



Top Cities for Women in **INDIA** **2024**



Top Cities for Women in India 2024

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FOREWORD

India is at a defining moment in its history. As one of the world's fastest-growing economies, poised to achieve the ambitious \$55 trillion mark by 2047, we find ourselves standing at the intersection of opportunity and responsibility. The numbers tell a compelling story: women constitute nearly half of India's population yet contribute only 18% to the nation's GDP. Imagine the possibilities if we bridged this gap—if women's full potential were unlocked.

At Avtar, this vision has been at the heart of our work for over two decades. Through our partnerships with more than 500 organizations, we've championed the cause of gender diversity, creating pathways for lakhs of women to build careers filled with purpose and promise. We've witnessed transformative successes, but also the barriers that women continue to face—barriers that are often deeply intertwined with the cities they live in.

Cities are more than just geographic spaces; they are the foundations of opportunity. They shape how women live, work, and thrive. The presence of safe streets, accessible healthcare, quality education, affordable living, and opportunities for economic and entrepreneurial growth can make all the difference. But as we've learned, not all cities are equal in enabling women's success.

This realization inspired the creation of the Top Cities for Women in India (TCWI)—a first-of-its-kind Inclusivity Index for cities. More than just an index; it's a movement to spotlight the cities that are setting a gold standard for empowering women and an inspiration for others to follow suit.

Our journey began in 2022 with a bold question: what makes a city truly inclusive for women? With data, insights, and voices from women across the country, we built the TCWI to answer this question and drive meaningful change. Each year, our analysis has grown deeper and broader—from 111 cities in the inaugural edition to 120 cities in this latest report.

This third edition of TCWI brings to light not only the cities that have excelled but also the areas that need attention and action. It's a call to administrators, organizations, and citizens to collectively build urban environments where women can thrive—because when women succeed, so does India.

The **Top Cities for Women in India (TCWI)** is a roadmap for transformative change. It calls upon organizations, policymakers, and individuals to work collaboratively towards building inclusive urban environments. By identifying role model cities, sharing best practices, and fostering collective action, the initiative aims to inspire meaningful progress for women across the country.

1. Identify Role Model Cities - One of the key outcomes of TCWI is identifying role model cities that set benchmarks for inclusivity. These cities showcase how intentional planning, supportive policies, and community efforts can create urban environments where women succeed both professionally and personally. For organizations, this presents an opportunity to partner with these cities to expand their footprint in regions already fostering inclusivity. By aligning with these role models, companies can demonstrate their commitment to diversity and inclusion while gaining valuable insights into what works. Supporting local initiatives, such as safety campaigns or career fairs or childcare programs, further allows organizations to solidify their impact in these pioneering cities.

2. Sharing of Best Practices - The initiative serves as a repository of actionable insights into policies, infrastructure, and community-driven efforts that have proven successful. This wealth of knowledge can guide other cities in their journey toward inclusivity. Organizations can play a pivotal role in this by hosting workshops, conferences, and roundtables that disseminate these practices. They can also collaborate with city administrations to replicate successful initiatives, such as affordable childcare centers or gender-sensitive urban planning. By championing the adoption of these practices, organizations amplify the scale of change, driving improvements across multiple regions.

3. Drive Collaborative Change - Recognizing that empowering women is a collective effort requiring the involvement of policymakers, businesses, and citizens alike, TCWI serves as a channel for multi-stakeholder collaboration to address gaps identified in the report. Organizations can join hands with task forces to tackle city-specific challenges, invest in programs that enhance skill development and employability, or advocate for inclusive policies such as equal pay or flexible work arrangements. This collaborative approach ensures sustainable impact and creates ripple effects that extend beyond individual cities, fostering a more inclusive society as a whole.

4. Inspire through Organizational Action and Accountability - Organizations are uniquely positioned to influence the inclusivity of the cities they operate in. By implementing policies that reflect the parameters highlighted in the TCWI report—such as mentorship programs for women, enhanced parental leave, and workplace safety initiatives—they can become role models of inclusion. Also, organizations can measure and publicly report their contributions to local inclusivity, aligning their corporate goals with broader community needs. By doing so, they not only enhance their credibility but also inspire other entities to follow suit, creating a culture of accountability and shared progress.

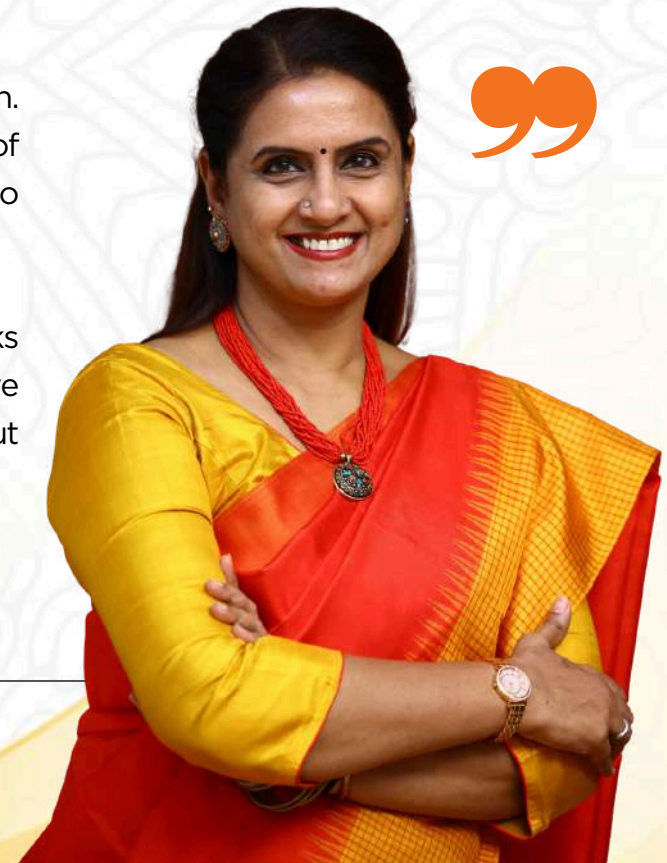
5. Championing Long-term Impact - Beyond immediate interventions, TCWI envisions sustained inclusivity and economic growth across India's cities. Organizations have the opportunity to play a crucial role in this journey by committing to long-term partnerships with city administrations and co-creating programs to address systemic challenges like education and employment disparities. Sponsoring longitudinal studies to track TCWI's progress over the years or establishing scholarships and grants to empower women in these cities are also great ways to contribute. Such efforts not only drive systemic change but also position organizations as committed leaders in the mission for inclusivity.

For me, this mission is personal. At Avatar, we've always believed in the power of intentional action. I've seen how even small shifts in mindset, policy, and infrastructure can create ripples of transformation. The TCWI is one such ripple, and I am deeply proud of the work we've done to make it a reality.

As you read through this edition of the Top Cities for Women in India report, I hope it sparks conversations, inspires change, and, most importantly, reinforces the belief that a truly inclusive India is within our grasp. Together, we can build cities that don't just accommodate women but empower them to lead, innovate, and transform.

Dr Saundarya Rajesh

Social Entrepreneur, Founder-President, Avatar Group



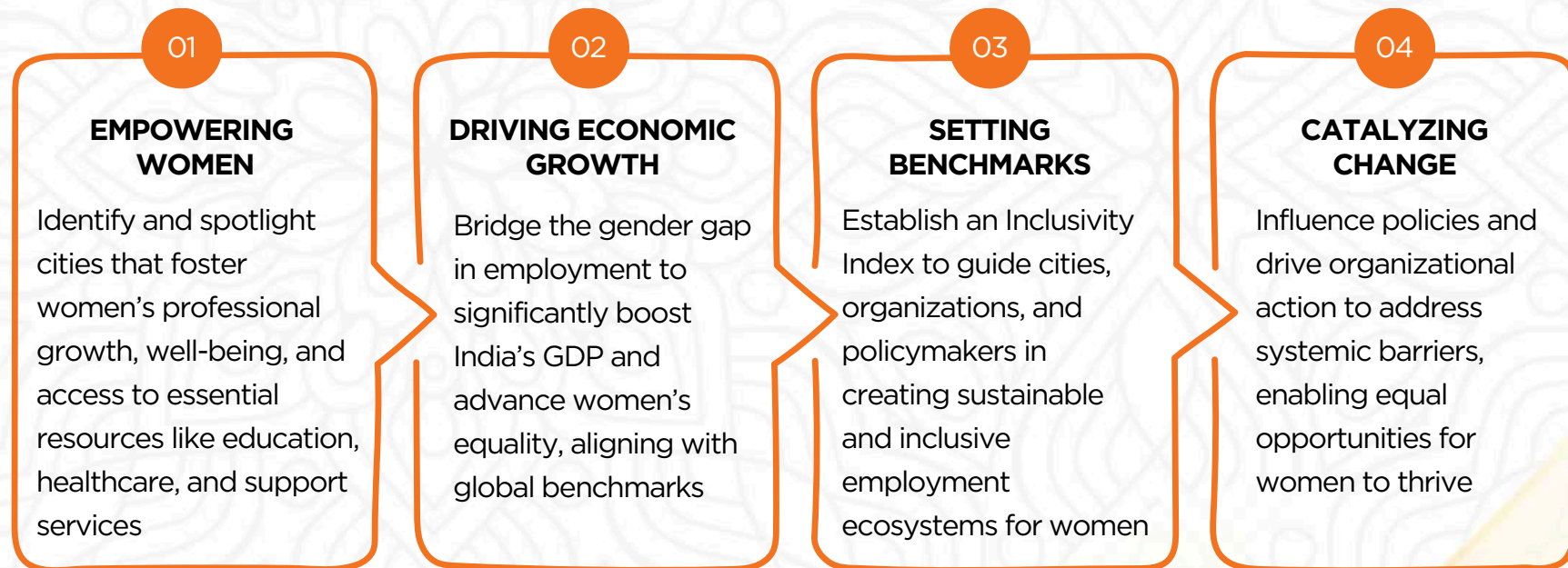
TOP CITIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA – THE WHY?

