

# FROM BORROWERS TO BUILDERS

WOMEN'S ROLE IN INDIA'S FINANCIAL GROWTH STORY





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**FOREWORD**

India stands at a transformative moment in its economic journey, one where women’s financial inclusion is not just an aspiration but a driving force of progress. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a remarkable shift in women’s engagement with formal credit, signaling a growing recognition of financial independence and empowerment. This report, *From Borrowers to Builders: Women’s Role in India’s Financial Growth Story*, published by the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL and MicroSave Consulting (MSC), offers valuable insights into this evolving landscape.

The findings are encouraging. A 42% year-over-year increase in women actively monitoring their credit health demonstrates a significant step toward financial awareness and responsible credit management. Additionally, the fourfold rise in business loan accounts opened by women over the last six years highlights their increasing entrepreneurial ambitions. These trends reaffirm that when given access to the right financial tools and support, women do not just participate in the economy, they help shape and strengthen it.

At NITI Aayog, we recognize that access to finance is a fundamental enabler for women’s entrepreneurship. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) continues to work towards building an inclusive ecosystem that fosters financial literacy, access to credit, mentorship, and market linkages. However, ensuring equitable financial access requires a collective effort. The role of financial institutions in designing inclusive products tailored to women’s needs, along with policy initiatives that address structural barriers, will be instrumental in accelerating this momentum.

This report is not just a reflection of progress but a roadmap for the future. It serves as a crucial knowledge resource, shedding light on the evolving credit behavior of women and offering actionable insights for stakeholders committed to driving financial inclusion.

As we move ahead, our goal is to build an ecosystem where every woman, regardless of background, has the means to access, leverage, and benefit from financial services. This will contribute to a more resilient, prosperous and inclusive economy.

*BVS*  
 28/2  
 [B.V.R. Subrahmanyam]

Dated: 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2025



**B.V.R. SUBRAHMANYAM**  
 Chief Executive Officer, NITI Aayog



Accelerating women's access to finance is not just an economic necessity but a strategic imperative for inclusive growth. Women entrepreneurs are a vital yet underutilized force in the economy, with the potential to create 150 to 170 million jobs and boost female labour force participation. Yet, they face significant barriers, including limited credit readiness, lack of collateral, complex banking processes, and societal norms that discourage borrowing.

An MSC study found that 30% of Individual Enterprises (IEs) and 22.2% of Collective Enterprises (CEs) lacked credit readiness for even small loans. Beyond these structural hurdles, many women self-exclude from financial opportunities due to poor user experiences, mistrust of financial institutions, and fears of financial repercussions. Overcoming these challenges requires a more inclusive and responsive financial ecosystem.

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is a key initiative addressing these gaps, offering access to finance, markets, mentorship, and networks within a government-supported framework. The launch of the Financing Women Collaborative (FWC) in September 2023 has further strengthened this effort by fostering public-private partnerships, promoting best practices, and driving the development of gender-intelligent financial products.

This report provides critical insights into women as a distinct customer segment, aiming to inspire the creation of targeted financial solutions. The efforts of WEP, TU CIBIL, and MSC mark a significant step forward, but sustained collaboration among policymakers, financial institutions, and industry leaders will be essential to unlock the full potential of women entrepreneurs.

## ANNA ROY

Principal Economic Advisor, NITI Aayog and Mission Director, WEP





India's economic growth story is being redefined by the resilience, innovation, and determination of its women. As we stand at the quarter-mark of the 21st century, it is clear that empowering women to fully participate in the economy is not just a moral imperative but an economic necessity. Women, who make up nearly half of India's population, contribute only 18% to the GDP. Bridging this gap could unlock transformative growth for the nation.

At TransUnion CIBIL, we have always believed in the power of data and insights to drive meaningful change, and that empowerment begins with knowledge. Over the past 25 years, we have worked to democratise access to credit, enabling individuals and businesses to achieve their aspirations. This report, "From Borrowers to Builders - Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story", highlights the remarkable strides women are making in reshaping India's economy.

Yet, systemic barriers persist—limited access to finance, gender biases, and inadequate mentorship. Addressing these challenges calls for collective effort from policymakers, financial institutions, and society at large. As we look to the future, empowering women to lead, innovate, and thrive will not only redefine India's economic narrative but also ensure that women are equal and vital partners in shaping the nation's destiny.

To further this vision, we have partnered with the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) to launch a credit education program aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs across India. This initiative provides essential financial literacy resources and business skills, equipping women with the knowledge to build strong credit histories and maintain healthy CIBIL Scores. By fostering financial confidence and enabling easier access to credit, we strive to support women in realizing their entrepreneurial potential and driving economic progress.

At TransUnion CIBIL, we remain committed to supporting this journey, enabling women to transform aspirations into achievements.



### **BHAVESH JAIN**

MD & CEO, TransUnion CIBIL



As we navigate the 21st century, India's economic landscape is transforming, with women emerging as key drivers of financial growth.

This report, "From Borrowers to Builders – Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story", presents a data-driven analysis of women's evolving role in the economy. The findings are striking, women seeking credit have grown at a CAGR of 22% since 2019, with 60% of borrowers from semi-urban and rural areas. This underscores a deepening financial footprint beyond metro cities. Additionally, a 42% rise in women self-monitoring their credit reflects growing financial awareness. More women are entering the workforce and realizing their aspirations as entrepreneurs, this is reflected in the rising demand for business loans from women. Yet, many systemic barriers persist for women-led enterprises and many still remain unprepared to access formal finance. Addressing these challenges is critical for unlocking India's full economic potential.

