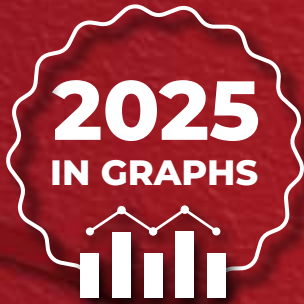


Yearbook



Layoffs In The AI Era And
Their Impact On The Job Market

The True Cost Of War : Economic
Disruption On A Global And National Scale

70-Hour Work Week In India :
Should We Adopt It Or Reject It?

The Growing Tax Burden On The Indian Middle
Class : A Threat To Urban Consumption?

Kicking Off 2026 : Getting Your Finances
In Order For The Year Ahead

Events That Shaped 2025

**Stock Market Outlook
2026**

**Sector Outlook
2026**

**Trading Holidays
2026**

Foreword

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Yearbook 2026

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Full efforts have been made to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the contents of the Yearbook, but we do not accept any liability for the errors if committed and the subsequent loss arising from the same, but we will make sure that the errors if occurred are rectified and minimized in future editions and also would welcome the reader's feedback.

We welcome your comments and suggestions for our future editions to make it more helpful month after month.

Dear Readers,

In the YearBook 2025–2026, we bring you a crisp recap of the year gone by and a forward-looking view of what lies ahead.

We begin with a Flashback of 2025 and a Glimpse into 2026, covering the key events that shaped 2025, a visual snapshot of the year through graphs, and a clear stock market outlook for 2026.

In our Exclusive section, we present a detailed Sector Outlook for 2026, along with a handy list of Trading Holidays to help you plan the year better.

Our Around the Globe segment looks at layoffs in the AI era and their impact on jobs, and examines the true economic cost of war, both globally and within nations.

Under National Talk, we explore two pressing debates, which is the 70-hour work week in India and the rising tax burden on the Indian middle class, and what it could mean for urban consumption.

We close with a New Year Special, Kicking Off 2026: Getting Your Finances in Order for the Year Ahead, offering practical insights to start the year on the right note.

We are certain that you will benefit from the Yearbook 2025–26.

Happy New Year!

Team EquityPandit

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Flashback 2025 +
Glimpse Into 2026





US Tariffs And Their Global Ripple Effect

In 2025, the US rolled out a series of aggressive tariff measures under President Donald Trump, reshaping global trade flows. The move began with targeted tariffs on China in February, followed by broader duties on Mexico and Canada, and steep levies on steel and aluminium in March. A major shift came in early April with a 10% baseline tariff applied to imports from nearly all countries, alongside higher sector-specific tariffs on automobiles. By August, the US implemented country-specific “reciprocal” tariffs on dozens of trading partners, with rates varying widely, including higher duties on India. Additional sector-focused tariffs followed later in the year. While many of these measures remain in force, they have triggered legal challenges and selective rollbacks, underscoring ongoing uncertainty for global trade and supply chains.





Union Budget 2025

Presented on 1st February, the Union Budget 2025 marks the first full budget of the Modi 3.0 government and sets an ambitious tone for India's next growth phase. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman focused on boosting household sentiment, private investment, and inclusive development, with strong support for farmers, MSMEs, youth, women, and gig workers. Major highlights include tax relief under the new regime, expanded credit guarantees for MSMEs, large interest-free loans for state infrastructure, and targeted schemes for agriculture and skilling. The budget also prioritises healthcare, defence, education, and maritime development through higher allocations and new funds. Overall, Budget 2025 positions growth, job creation, and infrastructure at the core of India's economic strategy, while aiming to strengthen the middle class and long-term competitiveness.





Operation Sindoor

In May 2025, India launched Operation Sindoor, a calibrated military response targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) following the deadly Pahalgam terror attack in April, which claimed multiple civilian lives. The strikes, executed with precision weapons including long-range missiles and supported by air and artillery units, focused on dismantling bases of groups linked to cross-border terrorism, according to government and defence sources. Indian authorities repeatedly emphasised that the operation was “measured and non-escalatory.” At the same time, fact-checking agencies debunked numerous false claims circulating online about fighter jets being downed or major military losses. The period saw heightened tensions, misinformation campaigns, and strong governmental emphasis on verified reporting. Security agencies continue to maintain vigilance amid evolving regional dynamics and ongoing counterterrorism efforts.





India's Infrastructure Push Accelerates

As 2025 draws to a close, India's infrastructure expansion is gaining pace across sectors and regions. The government has intensified efforts to clear a backlog of stalled highway projects, aiming to complete 60% of the pending national highway work to improve connectivity and logistics efficiency. Major industry events like the Infrastructure Expo in Mumbai underscore growing investment interest and innovation in roads, sustainable technologies, and smart infrastructure solutions. Partnerships between Indian firms and global tech providers are also boosting digital and GIS-driven planning to enhance project execution. Additionally, the Annual Infrastructure Conclave 2025 in Mumbai highlighted policy support and capital flows to propel growth, reinforcing India's commitment to building world-class transport, industrial, and urban infrastructure.





The Global AI and Tech Power Shift

The global AI and technology landscape is undergoing a significant power shift as countries race to lead in innovation, infrastructure, and strategic influence. The United States remains a dominant force in AI investment, research, and model development, driven by major tech firms and deep capital flows. China is closing the gap rapidly, narrowing performance differences in AI systems and expanding its research output and ecosystem strength. India has also risen in global AI rankings, reflecting growing capabilities and talent. Meanwhile, the European Union is pushing AI infrastructure projects to boost competitiveness but faces regulatory and market challenges. This evolving competition has broader geopolitical implications, shaping national strategies on data sovereignty, supply chains, and governance, and positioning AI as central to 21st-century economic and strategic power.





Neuralink Pushes The Frontiers Of Brain-Computer Interfaces

In 2025, Neuralink continued pushing the frontiers of brain-computer interface (BCI) technology, transitioning rapidly from R&D to real-world application. Founded by Elon Musk in 2016, the company's N1 implant has now been implanted in multiple human patients, enabling individuals with paralysis to control computers and digital devices solely through neural activity. Early progress included successful cursor control and gaming solely through thought, and by mid-2025, clinical trials expanded to include diverse participants across the US, Canada, the UK, and the UAE. Neuralink also secured major funding and FDA Breakthrough Device designations for next-generation applications, including speech decoding and the experimental Blindsight vision restoration implant. These milestones underscore Neuralink's drive to scale BCIs from medical assistive tools toward broader human-machine integration, while drawing global competition and ethical debate.





Quick Commerce Boom Reshapes India's Urban Consumption

India's quick commerce sector — led by platforms like Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, Zepto, and BigBasket — is rapidly transforming urban shopping habits by making 10-minute deliveries mainstream and driving a shift away from traditional retail. Blinkit now holds over 50 % market share in the space, while Instamart has expanded into around 100 cities, signalling strong demand beyond metros. Zepto's recent \$450 million fundraise and BigBasket's quick-commerce push further highlight investor confidence and sector growth. Urban consumers increasingly use these services not just for grocery top-ups but as primary shopping channels, reshaping expectations for convenience and speed. Companies are aggressively expanding dark store networks and investing heavily in infrastructure, though intense competition and profitability challenges persist. The trend is reshaping retail dynamics, with both opportunities and pressures emerging for FMCG brands and local stores alike.





Parliament Cracks Down On Online Gambling Platforms

In 2025, the Indian Parliament passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, introducing a comprehensive crackdown on real-money online gambling and betting platforms. The legislation bans all forms of online money games — including fantasy sports, poker, rummy, and betting apps — regardless of whether they involve skill or chance, aiming to curb addiction, financial harm, and associated fraud and money-laundering risks. Advertisements and financial transactions linked to these platforms are also prohibited, and banks and payment systems must block related flows. Operators face stringent penalties, including imprisonment of up to 3 years and fines of up to Rs 1 crore for violations. While the bill promotes e-sports and non-monetary social gaming, many real-money platforms have already suspended cash-based services and faced bans under the new regime.