India is currently the 5th largest economy in the world according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [1]. It is also estimated that India could become a \$55 trillion economy by 2047 if the country invests in growth-oriented measures and policies. Our population has surpassed that of China as per the United Nations' (UN) estimates [2]. According to the World Bank, there are 692 million women in India [3] – women constitute 48% of India's population. 35% of them are part of the urban landscape and 65% of them live in semi-urban/rural areas. As per the latest 2021-22 AISHE report [4], women comprise 48% of overall enrolled students in higher education institutes in the country. The proportion of women is highest at the postgraduate level, where 55.4% of students are female. These are promising statistics showing us a vision of a gender-balanced future. However, let us also examine some workforce data. The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), reports that only 10 per cent of working-age Indian women in 2023 were either employed or looking for jobs [5]. This means only 38.2 million women are employed in the workforce compared with 367.7 million men. Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2024 indicates that 41.7% of women (aged 15 and above) are part of India's labour force [6]. This is a heartening trend - the workforce is witnessing a shift as more young, highly educated women join salaried employment, which is leading to a significant reduction in informal wage work, as highlighted in the State of Working India Report, 2023 [7].



Let us look at some more indicators of women's contribution to the economy - While women constitute 48% of the population in the country, they only contribute 18% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [8]. Closing the gender gap in employment could lead to a significant increase in the GDP. As per estimates from the World Bank Group based on the Gender Employment Gap Index, long-run GDP per capita will almost be 20 percent higher if all gender employment gaps were closed [9]. This requires several factors to be addressed, starting from ensuring women's safety to ensuring access to education and employment, provision for enabling infrastructure and medical facilities, inclusive governance and efficient grievance redressal mechanisms amongst others that make it ideal for women to work.

It was in 2022 (against this backdrop), that Avtar decided to examine critically the role cities play in enabling women's employment. And we launched the Top Cities for Women in India Index to fulfil the following vision:



Towards pursuing this vision, we began with an observatory analysis of the pillars of the Employment Ecosystem that unveiled the crucial role cities play in determining the state of sustainable employment for women. The various channels that contributed to the same included the following:

1

Availability of job opportunities in cities across various sectors and industries.



Availability and access to support services like childcare facilities

5

2

Initiatives and local mandates to ensure women's safety



Well networked public transportation

6

3

Access to high-quality education



Reliable and affordable healthcare facilities

7

4

Housing and residential infrastructure



Resources that support entrepreneurial aspirations of women

8

We must remember that there are also interdependencies between these pillars, that collectively impact the inclusivity index of a city. For example, the positive trends around women's employment reflects progress in women's participation in the formal economy but this is unfortunately overshadowed by an alarming rise in crimes against women. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported over 4.45 Lakh incidents of crimes against women in 2022, emphasizing the urgent need to prioritize women's safety even as efforts are taken to enhance their economic empowerment.

In 2022, through a year-long progressive analysis of governmental reports, corporate employment statistics and women's own experiences and aspirations, we announced the inaugural index in January of 2023 comprising 111 cities. In 2023, for our second edition, we covered 113 cities chosen based on the role these cities play in the economic growth of the country. This report spotlights the third edition of the TCWI index and covers 120 cities bringing it to the centre - stage the key areas for administrative and organizational action. The process of longitudinal and progressive analyses was adhered to, in this edition as well.

TOP CITIES FOR WOMEN IN INDIA – THE HOW?

The Top Cities for Women in India 2024 study creates a City Inclusion Score (CIS) for a list of pre-determined cities. For 2024, 120 cities from across the country were identified to be gauged on their inclusivity potential and ability to support gender equitable environment.

The CIS is a composite of two pillars, namely:

a. Social Inclusion Score (SIS)

The Social Inclusion Score (SIS) is a cumulative score of four indicators. These are: city liveability, safety, women's representation in employment and women's empowerment. Data was sourced from several national level governmental reports including the Ease of Living report released by the Government of India, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2023-2024), Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and other higher education indicators. The sub-indices for these parameters are as depicted in Fig. 1.

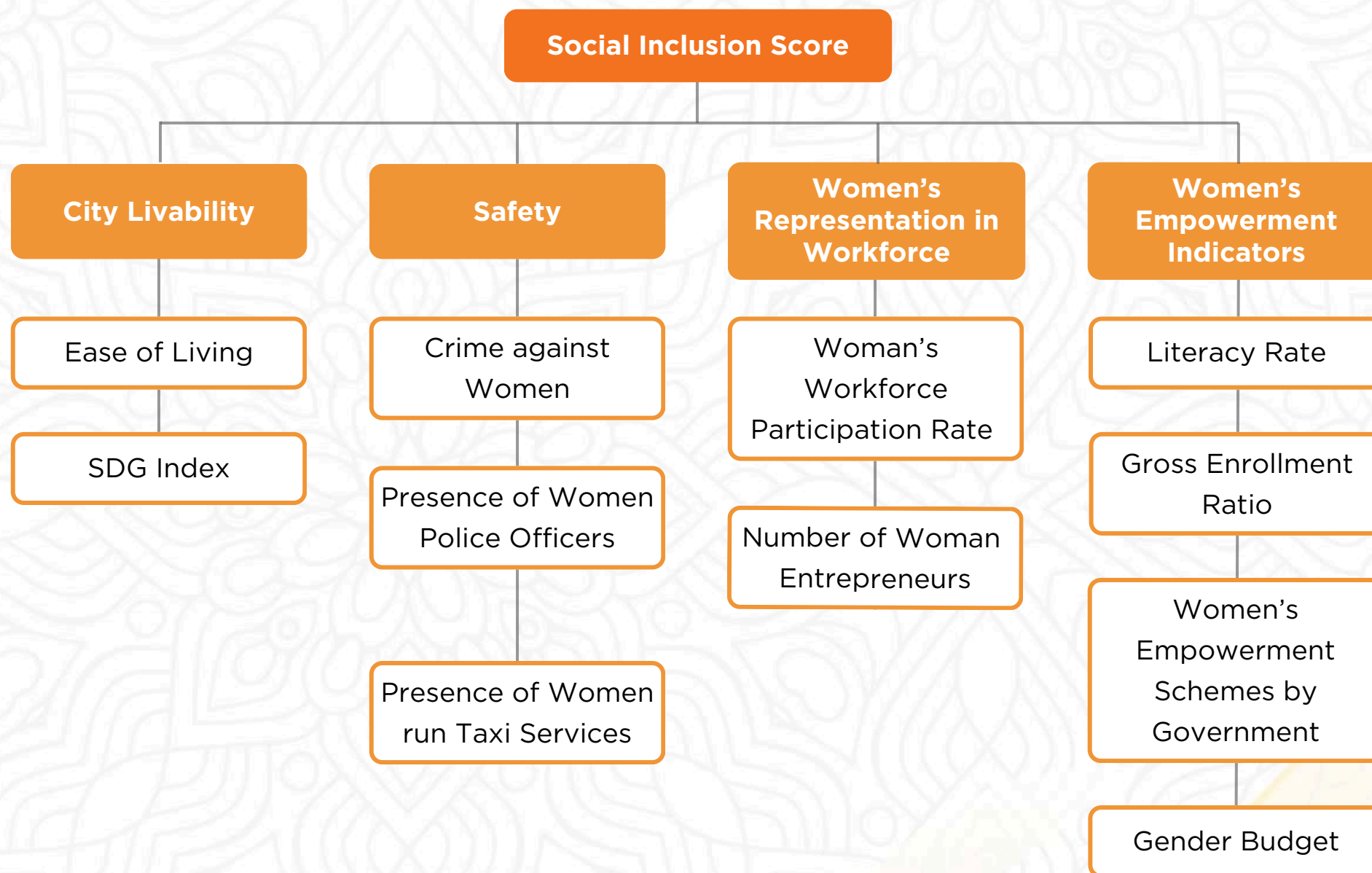


Fig. 1 Social Inclusion Score Indicators

b. Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS)

The Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS), is an industrial/business concept and evaluates the extent to which organizations in the city across industries are inclusive of women. The IIS is calculated on the basis of three indicators, namely inclusive organisations, inclusive industries and career enablers (Fig. 2). The data for all the three indicators was sourced from Avtar’s research on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion landscape in the country over the last 24 years. The density of gender inclusive organisations operating in a particular city is the main parameter for providing an inclusive organization score to each city. The inclusive industries score represents the density of women-friendly/inclusive industries within a particular city. The career enabler score is an index on the different enablers provided by organisations in the cities which are mobility support, childcare support, flexible working, career development programs, mental health and well-being support. The details are as depicted in Fig. 2

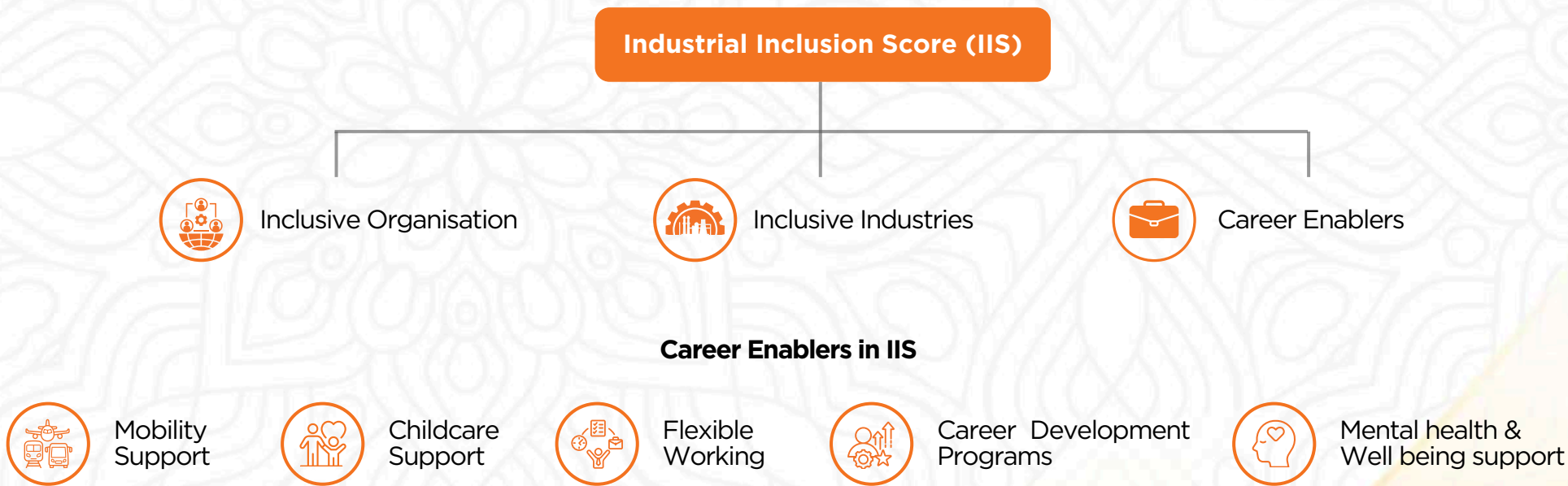


Fig. 2 Industry Inclusion Score Indicators

Why a Single Combined List?

In previous editions of the Top Cities for Women in India (TCWI) study, cities were categorized into two groups based on population data from the 2011 Census:

- **Million Plus Cities:** Cities with a population of over one million.
- **Less than a Million Cities:** Cities with a population of less than one million

While this segmentation provided a focused lens for analyzing inclusivity and progress, the rapid evolution of India's urban landscape has made it essential to transition to a unified ranking system in this edition. Several key factors have necessitated a shift to a single, unified ranking system:

- **Outdated Population Data:** The 2011 Census data is now over a decade old, and India's urban landscape has transformed significantly since then. Cities once classified as "less than a million" may have crossed the one million mark, leading to inconsistencies in population-based groupings.
- **Dynamic Urban Growth:** Rapid urbanization and migration have altered the population distribution across cities. This growth has blurred the lines between traditional categories, making the earlier distinction less relevant.
- **Holistic Comparisons:** A single comprehensive ranking provides a holistic view of inclusivity and progress across all cities, regardless of their size. It enables stakeholders to compare cities based on their ability to empower women rather than being constrained by population-based groupings.
- **Inclusivity Beyond Size:** Smaller cities are often capable of providing environments that are as inclusive, if not more so (past two edition's findings), than larger metropolises. A unified ranking recognizes these efforts and ensures they receive equal attention and recognition.
- **Relevance to Stakeholders:** For policymakers, organizations, and individuals, a single ranking simplifies decision-making. It provides a clear and cohesive picture of where each city stands in fostering inclusivity for women, without the need for population-specific interpretations

The transition to a unified ranking system reflects the evolving realities of India’s urban landscape and reaffirms TCWI’s commitment to capturing the true state of inclusivity in Indian cities. This approach not only recognizes the progress of smaller cities but also sets a stronger benchmark for all cities to strive toward inclusivity and empowerment.

KEY INSIGHTS

Based on the comprehensive analysis conducted within the framework of the study, an aggregate score was calculated for each of the 120 cities. The cities were ranked according to these scores, resulting in a unified list. The Top 25 Cities from this combined ranking are highlighted in Table 1, showcasing the highest-scoring cities excelling in inclusivity and empowerment for women.

Table 1: City Inclusion Score for Top 25 Cities for Women in India

2024 Rank	City	State	City Inclusion Score
01	Bengaluru	Karnataka	47.15
02	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	46.31
03	Mumbai	Maharashtra	41.11
04	Hyderabad	Telangana	38.89
05	Pune	Maharashtra	36.88
06	Kolkata	West Bengal	34.18
07	Ahmedabad	Gujarat	30.56

08	Delhi	Delhi	28.50
09	Gurugram	Haryana	25.52
10	Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu	24.40
11	Kochi	Kerala	23.20
12	Tiruchirappalli	Tamil Nadu	22.38
13	Thiruvananthapuram	Kerala	21.35
14	Shimla	Himachal Pradesh	21.06
15	Vellore	Tamil Nadu	20.71
16	Jaipur	Rajasthan	20.28
17	Madurai	Tamil Nadu	20.13
18	Salem	Tamil Nadu	19.89
19	Erode	Tamil Nadu	19.57
20	Tiruppur	Tamil Nadu	18.93
21	Puducherry	Puducherry	18.14
22	Kozhikode	Kerala	18.13
23	Jammu	Jammu & Kashmir	18.10
24	Mangalore	Karnataka	17.99
25	Visakhapatnam	Andhra Pradesh	17.92

Social Inclusion & Industrial Inclusion Score

The cities that excel in social inclusion differ from those leading in industrial inclusion, highlighting unique strengths across these dimensions. Table 2 presents the Top 10 cities in Social Inclusion and the Top 10 cities in Industrial Inclusion.