At MicroSave Consulting (MSC), we have spent over two decades shaping financial ecosystems that empower women as entrepreneurs, job creators, and economic leaders. Our work with financial institutions, policymakers, and development partners has shown that true inclusion goes beyond access; it requires financial products and support systems designed with women's realities in mind. We have seen firsthand that when women are given the right tools, they don't just borrow, they build, innovate, and drive lasting economic change.

This report offers actionable insights to create an enabling environment where women entrepreneurs thrive. By addressing key challenges and seizing emerging opportunities, we can shape a more inclusive economy.

## MANOJ KUMAR SHARMA

Managing Director, MicroSave Consulting





This report examines the evolving role of women in India's economic growth, focusing on their untapped potential and the systemic barriers they face. Women constitute nearly half of India's population but contribute only 18% to the GDP.

## Key Findings

Women are reshaping the economy, from farms to boardrooms and from small-scale industries to tech startups, increasingly stepping into roles as creators, innovators, and decision-makers across diverse sectors. From Self Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas to tech-enabled entrepreneurs in urban centres—the narrative is one of resilience in the face of systemic barriers.

### ► **Steady Rise in Women Borrowers**

Women seeking credit grew ~3X between 2019 and 2024, reflecting increased demand among female borrowers.

### ► **Women Borrower Demographics**

About 60% of women borrowers availing credit are from semi-urban or rural areas. Women under 30 years of age, account for only 27% of retail credit uptake by women, compared to 40% for men.

### ► Credit Supply Trends

Women's participation in credit origination has seen notable growth in recent years. Since 2019, their share in Business Loans and Gold Loans has increased by 14% and 6% respectively. By 2024, 42% of loans availed by women were for personal finance, a slight increase from 39% in 2019. While the credit supply to women in business sectors has improved, the majority of loans availed by women continue to be against gold - 36% of all loans availed by women in 2024 were gold loans vs. 19% of loans availed in 2019.

### ► Rise in Credit Monitoring and Awareness

As of December 2024, 27 million women borrowers in India have monitored their credit information report and score with CIBIL. While this is an encouraging trend, this must continue for women to progress from participants to leaders in India's economic story.

## Conclusion

**The findings underscore women's growing economic participation and financial inclusion, particularly in rural areas. However, untapped potential among younger women and reliance on traditional credit forms highlight the need for greater empowerment to lead and innovate. Unlocking their potential will drive inclusive and sustainable growth, transforming aspirations into achievements.**





# A SHIFTING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

India remains one of the fastest-growing economies globally, with an 8.2% GDP growth in FY23/24 (World Bank, 2024). Its real GDP is projected to grow by 6.5-7% in 2024-25, reflecting the economy's resilience and strong domestic demand. By FY24, the economy had expanded by 20% compared to pre-COVID levels in FY20.

Structural initiatives like "Make in India" and "Digital India" have supported this recovery, with the services sector leading the way, contributing 54.7% to Gross Value Added (GVA), followed by industry at 27.6% and agriculture at 17.7%.

Amid this robust growth, Women Entrepreneurs (WEs) are playing an increasingly significant role in the economy, contributing to the nation's progress. Over the past 7 years, the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) has steadily increased from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24. This growth has been largely fueled by the increased economic participation of rural women.



## THE RISE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

With India's working-age population projected to exceed 1 billion in the next decade (World Bank, 2024) job creation through entrepreneurship is vital. Promoting entrepreneurship for women is also one of the best pathways for accelerating equitable growth. To support this transformation, a range of government initiatives and schemes are empowering women to overcome barriers, launch businesses, and contribute meaningfully to the economy.



The National Rural Livelihood Mission has enabled 9 million women Self Help Groups (SHGs) to improve their livelihoods through access to formal banking.

NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) brings together public and private sector partners to create a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs. It provides a continuum of support across 4 key needs of training, access to finance and markets, mentoring, and support services to women entrepreneurs.

WEP's digital platform offers knowledge resources and information on over 70 central and 400+ state level gov. schemes supporting entrepreneurship.

In FY 2023-24, loans totaling INR 2.22 lakh crore were disbursed to 4.24 crore women entrepreneurs under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY). Additionally, the PM SVANidhi Yojana supported 30.6 lakh women street vendors with 5,939.7 crore in working capital loans as of December 2024.

As of January 2025, over 40% of UDYAM-registered MSMEs are women-owned (UDYAM Registration Data 2025)

Despite numerous initiatives a significant number of women-owned and managed businesses remain concentrated in sectors such as apparel, textiles, tobacco products, beauty and food and beverages. WEPs research indicates that women entrepreneurs need a continuum of support throughout the critical stages of their entrepreneurship journey to ensure their survival, growth and profitability.

## WOMEN AND CREDIT: A TRANSFORMATIVE SHIFT IN FINANCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The number of women borrowers availing retail credit in India has increased at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 22% between 2019 and 2024. This growth reflects a significant shift in financial behaviour, with women increasingly leveraging credit to meet personal and professional goals. A closer look at the data reveals key trends in credit origination, product preferences, state-wise growth, and the role of semi-urban and rural enterprises.

Lending data across India reveals not only growth in financial access, but also a shift in the types of credit products women are engaging with. For example:



Credit for financing business purpose (business loans, commercial vehicle & commercial equipment loans, loans against property) witnessed about ~37 lakh new loan accounts opened by women, with disbursement totalling INR 1.9 lakh crore. While number of accounts opened for business purpose has grown 4.6X since 2019, these loans constitute only 3% of overall loans availed by women borrower in 2024.

