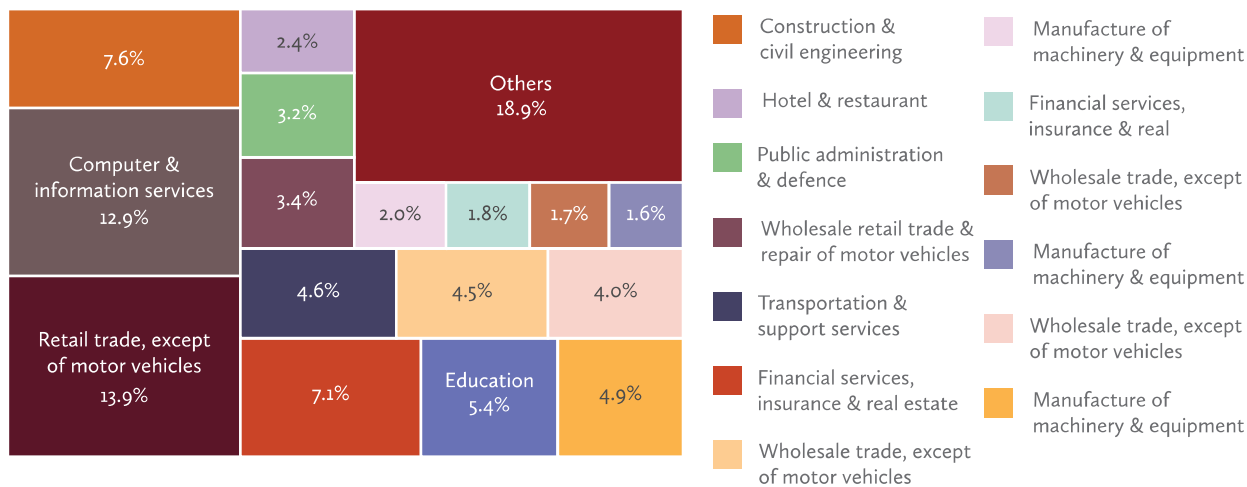
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

Figure 3.5: Computer & information services and construction emerge as major sectors of graduate male employment in 2023

a: 1983



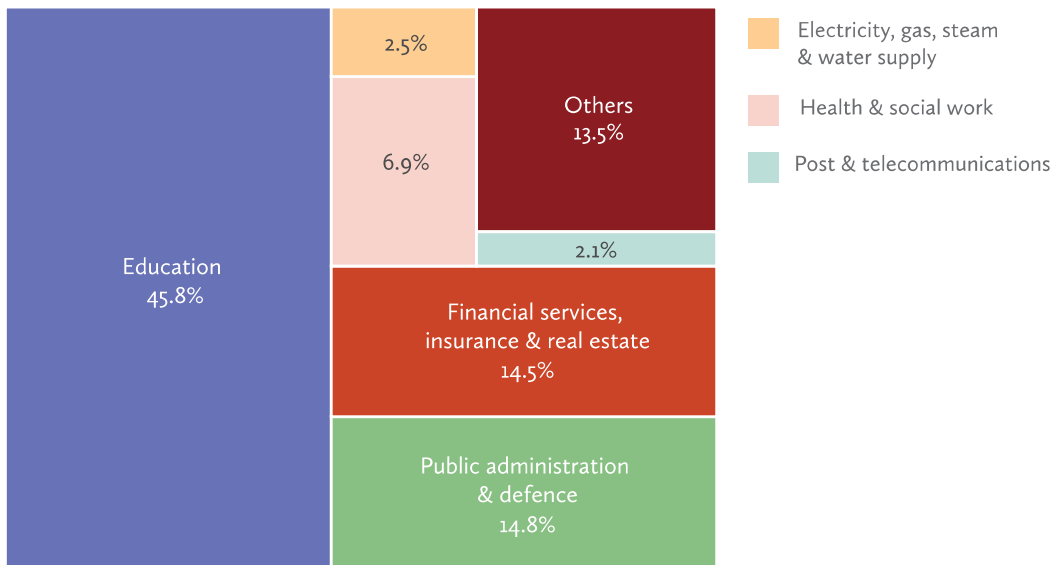
b: 2023



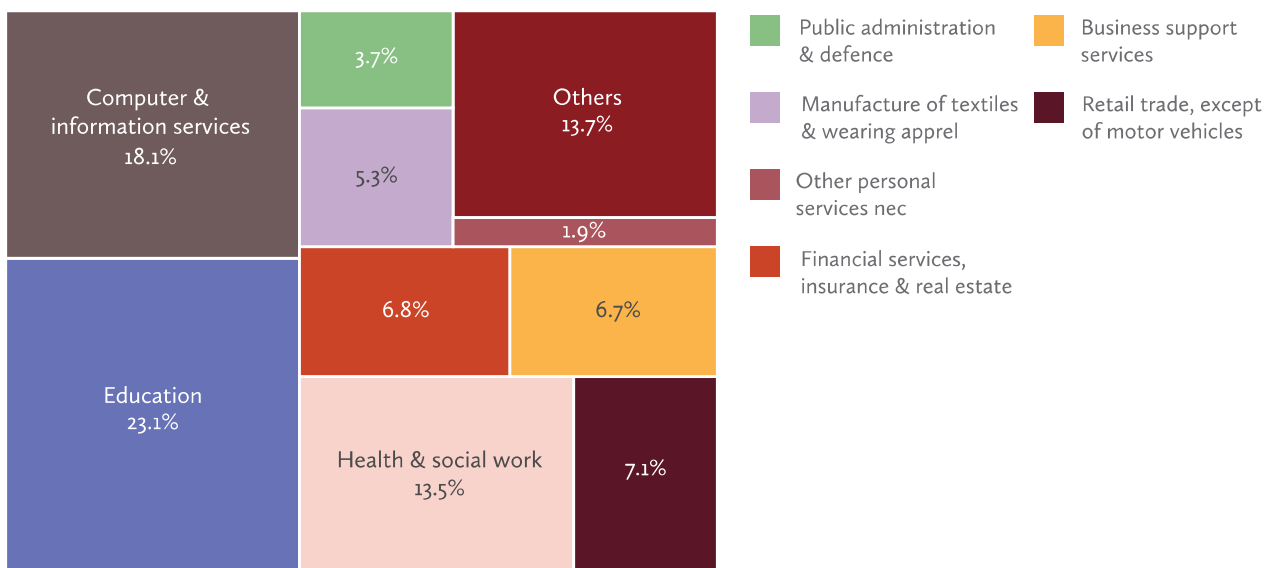
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24. Includes only young (20-29) men. Shares correspond to non-agricultural workforce.

Figure 3.6: Education, and more recently, computer and information services major employers of graduate women