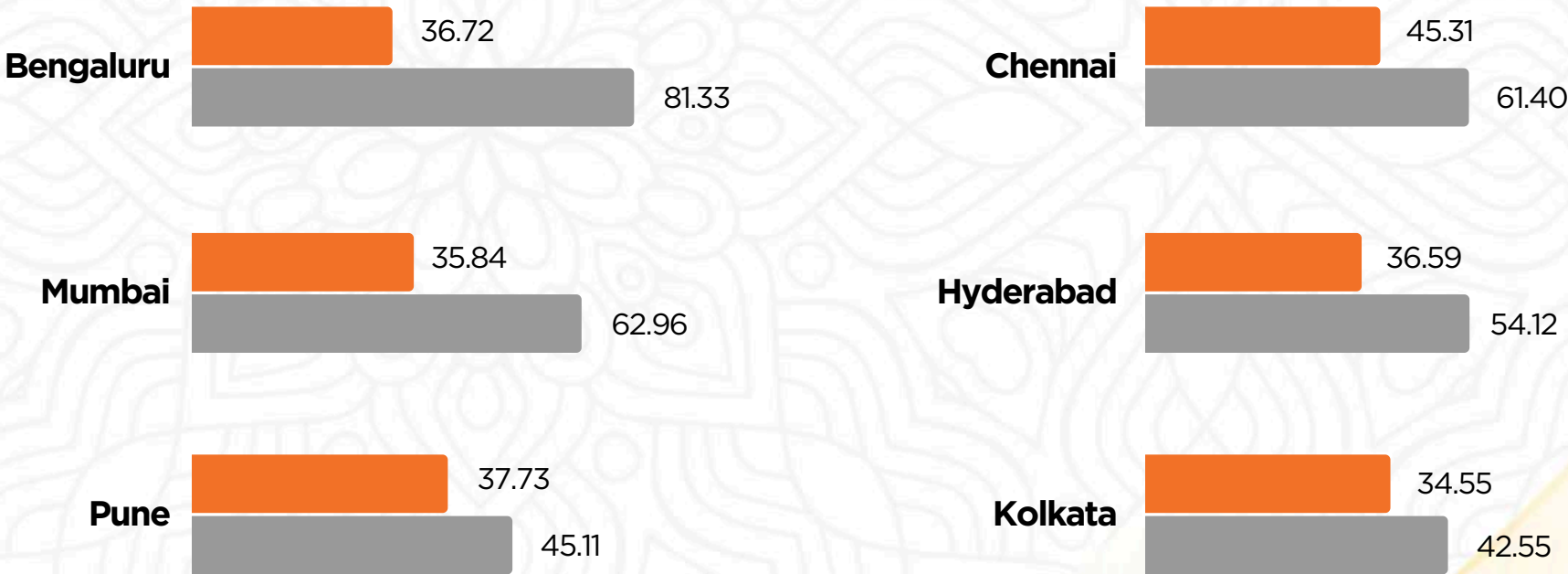
Table 2: Social Inclusion Score and Industrial Inclusion Score wise ranking of Top Cities

Rank	Top Cities for SIS	Top Cities for IIS
1	Chennai	Bengaluru
2	Pune	Mumbai
3	Bengaluru	Chennai
4	Hyderabad	Hyderabad
5	Mumbai	Pune
6	Kolkata	Kolkata
7	Ahmedabad	Delhi
8	Tiruchirappalli	Gurugram
9	Shimla	Ahmedabad
10	Thiruvananthapuram	Coimbatore

The comparison of rankings for Social Inclusion Score (SIS) and Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS) reveals distinct patterns of city performance. Chennai leads in SIS, emphasizing its strong social infrastructure, while Bengaluru dominates IIS, showcasing its industrial and economic opportunities. Interestingly, cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai perform consistently across both dimensions, indicating a balance in their social and industrial environments and their ability to include women.

On the other hand, cities like Tiruchirappalli and Shimla rank high in SIS but do not appear in the IIS Top 10, highlighting the need for them to improve their focus on industrial advancement. Conversely, Delhi and Gurugram feature prominently in IIS but are absent in SIS, highlighting their industrial strength despite room for growth in social inclusivity.

Fig.4 compares the Social Inclusion Scores and Industrial Inclusion Scores of the top 10 cities.



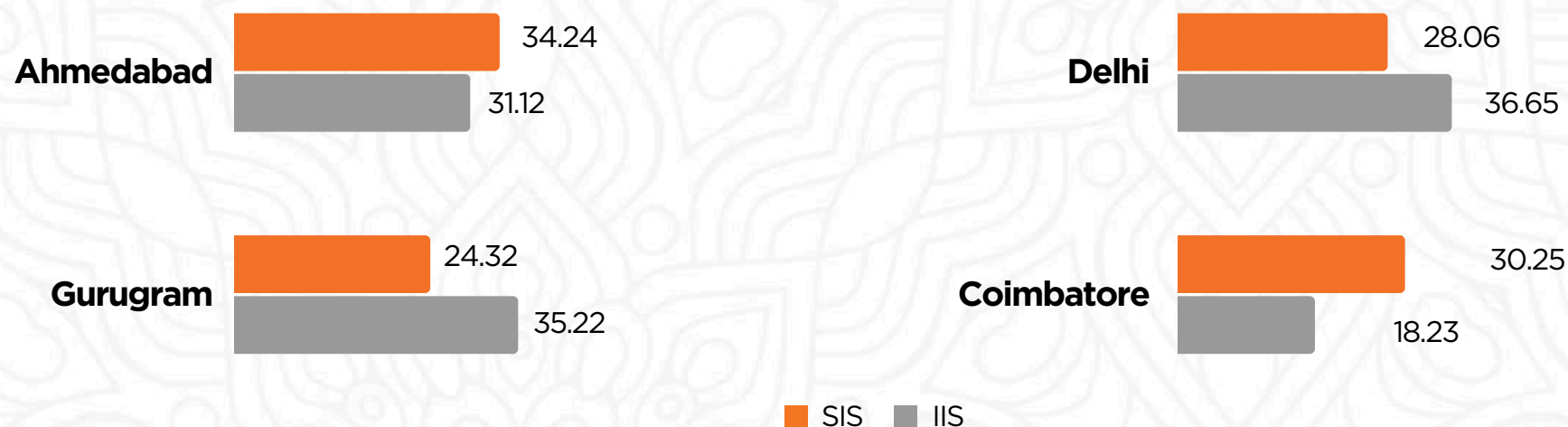


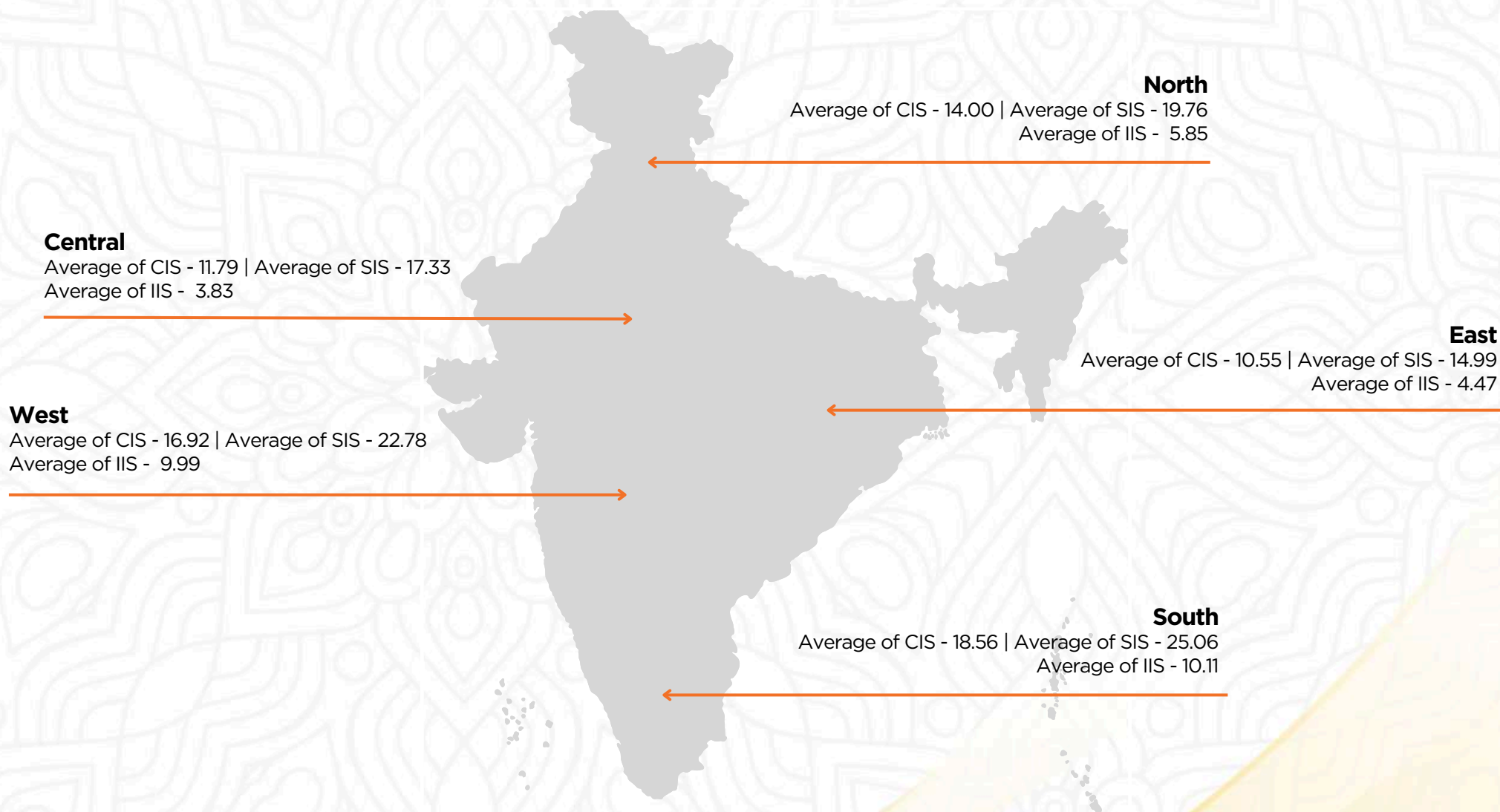
Figure 4: IIS and SIS of Top 10 cities for Women in India