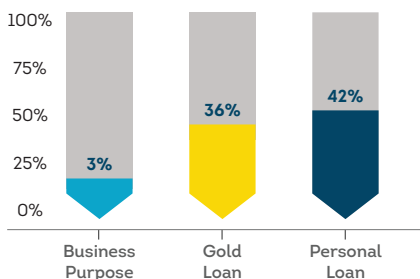


Gold loans have gained popularity amongst women borrowers, ~4 crore loans of value INR 4.7 lakh crore accounted for 38% of all loans availed by women borrowers in 2024, a growth of 5.1X by volume since 2019.



Credit for personal finance needs (personal loans, consumer durable loans, home ownership, vehicle loans) continues to be a major share of credit availed by women, ~4.3 crore such loans of value INR 4.8 lakh crore opened, accounted for 42% of all loans availed by women in 2024.

Share by Credit Product Type  
Loan Originations by Women in 2024



These figures underscore the increasing diversity in women's credit needs, from entrepreneurial ventures to personal financial management. And this growing financial acumen is evident in the success stories of women entrepreneurs who have leveraged credit to build thriving businesses.

## NEED FOR FOCUSED STRATEGIES TO EXPAND CREDIT ACCESS TO YOUNG WOMEN

Young women (<=30 years of age) are availing credit for personal finance purposes. However, the share of young women in other credit products remained low for originations in 2024.

### SHARE OF LOAN ORIGINATIONS TO YOUNGER WOMEN <30YRS



Personal Loans  
42%



Gold Loans  
17%



Business Loans  
18%



Agri Loans  
13%



Shares of loan originations to women in semi-urban and rural areas are higher for agriculture, business purposes, and gold than for personal finance loans, underscoring the geographical diversity in credit product preferences.

## SHARE OF LOAN ORIGINATIONS TO WOMEN IN SEMI-URBAN AND RURAL GEOGRAPHIES



Personal Loans  
49%



Gold Loans  
70%



Business Loans  
65%



Agri Loans  
84%



## WOMEN'S CREDIT PRODUCT PREFERENCES

Women borrowers are increasingly seeking credit for entrepreneurial growth, as reflected in the high share of women in credit enquiries in 2024 for:



➤ **Loan Against Property: 36%** (+2% increase in share from 2019)



➤ **Agriculture Loans: 26%** (+5% increase in share from 2019)



➤ **Business Loans: 25%** (+2% increase in share from 2019)



➤ **Commercial Vehicle Loans: 19%** (+4% increase in share from 2019)



## WOMEN'S CREDIT PRODUCT PREFERENCES (CONT.)

Consumption loans (i.e. personal loans, credit cards and consumer durable loans) remain the most preferred credit product among women borrowers, with 36% of women holding at least one consumption loan in their portfolio as of December 2024, up from 33% in December 2019. Other notable trends include:



### Agricultural and gold loans

Together rank as the second most preferred products, with 34% of women borrowers holding either an agricultural or gold loan in their portfolio as of December 2024.



### Business purpose loans

A notable rise in popularity, with 16% of women borrowers holding a loan to finance business needs in their portfolio as of December 2024, compared to just 9% in December 2019.



While business loans are gaining popularity among women, government initiatives have also substantially enhanced financial access. Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) issued 22% of total guarantees to women for collateral-free loans as of March 2024, while Stand-Up India sanctioned 84% of 2.09 lakh loans to women entrepreneurs by November 2023, reinforcing support for women-led businesses.

## STATE-WISE GROWTH IN WOMEN BORROWERS: A REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Credit participation by women borrowers varies significantly across states, reflecting regional differences in financial inclusion.



Southern states have higher shares of women borrowers with at least 1 live loan in their wallet – Tamil Nadu (44%), Andhra Pradesh (41%), Telangana (35%), Karnataka (34%) as compared to 31% of women at an overall country level as of December 2024.



Northern and central states (Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) have witnessed high CAGR in live women borrowers over the last 5 years, but their share of women at an overall country level remains low.

### LIVE LOANS FOR TOP 7 STATES – DEC '24

State	Overall Growth (5 Years CAGR)	Growth of Women (5 Years CAGR)	Share of Women (2024)
Uttar Pradesh	16%	20%	23%
Maharashtra	9%	13%	30%
Tamil Nadu	8%	10%	44%
Karnataka	12%	16%	34%
Andhra Pradesh	10%	13%	41%
Rajasthan	14%	20%	26%
Madhya Pradesh	15%	19%	25%



# SELF-MONITORING WOMEN BORROWERS

WOMEN ARE INCREASINGLY TAKING CHARGE OF THEIR  
CREDIT PROFILES.

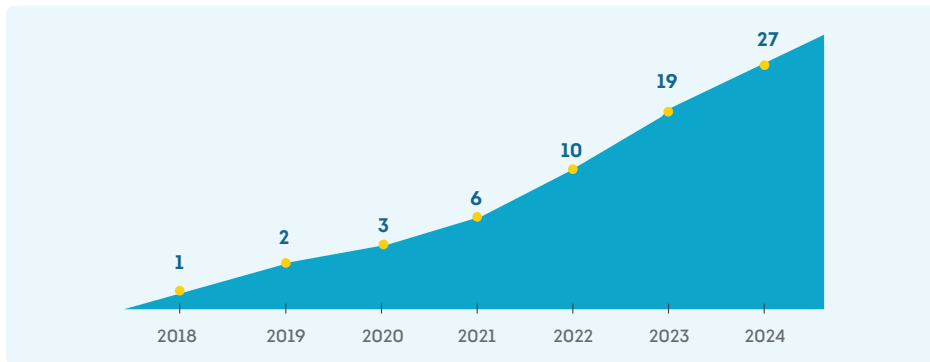


## RISE OF SELF-MONITORING: GENERATIONAL AND GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Building on the progress in access to finance, women are increasingly demonstrating financial independence through self-monitoring and credit management. This is a testament to their growing financial acumen.

