

2.1. India has become one of the fastest-growing major economy in the world with growth expected to continue upward over the next decade. Half of India's population, women represent a significant portion of the nation's untapped economic potential. Empowering women in India through providing equal opportunities would allow them to contribute to the economy thereby ensuring inclusive growth of the economy which is need of the hour in view of the predicted 'global recession' by many international economists and organisations. Protecting women and girls from violence and abuse and thus creating a safer environment will allow women in nation building. Considering this, their safety should be given paramount importance not only by the law enforcing agencies, but also by the civil society. The women in the country should be made aware about their rights from childhood onwards and the society should support them to overcome the stigmas against reporting crimes. Improving the female political representation rate would enable more women to serve as role models for young girls and allow a platform to bring awareness to the issues affecting women in India. Overall, gender equality allows for women to live a better quality of life, allowing them to determine their futures beyond traditional expectations.

2.2. Women are among the most vulnerable population groups in society. Every effort aimed to advance the status of women requires timely and accurate information on the situations of women and men. Understanding where, why and how gender inequality arises is a vital step in addressing problems and issues related to gender and development. The root causes of Gender Inequality can also be tackled by addressing women's condition relative to that of men and doing so is essential for achieving equality between women and men, girls and boys in all aspects of life. Women's empowerment, though closely related to gender equality, goes beyond it to include women's power to make choices and decisions and to have the ability to use their rights, access to and control over resources.

2.3. Gender equality is a development goal in its own right, as well as a precondition for the achievement of many other developmental goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a new and transformative vision. It establishes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are integrated and indivisible, with gender equality as a central priority. Gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed as explicit priorities through the stand-alone Goal 5 and by mainstreaming gender equality across the SDGs. In recognizing multi-dimensional inequality within and between countries, the 2030 Agenda is a commitment to "leaving no one behind".

2.4. While recognizing the importance of achieving gender equality in the nation's development, it has also been well realized that gender statistics plays a key role in promoting this equality and implement a gender mainstreaming approach. They provide the benchmarks against which progress are measured. They make the similarities and differences between women and men visible, by measuring them in numbers which are comparable and easily understandable. In this way, gender statistics have the potential to contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development of the country.

2.5. Further, gender statistics play an essential role in the elimination of stereotypes and raising consciousness about gender inequalities and the need for policies to promote equality between women and men. They are useful resources for persuading policy makers and inspiring the formulation of policies for change. They are also essential tools for monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and measures and progress towards equality. They can help identify topics that need to be investigated and the data and statistics required in order to understand and address gender issues in society.

2.6. The publication "Women and Men in India" is prepared with the objective to provide variety of available gender statistics at one place to serve as a single platform for accessing gender statistics by users which is a clear commitment to intensify efforts to strengthen statistical capacities and to disaggregate data. Improving the availability and use of gender statistics to inform policy is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender analysis that reveals differences and similarities between women and men, girls and boys relies on disaggregated data. Issues can be examined by a range of characteristics – age, geographic location, marital status, education level, employment status and the list goes on. Investing in gender statistics will result in better quality statistics to support informed decisions in all development fields.

2.7. The publication provides critical information through gender-equality indicators to help fast track progress in the country for a more gender-equitable society including those indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It evaluates women's status compared to that of men to identify challenges and impediments that our societies face in becoming more inclusive in socio-economic contexts. The report is divided into four chapters illustrated by charts and tables in addition to infographics. The report, where the latest data were available, has used disaggregation by age and location to provide in-depth information on dimensions of inequality that contribute to the gaps that exist between women and men.

2.8. The publication “**Women and men in India 2022**”, 24th in series is comprised of four chapters. *Chapter 1* provides overview of the publication. *Chapter 2* of the publication gives the details of the policies and programmes of Government of India. *Chapter 3* provides the data on population and related statistics, health and well-being, reproductive health, access to health services, literacy status, enrolment in all levels of education, drop out, availability of teachers under gender lens. Also, information/indicators on labour force participation, worker population, unemployment, employment status, time use, participation of women in decision-making, information related to impediments in empowerment particularly on early marriage, spousal violence, etc. are also included in the chapter. In the current year’s publication, a new chapter (*chapter 4*) on SDGs and gender has been added.