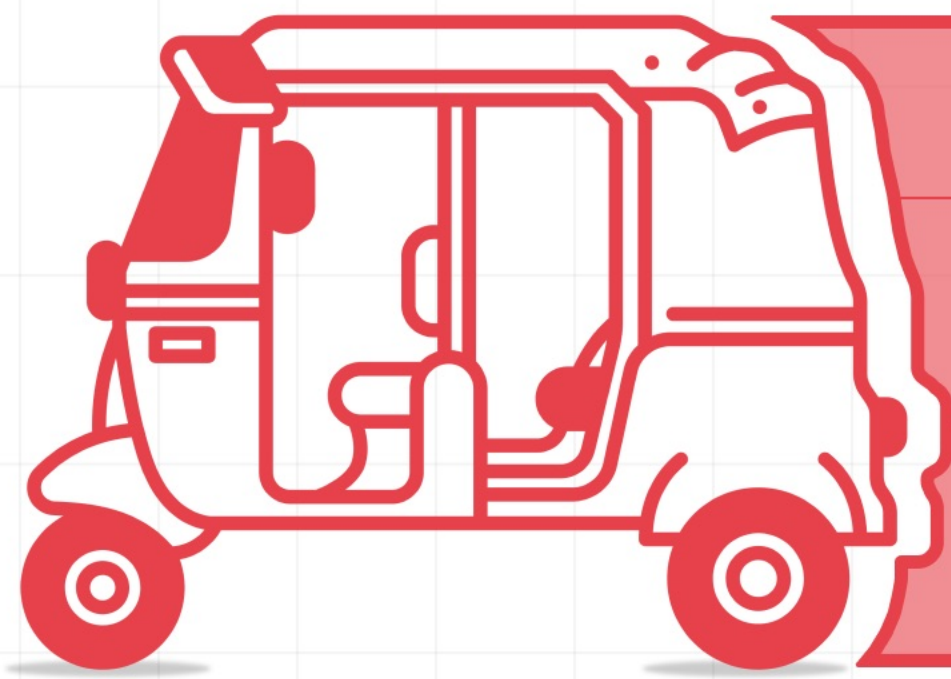


Mobility as a Pathway to *Women's Empowerment*

Author: Vrinda Gupta, Principal, Give Grants

Mobility is more than just movement, it is a fundamental pathway to economic opportunity for women.



- 01. Safe, affordable, & independent mobility dictates whether women can successfully access education, jobs, and markets.
- 02. Women navigate the transit ecosystem daily via public transport, shared mobility, and private vehicles, but their potential extends far beyond being passengers.
- 03. Despite their capacity to be vital transport providers (like drivers and delivery workers), stark gender gaps in training and vehicle access keep women severely underrepresented in the workforce.

This massive gap is immediately evident when looking at India's driving statistics:

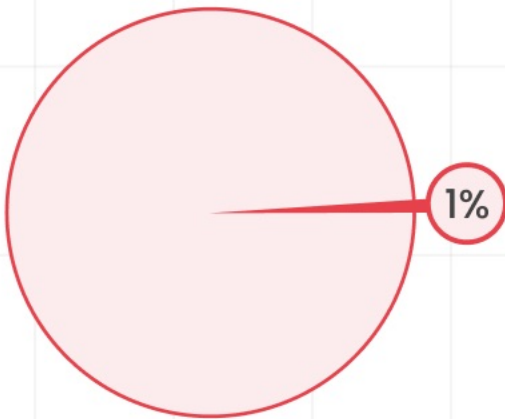
All Driving Licenses (India, 2022):

94% Men (288 Million)



6% Women (19.5 Million)