As women take charge of their financial futures, the numbers tell a compelling story. By the end of 2024, nearly 27 million women were actively monitoring their credit—a striking 42% increase from 2023. This shift reflects a broader cultural and economic transformation, with women increasingly viewing credit health as an active tool for shaping their financial futures.

Self-Monitoring Women Borrowers (in Mn.)



The surge is being driven by the younger generation, with Gen Z women - a generation often characterised by its digital fluency and appetite for self-improvement - leading the way.

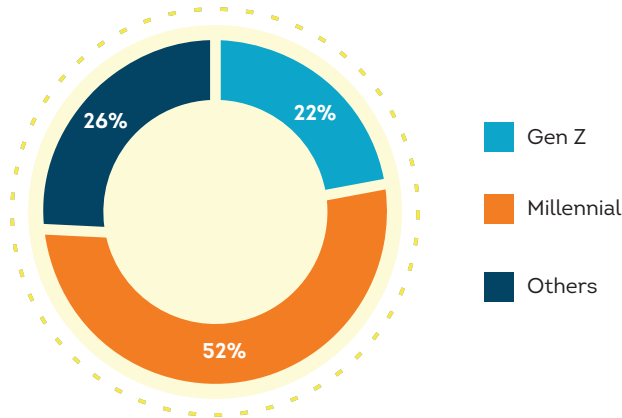


The number of Gen Z women self-monitoring their credit jumped by 56% year-on-year, while millennial women followed closely with a 38% rise.

## RISE OF SELF-MONITORING: GENERATIONAL AND GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS (CONT.)

This attitudinal shift could be the sign of a broader trend: women are increasingly recognising the importance of credit health as a cornerstone of financial empowerment.

Age-Wise Distribution of Self-Monitoring Women Consumers (2024)



In 2024, women made up 19.43% of the total self-monitoring base, up from 17.89% in 2023.

The share of Gen Z women amongst the self-monitoring population rose to 27.14% in 2024, compared to 24.87% the previous year.

They also accounted for 2.16 million new credit self-monitoring individuals in 2024, while millennial women added 3.80 million to their ranks.



## STATES WITH LARGEST GROWTH IN SELF-MONITORING WOMEN BORROWERS



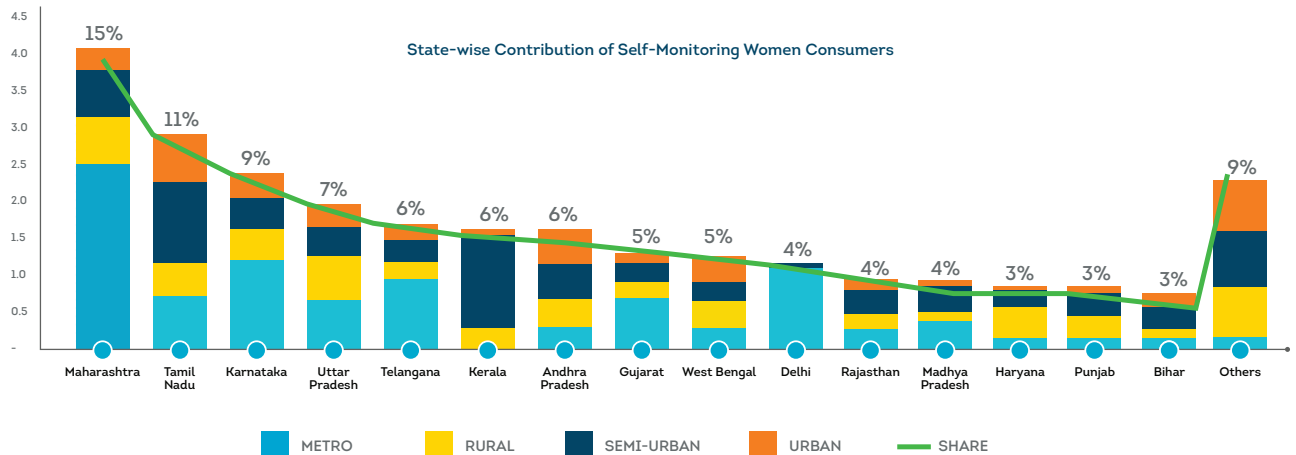
The number of self-monitoring women from metro areas has grown by 30% from December 2023 to December 2024, while those from non-metro areas has grown by 48% during the same period.



**Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana** were the top five states for women self-monitoring in CY 2024, contributing to 49% of the total women self-monitoring across all states.



The southern region has the highest number of women self-monitoring, with 10.16 million women. This region also experienced a growth of 46% from Dec 2023 till Dec 2024.



## THE POWER OF SELF-MONITORING: WOMEN ACHIEVING CREDIT HEALTH

A closer look at women-specific credit data reveals that 13.49% of women who engage in self-monitoring open a loan account within one month of their monitoring activity, underscoring the direct link between awareness and action.



44% of women who engage in self-monitoring see improvements in their credit scores within six months, reflecting the impact of increased financial awareness.