a: 1983



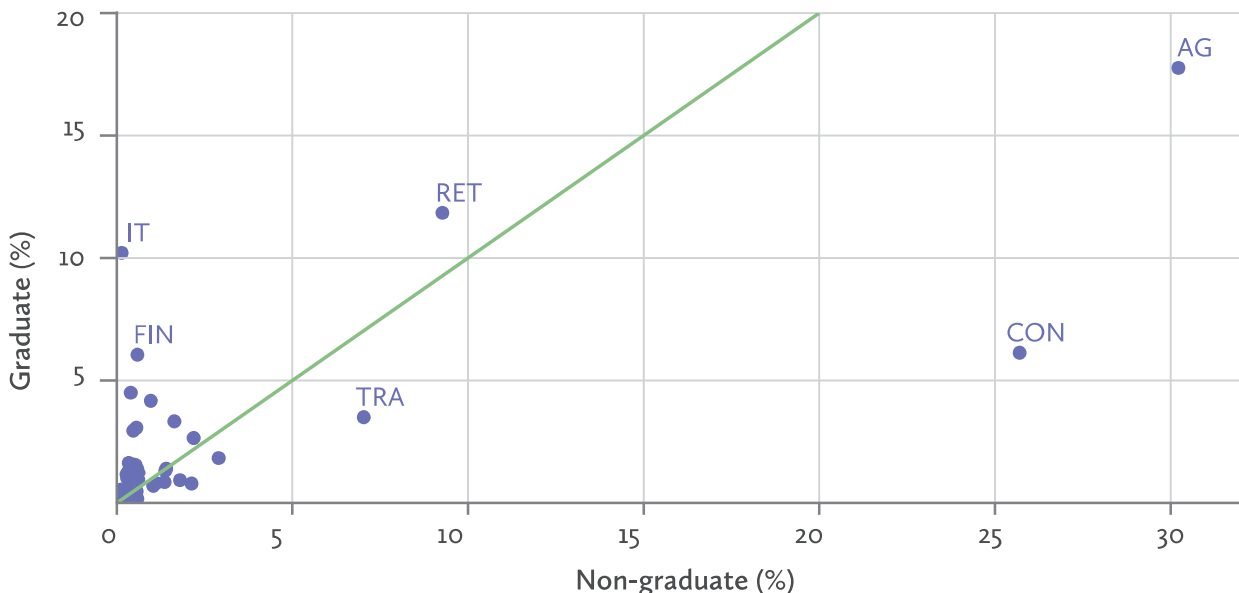
b: 2023



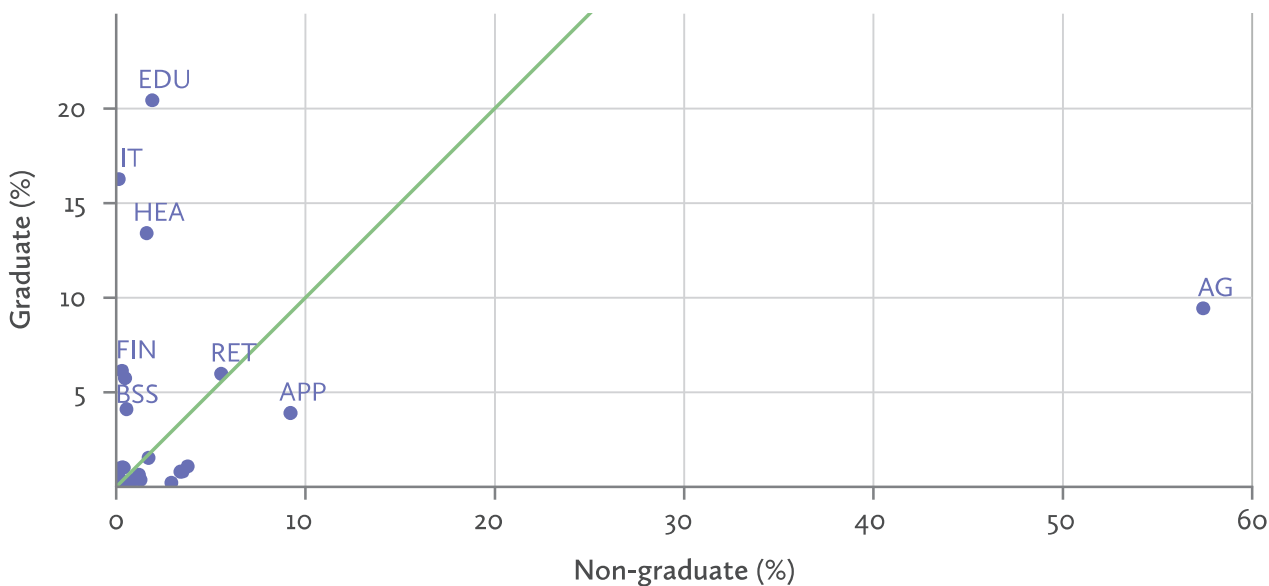
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24. Includes only young (20-29) women. Shares correspond to non-agricultural workforce.

Figure 3.7: Major employers are very similar between graduate and non-graduate men

a: Men

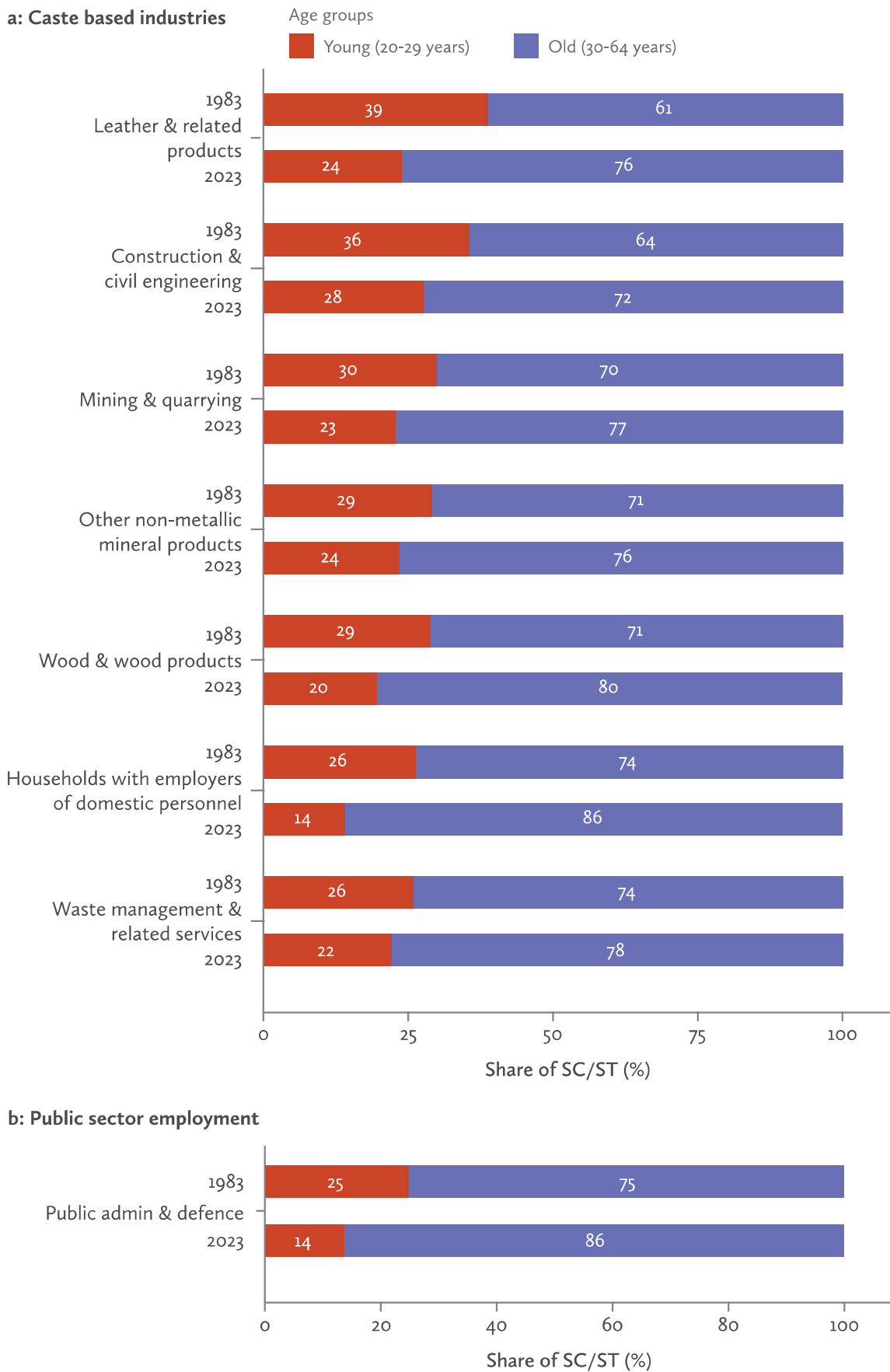


b: Women



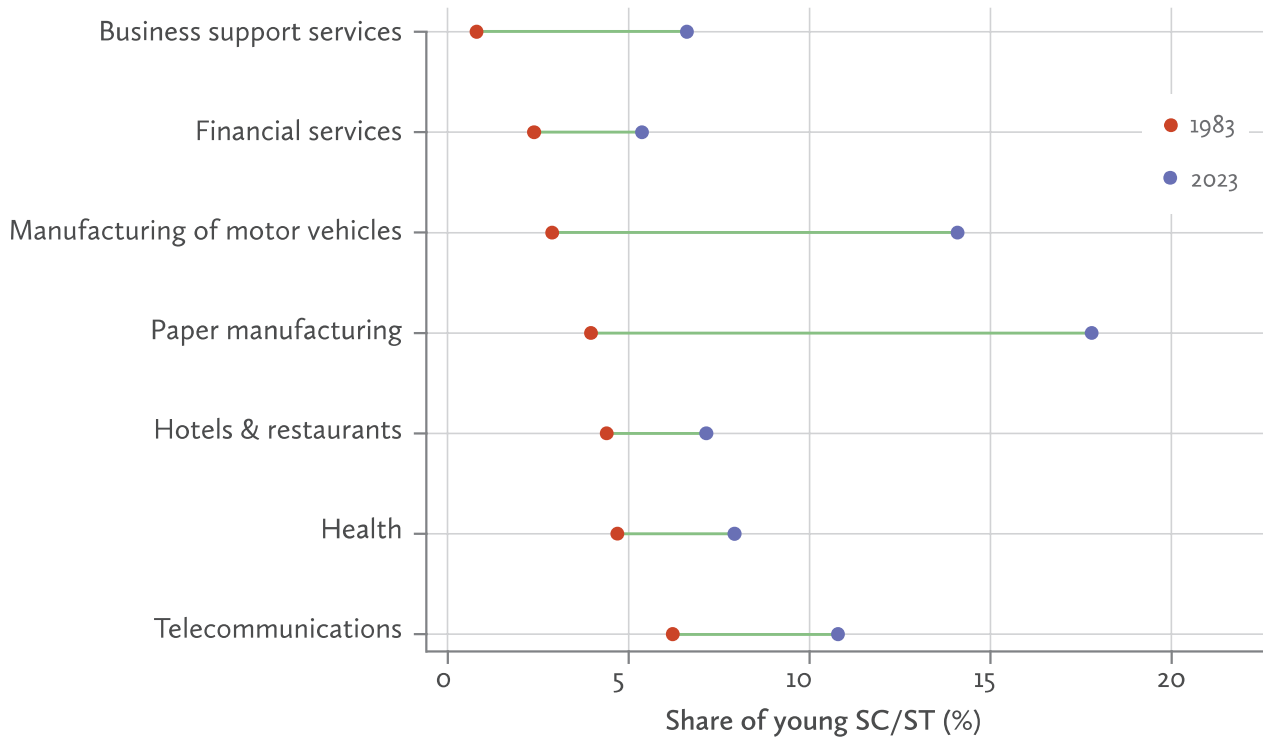
Sources and notes: Pooled PLFS 2021-22, PLFS 2022-23 PLFS 2023-24. The line corresponds to the 45 degree line of equality. AG - Agriculture, CON - Construction, RET - Retail Trade, IT - Information Technology, APP - Manufacture of Apparel, BSS - Business and Support services, MOT - Manufacture of motor vehicle, HEA - Health, LEA - Leather and footwear, FIN - Financial services, EQP - Manufacture of telecommunications equipment, TEL - Post and Telecommunications.