The analysis highlights the importance of a balanced approach to social and industrial inclusion for advancing women's empowerment across cities. Chennai leads the way with the highest Social Inclusion Score (SIS) of 45.31 and a strong Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS) of 61.40, demonstrating a well-rounded commitment to both societal well-being and industrial support. Bengaluru tops the Industrial Inclusion Rankings rankings at 81.33, supported by an SIS of 36.72, indicating robust industrial inclusion while spotlighting the need for for further progress in social inclusion to achieve equilibrium. Cities such as Pune and Hyderabad exhibit a balanced inclusion profile, with smaller gaps between their SIS and IIS, reflecting cohesive efforts across both dimensions.

Ahmedabad and Coimbatore have higher Social Inclusion Scores when compared to Industrial Inclusion Scores, highlighting an opportunity for organizations to establish operations in cities with strong social inclusion frameworks. These cities already provide a good foundation in liveability, safety, and women empowerment, creating an environment conducive to workforce development and offering significant potential for growth through enhanced industrial inclusion initiatives.

Regional Insights

Fig 5: Regional Analyses of City Inclusion Score, Social Inclusion Score and Industrial Inclusion Score



The regional analysis of the City Inclusion Score (CIS), Social Inclusion Score (SIS), and Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS) (as illustrated in Fig 5) highlights significant disparities across India. The South emerges as the most inclusive region, scoring comparatively higher in all three metrics with a high SIS of 25.06 and an IIS of 10.11, reflecting its well-rounded approach to both social and industrial inclusion (also reflecting in the average City Inclusion Score of 18.6).

The West follows closely, showcasing good performance in SIS (22.78) and IIS (9.99), indicating a balanced focus on inclusivity (the average CIS being a 16.92). The North does show strength in SIS and CIS, but still trails the South and West. In contrast, the Central and Eastern regions lag behind, particularly in IIS, with averages of 3.83 and 4.47, respectively, suggesting limited industrial development and opportunities. This data underscores the need for targeted efforts to boost inclusivity in underperforming regions, particularly in industrial inclusion.

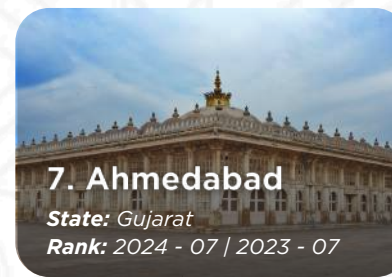
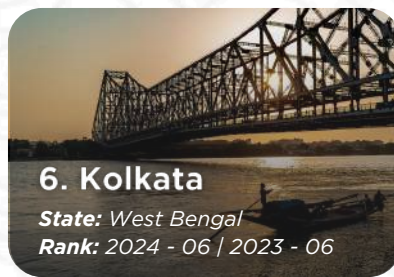
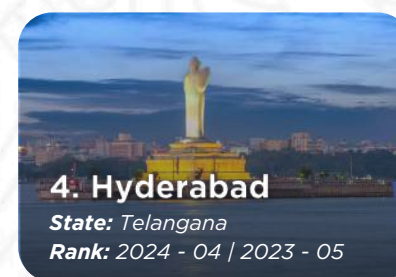
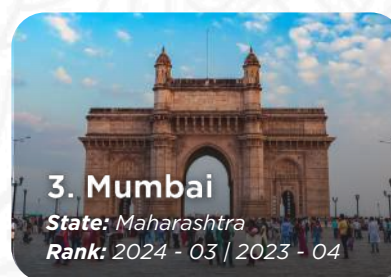
State wise analysis (as indicated in Fig 6) indicates that Kerala leads with the highest Average City Inclusion Score of 20.89, followed by Telangana at 20.57, Maharashtra at 19.93, Tamil Nadu at 19.38, and Karnataka at 17.50. While these top-performing states demonstrate promising progress in city inclusion, the average scores indicate that there is still significant room for improvement to achieve truly inclusive and equitable urban environments across the country.

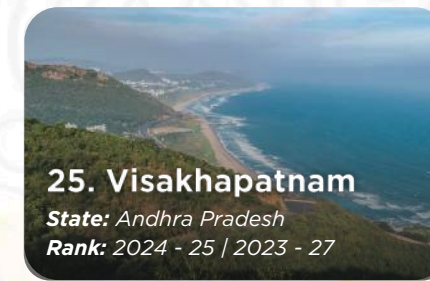
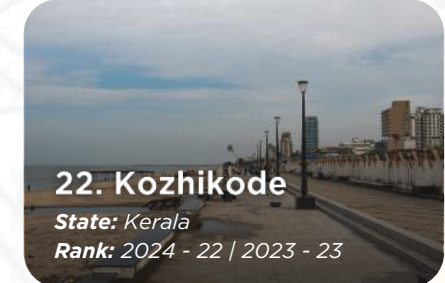
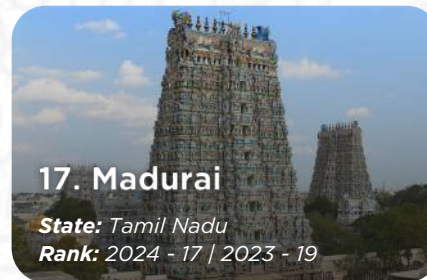
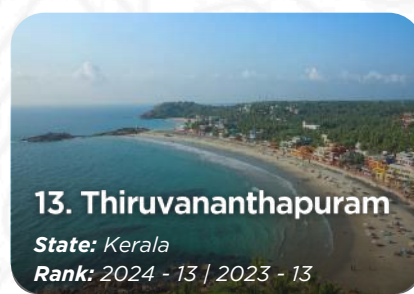
Fig 6. Indian States with the highest average City Inclusion Score



Comparison of Top 25 Cities rankings - 2024 vs 2023 Ranking

In Table 5, we present the comparative rankings of the Top 25 cities between 2023 and 2024. For purposes of comparison, we have unified the city listings of 2023 (across the two population categories of Million plus and Less than a Million category, based on their City Inclusion Scores)





The 2024 rankings of top cities show notable trends compared to 2023, reflecting both improvements and declines. Bengaluru moves to the no.1 position and Chennai slips to no.2. This can be attributed to Bangalore being an IT hub, an industry that reports one of the highest employment rates for women. Mumbai demonstrated consistent progress, climbing from Rank 4 in 2023, and now securing Rank 3 in 2024.

It is noteworthy that Gurugram makes a significant jump (from an overall positioning of 20 last year to a rank of 9, this year). This may be attributed to the impact of the rapid industrialization in the region leading it to also become an employment hub, generating more opportunities for women.

Big cities vs small cities: A comparison

A dip-stick study was conducted in a select set of cities in which 1239 women participated and shared their experience of living in their cities. The dipstick study focused on women's experience across six pillars. These pillars were:

- **Skilling and Employment** – This refers to presence of skilling institutions and diverse employment opportunities like access to professional networking platforms, in the cities
- **Caregiving Support** – This refers to the presence of child-care support centres in the city
- **Infrastructure** – This refers to safe and affordable accommodation for women (temporary and long-term) such as hostels for women, mobility and transport facilities and recreational facilities
- **Quality of Life** – This refers to one's holistic experience of living in a city including environment quality and traffic regulation
- **Efficiency of Government Bodies** – This refers to proactive and reactive channels of government response, available in cities
- **Safety** – This refers to overall crime rates in the city, violence against women, governmental initiatives to ensure women's safety and presence of women police officers.