India Shines On The Global Sporting Stage

2025 has been a stellar year for Indian sports, with achievements across cricket, hockey, squash, archery, kabaddi, and chess. In cricket, India clinched the Men's Champions Trophy and the Women's Cricket World Cup, while the U19 Women's T20 World Cup highlighted the next generation of talent. Hockey also shone, with the Men's Junior Hockey team making waves internationally. The Indian Squash team and Archery squad delivered strong performances in global championships, while the Women's Kabaddi team continued its dominance. Chess prodigy Gukesh further solidified India's presence on the world stage with high-profile tournament wins. These achievements underscore India's growing sporting infrastructure, talent development, and global competitiveness, reinforcing its position as a rising powerhouse across diverse disciplines.





Dollar Surges To Rs 90

In early December 2025, the Indian rupee slid past the key psychological level of Rs 90 against the US dollar for the first time, marking a historic depreciation driven by sustained global pressures and domestic currency outflows. On 3rd December 2025, the rupee hit an intraday low of around Rs 90.30 per dollar, closing near Rs 90.19, reflecting strong dollar demand, capital flight, and trade uncertainties with the US. Continued foreign investment outflows and delayed trade deals added pressure, making the rupee one of Asia's weaker performers in 2025. The Reserve Bank of India intervened intermittently to curb excessive volatility, but the currency's weakness highlighted broader macroeconomic challenges amid shifting global financial conditions.



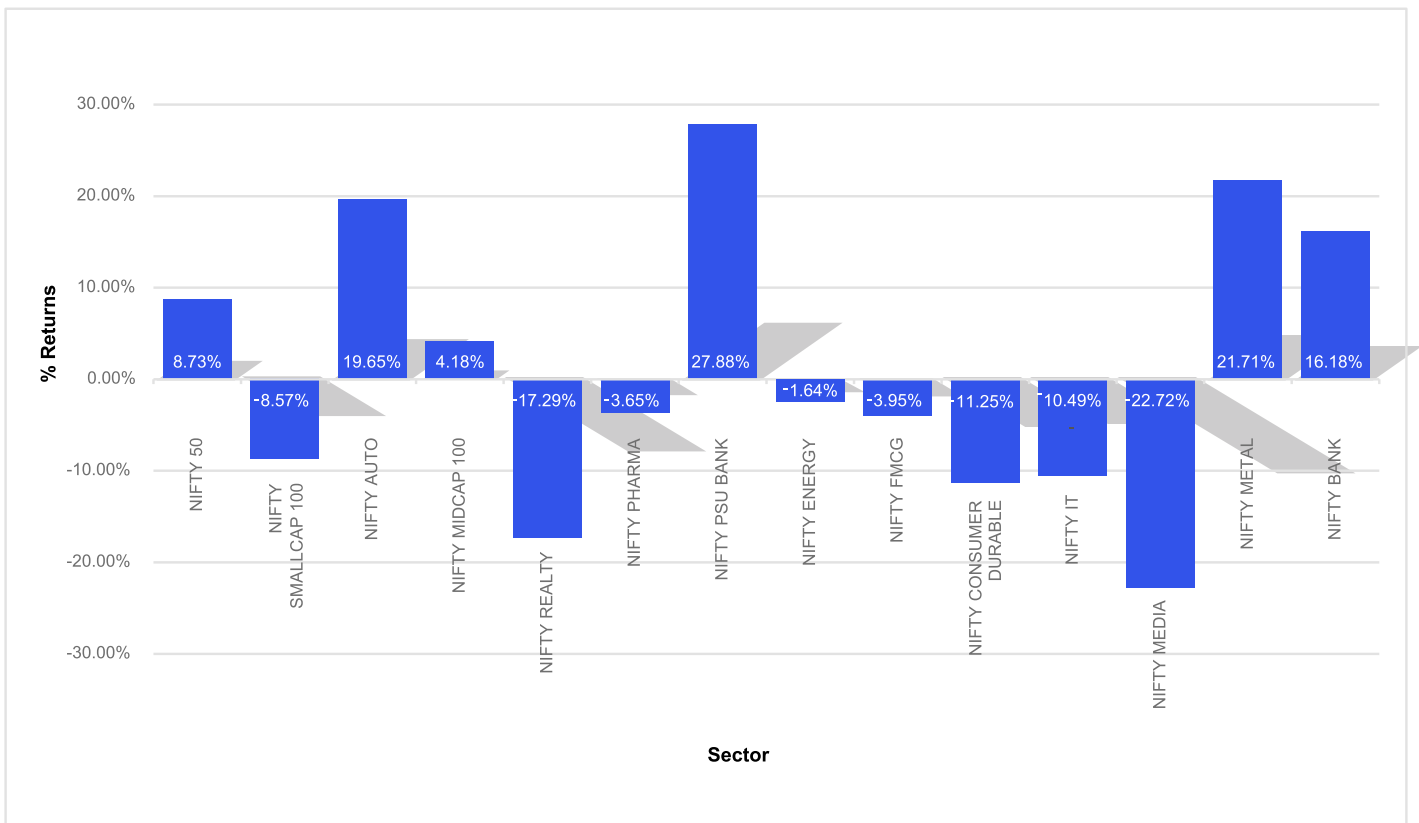
Flashback 2025 +
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2025 IN GRAPHS

Performance Of Sectors In

2025



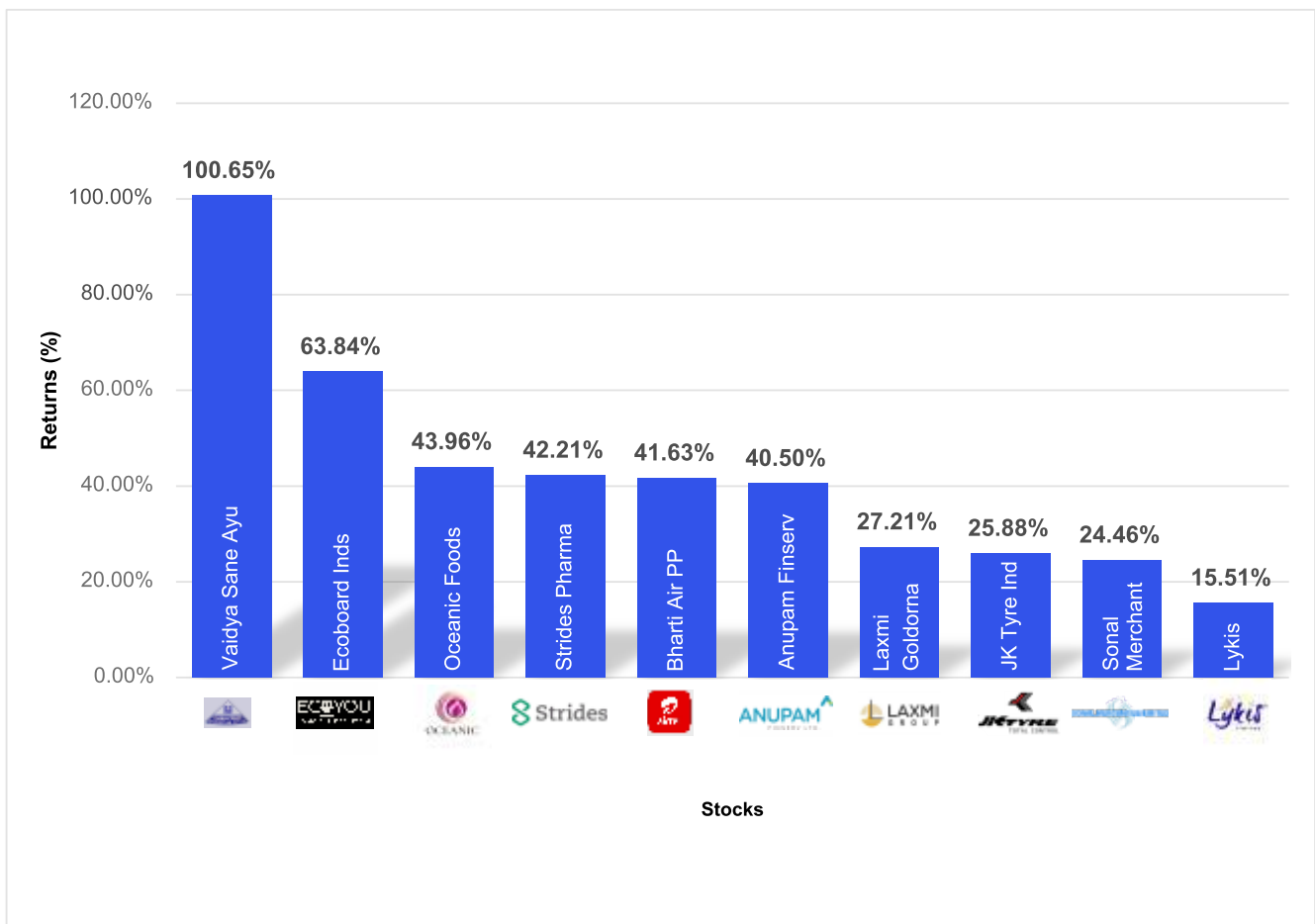
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2025 IN GRAPHS