Figure 3.8: Declining share of young SC/ST workers in traditionally caste-based industries and in public administration



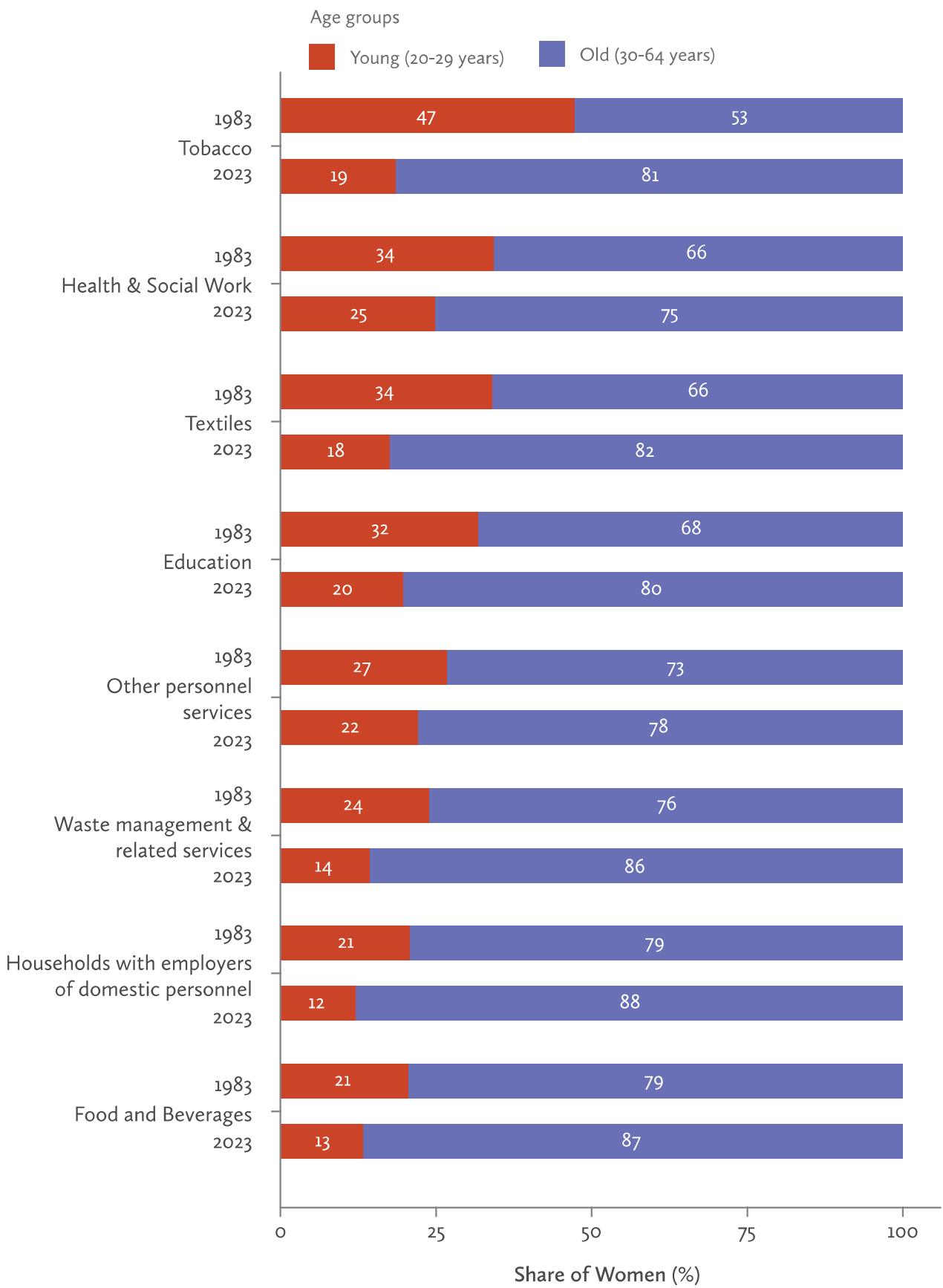
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24

Figure 3.9: Top ten emerging employers of young SC/STs are not in typically caste-based industries



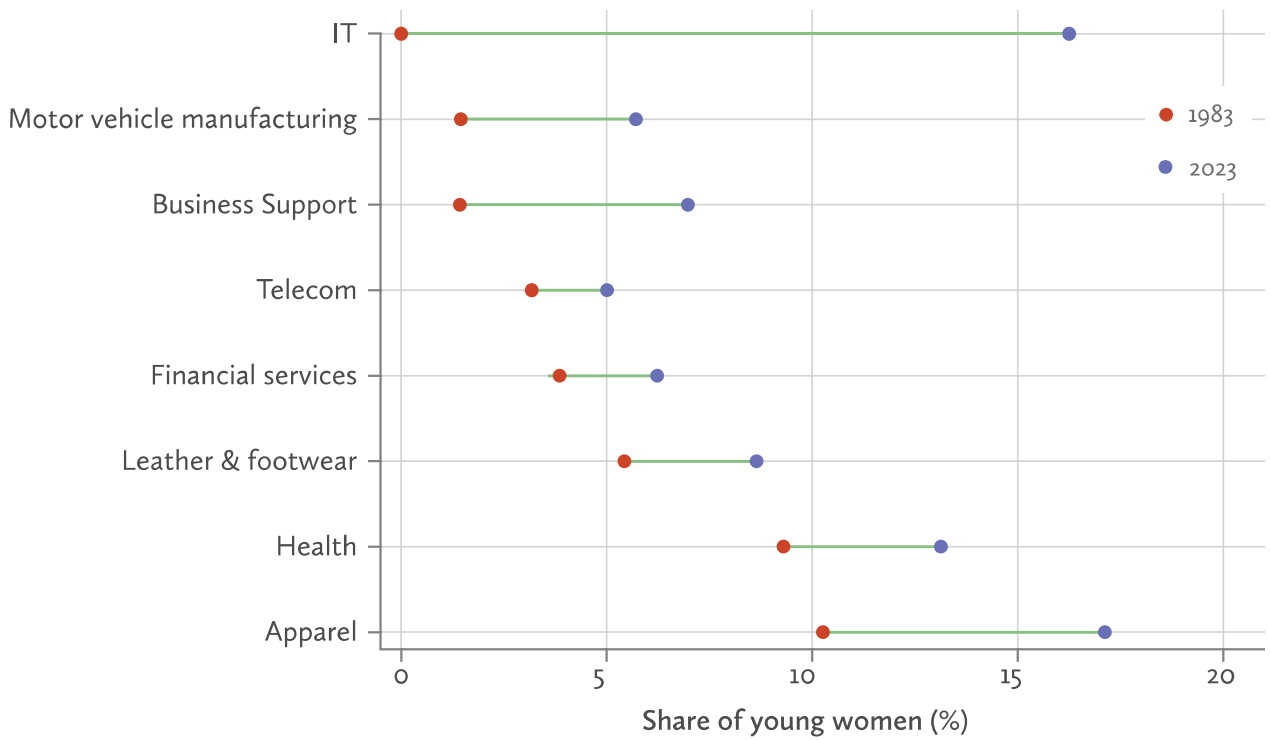
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24.

Figure 3.10: Female dominated industries have seen a declining share of young women



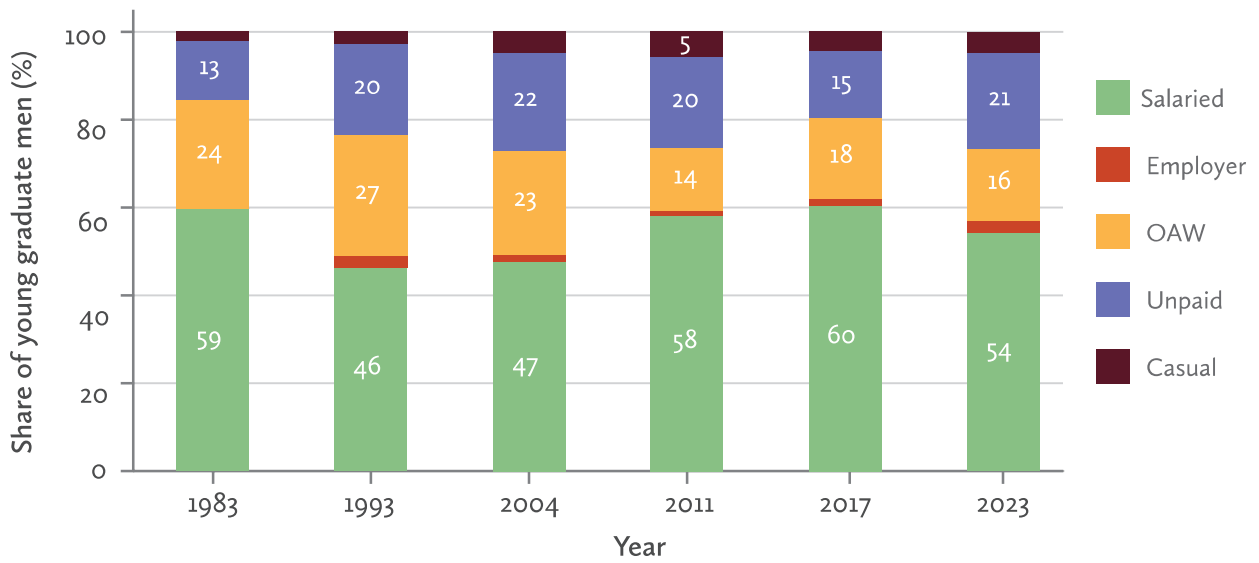
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24

Figure 3.11: Significant increase in the share of young women in IT and Business support services



Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84 and PLFS 2023-24.