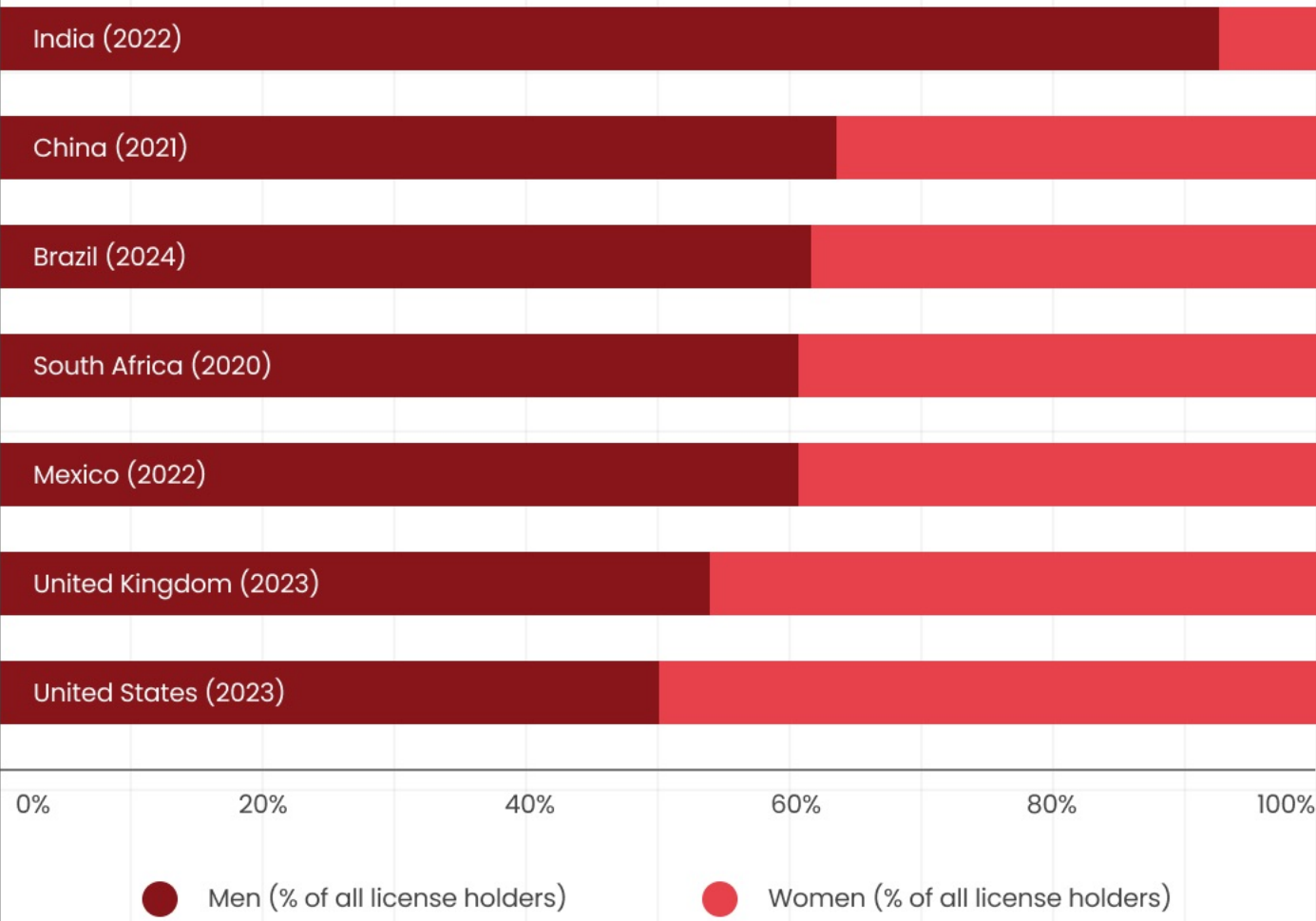
Commercial Driving Licenses:



The distribution completely collapses, with women holding less than 1% of all commercial licenses in the country.

This extreme divide is not a global norm. When comparing driving license holders worldwide, India emerges as a category on its own:

Figure 1: Driving License Holders — Men vs Women Share of Total



Indian women are not only excluded from mobility as an occupation but also excluded from driving as an economic enabler.