Wealth Creators Of

2025



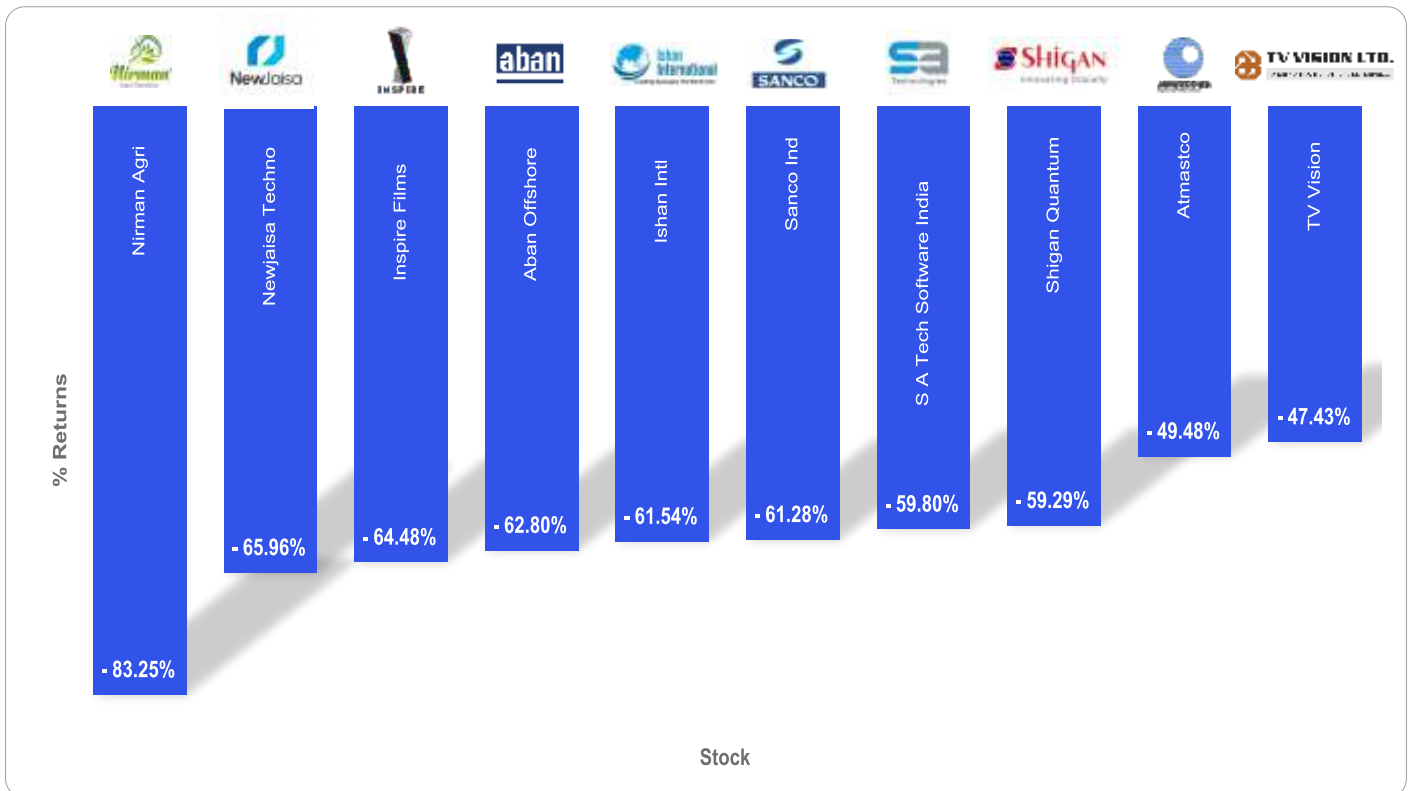
Flashback 2025 +
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2025 IN GRAPHS

Wealth Destroyers Of

2025



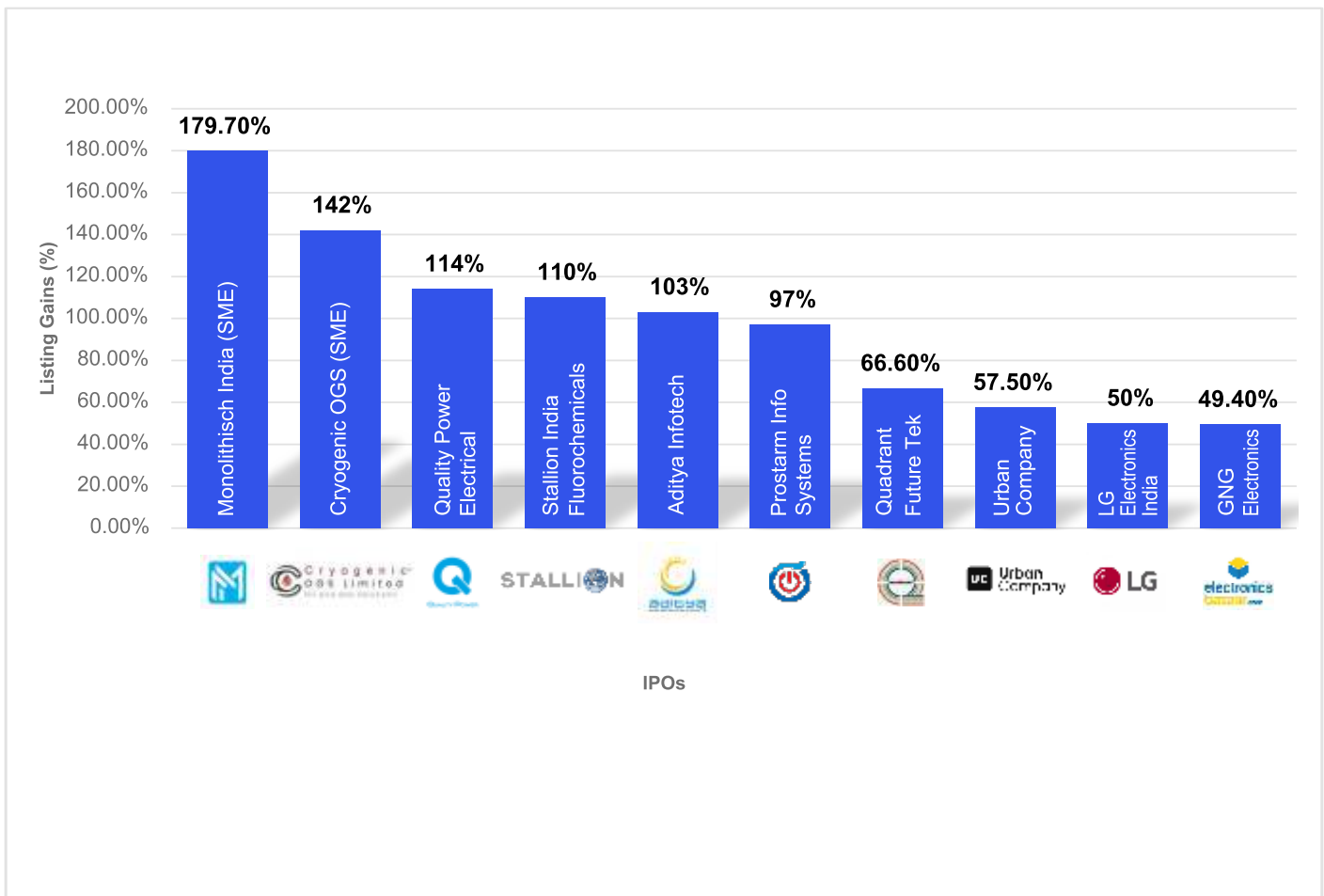
Flashback 2025 +
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2025 IN GRAPHS