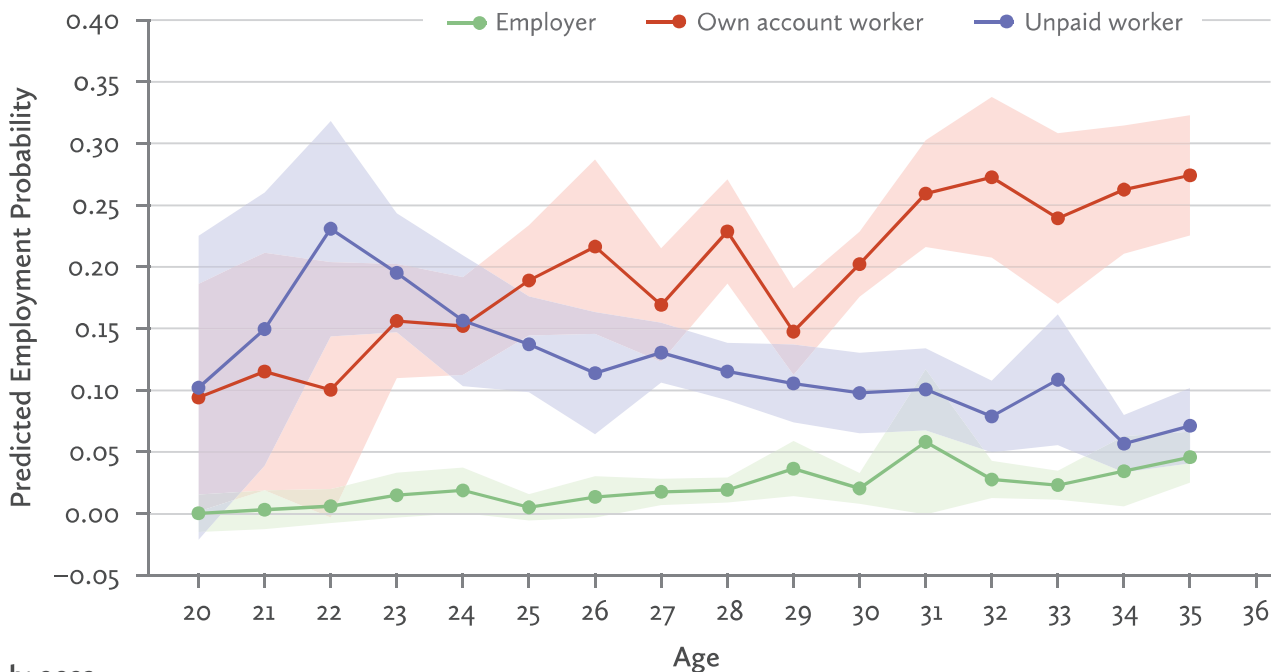
Figure 3.12: Sharp increase in unpaid family work among young graduate men between 2017 and 2023



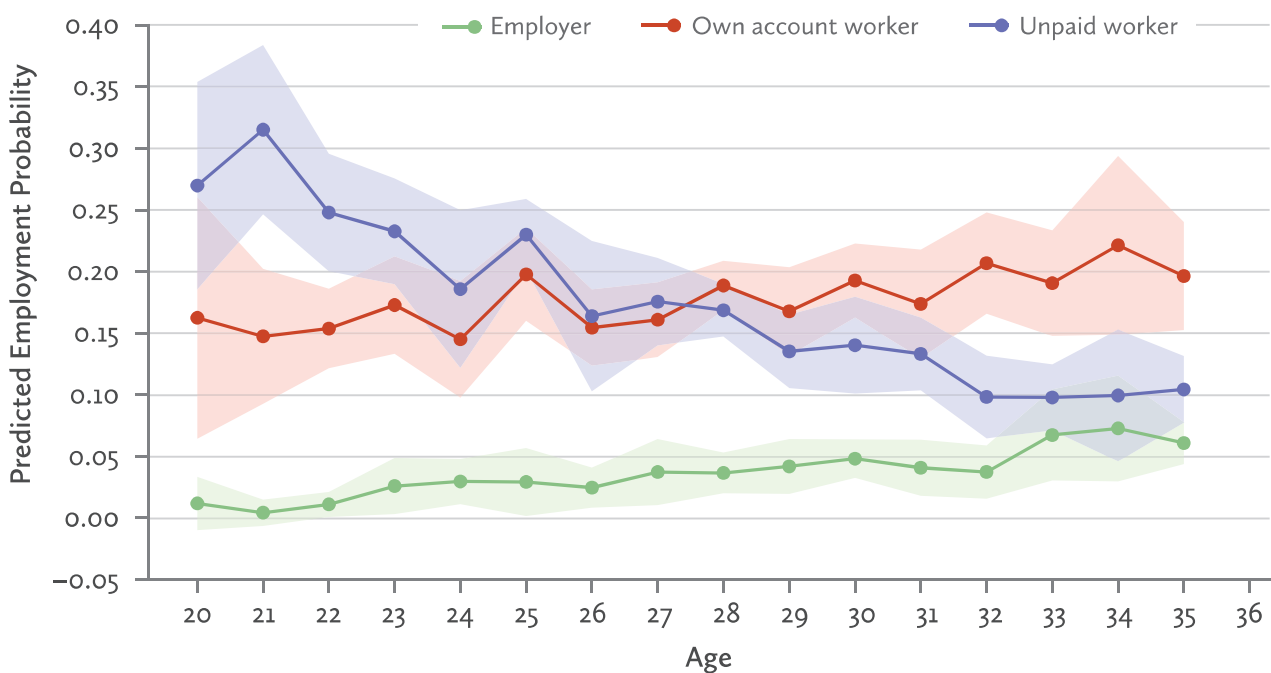
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24. Includes only young (20-29) graduate men. OAW refers to Own Account Workers.

Figure 3.13: Between 2017 and 2023, probability of young graduate men being in unpaid work is higher at every age

a: 2017

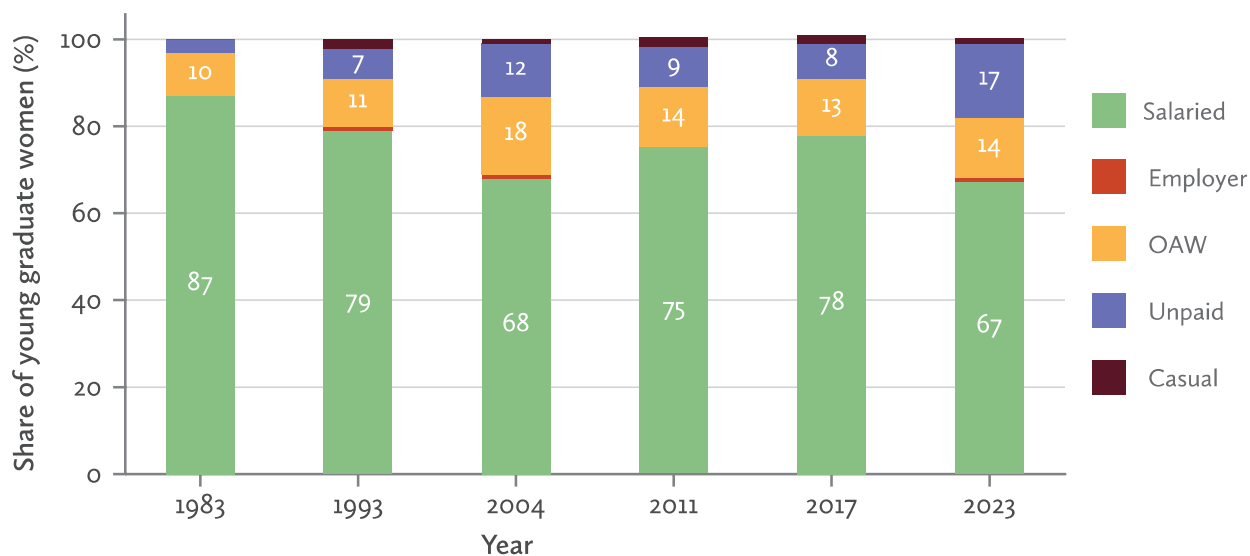


b: 2023



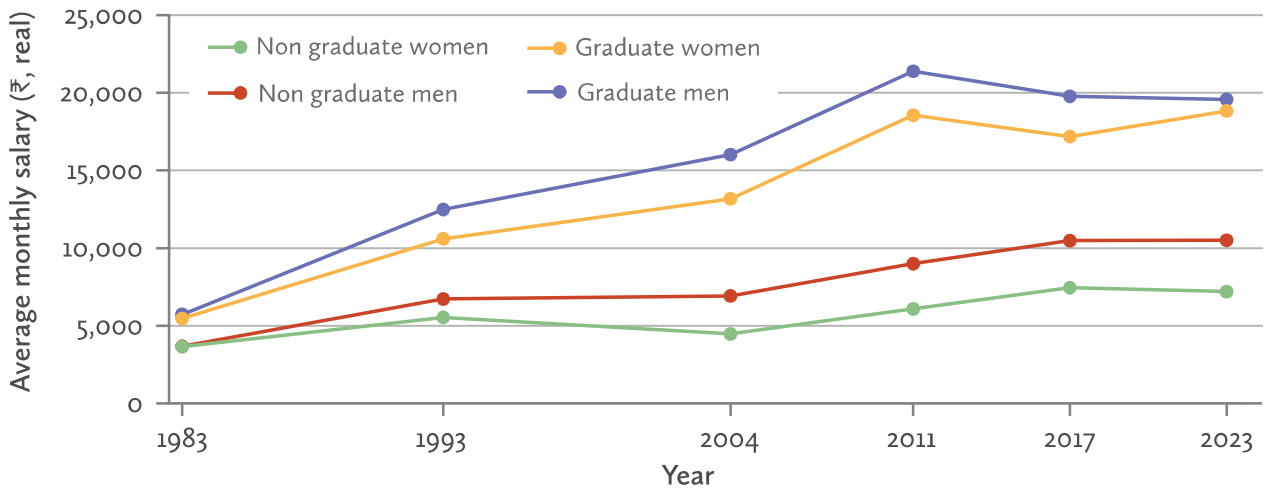
Source and notes: PLFS 2017-18 & 2022-23. Controls include age, marital status, religion, caste, technical education, employment type of household head, and region-specific expenditure quintiles. Includes only graduate men. Shaded area represents 95% confidence interval.