The analysis across the six key pillars revealed the following scores for the identified cities of the country (These are scores calibrated on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest). In Table 3a and 3b, we illustrate how these cities fare:

Table 3a: Women's rating of inclusion experience in big cities

City	Skilling & Employment	Caregiving Support	Infrastructure	Efficiency of Government Bodies	Quality of Life	Safety
Bengaluru	7.54	7.44	7.52	6.83	6.97	6.17
Chennai	7.09	7.36	7.58	6.68	7.05	6.48
Mumbai	7.60	7.08	7.64	6.99	6.67	7.19
Hyderabad	6.95	7.56	8.01	6.85	6.63	6.95
Pune	7.14	7.20	7.02	7.06	7.50	6.71

Table 3b: Women's rating of inclusion experience in smaller cities

City	Skilling & Employment	Caregiving Support	Infrastructure	Efficiency of Government Bodies	Quality of Life	Safety
Gurugram	7.68	7.64	7.21	6.48	6.34	5.60
Coimbatore	7.43	7.42	7.75	7.18	7.54	6.76
Kochi	6.62	7.12	7.41	6.85	6.85	6.02
Tiruchirappalli	6.23	7.04	7.34	7.18	7.35	6.55
Thiruvananthapuram	5.51	6.98	7.33	8.15	7.40	7.43

In the segment below, we list down key inferences across the six pillars.

01 ➤

Skilling & Employment

Amongst the bigger cities, Mumbai (7.60) and Bengaluru (7.54) score highest, reflecting robust job markets and availability of skilling opportunities, whereas Chennai (7.09) and Hyderabad (6.95) lag slightly behind. However, it is important to note that the variations between the scores are less than 1 point.

Amongst smaller cities, Gurugram scores the highest in skilling and employment opportunities closely followed by Coimbatore, as rated and reported by women. This validates the mushrooming opportunities in the regions for women.

Kochi, Tiruchirappalli and Thiruvananthapuram, which are all cities that are slowly developing into employment hubs, also lag behind in this indicator.

02 ➤

Caregiving Support

Hyderabad (7.56) and Bengaluru (7.44) lead in caregiving facilities amongst the bigger cities and Gurugram (7.64) and Coimbatore (7.42) amongst the smallet cities, showing better support systems for dependents. All these cities are industrial and technology hubs, and have a large number of organizations also contributing to the building of the caregiving ecosystem which includes childcare, eldercare, and other family-oriented services.

03 ➤

Infrastructure

Hyderabad (8.01) stands out with the highest infrastructure score amongst the bigger cities, followed by Mumbai (7.64), demonstrating strong connectivity and public amenities. This includes well connected public transport and amenities that ease travel for women.

Coimbatore also scores high on infrastructure with 7.75, reflecting robust urban planning and facilities. All of the smaller cities – Kochi, Gurugram, Tiruchirappalli and Thiruvananthapuram also score above 7 on this parameter.

04 ➤ **Efficiency of Government Bodies**

Pune (7.06) and Hyderabad (7.56) top governance efficiency, highlighting relatively effective public service delivery, grievance redressal mechanisms, and proactive redressal of women's challenges. Amongst the smaller cities, Thiruvananthapuram takes the top spot at 8.15, indicating effective governance and public service delivery. Gurugram, at 6.48, has room for improvement in governance efficiency.

05 ➤ **Quality of Life**

Pune (7.50) and Chennai (7.05) report the best quality of life indicators, indicating good living conditions including environmental quality. Coimbatore takes the lead among smaller cities with a score of 7.54, showcasing superior livability. Thiruvananthapuram follows with 7.40, whereas Gurugram is at the lower end with 6.34, indicating challenges in ensuring comfortable quality of living. Lower scores of Gurugram in this parameter maybe correlated to environmental challenges and air quality, the region has been facing recently.

06 ➤ **Safety**

Mumbai (7.19) and Hyderabad (6.95) lead in safety, highlighting better security infrastructure, that women experience in the city as part of their employment pursuit. Amongst the smaller developing cities, Thiruvananthapuram leads in safety with a score of 7.43, while Gurugram scores the lowest at 5.60. This indicates significant disparities in the perception or actual implementation of safety measures among the cities.

Investments and Economic Ties: Alignment with Top Cities Rankings

The rankings of India's top cities for women reflect a strong alignment with investment patterns and economic development across the country. Despite an overall decline in foreign direct investments (FDI) to a five-year low of US\$44.4 billion in FY24, certain states

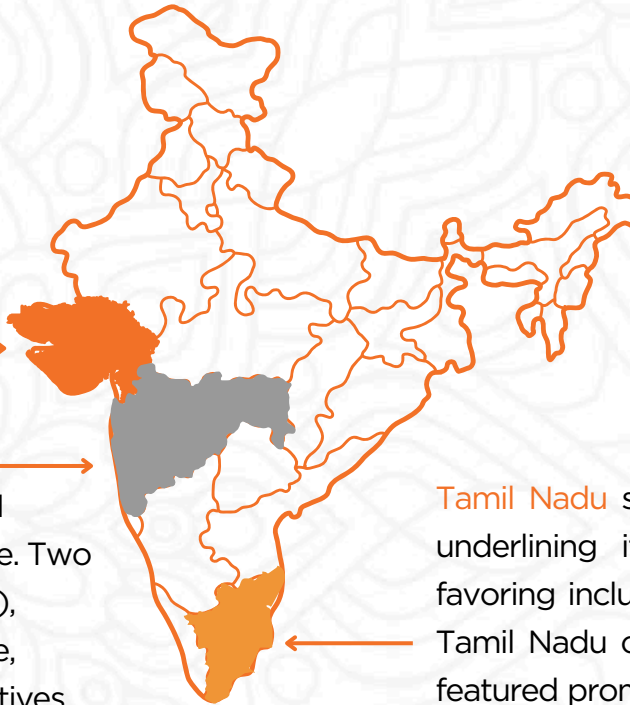
demonstrated remarkable resilience in attracting FDI inflows [10]. This alignment highlights the correlation between inclusive urban policies and the ability to foster economic growth. (Source: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)).

Gujarat, which secured US\$7.3 billion in fresh FDI equity inflows—a 55% year-on-year growth—emerged as the top performer in attracting investments. This aligns with Ahmedabad, ranked 7th in the Top Cities for Women Index (TCWI), showcasing a commitment to both social and industrial inclusivity.

Similarly, **Maharashtra**, with a 2% increase in FDI inflows, demonstrated its economic prominence. Two of its cities, Mumbai (Rank 3) and Pune (Rank 5), consistently rank high due to their infrastructure, employment opportunities, and inclusivity initiatives, reinforcing their roles as key investment destinations.

Tamil Nadu saw a 12% year-on-year increase in FDI inflows, underlining its robust business environment and policies favoring inclusivity. This is mirrored in the rankings, with two Tamil Nadu cities—Chennai (Rank 2), Coimbatore (Rank 10), featured prominently. These cities excel in providing a balance of strong social inclusion and industrial support, making them attractive hubs for businesses and industries.

This synergy between investments and inclusive urban growth underlines the role of cities not just as centres of economic activity but also as drivers of equity and empowerment. Investors are naturally drawn to cities that demonstrate a holistic development approach, ensuring both industrial productivity and enhanced quality of life for all residents, particularly women.



ROLE MODEL CITIES: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THESE TOP CITIES

As the population of working women across the country increases, Indian cities must keep up with what working women want. Inclusive employment opportunities, good transport facilities, care centres for their children, well-lit roads, good connectivity between far off places and police patrolling to provide a sense of security are all elements of a city that can create a more inclusive experience. It should be the government's priority to give citizens these basic requirements to enable them to work and add to the gross domestic product of the country.

Let us look at the top 5 cities and understand the factors that make them the top cities for women in the country.

1. Bengaluru:

Bengaluru, often referred to as India's Silicon Valley, ranks at the no.1 spot amongst Top Cities for Women in India, with a City Inclusion Score of 47.15. India's IT capital has the topmost Industry Inclusion Score among the 120 cities ranked in this study. Industry Inclusion Score refers to the presence of inclusive organizations, inclusive industries and career enablers that enable women to join the workforce. Bengaluru also scores very well on the Ease of Living (EOL) index with a score of 66.7 out of 100 [11]. EOL is the index brought out by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, GoI, that examines liveability of Indian cities across a set of three pillars, which include a total of 14 categories and 50 indicators on the subjects of quality of life, economic ability and sustainability. Karnataka state's women's literacy rate is at a modest 70.1% which is an area for improvement [12]. The gross enrolment ratio of girl students stands at 36.2% [13] which even though is higher than that of boys, is still quite low compared to



some other states in the country. The survey also indicated that working women seemed to perceive the city to be conducive to their mobility, safety and liveability needs. One of the parameters the city will do well to improve is its crime rate. The city's rate of crimes against women (as per NCRB 2022) stands at 96.7 which is higher than the national average of 90.1, demanding attention [14].