IPOs That Impressed The Market In

2025



**Flashback 2025 +
Glimpse Into 2026**

Stock Market Outlook 2025



NIFTY

Nifty 50 hit a record closing high around 20th November but saw mild profit booking in the next session as global volatility intensified. On 21st November, the index slipped nearly 0.7% to an intraday low of 26,055.95, tracking weakness in global markets, especially the sharp fall in the Nasdaq. Market experts cautioned that volatility may remain elevated, advising retail investors to avoid speculative trades and focus on buying high-quality, fairly valued stocks during market dips.

A key positive development has been the return of foreign portfolio investors after three months of continuous outflows. Supported by better earnings expectations, lower consumption taxes, and

progress in India-US trade negotiations, FPIs have turned net buyers since October, adding nearly USD 1.3 billion, which has helped cushion downside risks in the market.

On the technical front, the breakout above the recent trading range keeps the outlook positive with an upside target of 26,550, though indicators suggest near-term rallies could be limited. A fall below 26,237–26,160 may shift the bias towards 26,028–25,984. Strengthening the longer-term view, Goldman Sachs upgraded Indian equities to overweight, projecting a 2026 Nifty target of 29,000, citing the end of the earnings downgrade cycle and improving momentum.



Ref: Mint, Goldman Sachs

Sensex

Most brokerages remain optimistic about Indian equities, supported by expected earnings improvements and a reversal in foreign fund flows. Reflecting this confidence, the BSE Sensex touched a fresh lifetime high of 86,055.86 in intraday trade on 27th November,

highlighting sustained strength in benchmark indices despite intermittent global uncertainties.

Looking ahead, brokerages have laid out varied but largely positive scenarios for the Sensex by 2026-end. Morgan Stanley's most bullish view projects the



Ref: Business Standard, Morgan Stanley, HSBC

index at 1,07,000, implying an upside of around 24% from current levels. In comparison, HSBC has set a relatively conservative target of 94,000, indicating a potential rise of about 9.3%, while noting that Indian equities currently offer better value compared to China.

Morgan Stanley has maintained a base-case target of 95,000 for December 2026 and expects India to “regain its mojo” as markets shift from stock-specific

movements to a broader macro-driven cycle. Falling interest rates, stronger credit growth and policy support are seen as key tailwinds. The brokerage also pointed out that foreign investor positioning is among the lightest on record, leaving room for meaningful catch-up inflows. At the same time, steady domestic investments continue to provide a strong support base for the market.



Sector Outlook 2026

Automobile Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd
Eicher Motors Ltd
Automotive Axles Ltd

Stance

Bullish

Comment

The Indian car industry is set for growth, fueled by supportive policies, rising incomes, and strong consumer demand. Watch out for headwinds like higher fuel costs, changing buyer preferences, and increasing global competition.

Source: Moneycontrol

Sector Outlook 2026

FMCG Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Hindustan Unilever Ltd
ITC Ltd
Nestle India

Stance

Bullish

Comment

FMCG companies in India can expect solid growth on the back of strong consumer demand and a supportive policy environment. Rising input costs, intense competition, and shifting consumer tastes remain key risks.

Source: Moneycontrol

Sector Outlook + 2026

Healthcare And Insurance Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries
Divi's Laboratories
Dr Reddy's Laboratories

Stance

Bullish

Comment

Steady growth ahead as demand for healthcare rises, tech adoption accelerates, and insurance coverage expands. Policy support adds further tailwinds for long-term potential.

Source: Moneycontrol

Sector Outlook 2026

IT Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Tata Consultancy Services
Infosys
HCL Technologies

Stance

Bullish

Comment

India's IT industry continues its growth run, backed by favourable regulations, skilled talent, and strong digital demand. Watch for pressures from rising costs and global competition.

Source: Moneycontrol

Sector Outlook 2026

Real Estate Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Indiabulls Real Estate
Oberoi Realty

Stance

Bullish

Comment

Long-term prospects remain positive with urbanisation, supportive policies, and commercial real estate expansion driving growth. Short-term challenges may persist, but fundamentals are strong.

Source: Moneycontrol

Sector Outlook 2026

Renewable Energy Sector



Top Picks For 2026

Reliance Industries
Oil & Natural Gas
Corporation (ONGC)
NTPC

Stance

Bullish

Comment

Beyond solar and wind, bioenergy and small hydropower are gaining traction. Falling tech costs, government backing, and rising clean energy demand make this sector a strong growth play.

Source: Moneycontrol



Trading Holidays

These share market holidays implies on Equity, Derivatives, and SLB Segments.

Date	Day	Description
January 26, 2026	Monday	Republic Day
March 03, 2026	Tuesday	Holi
March 26, 2026	Thursday	Shri Ram Navami
March 31, 2026	Tuesday	Shri Mahavir Jayanti
April 03, 2026	Friday	Good Friday
April 14, 2026	Tuesday	Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti
May 01, 2026	Friday	Maharashtra Day
May 28, 2026	Thursday	Bakri Id
June 26, 2026	Friday	Muharram
September 14, 2026	Monday	Ganesh Chaturthi
October 02, 2026	Friday	Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti
October 20, 2026	Tuesday	Dussehra
November 10, 2026	Tuesday	Diwali-Balipratipada
November 24, 2026	Tuesday	Prakash Gurburb Sri Guru Nanak Dev
December 25, 2026	Friday	Christmas



**Around
The Globe**

Layoffs In The AI Era And Their Impact On The Job Market

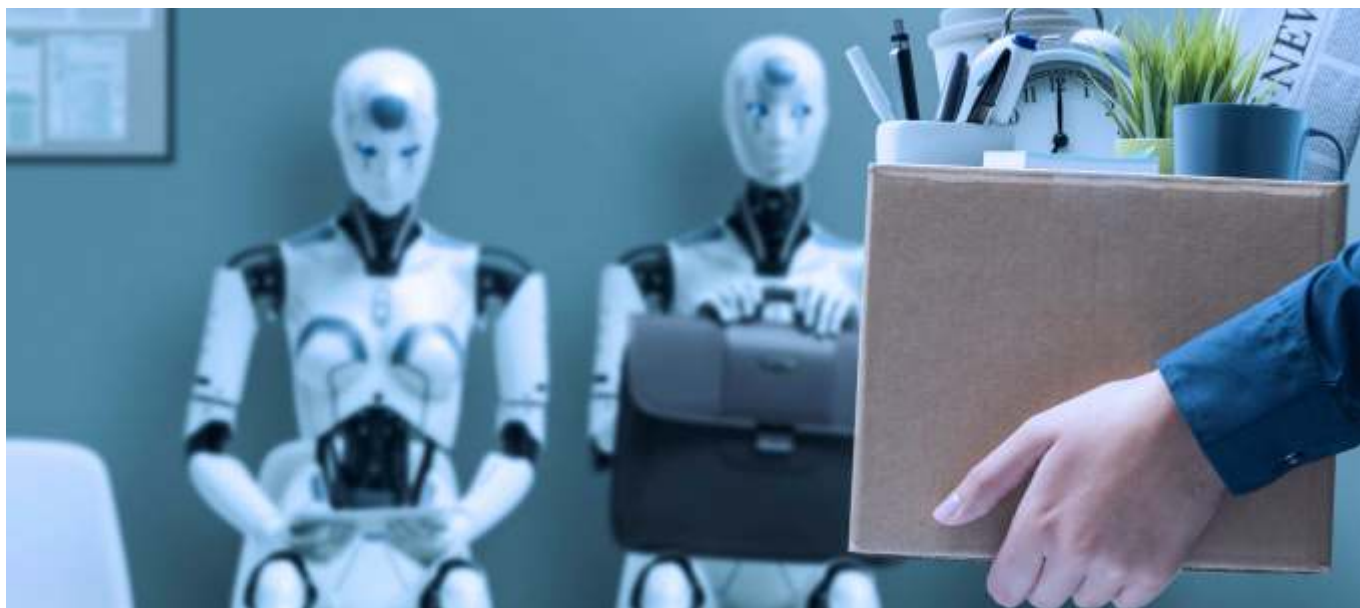
Artificial intelligence (AI) is widely celebrated as one of the most transformative technological advances of our time — with potential to boost productivity, create new industries, and improve lives. But in 2025, AI's rise has had a more complicated and often painful impact on the global job market. Across