Figure 3.14: Majority of graduate women are in salaried employment, although unpaid work has also increased in the recent years



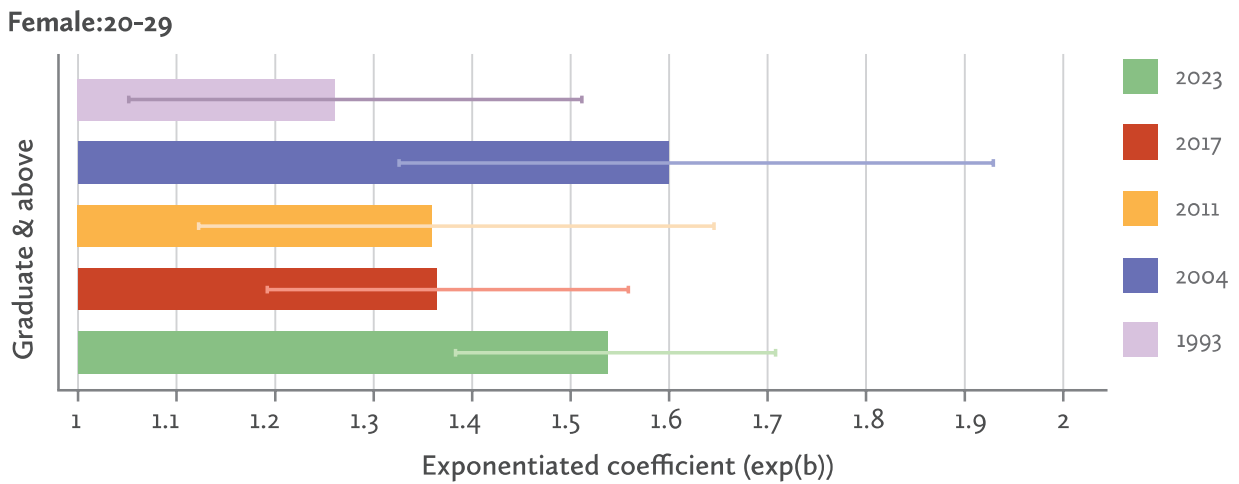
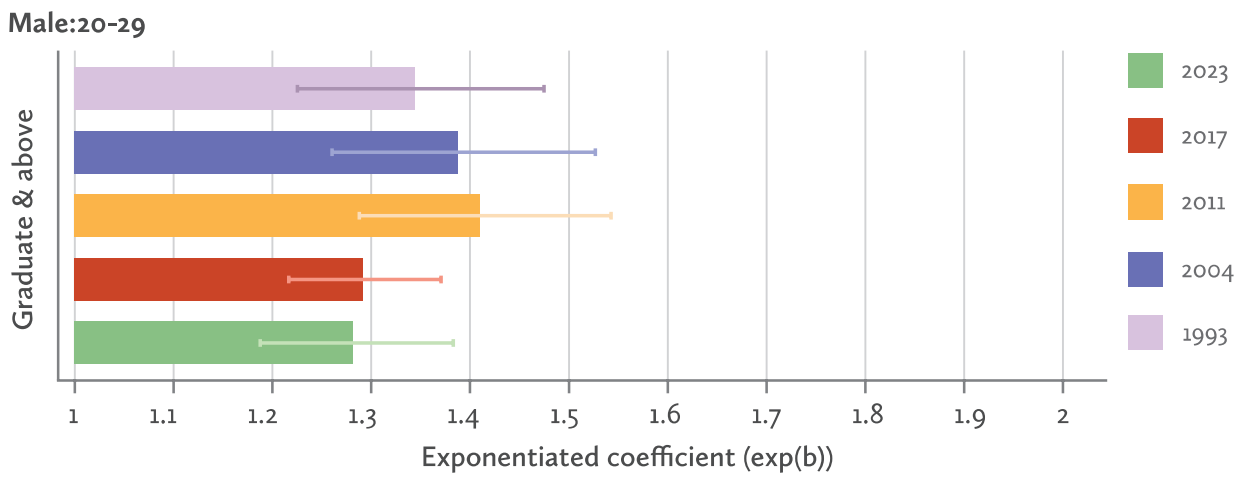
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24. Includes only young (20-29) graduate women.

Figure 3.15: Graduate earnings rise and is followed by stagnation



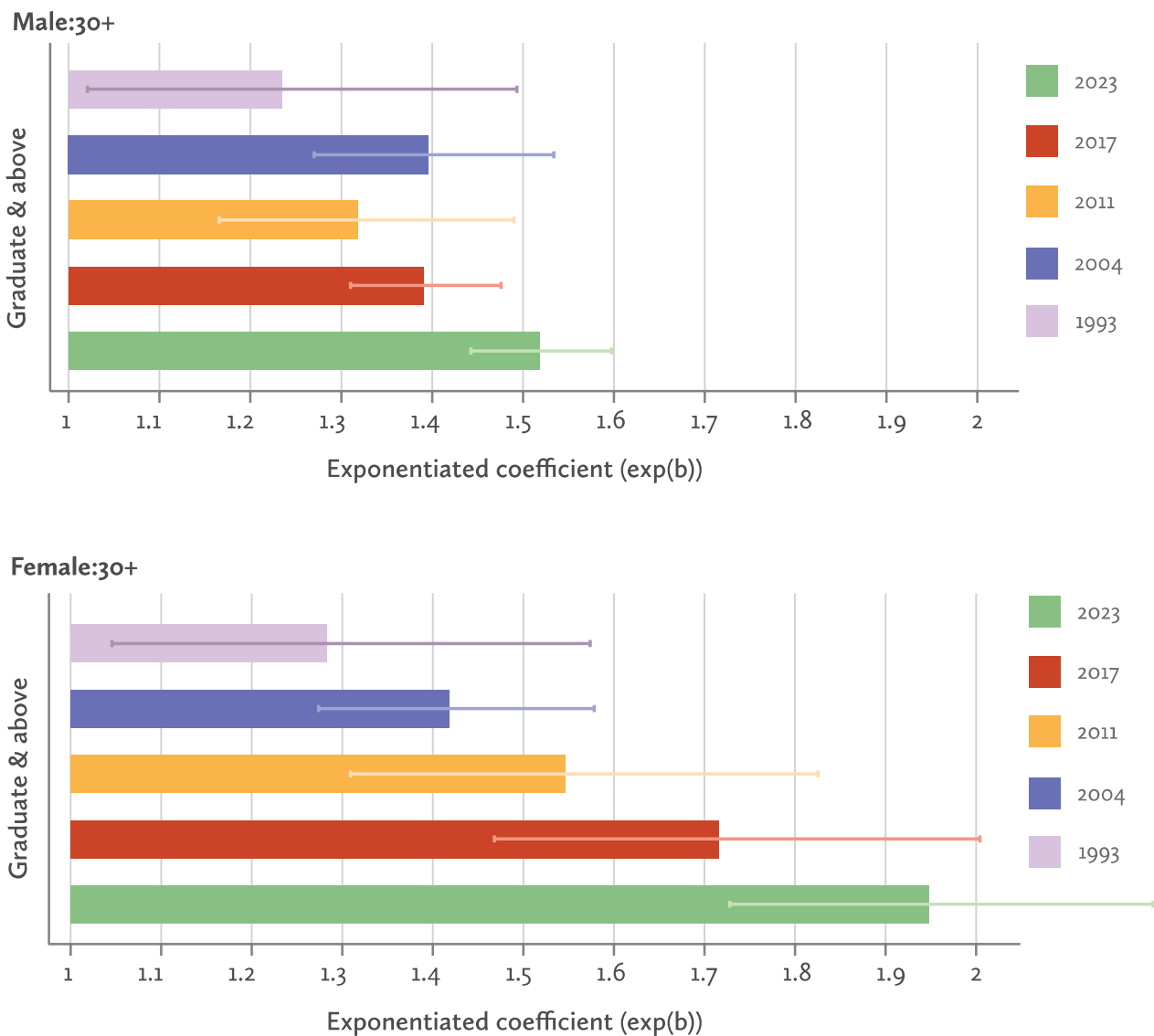
Sources and notes: NSS EUS, PLFS various rounds. Data pertains to young (20-29) men and women. Earnings are deflated using CPI-R and CPI-U with base year 2020.

Figure 3.16: Graduate premiums for young men have declined



Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24. Controls include age, marital status, number of children, whether the individual is the head of the household or not, caste group, religion, education of the household head and state fixed effects.

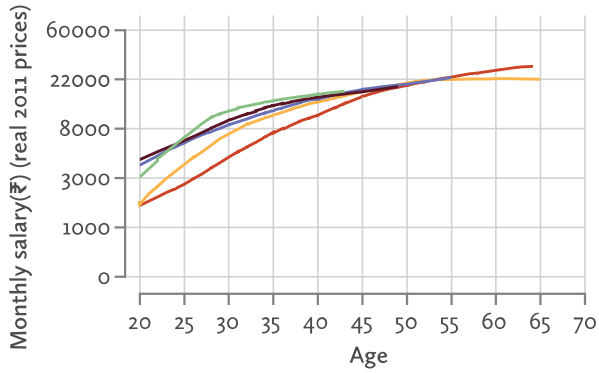
Figure 3.17: Older graduates have higher wage premiums, and women have higher premiums compared to men



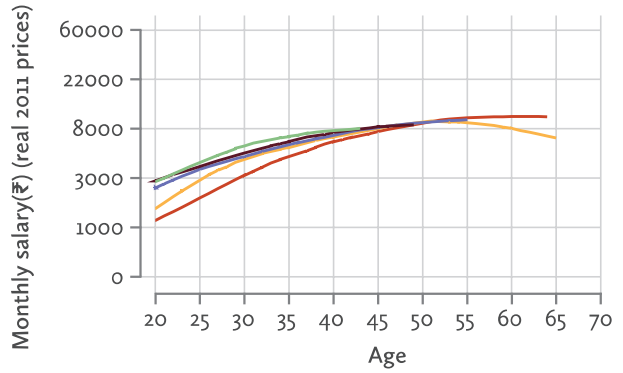
Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24. Controls include age, marital status, number of children, whether the individual is the head of the household or not, caste group, religion, education of the household head and state fixed effects.