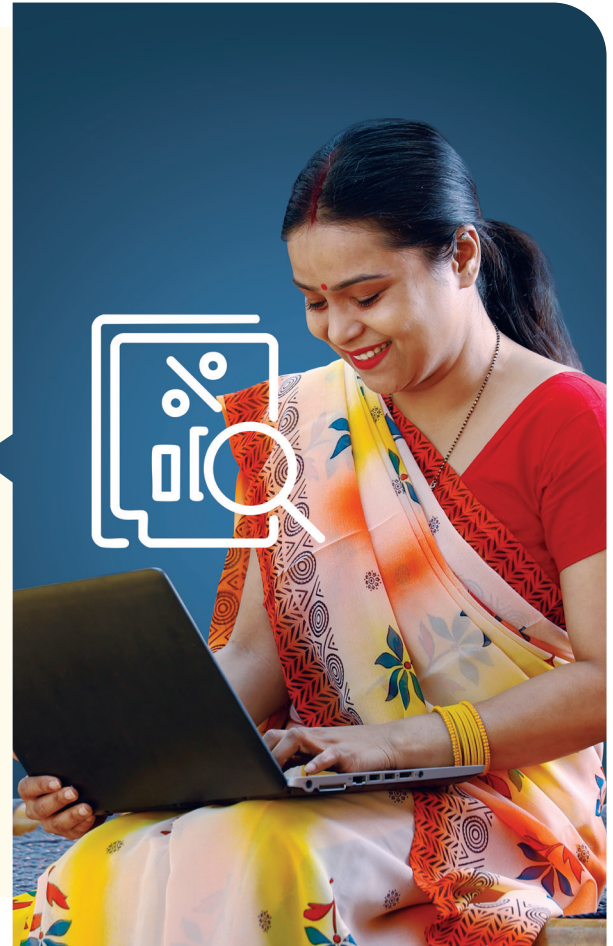
Among women in the 90+ Days Past Due (DPD) category at the time of their credit check, 17.45% moved to a lower delinquency bracket within six months, while 11.37% became standard borrowers.



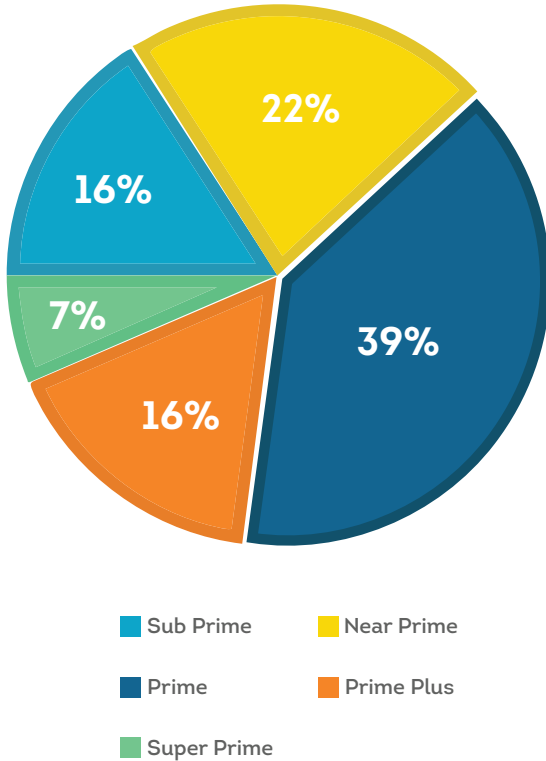
The number of women self-monitoring and classified as Prime and above grew from **8.22 million** as of December 2023, to **11.90 million** as of December 2024, showing a growth of approximately 45%.



Nearly 62% of self-monitoring women are in the Prime and above bands. This shows that actively managing your credit by consistently following good credit practices has helped women borrowers remain credit healthy.



Score Distribution of Self-Monitoring Women Consumers



The rise in financial and credit awareness amongst women—especially younger ones—marks a significant cultural and economic shift. Credit health has now become an active tool for shaping economic independence. It is a reminder that empowerment is rooted in knowledge, and for this generation, credit health is proving to be a powerful starting point.

**CIBIL Scores:** Range from 300-900. Score tiers are: **Subprime** = 300-680 | **Near Prime** = 681-730

**Prime** = 731-770 | **Prime Plus** = 771-790 | **Super Prime** = 791-900

# BEYOND THE STATISTICS: UNDERSTANDING WOMEN BORROWERS

WOMEN'S CREDIT POTENTIAL, PERSONAS, MOTIVATIONS  
AND CHALLENGES



## NAVIGATING COMPLEXITIES: WOMEN'S NON-LINEAR JOURNEY TO SUCCESSFUL BORROWING

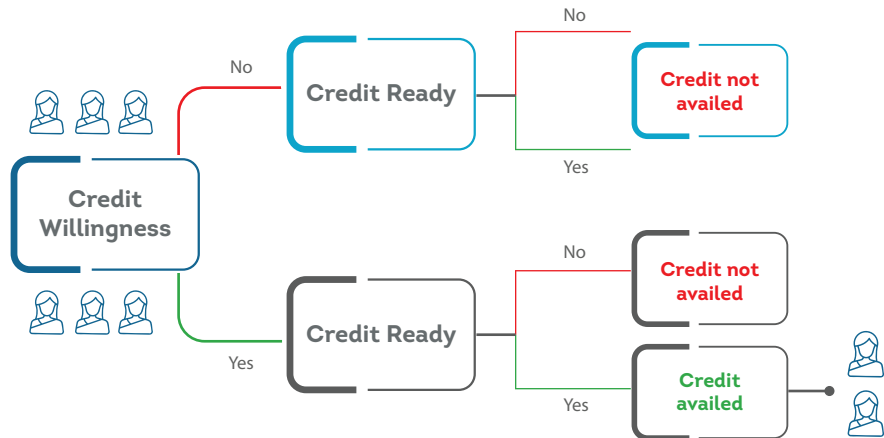
Understanding women borrowers' credit journeys is crucial to addressing the gender gap in credit and unlocking women's potential in the market. MSC's study (Women and Credit Report) of 40 women-owned enterprises across 10 states led to the creation of personas that capture the non-linear credit journey of women entrepreneurs.