2. Chennai

With a City Inclusion Score of 46.31, Chennai ranks at no.2. This can be attributed to its Social Inclusion Score and Industrial Inclusion Score ranking amongst the highest. Chennai scores high on the Ease of Living (EOL) index with a score of 62.61 out of 100 [11]. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) rate of the state of Tamil Nadu is 43.2% which is way higher than the national average of 41.7% (data according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2023 [15]). It is also a favourite destination for setting up business by Fortune 500 companies—74 F500 companies have offices in the state. It leads the nation in terms of both the number of factories and industrial workers, with a striking 43% of the entire female manufacturing workforce in India hailing from the state [16].

Apart from this, Chennai boasts of numerous women empowerment schemes that the state has carried on for years such as the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya scheme, Chief Minister's girl child protection scheme, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit scheme and Mahalir Thittam scheme. Tamil Nadu state also has the second highest number of policewomen in the country. The lived experiences shared during the survey and focus group discussions for the city were also very positive. Chennai also has a relatively lower crime rate as compared to other cities. Its crime rate, specifically for crimes against women, according to the National Crime Records Bureau report 2022 is the lowest at 17.1 [14]. Crime (against women) rate refers to the total number of crimes against women registered per lakh women population.

3. Mumbai

Mumbai, India's financial capital, ranks third on the list with a City Inclusion Score of 41.11. Mumbai has been the commercial capital of India and has been a city that welcomes talent and lets them thrive. The cultural milieu of the city is very different from most cities in the country with its progressive values, respect for women and an overall reverence for the working population of the city. With an EOL score of 59.91 [11], a female labour force participation rate of 40.1% [15] and women's literacy rate of 78.4% [12], the city performs reasonably well on most criteria. It has a very high industry inclusion score owing to the presence of large industries and inclusive organizations that enable a large number of women to find and retain meaningful jobs. The city needs to work on bringing its crime against women rate down from 72.5 [14] to ensure that women feel safe as they go out to work.



4. Hyderabad

Hyderabad, with a City Inclusion Score of 38.89, is celebrated for its world-class infrastructure, which sets a benchmark for urban planning and inclusivity. Hyderabad is on the cusp of dethroning Bengaluru as the IT hub of India and taking on that crown. Hyderabad already has the top IT companies such as Infosys, Wipro, TCS and Microsoft setting up offices in the city while it continues to receive increased attention and investment to boost its industry. It has a high female labour force participation rate as well as a good share of women led MSMEs. With a EOL score of 55.4 [11] and a crime (against women) rate of 86.3 [14], the city does have scope for improvement in the areas of literacy (currently at 65.1 [12]) and GER for girls (41.6 in Higher education [13]). With more and more IT companies setting up business in the city, the city will do well to work on its infrastructural and transport facilities to make the city more amenable for working women.



5. Pune

Pune rounds out the top five with a City Inclusion Score of 36.14, distinguished by its emphasis on quality of life. Pune with its tropical climate and vicinity to Mumbai has become one of the most sought after cities in the country to live. It is also becoming an inclusive city for women to work. With a high ease of living score and a higher female labour force participation rate than even Bengaluru and Chennai, it only lags behind in the crimes (against women) rate. The Maharashtra state could do much better on the literacy rate as well as the gross enrolment ratio of girl students but overall the state and some of its cities such as Pune and Mumbai score high on social inclusion and industrial inclusion parameters. The state also does well in its share of women led MSMEs. 6.47% of all MSMEs in Maharashtra are led by women.



THE WAY FORWARD

These Role model cities - Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Pune - illustrate the immense potential of Indian cities to create inclusive and empowering environments for women. The success of these cities offers valuable lessons that can serve as a blueprint for other urban centres. One of the key takeaways is the need for a holistic approach that integrates safety, healthcare access, economic opportunities, and community support to cater to women's multifaceted needs. These cities demonstrate that intentional and sustained efforts in governance, public-private partnerships, and community engagement can produce tangible results in fostering gender equity.

Organizations, too, play a pivotal role in this transformation. By investing in DEI policies and practices, offering flexible work environments, and investing in women's leadership programs, businesses can help bridge gaps in economic opportunities for women.



Furthermore, collaborating with city planners and local authorities to develop gender-sensitive infrastructure, such as safe public spaces and reliable transport systems, can amplify efforts to create truly inclusive urban ecosystems.

However, the journey does not end here. The findings highlight the importance of conducting a much larger and deeper exercise, such as the proposed Top Cities for Women in India (TCWI) 2025 study, to further explore and address the nuanced challenges that women face across diverse regions. This expanded effort could delve into critical areas that address the evolving demands of women in rapidly transforming cities. With efforts towards city planning set to impact 400 million professionals and 305 million workers who are part of the unorganized workforce [18], this could have critical implications for the inclusive growth of our country.

With TCWI 2025, we look to reinvent the exercise and broaden its scope so as to act as a catalyst for systemic change, encouraging stakeholders - including policymakers, corporates, and communities - to learn from the best practices of role model cities and take a data-driven approach to urban planning and gender inclusivity. By leveraging the learnings from these top-performing cities and scaling them to address the broader spectrum of challenges in a city ecosystem, India can take a significant step forward in creating cities that not only empower women but also set benchmarks for inclusivity and equity.

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ANNEXURE

In the following table, we present the ranking of all the 120 cities considered for TCWI 2024.

S.NO	CITY	CITY INCLUSION SCORE (OUT OF 100)	2024 RANK	2024 SIS RANK	2024 IIS RANK
1	Bengaluru	47.15	1	3	1
2	Chennai	46.31	2	1	3
3	Mumbai	41.11	3	5	2
4	Hyderabad	38.89	4	4	4
5	Pune	36.88	5	2	5
6	Kolkata	34.18	6	6	6
7	Ahmedabad	30.56	7	7	9
8	Delhi	28.50	8	19	7
9	Gurugram	25.52	9	39	8
10	Coimbatore	24.40	10	14	10
11	Kochi	23.20	11	12	13
12	Tiruchirappalli	22.38	12	8	43
13	Thiruvananthapuram	21.35	13	10	25
14	Shimla	21.06	14	9	69
15	Vellore	20.71	15	11	50
16	Jaipur	20.28	16	34	11
17	Madurai	20.13	17	17	28
18	Salem	19.89	18	13	51
19	Erode	19.57	19	15	69
20	Tiruppur	18.93	20	16	69
21	Puducherry	18.14	21	22	37
22	Kozhikode	18.13	22	18	82
23	Jammu	18.10	23	24	44
24	Mangalore	17.99	24	28	35
25	Visakhapatnam	17.92	25	33	20

S.NO	CITY	CITY INCLUSION SCORE (OUT OF 100)	2024 RANK	2024 SIS RANK	2024 IIS RANK
26	Nagpur	17.66	26	35	18
27	Belagavi	17.46	27	20	69
28	Hubli Dharwad	17.44	28	21	40
29	Solapur	17.38	29	25	63
30	Nashik	17.26	30	38	26
31	Chandigarh	17.21	31	49	15
32	Vijayawada	17.18	32	32	21
33	Bhubaneswar	17.06	33	53	14
34	Jodhpur	16.85	34	29	38
35	Vadodara	16.83	35	42	19
36	Aurangabad	16.66	36	41	30
37	Kakinada	16.63	37	23	69
38	Kalyan Dombivli	16.48	38	27	60
39	Ajmer	16.48	39	26	69
40	Dehradun	16.40	40	37	33
41	Thane	16.38	41	30	41
42	Kota	16.30	42	31	69
43	Warangal	15.65	43	43	45
44	Surat	15.55	44	46	22
45	Vasai Virar	15.55	45	36	60
46	Pimpri Chinchwad	15.45	46	40	54
47	Raipur	15.34	47	48	31
48	Indore	15.20	48	61	16
49	Rajkot	14.91	49	45	48
50	Mysore	14.81	50	50	39
51	Bilaspur	14.65	51	47	66
52	Srinagar	14.50	52	44	68
53	Ranchi	14.49	53	51	27
54	Jalandhar	14.26	54	52	57

S.NO	CITY	CITY INCLUSION SCORE (OUT OF 100)	2024 RANK	2024 SIS RANK	2024 IIS RANK
55	Prayagraj	13.79	55	57	57
56	Ludhiana	13.74	56	68	32
57	Bhopal	13.61	57	66	23
58	Lucknow	13.51	58	74	17
59	Faridabad	13.48	59	55	47
60	Dhanbad	13.10	60	59	69
61	Jabalpur	13.09	61	67	53
62	Noida	13.05	62	86	12
63	Bareilly	13.02	63	54	63
64	Moradabad	13.02	64	63	60
65	Saharanpur	13.01	65	62	69
66	Anand	12.88	66	58	52
67	Varanasi	12.86	67	73	36
68	Rourkela	12.76	68	56	67
69	Jhansi	12.75	69	65	69
70	Kanpur	12.72	70	69	34
71	Amritsar	12.64	71	60	87
72	Agra	12.58	72	75	42
73	Ujjain	12.41	73	64	55
74	Ghaziabad	12.35	74	70	46
75	Guwahati	12.27	75	79	29
76	Meerut	11.81	76	72	63
77	Aligarh	11.67	77	71	69
78	Patna	11.50	78	80	24
79	Gwalior	11.48	79	77	59
80	Bhilai	10.58	80	76	85
81	Jamshedpur	10.39	81	78	56
82	Thanjavur	10.39	82	82	93
83	Tirunelveli	10.28	83	81	96