sectors, corporations are shedding jobs — and in many cases explicitly citing AI and automation as catalysts. This blog explores the scale of AI-linked layoffs, the structural shifts reshaping work, the economic and social consequences, and how workers and policymakers can respond.



2025

AI-Fueled Layoffs



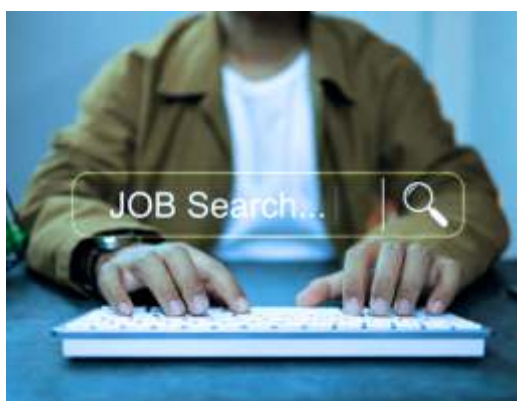
In 2025, layoffs surged to levels not seen since the post-pandemic years, with over 1.17 million jobs cut across the US alone — the highest total since 2020. Of these, about 55,000 job losses were explicitly linked to AI adoption, according to Challenger, Gray & Christmas, a prominent labour analytics firm.

Major corporations from Amazon and Microsoft to Salesforce and IBM have

announced significant reductions in workforce as part of AI-driven restructuring and cost-cutting strategies. For example:

- Amazon cut 14,000 corporate roles, citing AI and organisational efficiency in its restructuring.
- Microsoft reduced approximately 15,000 jobs by mid-2025 to refocus resources on AI research and operations integration.
- Salesforce trimmed 4,000 positions, referring to automation and AI-enhanced workflows in customer support.
- Tech firms such as Google, Meta, and Oracle have also conducted layoffs linked to broader shifts toward AI and cloud services.

Even outside classic tech giants, sectors



like retail, logistics, and finance have experienced workforce cuts tied to automation and AI integration, reflecting AI's diffusion across industries.

Not all layoffs are officially considered as having been caused by AI, but analysts

agree that, in general, automation and efficiency expectations are getting more and more influential in staffing decisions, even if companies are using more generic terms like "restructuring" to describe the cuts in manpower.

Why AI Is Driving Workforce Reductions

Several forces are converging to make AI a material factor in layoffs:

... Automation Of Routine Tasks ...

AI tools from code-generating systems to automated customer service agents can perform repetitive or rules-based work previously done by humans. This makes some roles obsolete or less cost-effective to fill with human labour.

For instance, some firms have replaced HR support staff with AI systems capable of handling millions of employee queries annually.



... Efficiency And Cost Pressures ...



The cost pressures that followed the pandemic, such as inflation and a slowdown in the growth of the global economy, forced companies to make their operations more efficient. The use of AI technology promised to "get more done with fewer resources," so companies quickly downsized their workforce as they aimed for efficiency.

... Shift In Skill Requirements ...

Demand is increasing for the roles that require digital, analytical, and AI-related skills, which are advanced. The workers who do not have these skills are the ones who are more likely to lose their jobs. A survey conducted by HR recently reported that approximately 6-7% of workers would be displaced because of automation, which would be the case mainly in the US, where this pattern is also seen in other parts of the world.



... Structural Realignment Across Industries ...



The massive layoff event was not limited to the tech sector as such. AI automation has gradually made its way into logistics, service industries, and office-related jobs to the point that it has affected hiring and firing across the board, and that has been one of the reasons for the employment shifts.

Quantifying The Impact Job Numbers And Sectors Affected

When it comes to AI-related layoffs, the figures involved are staggering:

- In the United States of America alone, over 55,000 layoffs in the year 2025 were reported to be caused by AI.
- In the year 2024, more than 150,000 tech jobs were eliminated, alongside tens of thousands more in the first six months of 2025.
- Some reports on layoffs (within industries and broadly across AI roles) even imply that companies might have cut over 180,000 jobs as they transition to hiring more AI personnel.

Software engineers, QA testers, and legacy support staff roles are among the most affected in the tech sector, though layoffs are also taking place in customer service, administration, and HR departments, where AI could do the tasks originally performed by humans.



Impact On The Job Market And Workers

... Employment Polarisation And Skill Mismatch ...

The effect of AI differs among employees. It is the workers whose jobs are made up of monotonous and repetitive tasks who are more at risk, whereas the demand for the skills related to AI, data science, and cloud computing is on the rise. As a result, the labour market is divided into two polarised segments — one consisting of high-skills, high-pay workers and the other of low-skills, low-pay workers.

The analyst predicts that developing regions like India might be struck the hardest as they will suffer from the

"double vulnerability" consisting of a great number of employees in the high-risk automation professions together with a low number of AI-skilled workers.



... Pressure On Entry-Level Jobs ...

The use of AI has a significant impact on entry-level positions, thus slowing down the process of hiring new employees for junior roles since companies are trying to optimise their workflows rather than

recruit new graduates. Rumours suggest that the practice of "freezing" hiring for young tech workers is widespread, where the companies are mainly choosing to keep their existing staff and to hire

already experienced AI practitioners. Such a trend cuts down the traditional career path wherein the new graduates start their journey by taking up junior roles and eventually gain experience.

This denial of access to the first step of the ladder might not only affect the juniors' incomes but also their prospects in the profession for a longer period to come.

... Wage And Job Security Challenges ...

The more people compete for fewer jobs, particularly mid-career and junior, the less the likelihood of any wage growth at all. Even those who manage to hold on to

their jobs will probably find their work reshaped around the use of AI tools, thereby changing both the responsibilities and the expectations.



Balancing Layoffs With Job Creation

Despite alarming headlines, the story isn't purely about job loss. AI is also creating new roles and opportunities:

- Emerging job titles include AI trainers, responsible AI governance managers, and people-data analysts roles that focus on working with AI, not being replaced by it.
- Some research suggests that wage growth in AI-exposed jobs has

outpaced others; between 2023 and 2025, real wages in AI roles increased more rapidly than in non-AI roles.

Economists broadly agree that while AI may displace jobs in the near term, over time it can augment productivity and generate new work, similar to how earlier technologies (like the internet and smartphones) transformed labour markets.

According to Goldman Sachs, about 6-7% of jobs in the US could disappear under an AI scenario at baseline, but this effect might only be short-lived since the workers will first lose their current positions and then eventually get hired

into the new ones.

This scenario hints at workers having to go through a period where some will be displaced due to a lack of proper skill or knowledge, while others will get new or better positions in the same field.

Social And Economic Ramifications

... Economic Confidence And Consumption ...

Widespread layoffs can dampen consumer confidence and reduce personal consumption — a major driver of GDP in many economies. Urban middle classes, especially those in tech and services, may scale back spending in response to job insecurity.



... Mental Health And Social Impact ...

Disruptions in employment can lead to severe mental health problems. Losing a job is associated with stress, fear, and the inability to pay bills; besides, these impacts vary among families and communities.