These personas highlight that women business borrowers are diverse. Some may be credit-ready but not credit-willing, while others are credit-willing but not credit-ready. Additionally, some face barriers even when they are both credit-ready and credit-willing. Their challenges and motivations vary by life stage, needs, and experience with the credit market. The following personas, representing real WEs from the field study, illustrate these varied journeys.



The Dynamic Credit Paths of WEs





## OVERCOMING BARRIERS: THE ONGOING CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN BORROWERS

- ▶ Despite the strides they've made, women borrowers continue to face systemic challenges.
- ▶ Access to finance remains a significant hurdle, with many women entrepreneurs struggling to secure loans due to gender biases, lack of collateral, and limited financial literacy.

01

### Credit Aversion

Some women, despite being credit-ready, avoid formal loans due to social norms, fear of default repercussions, and complex application processes.

### Poor Banking Experience

Women often find the banking system unwelcoming and intimidating, discouraging full financial participation. Many banks fail to offer advisory services tailored to women's needs.

02

03

### Limited Institutional Support

79% of women-owned businesses are self-financed, with only 7% of MSME credit directed to women. Lenders perceive women as higher-risk borrowers due to limited credit history and business experience.

### Barriers to Credit Readiness

Many women lack the necessary documentation, guarantors, and collateral for productive loans. Around 30% of individual enterprises and 22.2% of women-led collective enterprises are not credit-ready.

04

05

### Collateral & Guarantor Constraints

Lack of tailored financial products considering women's unique financial needs, such as flexible repayment structures. Most women-led MSMEs rely on non-collateral loans, often capped at INR 1.5 lakh.

# MAPPING THE FINANCIAL JOURNEYS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH SIX KEY PERSONAS

## INDEPENDENT GO-GETTER

Credit-willing, credit-ready, and has independently availed credit from a financial service provider.

## GUIDED ACHIEVER

Credit-willing and credit-ready but has availed credit with the assistance of bridge institutions^.

## DISAPPOINTED APPLICANT

Credit-willing and credit-ready but has been unable to access credit, despite meeting the necessary financial and business requirements.

## HOPEFUL LEARNER

Credit-willing but not credit-ready due to a lack of business viability, documentation, or credit history.

## RISK-AVERSE PLANNER

Credit-averse despite having a viable business and meeting financial eligibility criteria, often due to social, economic, or personal concerns.

## RESOURCE-LIMITED STRIVER

Lacking both, the motivation to seek credit and the necessary business or financial prerequisites, to qualify for formal borrowing.



^Bridge institutions provide credit and credit-plus services, such as training and business support, to women. They connect banks with borrowers, maintain long-term relationships, and adopt gender-intentional or gender-transformative lending approaches. (Women and Credit, 2023.)

# INDEPENDENT GO-GETTER

## PRIYA, 35

Region: Urban

Enterprise: Drone Technology

Ownership type: Single

Annual revenue: INR 12 million

Employees: 10



“

I started with loans, but grants and equity from impact investors align better with my climate tech vision.

”

### Journey



Priya, a passionate advocate for sustainable development, founded a drone technology company with a mission to combat climate change using renewable energy-powered drones. After years of researching emerging technologies, she launched a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) two years ago, focused on delivering essential healthcare supplies to remote and climate-vulnerable communities.

#### Credit Willing

Priya is open to credit opportunities but has a preference for alternative funding sources such as grants and equity investments. She seeks a financial partnership that complements her long-term vision for the business.

#### Credit Ready

With a proven track record of selling her MVP for over two years and consistent growth, Priya is credit-ready. Her business is structured to manage scaling, making her well-positioned for expansion.

#### Credit Availed

Priya initially took traditional loans but later secured grants and equity investments from impact investors focused on climate tech.

# INDEPENDENT GO-GETTER

## REENA, 54

Region: Urban

Enterprise: Health services and chain of medical shops

Ownership type: Cooperative

Annual revenue: INR 60.25 million

Employees: 300 active members



“

We started with small steps, but with resilience, collaboration, and the right financial support, we have built a movement that uplifts informal women workers.

”

### Journey



Reena leads the Prakritik Health Services which is a women-led, women-run health cooperative in India, dedicated to making basic health services and information accessible to women in the informal economy. Registered in 1990, it is 1500 members strong, working with an objective to provide quality health services to people at low cost, crucial for keeping informal women workers out of poverty.

#### Credit Willing

The collective seeks INR 5-6 million in credit to obtain a manufacturing space for producing ayurvedic products.

#### Credit Ready

With a proven repayment history, necessary documentation, and a sustainable business model, the collective is well-positioned to access credit.

#### Credit Availed

They have secured loans from banks, working capital from an NBFC and a women federation.

# GUIDED ACHIEVER

## NAZRIN, 45

Region: Urban

Sector: Food processing

Ownership type: SHG Enterprise

Annual revenue: INR 3.3 million

Employees: 12 (10 SHG members)



“

Now, I'm confident in selling, managing investments, and speaking publicly. I am grateful to MAVIM for supporting all aspects of my business, from finance to marketing.

”

### Journey



After her husband's accident left him unable to work, Nazrin became the sole breadwinner by launching a spice business. Overcoming cultural barriers against loans with the support of MAVIM, she formed a Self-Help Group (SHG), secured funding, and used digital marketing to grow her brand. She recently fulfilled an international order and continues to be an inspiration for her community.