Figure 3.18: Life-cycle earnings flatten across successive cohorts, with slower wage growth for recent graduates and persistent gender gaps

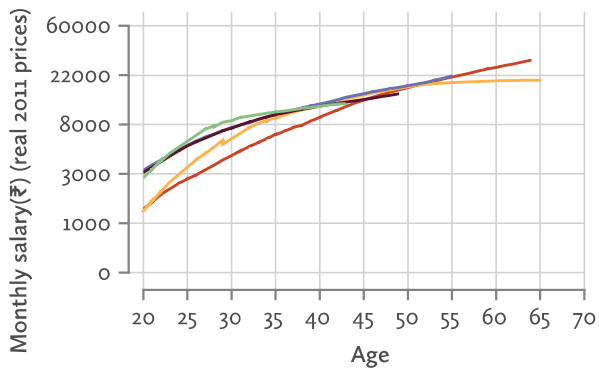
Men: Graduate and Above



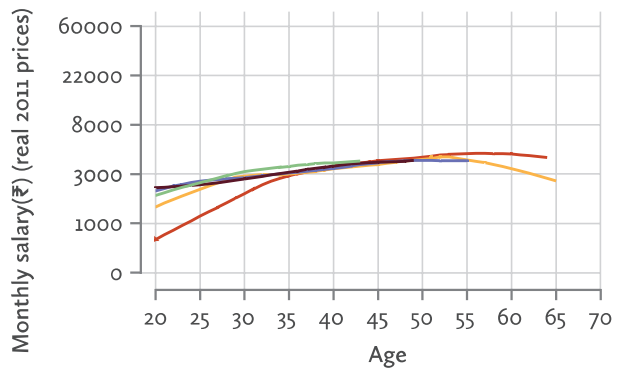
Men: Below Graduate



Women: Graduate and Above



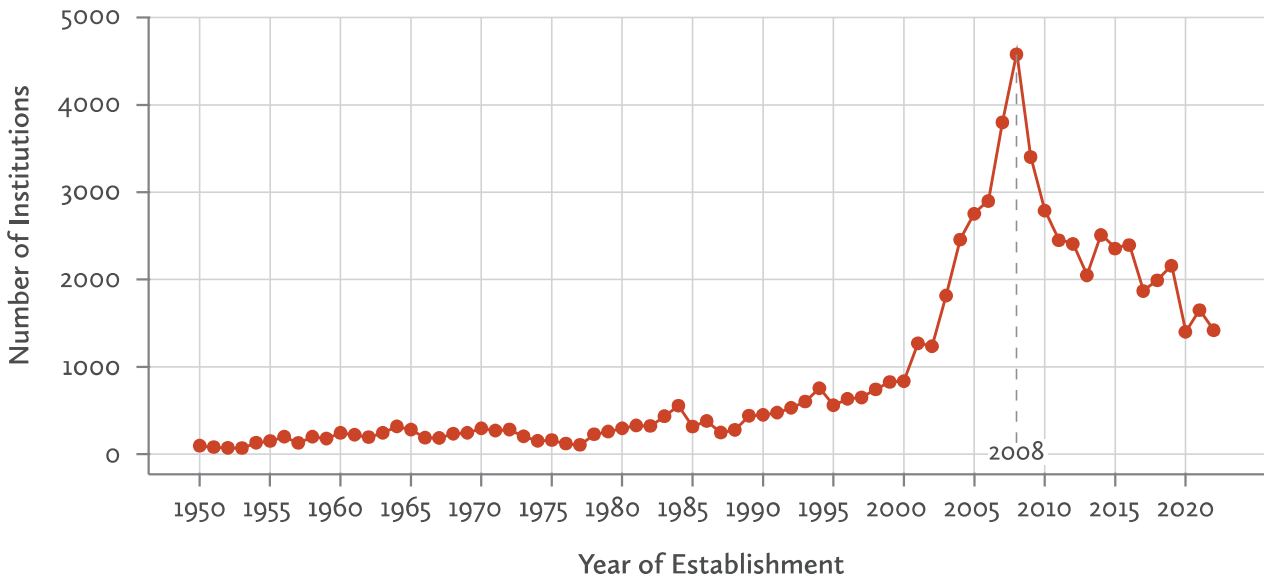
Women: Below Graduate



— Cohort 1 — Cohort 2 — Cohort 3 — Cohort 4 — Cohort 5

Sources and notes: NSS EUS 1983-84, 1993-94, 2004-05, 2011-12, PLFS 2017-18, 2023-24

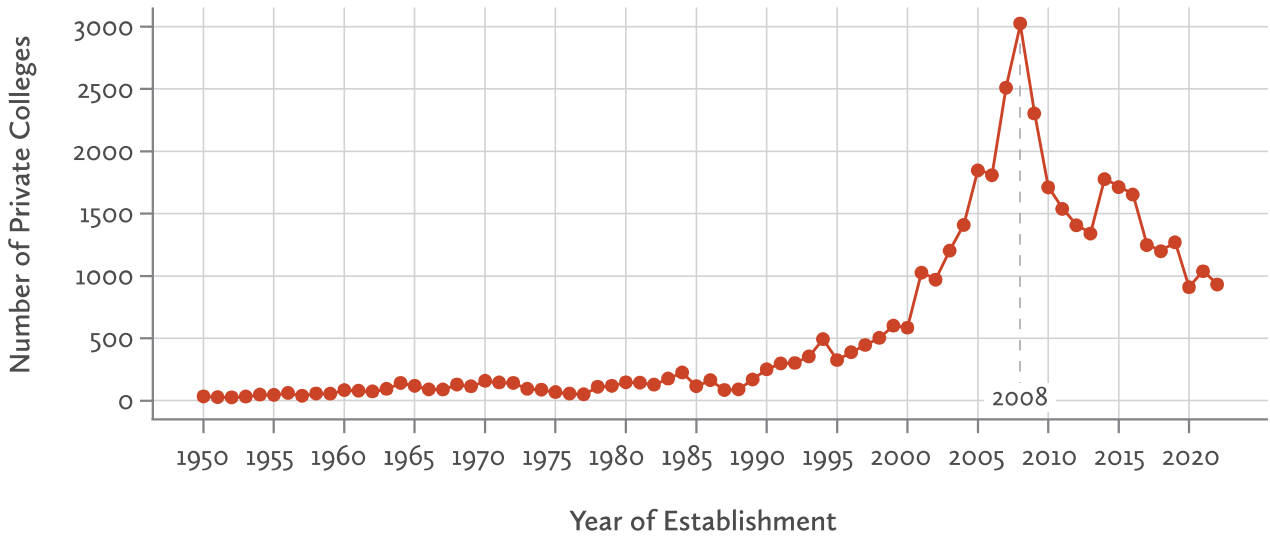
Figure 4.1: Steady increase in the number of institutions, particularly post-liberalisation



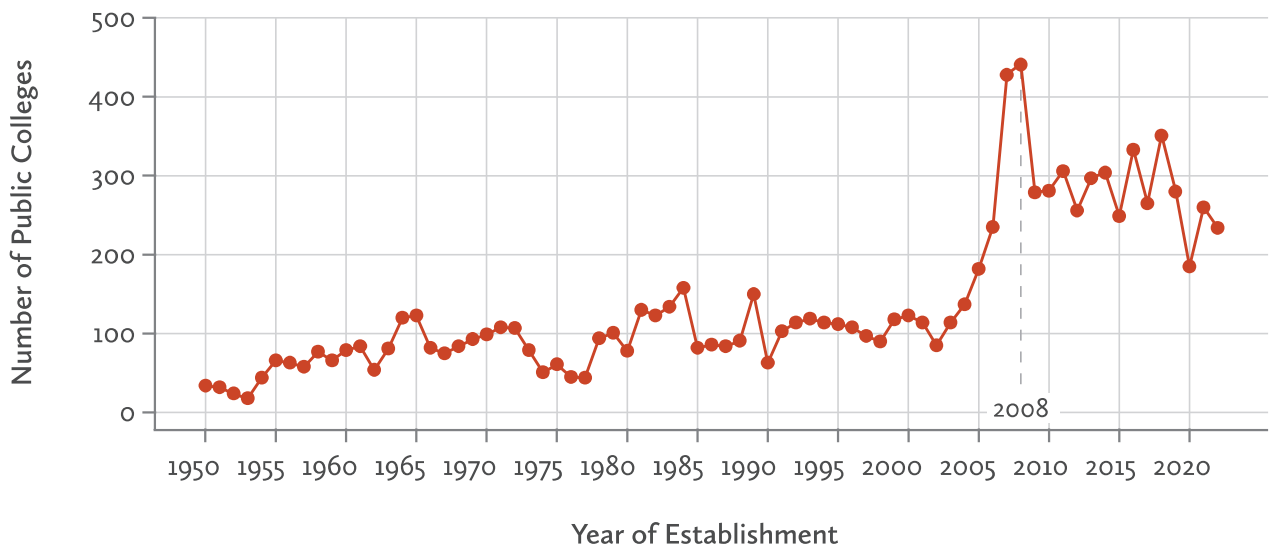
Source and notes : AISHE, all years. Where the year of establishment was missing, the values reported by the same institution in the previous AISHE years were imputed. Institutions here include Universities (public and private), Colleges (public and private) and stand-alone institutions.

