



Why aren't Women Part of the Conversation?

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India is the largest market for social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Yet these markets present a heavily skewed profile of the majority men users. Many statistics reiterate the above statements. In India, 55% of women own a mobile phone compared to 75% of men users. Similarly, only 9% of women within the 15-65 age bracket use social media compared to 22% of men in the same age group.

Key Highlights:

- Even when a slim majority of 54% says that both men and women are responsible for earning for the family, there are clear indications of prominence of men in the economic sphere in the survey findings. As majority opined those men should be given job preference when jobs were in short supply.
- As per the report, there is a disparity in the usage pattern of mobile phones between men and women.
- The gender gap in usage is also due to the low level of digital literacy amongst women. The researchers found out that 22% of women surveyed could not even dial a phone number without help. There has been a lack of confidence in women to learn new digital skills, again restricting their usage pattern.
- The difference in usage patterns between men and women is seen in Social Media too. Women in India, use social media to maintain their existing networks and friends, rather than to build new ones.
- As per the report, gender norms pose a huge influence in determining women's behaviour in the online space. These norms are reflected through supervision of the use of mobile phones by women by men, family members and partners. The research reports instances where women have to share their passwords with male family members. These activities are then justified as protection of the women members from online traps and violence.
- Though concerns pertaining to privacy and safety exists, it must be noted that these concerns do not act as bottlenecks for the men in the use of phones and the internet.
- The norms also ensure that women resort to existing feminine traits and remain as silent spectators, while men utilise the online space to show masculinity and aggressiveness. Women who deviate from these norms more often are subjected to online verbal harassment and trolling.
- 58% of women internet users have faced online sexual harassment of some form. The harassment pattern further intensifies on the basis of religious and caste basis. Muslim and Dalit women become the prime targets for such actions.
- A majority of women (54%), who've been subjected to such attacks have reported not seeking any type of help, either from their family or through legal institutions, primarily due to fears of curtailment of the use of mobile phones by family members or lack of awareness.
- The study also mentions the role of female content creators in disrupting gender stereotypes through the content.

Read more: [Why aren't Women Part of the Conversation?](#)

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