#### Credit Willing

With MAVIM's guidance, she overcame cultural barriers that previously discouraged her from taking interest-based loans.

#### Credit Ready

She is credit-ready, with a registered business, licenses, consistent revenue, and active financial management for growth.

#### Credit Availed

She has secured a loan of INR 300k from a bank in Maharashtra that has an MOU with MAVIM.

# DISAPPOINTED APPLICANT

## RADHIKA, 45

Region: Urban

Enterprise: Fruit juice shop

Ownership type: Single

Annual revenue: INR 1-1.8 million

Employees: 2



“

Banks should evaluate loan applications based on business potential and economic activity rather than solely relying on the requirements of guarantors.

”

### Journey



Radhika, a determined single parent from Telangana, has been running a successful juice shop for 34 years. With a clear vision for the future, she aspires to expand her shop network and grow her tailoring business simultaneously. She trusts banks for their low interest rates, but the complex loan application process, delays and the need for a guarantor have held her back. But her dreams are bigger than her challenges.

#### Credit Willing

She is credit-willing because of her business growth potential. She has a positive perception of banks offering lower interest rates and stability, making them her preferred option.

#### Credit Ready

Her business is registered and she has the relevant license, inventory quotations, strong business records, bank statement, KYC documents and her own house papers.

#### Credit Availed

She applied for a INR 500k loan but couldn't secure it due to a guarantor requirement. "I felt hesitant to approach men due to social stigma", which led her to withdraw the loan application.

# HOPEFUL LEARNER

## RAVEENA, 28

Region: Urban

Enterprise: Retail (kirana shop) and tailoring service

Ownership type: Single

Annual revenue: INR 600K

Employees: None, operates with the help of family



“

More awareness about loan products, simpler documentation, and guidance on registration are needed to help entrepreneurs like me access formal credit.

”

### Journey



Balancing family and work, Raveena has built a livelihood, tirelessly working alongside her husband. Her dream of expanding her business reflects her unwavering hope to create a better future for her family. Her business may be small, but her vision is big, and with the right support, she's ready to take the next step.

Credit Willing 

Raveena is willing to take a loan of INR 300-500k to expand her kirana shop into a supermarket. She prefers monthly repayment terms and views banks as trustworthy due to their lower interest rates.

Credit Ready 

She has a bank account and basic documents like Aadhaar and PAN, but her unregistered business and lack of awareness of formal loan procedures and other required documents limit her credit readiness.

Credit Availed 

Raveena borrowed INR 100-150k from informal lenders at 14% interest and INR 70K from her SHG at 6% but hasn't secured an individual loan yet.

# RISK AVERSE PLANNER

## APARNA, 40

Region: Rural

Enterprise: Horticulture / Nursery

Ownership type: Single

Annual revenue: INR 1 million

Employees: 7



“

I am scared to take loans from the bank directly. How will I repay them? What if I miss some installments due to a bad season?

”

### Journey



Aparna's is deeply involved in every facet of the business, whether it's managing the accounts, marketing her products or personally training her employees. She blends traditional methods with digital tools to promote her products. With her agriculture education, she dreams of expanding her product range with a seed and pesticide license. Although, her cautious nature holds her back from rushing into large-scale expansion.

Credit Willing ❌

Aparna is hesitant to take larger bank loans despite eligibility, fearing missed installments. She prefers relying on her available resources rather than additional financial risk.

Credit Ready ✅

Aparna is well-prepared for formal credit access, possessing the necessary documents and a strong business track record. She has a solid history of managing loans through her SHG.

Credit Availed ❌

While Aparna has successfully availed multiple SHG loans for business equipment and setup, she has not pursued individual bank loans.



# RESOURCE-LIMITED STRIVER

## SHANTI DEVI, 39

Region: Rural

Enterprise: Retail

Ownership type: Single

Annual revenue: INR 600-720k

Employees: 2



“

Managing my finances separately from household expenses and maintaining regular communication with clients and suppliers are crucial for my business. Despite the challenges, I continue to rely on informal sources for borrowing to keep my ventures running smoothly.

”

### Journey



Shanti Devi is the sole provider of her family and runs two businesses on her own in Rajasthan. She started both the ventures, a cosmetic and a clothing shop, from ground up with her own capital. She keeps written business records regularly and thinks separating business finances from household finances is essential. She also maintains her bank account regularly and uses a computer to communicate with clients and suppliers.

Credit Willing ❌

She is hesitant to take on formal debt, fearing it could risk her family's financial stability. She relies on informal credit sources for flexibility, albeit a higher cost.

Credit Ready ❌

She does not have collateral and hesitates to formalize her business due to concerns about tax implications and the burden of dealing with government inspections.

Credit Availed ❌

Despite her financial progress, Santoshi relies on informal sources like moneylenders and friends for her borrowing needs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MSC AND WEP DRAWN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



### Expand Women's Access to Business Loans

Policies to increase affordable credit for women, collecting sex-disaggregated data, expanding guarantee covers, providing patient capital for women-led enterprises, and addressing gender bias in credit markets are essential to fostering gender-inclusive finance.



### Develop Gender-Intelligent Financial Products

Financial institutions must design tailored products that address women's lifecycle needs, social norms, and structural barriers. Flexible loan terms, convenient repayment options, financial education, and solutions for mobility, privacy, and collateral constraints are



### Reimagine Credit Risk Assessment

Traditional credit assessments often exclude women borrowers. Banks should adopt alternative methods using AI, big data, and fintech partnerships, with algorithmic audits to prevent gender bias. Community intelligence from bridge institutions can improve risk profiling and access to finance.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MSC AND WEP DRAWN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



### Boost Credit Readiness of WMSMEs

Support “credit-willing” women entrepreneurs to become “credit-ready” by promoting digital transactions, bookkeeping, and business formalization. Grassroots-led digital capacity-building can enhance women’s confidence to access credit and grow their businesses.



