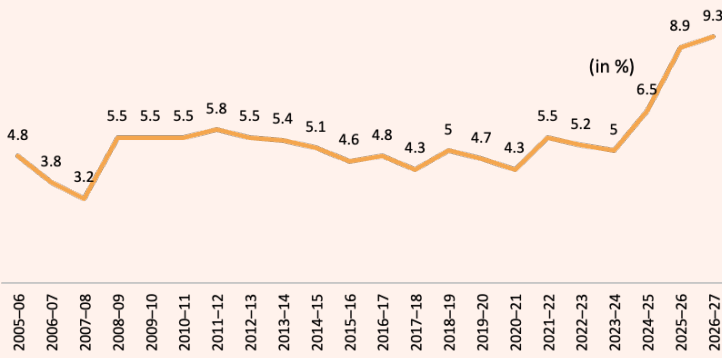


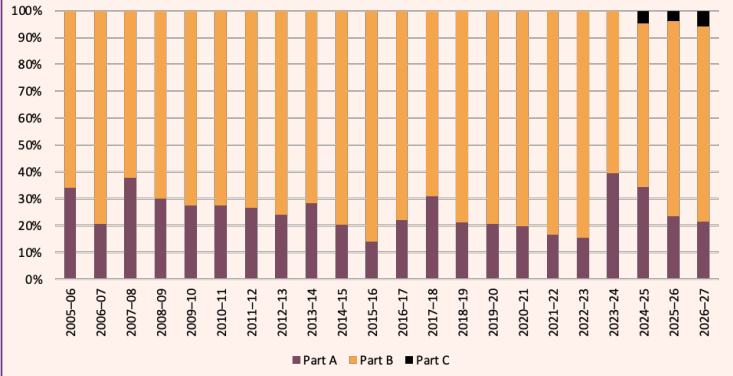
# BUDGET 2026-27 AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: PROGRESS WITHOUT TRANSFORMATION?

The 2026-27 Budget shows incremental gains in gender budgeting, but falls short of enabling women-led structural transformation. Higher allocations aside, gender budgeting remains an accounting exercise rather than a planning tool to address time poverty, shift women to high-value manufacturing, and create more productive jobs for them.

Gender Budget (GB) has witnessed upward trajectory in recent years. This year, GB increased by 11% to ₹5 lakh crore, accounting for 9.3% of total Union Budget allocations — up from 8.9% last budget and the highest share so far.



Yet, there is a decline in Part A schemes (100% women-specific), which make up 21.5% of GB this year. More than 75% of allocations in Parts B & C, where portions of general schemes are counted as gender-responsive.



## Headway

- **National Care Ecosystem** + training of 1.5 lakh caregivers: Potential to convert unpaid care into paid jobs
- **SHE (Self-Help Entrepreneur) Marts:** Shift from credit-led livelihoods to women-owned enterprises
- **GB Allocation to Electronics PLI:** Signals rising women's employment in electronics & mobile manufacturing
- **Women-Led Groups in Fisheries:** Explicit mention of women in fisheries value chains
- **Girls' Hostels in STEM Institutions** in all districts: could address perception barriers to girls' access to STEM
- **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL)** scheme is ~50% gender-budgeted: could strengthen early STEM exposure for girls

## Backpedaling

- **Care Infrastructure:** Still minimal despite women's time poverty blocking economic participation. Care still not treated as core infrastructure.
- **Employment Schemes:** No new incentives to hire/retain women. Only 20% of PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (3.5 cr jobs target) is gender-budgeted. Minimal GB boost for V-B GRAM G over previous allocation to MNRREGA (women >50% workers)
- **Agriculture:** Employs 2 out of 3 women, gets just 4% gender budget. No incentives to shift women from unpaid to higher-value paid work. Matsya Sampada - only 5% GB (despite women focus). Drone Didi - higher funds despite past low disbursements.
- **Manufacturing/MSMEs/Trade:** No GB allocation for major schemes. No path for women-led enterprises to move from informal to formal/scaled enterprises.
- **Services/STEM/AI:** No big gender push. Lacks women-focused digital/AI skills or gender-sensitive schemes. India AI Mission gender share drops from 33% to 15%.
- **Ad-Hoc allocation in Part B & C:** Many schemes lack intentional gender-design. Several potentially empowering schemes are excluded from GB, rendering them formally gender neutral but effectively, *gender blind*.

## Outcome-wise Allocations under Gender Budget 2025-26