Figure 4.2: Increase in institutions led by the growth of private colleges

a: Private Colleges



b: Public Colleges

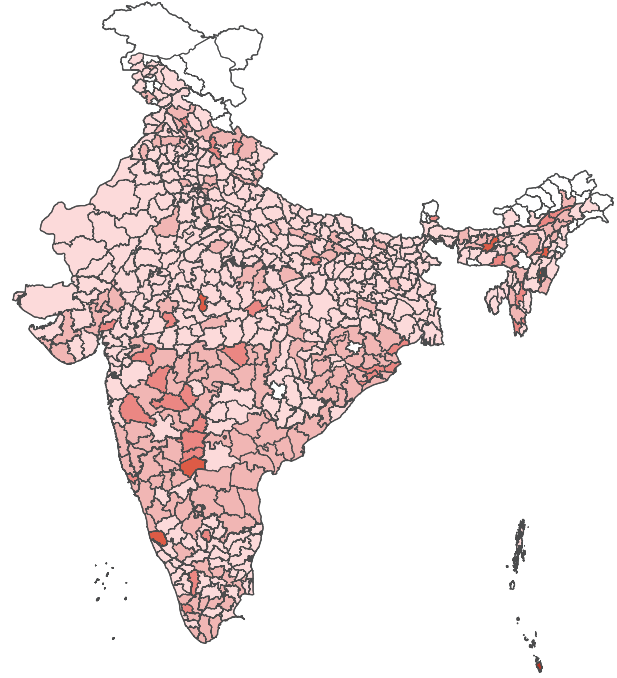
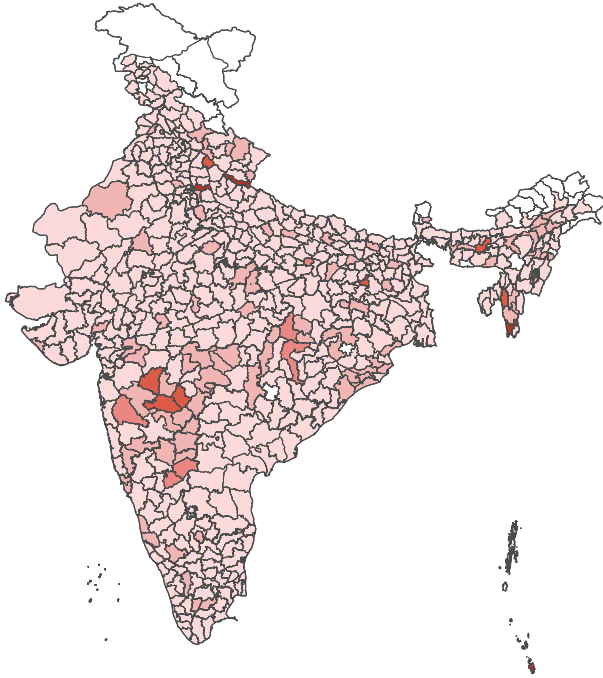


Sources and notes: AISHE, all years. Where the year of establishment was missing, the values reported by the same institution in the previous AISHE years were imputed.

Figure 4.3: Regional disparities in the per capita availability of colleges

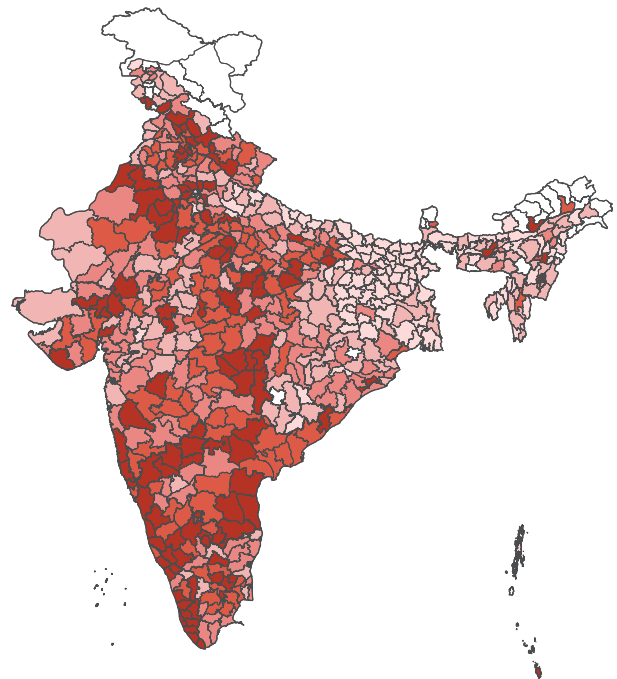
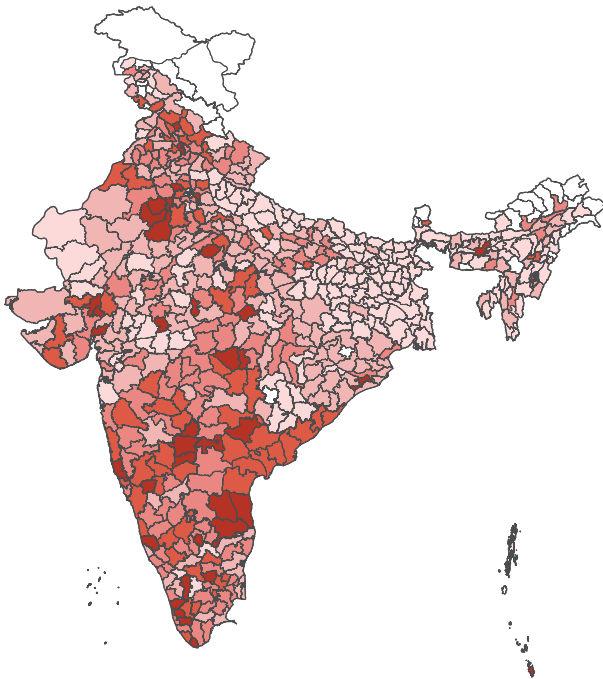
a: 1991

b: 2001

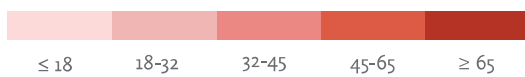


c: 2011

d: 2021

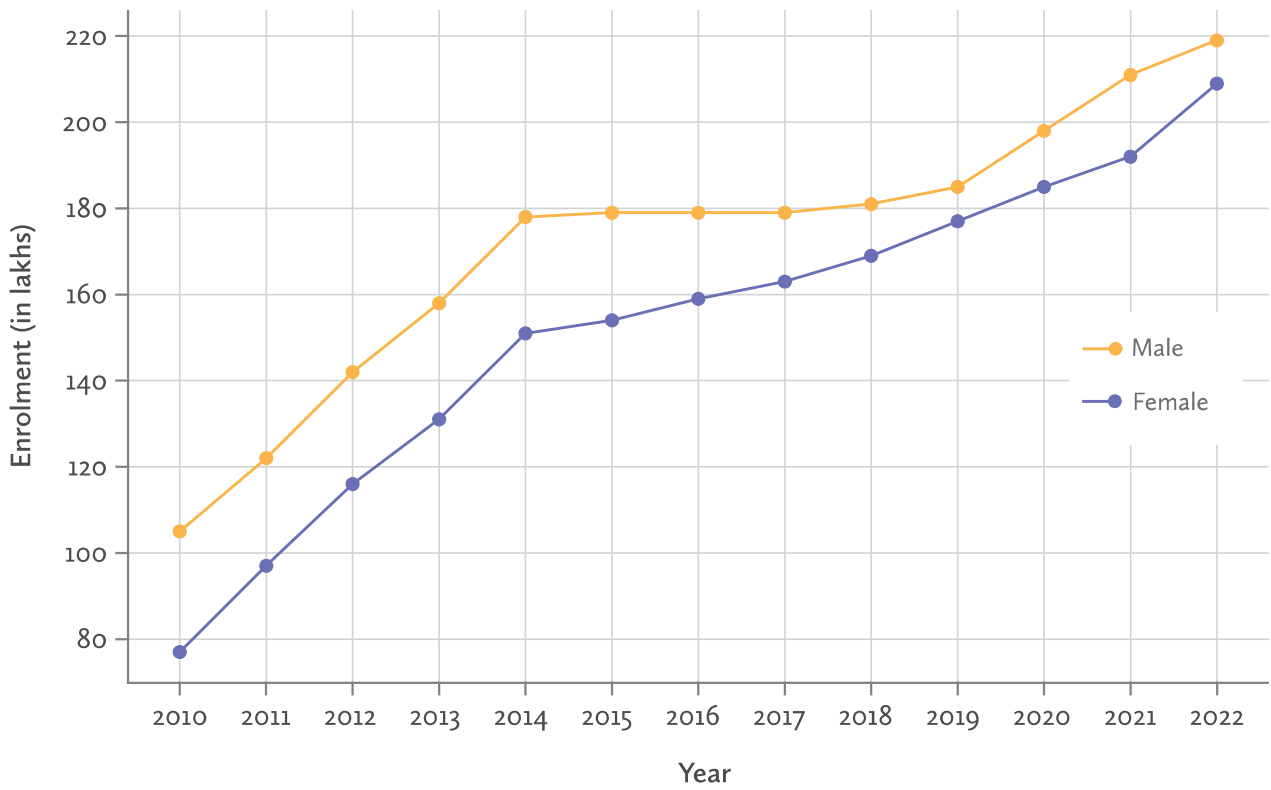


Colleges per lakh youth population



Sources and notes: AISHE. Darker shades represent higher colleges per youth population.

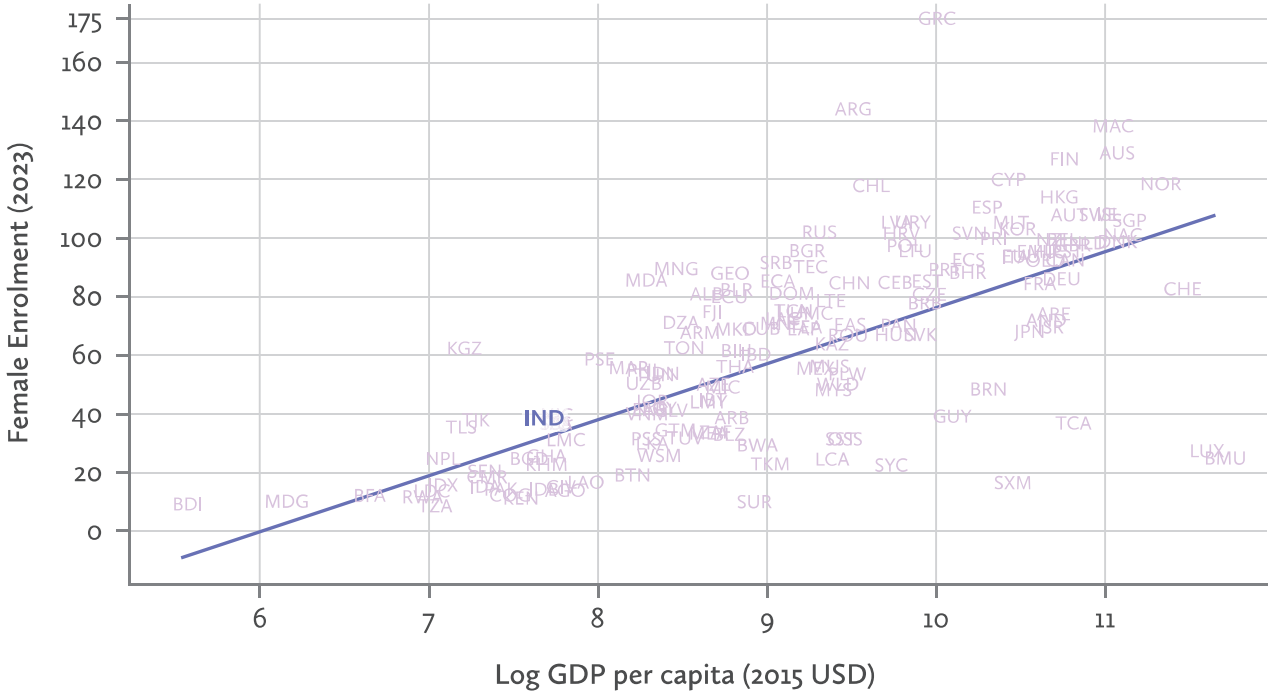
Figure 4.4: Female enrolment has steadily increased and has almost caught up with male enrolment