... Inequality And Regional Disparities ...

The reduction of jobs by AI may worsen the income divide. Workers with great digital skills and the chance to get retrained are the ones to gain, while

others, especially in less developed areas that are the ones who suffer the most and stay at risk without adequate support systems.

How Workers And Policy Makers Can Respond

... Reskilling And Upskilling ...

Reskilling initiatives should be supported by governments, educational institutions, and companies, which enable displaced workers to switch over to roles oriented towards AI — like data analytics, cybersecurity, and AI ethics.



... Lifelong Learning Ecosystems ...

Continuous learning policies like tax deductions on training or social learning accounts may provide workers with the power throughout their careers.



... Safety Nets And Transitional Support ...

Unemployment benefits, wage subsidies, and moving assistance can ensure financial security during the transition period.



... Strategic Workforce Planning ...

Companies should prepare workforce strategies that take the impact of AI adoption on labour into account and provide reskilling pathways, job redesign initiatives, and human-AI collaboration strategies.



Conclusion

In the era of AI, layoffs signify a considerable change in the labour market rather than just a cyclical downturn. The short-term future has seen a displacement of the routine and mid-skill occupations, which is very real and significant. However, historical trends and economic studies indicate that technology alters jobs but does not fully destroy them.

AI's future impact will hinge on how societies guide workforce transitions, invest in human capital, and encourage innovation that complements rather than substitutes human work.

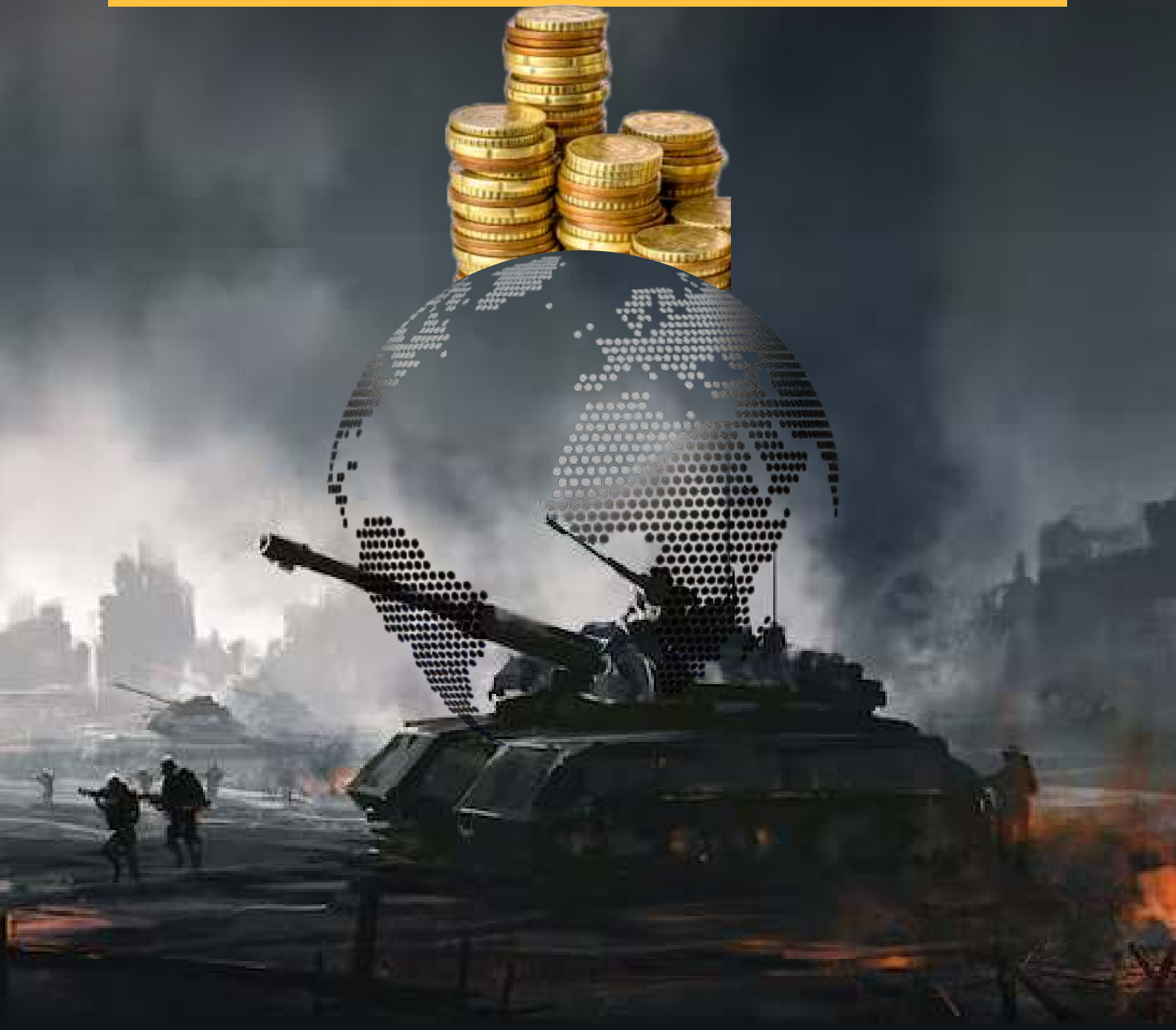
The challenge is not just managing layoffs, but it's enabling workers to thrive in an AI-augmented economy.



Around
The Globe

THE TRUE COST OF WAR

Economic Disruption On A Global And National Scale



War is often discussed in terms of geopolitics, strategy, human tragedy, and diplomacy, and rightly so. But beyond the battlefield lies an extensive economic dimension that impacts countries, communities, and global markets for years or even decades. The true cost of war goes far beyond military expenditures; it permeates economic

growth, public finances, infrastructure, and human capital, leaving deep and lasting scars in both the global economy and national development paths.

In this blog, we explore how wars disrupt economies, why their impacts are so long-lived, and what lessons they hold for policymakers, businesses, and societies.



War's Visible Economic Costs

When war begins, the most visible costs are military spending and destruction of physical assets. But economists show that the true economic cost includes many layers — some immediate, others long-term and structural.



Military Spending And Government Budgets

The states involved in a war cannot help but increase their military activities and hence expenditures. The military spending of the whole world was \$2.72 trillion in 2024, which is the highest ever recorded, with several nations raising their budgets because of the political situation. This increase in military spending takes away funds from the social sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, etc.

The defence spending might create some jobs and stimulate industries related to weapons and technology in the short

term, but their impact on the economy as a whole is usually negative: in the past, it has been found that the GDP multiplier for defence spending is usually less than 1, which indicates that the money spent does not lead to the same amount of economic development.



Destruction Of Capital And Infrastructure

Conflict results in the destruction of all economic resources; this includes manufacturing plants, power stations, highways, hospitals, schools, and water supply systems. Wars not only destroy resources on battlegrounds; they also disrupt the lives of people living nearby and the functioning of related industries, e.g., the World Bank has put the cost of



recovery and reconstruction for Ukraine after three years of war at a whopping \$524 billion—almost three times the country's anticipated 2024 gross domestic product.

Also, short wars tend to produce high costs in a smaller context, for war is very costly, no matter how short it is. For example, a minor military conflict between India and Pakistan in 2023 apparently cost India between Rs 4,380 crores and Rs 15,000 crores for just over four days and the figure only includes direct military costs, but the wider disruption is not included.

GDP Losses And Long-Term Growth Drag

War is devastating because it not only wipes out an economy's assets but also reduces its overall output significantly. In a study conducted by economists, it was found that on average, conflicts cut real GDP by approximately 13%, a decline that lasts for a decade without full recovery. The situation turns so bad that



the investment is zero, the financial institutions become less liberal, and the confidence of the people, both domestic and foreign, is shaken.

Case studies reinforce this: civil wars in the former Yugoslavia led to regional GDP declines of up to 38%, with some areas never fully recovering. These sustained output losses also stifle innovation and entrepreneurship, for instance, the Russo-Ukrainian war saw Ukrainian self-employment drop by an estimated 20%, with Russian SMEs falling by 42% five years into the conflict.