### Strengthen Support Ecosystems for Women Entrepreneurs

Collaboration across stakeholders is vital to closing gender gaps in credit access and financial capability. Initiatives like WEP’s FWC, which provide mentorship, networking, and access to creditors, play a critical role in enabling women entrepreneurs.



### Increase Gender Balance in Financial Services

Greater representation of women in product design, decision-making, and delivery roles is crucial to ensure financial services better meet women’s needs.

## A BOLD FUTURE

Evolving from borrowers to builders, women are reshaping India's economy with determination, innovation, and growing financial acumen. This report highlights the transformative potential of their participation, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to unlock their full contribution.

Key findings show that while women's labour force participation and entrepreneurial activity are increasing, systemic barriers such as limited access to finance, gender biases, and inadequate financial literacy persist. Women's entrepreneurship holds immense potential, and addressing these challenges with targeted policies, inclusive financial products, and public-private collaboration is essential to unlocking their full economic impact.

A promising shift is evident among younger generations, particularly Gen Z and millennial women, who are driving cultural and economic transformation. They are embracing financial tools, understanding the importance of credit, and leveraging formal credit systems to achieve personal and professional goals. The rise in financial awareness, with more women self-monitoring and improving their credit health, signals a new era of empowerment—one where knowledge translates into meaningful financial action.

Women are no longer passive participants in India's economy; they are becoming active drivers of growth, innovation, and resilience. They are shaping an economic future for India that will increasingly be defined by their contributions.





SONAL JAITLY

MUSKAN SINGH

JEYASUNDARI SIVARAMAKRISHNAN

KIRTI RAKVI

GANESH THIYAGARAJ

AMITAVA ROY

POOJA BANSAL

DINESH VALIRAMANI

JAYANTI KALYANI

RITUPARNA GANGULY

ROHAN SIRKAR

## TRANSUNION CIBIL

TransUnion CIBIL, India's pioneer information and insights company, enables trust in the modern economy by providing actionable insights for reliable representation in the marketplace. Serving the financial sector, MSMEs, corporates, and individual consumers, its clients include banks, NBFCs, housing finance companies, and insurers. By strengthening the credit information ecosystem, TransUnion CIBIL has catalysed lending in India, driving access to credit for millions over two decades. Its efforts promote sustainable credit growth, financial inclusion, and improved ease of doing business, supporting economic opportunity and empowerment across

## WEP

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), a pioneering initiative by NITI Aayog, is steadfast in its mission to empower women entrepreneurs across India. Through recent initiatives and partnerships, WEP continues to break barriers and create opportunities for women. From launching state chapters and building international partnerships to providing mentorship and skill development programmes, WEP is making a tangible difference and setting a foundation for future possibilities.

## MSC

MicroSave Consulting (MSC) is a boutique consulting firm that has, for 25 years, driven progress toward meaningful financial, social, and economic inclusion. With a team of over 300 staff from diverse nationalities and areas of expertise, the firm operates in more than 68 developing countries. MSC collaborates with stakeholders in financial services, enterprise, agriculture, and health ecosystems to deliver sustainable performance improvements and unlock lasting value. Its clients include governments, donors, private sector corporations, and local businesses. MSC specializes in helping organizations seize digital opportunities, address mass markets, and future-proof their operations.

## FWC

Financing Women Collaborative (FWC) is an initiative of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), launched in September 2023, to enhance access to finance for women entrepreneurs in India. It is a platform to bring together financial service providers, public and private sector banks, and organizations working with women entrepreneurs to create a supportive financing ecosystem for women.

FWC is chaired by SIDBI, co-chaired by TU CIBIL with Microsave Consulting as its secretariat to anchor initiatives that accelerate financing for women. Between 2023-24, FWC members have launched credit products and credit readiness programs benefitting more than 50,000 women entrepreneurs.

**Retail credit:** Retail credit includes loans and credit products to individuals as reported by credit institutions on consumer bureau of TransUnion CIBIL. This excludes any credit data pertaining to commercial entities or microfinance joint liability groups.

**Credit seeking individual:** Individuals enquiring for a retail credit product with a credit institution.

**Credit origination:** Number or Sanction value of retail loans availed from a financial service provider.

**Self-Monitoring consumers:** Those users who have proactively checked their CIBIL Score and Report at least once with TransUnion CIBIL.

**CIBIL Scores:** Range from 300-900. Score tiers are:

**Subprime** = 300-680 | **Near Prime** = 681-730

**Prime** = 731-770 | **Prime Plus** = 771-790 | **Super Prime** = 791-900

**Gen Z:** Those born between 1997 and 2012.

**Millennials:** Those born between 1981 and 1996.

**New-to-credit:** Consumers with a credit history of up to six months.

**Credit willing\*:** Entrepreneurs who require financing and are open to engaging with financial institutions, actively seeking credit and completing the application process.

**Credit averse\*:** Entrepreneurs who choose not to seek credit due to social or economic reasons.

**Credit ready\*:** Entrepreneurs with a sustainable business model, proper documentation to establish their business identity, consistent financial records, profitability, and a positive credit history from a lender's perspective.

**Credit availed:** Entrepreneur has at least once availed individual credit from a financial service provider.

\*These definitions have been adopted from Women and Credit, 2023.



For more information on your CIBIL Score and Report, visit

[www.cibil.com](http://www.cibil.com)

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