

# Share of women in wage work declined to 15.9% in 2022-23: PLFS

Women in Assam saw the maximum decline, dropping 41 percentage points to 20.2%

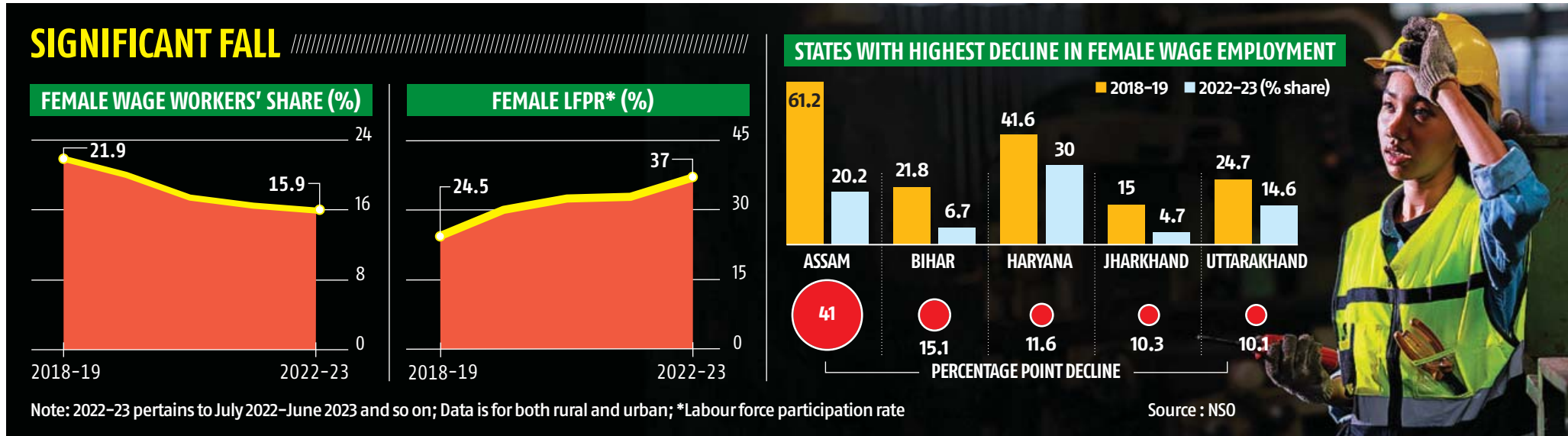
SHIVA RAJORA  
New Delhi, 15 October

The quality of employment for women continues to deteriorate as their share in wage work fell for the fourth consecutive year during July 2022-June 2023, a *Business Standard* analysis found. The analysis was from the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

At the national level, the share of women in regular wage work has declined sharply to 15.9 per cent in 2022-23, from 21.9 per cent in the pre-pandemic period of 2018-19.

Meanwhile, the 'usual status' measure of employment, which classifies a person according to the type of work they would have engaged in during a one-year reference period, showed an increase in self-employment among women to 65.3 per cent from 53.4 per cent during the same pre-pandemic period.

Regular wage or salaried work, where workers receive fixed wages at regular intervals, is generally considered a better form of



employment than working as a casual worker or self-employment. The second form comprises working as unpaid household help in agricultural fields or owning a small informal enterprise.

This assumes significance as Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Thursday highlighted the sharp increase in participation of women in India's workforce in recent years. He has credited the impact of various schemes and campaigns launched during the last few years to empower

women.

Women's participation in the rural workforce has increased to 41.5 per cent in 2022-23 from 26.4 per cent in 2018-19. In urban areas, it increased to 25.4 per cent from 20.4 per cent. The unemployment rate for rural women (1.8 per cent) was even lower than rural men (2.7 per cent) in 2022-23.

Santosh Mehrotra, visiting professor at the University of Bath, said that despite popular belief, labour markets are yet to recover. This is because wage employment remains

significantly lower than the pre-pandemic levels, leading to an increase in self-employment, particularly for women. He further added that more women are engaged in agriculture now than in the last five years.

The PLFS survey shows that the share of women engaged in agriculture has increased sharply to 64.3 per cent in 2022-23 from 55.3 per cent in 2018-19.

"The increase registered in the female labour force is primarily a result of the distress induced in the

household by the pandemic or a slowing economy. In a way, women are being forced to work to augment the household income, rather than fetching jobs based on their skills.

Decline in wage employment even for males over the past few years and the corresponding increase in labour force participation show that more people are joining the labour markets and the economy isn't able to generate enough decent jobs for them. As a result, what happens is that once the household income stabilises, women tend to

withdraw from the labour force altogether. This leads to both loss of jobs and participation in the workforce for women," Mehrotra said.

Among states, women in Assam experienced the most significant decline in salaried work, dropping by a whopping 41 percentage points to 20.2 per cent in 2022-23 from 61.2 per cent in 2018-19. It was followed by Bihar (15.1 percentage points), Haryana (11.6 percentage points), Jharkhand (10.3 percentage points) and Uttarakhand (10.1 percentage points).