Indirect Costs: Inflation, Debt, and Financial Strain

Inflation and Monetary Pressures

Inflation is commonly a consequence of wars. Governments find themselves in a situation where their income is less, but their expenses are more, so they resort to printing money to cover the deficit. The resulting money supply can increase prices by almost 50%, thus discouraging investment, diminishing savings, and decreasing the purchasing power of the people.



The inflationary situation will be most severely felt by households, especially in import-dependent countries for basic goods and energy consumption.

Public Debt And Fiscal Strain

War usually leads to a very big change in the financial situation of the government. The revenue will rarely be as it was before since the government would be at



war; you might even say that the government would be losing money, while, at the same time, defence and reconstruction expenditures will be growing. This situation pushes up deficits and public debt levels that could be an economic burden for years. Governments of countries that have been to war may cut down on spending in the health sector and education, as they would have to allocate funds to security-related issues.

Trade And Investment Disruption

Trade routes, foreign investments, and cross-border economic collaborations are all adversely affected during prolonged conflicts. Investors will not even look at

such places where risk is high, and supply chains will break, and there will be a fall in export revenues; thus, the economic cycle will deteriorate further.



Social Cost: Poverty, Displacement, And Human Capital Loss

Refugees And Displaced Populations

Wars displace large numbers of people. Historical reports substantiate that more than 122 million people have been the victims of forcible displacement due to conflicts in recent years, which is more than double the number of 2008.

The movement of people from one place to another brings along with it an immediate need for humanitarian aid and also a long-term economic challenge, as the countries that take in the refugees will



have to provide social services, housing, and eventually a labour market. Thus, the strain will be quite intense.

Poverty And Inequality

Conflict zones are likely to be the areas with the most poverty in the world. The World Bank has projected that by the year 2030, approximately 60% of the extremely poor people in the world will be living in conflict-affected countries, as opposed to a little more than half of the current situation. The most vulnerable populations are the ones that pay the price and suffer the most due to wars; thus, inequality is further aggravated, and the chances of people moving up the economic ladder are reduced.



2025

Human Capital Loss

Wars also diminish human capital: deaths, injuries, and migration reduce the workforce. School closures and disrupted education can depress skill development for an entire generation, lowering long-term productivity.



Global Economic Fallout

War's impact extends well beyond the countries directly involved.

Global Costs Of Conflict

As per the estimates, violence had an approximately \$19.1 trillion impact on the world economy in 2024, which is around 13.5% of the entire world GDP. The components of the impact are military expenditures, losses in production, refugees, and internal security costs. The breakdowns indicate enormous amounts:

- Military expenditure: \$9 trillion
- Internal security: \$5.7 trillion
- GDP losses: \$462 billion
- Refugees and displacement: \$343 billion

The global costs signify not only the military budgets during the wars but also the productive losses, market disruptions,



and rise in the internal security and peacekeeping expenditure, rather than financing the growth activities.

Impact On Global Growth

Global growth gets considerably reduced by major conflicts. For instance, some analyses indicated that the Ukraine war might have resulted in a global economic growth reduction of over 1 percentage point in the next year post-invasion due to the decline in production, trade, and investment.



National Economies Under Stress

Ukraine (2022–2025)

The economic toll of the Russia-Ukraine war illustrates the scale of modern conflict costs:

- Ukraine estimates needing \$524 billion over the next decade to recover and rebuild its economy and infrastructure, nearly three times its expected annual output.
- Destruction of energy infrastructure alone surged by 70%, pushing recovery needs even higher.



Ukraine (2022–2025)

Even relatively short conflicts can devastate smaller economies. The World Bank estimated that Lebanon would require \$11 billion for reconstruction after the 2023–24 Israel-Hezbollah war, as GDP shrank by 7.1% in 2024 and nearly 40% cumulatively since 2019.



Economists characterise the economic impact of war as persistent and deep:

- GDP drops do not rebound quickly; many economies remain below their pre-war output levels even a decade later.
- Investment collapse slows future growth; credit tightens as risk perceptions rise.
- War also alters labour markets, reduces entrepreneurial activity, and leads to long-lasting infrastructure deficits.



- Inflation depresses investment and increases borrowing costs.

Beyond Cost

Given the enormous economic burden, conflict prevention and peacebuilding are not just moral imperatives but economic strategies. Analyses show that if the world had been free of violent conflict since 1970, the global economy might have been up to 12% larger today, which is an immense potential gain lost to war's toll.

Investments in diplomacy, conflict resolution, and international cooperation often cost far less than rebuilding after destruction, making peace a strong economic objective as well as a human one.



War's price tag extends far beyond bullets and bombs. It encompasses:

- Destruction of infrastructure and capital
- GDP contraction and investment decline
- Inflation and fiscal distress
- Social displacement and human capital loss
- Long-term stunting of growth and opportunity

The global cost is measured in tens of trillions of dollars, reflecting the breadth of impact on lives and livelihoods. As conflicts continue, understanding these economic dimensions becomes essential for policymakers, businesses, and societies striving not just to survive but to thrive in an uncertain world. War is often framed in geopolitical terms, but the true cost of war is both immediate and generational.

But history also shows us that recovery and resilience are possible when countries invest in peace, institutions, human capital, and international cooperation. Understanding the full spectrum of war's economic cost is essential for policymakers, businesses, and citizens alike as we navigate a world where political tensions and conflicts continue to be all too common.

National Talk

70-Hour Work Week In India

Should We Adopt It Or Reject It?





In early 2025, India's corporate and social media discourse was set ablaze when NR Narayana Murthy, the co-founder of Infosys, publicly suggested that young Indians should be willing to put in 70 hours of work a week to rise on the global productivity ladder. His comments, rooted in his personal experience of long work hours during the early days of Infosys, sparked a wide-

ranging debate: Is working 70 hours a week a path to national success, or an outdated idea that harms well-being and productivity?

This blog explores the key arguments on both sides of the debate, the evidence from research and global comparisons, the Indian context, and what a balanced perspective might look like for the future of work in India.

The Origin Of The Debate Murthy's Provocative Suggestion

Among the suggestions made by Murthy was that he himself was a very committed person, a great example being that he often came early and left late during the early years of Infosys. He

maintained that such devotion was not only the creator of his company but also the main author of India's "gone to great heights" story, and he even went as far as to say that it was the young Indians who

should embrace such a lifestyle.

But then, came his clarification: he did not think that the hours should be imposed on anyone, but rather be the result of personal choice and deep thinking, and thus, part of the larger discussion on productivity and ethics.

While Murthy's intentions may have been to inspire, the reaction has been divisive and widespread.



NR Narayana Murthy, the co-founder of Infosys

Arguments In Favour Of A 70-hour Work Week

The supporters of the longer workweeks have come up with several arguments:

1 Enhanced Productivity And Economic Growth

Supporters argue that the increased working hours may lead to higher output and, along with that, Indian industries would be able to compete on the international level. The world's rapidly expanding markets, such as Japan and Germany after WWII, are cited as historical examples where high work intensity coincided with economic transformation.



2 Skill Building And Career Advancement

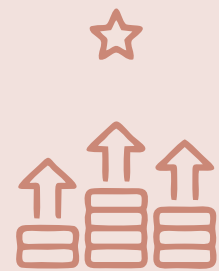
Some argue that the extra hours can be seen as a gift for learning, taking on responsibilities, and falling deeply into work's difficulty, which may be the case for the early-career professionals who seek rapid skill development.



There is a study claiming that longer involvement in work tasks can lead to enrichment of learning experiences, but this is context-dependent.

3 Competitive Edge For India

Murthy is the storyteller, and if Indian youth would like to see the country jump over boundaries in terms of development, one of the ways to do that could be by showcasing a hard-working and contributing philosophy, especially in the sectors of knowledge and technology, hence leading to crucibles of confusion and sometimes even rivalry. This perception is sometimes based on concepts of responsibility, competition, and the past models of industrial growth.