S.NO	CITY	CITY INCLUSION SCORE (OUT OF 100)	2024 RANK	2024 SIS RANK	2024 IIS RANK
84	Udaipur	10.08	84	88	81
85	Dindigul	10.00	85	84	96
86	Gangtok	9.94	86	89	96
87	Dharamshala	9.77	87	87	96
88	Thoothukudi	9.51	88	83	86
89	Kohima	9.27	89	85	96
90	Shillong	8.89	90	90	96
91	Tumakuru	8.68	91	94	114
92	Amravati	8.39	92	103	83
93	Panaji	8.35	93	92	80
94	Shivamogga	8.33	94	91	96
95	Imphal	8.27	95	102	87
96	Gandhinagar	8.24	96	104	49
97	Tirupati	8.23	97	95	87
98	Davanagere	8.11	98	93	96
99	Aizawl	7.92	99	97	96
100	Namchi	7.91	100	96	114
101	Silvassa	7.67	101	100	94
102	Pasighat	7.65	102	98	96
103	Dahod	7.57	103	99	114
104	Itanagar	7.49	104	101	114
105	Karimnagar	7.18	105	105	94
106	Diu	7.14	106	108	114
107	Bihar Sharif	7.01	107	106	83
108	Karnal	6.68	108	107	87
109	Daman	6.37	109	109	119
110	Agartala	6.30	110	110	87
111	Rae Bareli	6.12	111	111	96
112	Rampur	6.10	112	112	96

S.NO	CITY	CITY INCLUSION SCORE (OUT OF 100)	2024 RANK	2024 SIS RANK	2024 IIS RANK
113	Port Blair	6.06	113	113	96
114	Sagar	5.90	114	114	96
115	Bhagalpur	5.84	115	115	87
116	Muzaffarpur	5.72	116	116	96
117	Satna	5.67	117	117	96
118	Ladakh	5.30	118	118	119
119	Kavaratti	4.99	119	119	96
120	Dispur	3.56	120	120	113

ABOUT AVTAR

Avtar, set up in 2000, is India's first diversity advocate & workplace inclusion expert. Stepping into its 25th glorious year, renowned for the extensive work in the space of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) and more specifically, women's workforce participation, Avtar is now an ISO 20700 Certified firm. Under the visionary leadership of Dr Saundarya Rajesh, Avtar has ventured into areas of gender inclusion and career creation, which are firsts to India, including:

- Creating platforms for second career women to meet potential employers,
- Developing a comprehensive set of career enablers which companies can implement in their workspaces
- Spearheading original research that has provided cutting edge insights to organization
- Creating India's largest diversity benchmarking platform – Avtar & Seramount Best Companies for women in India
- Creating India's first diversity hiring portal myavtar.com for women, LGBTQ, PWD, Veterans and Silver Generation

Avtar has built its DEI offerings under Six EDs, which ensures that every organization can have a clear path towards moving forward, building and sustaining diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. The Six EDs – Enrich Diversity, Embed Diversity, Enable Diversity, Experience Diversity, Extend Diversity and Endow Diversity are constructed along six key implementation dimensions of Diversity - for Assessments & Advisory support, Recruitment Programs, Workshops and Training Programs, Conferences and Events, Empowering Supplier Diversity & Inclusion and supporting inclusion of under-privileged communities, respectively. For its transformational impact in the realm of DEI, Avtar Group was listed in the prestigious Steward Leadership 25 Listing by Strait Times & INSEAD at Singapore in 2022.

To know more, visit www.avtarinc.com | www.myavtar.com

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Dr Saundarya Rajesh

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Dr Saundarya Rajesh is an award-winning social entrepreneur, a sought-after DEI strategist and a torchbearer for women in the workplace. As the Founder-President of Avtar, India's top DEI consulting firm, she is the trusted advisor for hundreds of organizations and has facilitated the creation of inclusive workplaces for nearly 10 lakh women.

Dr Saundarya firmly believes that women's workforce participation can promote national economic prosperity and was one of the earliest proponents of gender diversity in the workplace, at a time when women's careers were viewed as unnecessary. A pioneer of the idea of second career paths for women and the concept of career intentionality—an innovative success tool for women, Dr Saundarya has made it possible for thousands of women to make a career re-entry and flourish in the workplace.

She has demystified DEI for a remarkable range of audiences including women, policymakers, CEOs, HR leaders, and DEI enthusiasts, through her training sessions and speeches across various platforms. Her stellar contribution in the space of women's workforce participation has won her several awards including the Ministry of Women and Child Development's #100 Women Achiever Award, the Chevening Global Changemaker Award and NiTi-Aayog's Women Transforming India Award.

Dr Saundarya is the author of two highly acclaimed books – 'The 99 Day Diversity Challenge', a unique DEI guide for business leaders, and 'Conversations with the Career Doctor', a practical handbook for women to win in their careers.



Karthik Ekambaram

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Karthik is a Diversity and Inclusion specialist with rich experience of completing several seminal projects successfully for various organizations. An MBA, with over 25 years of experience in business analysis, talent strategy and workforce diversity consulting, he has devised flexible working policies and created diversity ready workplaces for several fortune 500 organizations.

As one of India's pioneers in the field of Second Career programs, Karthik has been a key architect in the re-entry of women into the workplace. He has worked on many research studies on Diversity & Inclusion, Second careers for women, Generations in the workforce, Flexible working and Work-life balance. Karthik leads India's largest study on Diversity & Inclusion – Avtar & Seramont Best Companies for Women and Most Inclusive Companies in India. He has conducted several D&I audits & assessments of organisations across Industries. He has also conducted workshops for Senior Leadership Team in companies such as Abbott, JSW Group, Boeing, Sundaram Fasteners and PepsiCo India. Karthik has also co-authored several papers that have been published in Journals of National and International repute. He has been conferred the DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP AWARD by World HRD Congress.



Anju G Parvathy

Vice President – Research & Solutions, Avtar

Anju G Parvathy, a CBSE national topper is a Computer Science Engineer from BITS, Pilani – one of the premier institutes of technical education in India. Research had always been her passion and in her career spanning 15+ years of work experience, she has published several papers on women careers and diversity and inclusion in national and international journals. In 2010, she was chosen to present her research paper at AAAI (American Association for Artificial Intelligence), a highly prestigious Artificial Intelligence conclave in Atlanta (USA). A listed co-inventor of two patents at the USPTO, Anju's tryst with 'gender analytics' started

about a decade back when the 3 Ms in her life – Marriage, Maternity and Motherhood reshaped her approach towards women’s careers.

As Vice President – Research & Solutions at Avtar, Anju (a second career woman herself) has played pivotal roles in several workforce centric studies undertaken in-house - on career intentionality of Indian professionals, on generational diversity in India, economic centeredness of Indian women, gender inclusion in a VUCA world, to name a few. Anju leads a team that works across the length and breadth of D&I metrics for companies to produce strategic insights for corporate India. At Avtar, she also drives Corporate India’s largest diversity analytics exercise – Avtar & Seramount Best Companies for Women in India study, which completed nine successful editions in India between 2016 and 2024 and will shortly enters its 10 edition.



Rashmi Ravindran

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As part of the Solutions Team, Rashmi works on creating customised DEI strategies and solutions for clients. With over 20 years of expertise in Branding and Communications, she brings a unique blend of strategic insight and creative execution to every project. She has successfully led Avtar’s Marketing and Communications division, establishing its structure and driving impactful campaigns.

Rashmi’s expertise extends to product development, having spearheaded initiatives such as the creation of Avtar Academy, a pioneering DEI e-learning platform. Her extensive experience and passion for inclusion make her a trusted partner in crafting transformative DEI solutions for organizations.



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Hailing from diverse backgrounds of psychology, journalism, and human resources, Dr Hima holds a PhD in Organizational Behavior from IIT Madras. She did her research on the broad area of Organizational Culture, and her thesis was on the 'not-so-often-researched' topic of 'Workplace Humor'. During and after her doctoral degree, Hima has participated and presented her work in several national and international conferences and has published her research in numerous academic

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Top Cities for Women in **INDIA 2024**



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