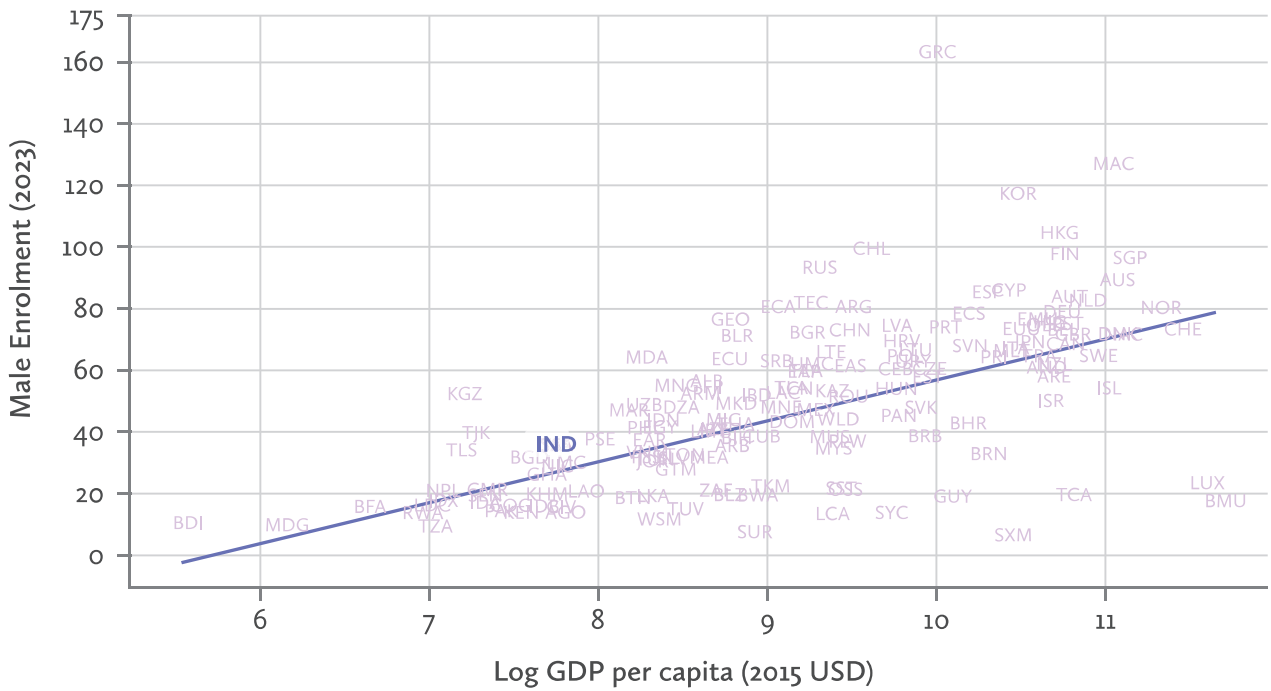
Sources and notes: AISHE, all years.

Figure 4.5: From a global perspective, India is on track in terms of GER, given its per capita income

a: Female

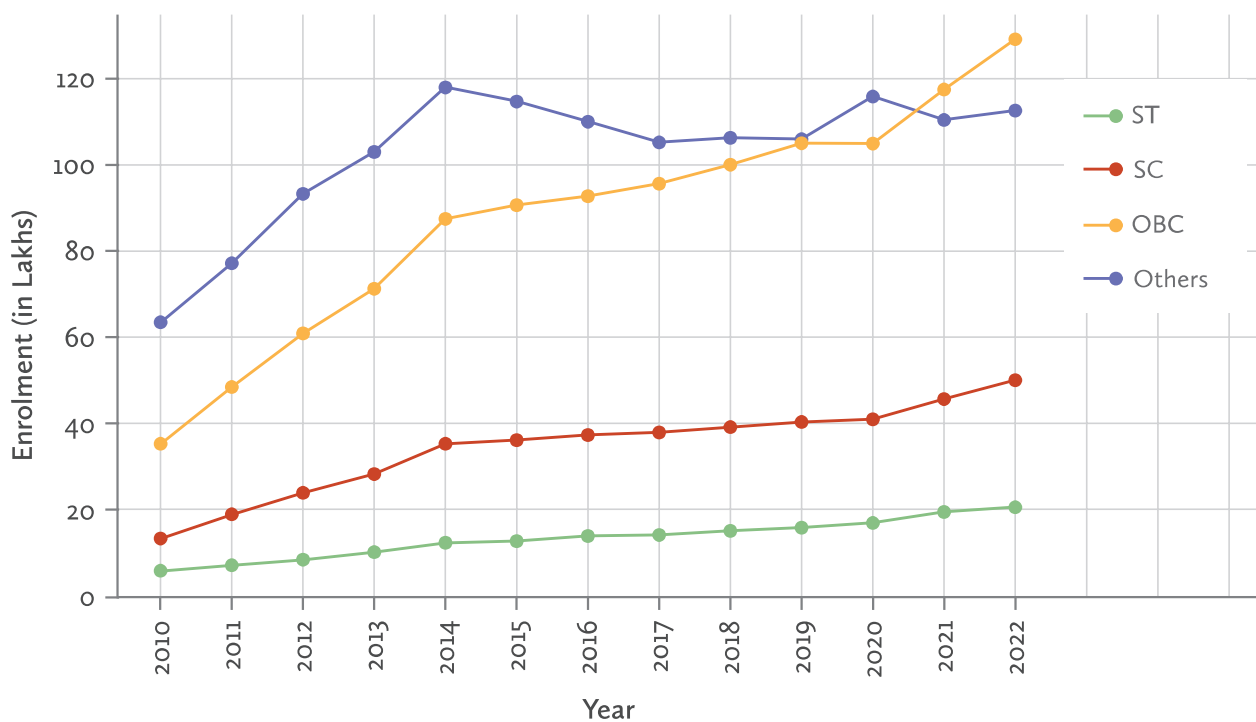


b: Male



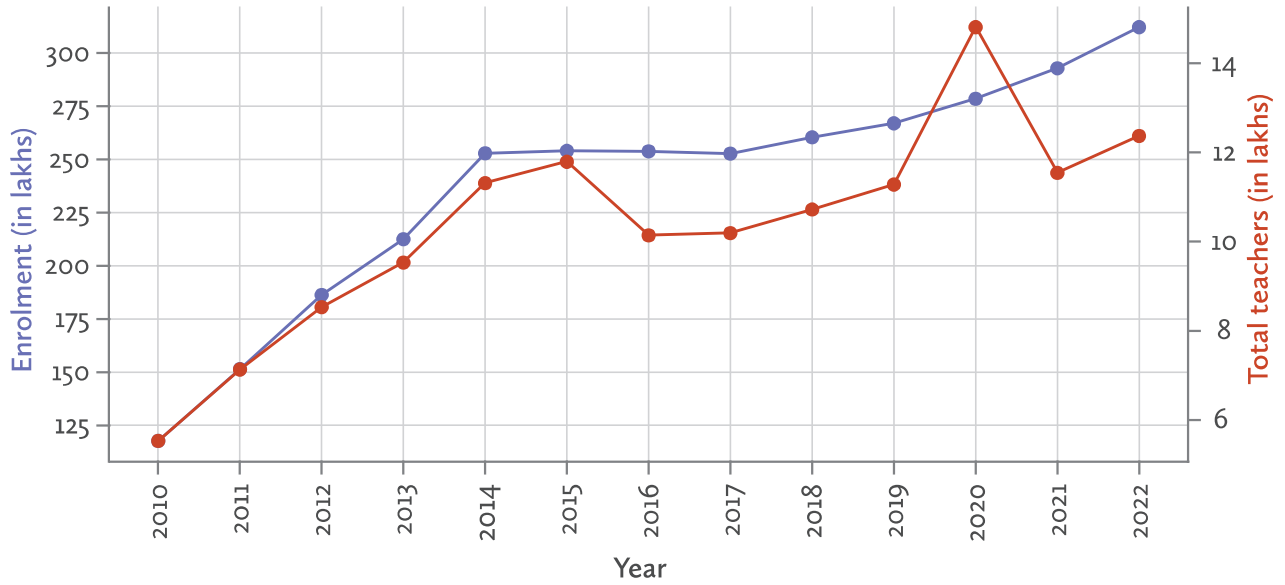
Sources and notes: World Development Indicators 2023. GER refers to tertiary school enrolment (% , gross).

Figure 4.6: Relatively sharp increase in OBC enrolment over time



Sources and notes: AISHE, all years. Others include General category and other groups not elsewhere classified.

Figure 4.7: In more recent years, increase in teacher appointment has not kept pace with student enrolment in colleges



Sources and notes: AISHE, all years.