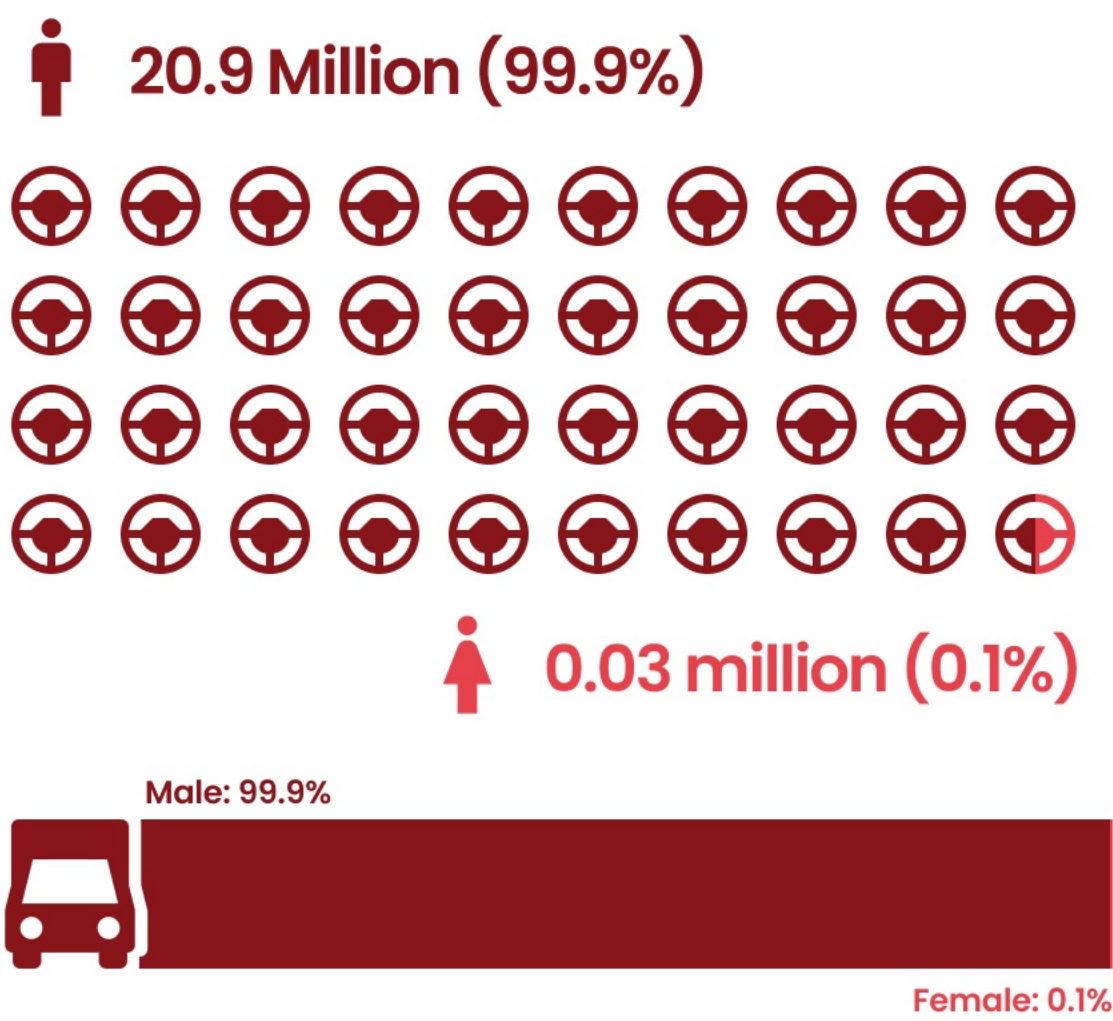
This gender divide is mirrored in the occupational pattern where we see that women are almost absent in a growing occupation category, Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators. Approximately 98% of driver and mobile plant operator jobs are held by men today (*Table 1*). These occupations include car and taxi drivers, two-wheeler and three-wheeler drivers, bus, truck drivers, tractor drivers, bulldozer, crane, lift truck drivers etc.

There has been an improvement in women representation in the Driving and Plant Operator occupation group moving from less than 1% to 2% between 2022 and 2025 (*Table 1*). However, of the 8 million new jobs created in this occupation group during this period, more than 90% were taken up by men.

