

## State of Rural Youth Employment - 2024

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### Introduction:

The "State of Rural Youth Employment" report offers an in-depth look at the hurdles and opportunities rural youth face in India, touching on areas like job prospects, skill training, and ambitions.

### Key Findings:

- 1. Workforce Involvement:** The report highlights that while 70% of India's youth live in rural areas, only 46% contribute to the nation's GDP. The rural economy relies heavily on agriculture, with around 80% of the young workforce employed in this sector. Despite this, agriculture is losing its appeal due to low productivity and income.  
In the 18-25 age group, only half of the men are working, and just one-quarter of women have paid jobs. For the older group (26-35), 85% of men are employed, while only 40% of women have jobs, with many stepping away from work to manage family obligations. This employment gap is particularly wide for women, who have never worked in paid jobs.
- 2. Job Aspirations:** Most rural youth are seeking better opportunities, with 70-85% of those surveyed wanting to switch jobs. A significant number are interested in starting small businesses in areas like retail, manufacturing, or trade. Government jobs are especially desirable for younger women, while older women tend to lean towards self-employment, likely because it offers more flexibility to juggle work and household duties.  
Even though entrepreneurship is generally appealing, fewer youth show interest in vocational trades. Many prefer familiar roles like tailoring and driving, mainly because they are unaware of more lucrative options in other trades.
- 3. Barriers to Employment:** Financial issues are the biggest obstacle to entering the workforce for both men and women. Many also point out the lack of job opportunities in rural areas and insufficient family support. For women, cultural expectations and a lack of information about job opportunities add to the challenges they face in securing work.
- 4. Skill Development:** While many young people seek vocational training, particularly those interested in starting businesses, there is limited access to these opportunities—especially for women. Even though there's general awareness of programs like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), not many are actively participating. Many rural youth, especially women, are unaware of the full range of government support programs available to them.

5. **Migration Preferences:** A large majority of rural youth prefer to stay close to their hometowns. More than 60% of the men and over 70% of the women said they would rather work near their village, even if it means earning less. Only a small number are willing to move to cities for higher-paying jobs.
6. **Challenges in Entrepreneurship:** While entrepreneurship is seen as a possible alternative to regular jobs, there are many roadblocks. A lack of entrepreneurial skills, difficulty in accessing seed funding, and limited knowledge on how to start a business are significant challenges. Women are particularly hesitant about entrepreneurship because they often lack family experience in running businesses and face additional barriers like cultural expectations.
7. **Agriculture's Declining Appeal:** Although many rural youth are employed in agriculture, it is not seen as a desirable career. The main reasons include low income and unpredictable weather conditions. Those who do continue in farming say they need more technical assistance, better training, and access to high-quality farming materials to improve productivity.

#### **Conclusion:**

The report stresses that a coordinated effort is essential to tackle the employment challenges facing rural youth. This involves collaboration between the government, private sector, and community organizations to create sustainable job opportunities that cater to the needs and aspirations of young people in rural areas.

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**Author:** Paras Jyani, PILOT at Pratham