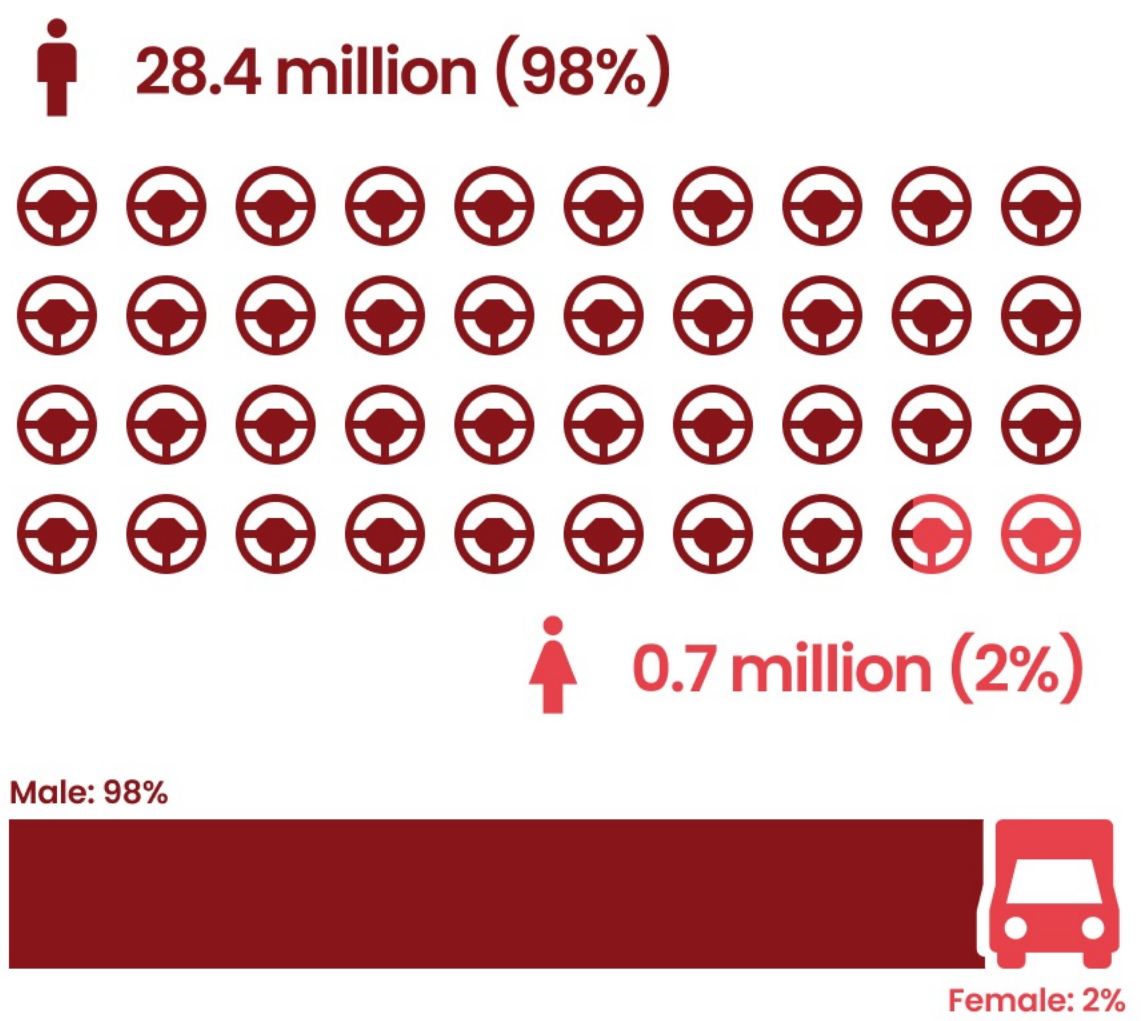
Table 1: Gender Distribution — Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators

Million Workers: Occupation — Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators

2022



2025



Source: PLFS 2021-22; PLFS 2025
Note: Population figure to calculate percentages for 2025 were taken from UN Population Prospects.

Mobility as a Pathway to *Women's Empowerment*

Mobility is an important economic enabler for women.

The Cost of Inequality

The World Bank Group's *She Drives Change* toolkit identifies that transport inequality actively restricts women's workforce participation.



The Power of Mobility

Independent mobility grants women the ability to access spatially spread education, training, and jobs. It also provides crucial control over travel times, enabling women to study or work in shifts and irregular hours.



The Bottom Line

Driving training, when paired with vehicle access and employment opportunities, creates a direct and immediate impact on a woman's employment and earning capacity.



“Corporate philanthropy has an important role to play in promoting independent mobility and female labour force participation.

CSRs can help close this mobility gap through targeted programs that support underserved women with driving training, vehicle access and employment linkages.

Industry Interventions in Action

CEAT (SWAYAM): Trains women to drive two, three, and four-wheeler vehicles and actively connects them to employment opportunities.



Mahindra (WE Hunar): Provides three and four-wheeler driving training combined with EV repair and customer care skills.



Data from grassroots organizations like the Azad Foundation proves the impact of these programs is far-reaching:

- A 200% increase in income.
- Improved personal mobility and household decision-making power.
- Enhanced access to property ownership and education.

Source: Azad Foundation, "Women with Wheels," accessed August 2026, <https://www.azadfoundation.com/core-initiatives/women-with-wheels/>.

Gender disparity in mobility isn't due to lack of willingness on the part of women, rather it is driven by cultural bias against women's ability to drive, lack of access to training, vehicles and employment opportunities. It's a solvable challenge through right targeting and funding structures where impact of CSR interventions shows up directly in women's monthly incomes and household decision making power.