Arguments Against A 70-Hour Work Week

While the notion of extended work hours may resonate with some corporate leaders, the evidence and expert opinion raise serious concerns:

1 Health and Well-Being Risks

Multiple studies show that working long hours (beyond ~50–55 per week) is associated with significant health risks, including increased likelihood of cardiovascular disease, stress, burnout, sleep disturbances, anxiety, musculoskeletal issues, depression and general fatigue.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has cautioned that working hours beyond 55 hours per week contribute to a



higher risk of stroke and heart disease globally. In India, where stress-related absenteeism is already significant, this is particularly relevant.

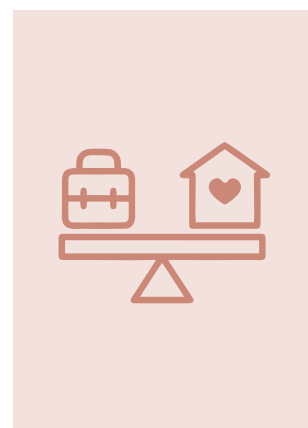
2 Productivity Does Not Scale Linearly With Hours

It is established in research that the productivity of an individual working two to three hours overtime per day drops when the total working hours in a week exceed the range of 40 to 50. For longer periods, the outcome is not fruitful, and the brain power and decision-making ability will be affected by exhaustion.



3 Work-Life Balance And Family Responsibilities

A worker doing a 70-hour week will approximately spend 12 hours a day at work, six days a week, with very limited time for family, looking after oneself, sleeping, and having fun. This is an even bigger problem in India since many of the workers are already straining with a lot of family responsibilities. Researchers stress that a lack of work-life balance is the biggest cause of stress and poor health in society as a whole.



4 Gender And Structural Inequality Considerations

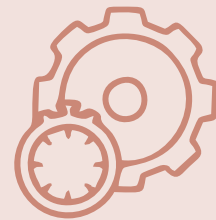
Women do most of the unpaid home care giving, and this limits their ability to work the same hours as men do. The female participation rate in the Indian workforce is still low (around 37% as of 2023), one of the reasons is caregiving, thus making it a double blow to women in the sector if longer hours become the standard that pushes their male counterparts further ahead.



5

Debate On Modern Productivity Models

Many modern organisational thinkers argue that the quality of work matters more than the quantity of hours. CEOs and business leaders in India have pointed to flexible, outcome-oriented models as better approaches than enforcing long hours. For example, leaders like Harsh Goenka have argued that work culture should focus on results rather than longer hours or rigid office attendance.



What Experts And Policy Perspectives Say

Economic Survey 2024–25, the Indian government warned against burning the candles at both ends, stating that working more than 55–60 hours a week might lead to mental and physical health issues and eventually hinder productivity. On a global scale, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its different contexts, recommends 48–52 hours as the upper limit for weekly work hours,

adding that long ones should be the exception and not the rule in the sustainable work model.



Comparative Experience What Does Research Suggest?

It is quite obvious from the longitudinal studies done across industries that the excessive work hours often lead to burnout and consequently hinder productivity. For instance, research in software engineering has shown that the majority of developers follow the

standard office hours and the late night or weekend work can, in fact, lead to stress and lost creativity. The key takeaway from academic literature is that consistency, focus, and recovery time are critical to long-term productivity and quality of output - not just more hours logged.

The Indian Workforce Reality

It's worth noting that long hours are already a reality for many workers in India:

- In sectors such as MSMEs and agriculture, 70–90-hour workweeks are common - often without adequate social security or compensation.

However, comparing these informal work patterns to a formal 70-hour

workweek expectation for salaried professionals highlights an important difference: choice vs obligation. In many informal sectors, workers lack agency and protections, whereas in high-end corporate roles, extensions beyond the typical 40–48 hours may be discretionary or result from employer pressure.

Balancing Ambition With Well-Being A Middle Path

A more nuanced perspective suggests that:

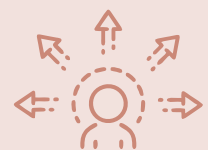
1 Productivity Gains Should Come from Smart Work, Not Just Long Hours

Investments in skills, technology, automation, flexible work modes and employee wellness can enhance output without sacrificing well-being.



2 Personal Choice Matters

As Murthy himself eventually emphasised, decisions about work hours should be a personal choice, not a mandate.



3

Flexible And Outcome-Oriented Work Is The Norm For Modern Talent

Newer generations often value autonomy, creativity, and work-life harmony more than sheer hours logged. Encouraging results-focused work with flexibility may be more sustainable than returning to industrial-era models of work.



Adopt? Reject? Reframe.

The idea of a 70-hour workweek in India, especially for salaried professionals, is unlikely to be a practical one-size-fits-all solution. While historical leadership examples of long hours can be inspiring, equating longer hours with better productivity overlooks modern research and lived experience showing that:

- Productivity is not proportional to hours worked beyond a certain threshold.
- Health, relationships and well-being suffer from chronic overwork.
- Gender and societal inequities make long hours less feasible for many.

Instead of purely adopting longer workweeks, India might benefit more from smarter, healthier, and flexible work cultures that allow deep focus, recovery, and life outside work, delivering sustainable productivity without burning out the workforce.

This balanced reframing could help India's workforce become more productive and fulfilled, aligning ambition with human well-being in the 21st century.

The Growing Tax Burden On The Indian Middle Class

A Threat To Urban Consumption?



The reclamation of India's economy in the past ten years has a lot to do with good household consumption, which is more than 55-60% of GDP. The purchasing power of the people, consisting of the spending of the urban middle class on both necessities and luxuries, is the most important factor for growth.

On the other hand, the increasing taxation, from both direct and indirect

sources, has led to the question: Is the Indian middle class getting taxed more and more, and could this result in less urban consumption and a slowdown of the economy?

This post looks into tax statistics, changes in policies, effects on the different income groups, and the fairness of the current tax process, giving special emphasis to the middle-class families living in cities in India.



Tax Structure And Middle-Class Exposure

Direct Taxes

The tax system of India consists of direct taxes (such as personal and corporate income tax) and indirect taxes (mainly GST). Personal income taxes have been growing as a share of government revenue over the years.

- As of the start of 2025, the personal income tax (PIT) collected was growing by about 6-8% every year,



even with the introduction of the tax relief by the government in the Union Budget of 2025-26.

- Interestingly, corporate tax collections have recently surpassed personal income tax collections, reflecting strong corporate earnings, but also indicating slower relative growth in individual tax revenue.
- Personal income tax now contributes a significant share of direct taxes, even

though only about 4.8% of the adult population files income tax returns and pays tax.

This suggests that a small percentage of the population, mainly those with middle-income and high-income, pay a very large portion of the total income tax. Out of the taxpayers, a very small percentage (approximately 0.3% of the adults) is responsible for paying around 76% of the total personal income tax receipts.



Indirect Taxes

Indirect taxes like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) are levied on consumption and impact everyone who spends on goods and services. Data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022–23 show:

- The bottom 50% of urban consumers and the middle 30% both bear about 29–30% of the GST burden.
- The top 20% of urban consumers carry

around 41% of the GST burden.

This suggests a rather progressive taxation system for GST, but at the same time, it should be pointed out that the distribution of the tax burden among the lower half and the middle classes being almost equal indicates that the tax system is not very progressive, and the middle-income groups still carry a large portion of the burden in consumption taxes.

Effective Tax Rates And Progressivity

According to analyses, India's taxation system combines a relatively high effective personal income tax rate (after

accounting for actual payments and deductions) with indirect taxes that tend to be regressive (shared uniformly regardless of income).

This mix creates an environment in which middle-income urban households pay taxes both on their labour income and everyday consumption, amplifying their perceived burden compared to other sections of the economy.



Middle-Class Squeeze And Urban Consumption Patterns

Impact On Disposable Income

Despite reforms in the 2025–26 Union Budget aimed at tax relief, many middle-class households still feel the pinch:

- The new personal tax regime increased the tax-free threshold to ₹12 lakh, meaning many low-to-middle earners

pay little or no direct income tax under the simplified system.

- However, higher-income households just above this limit still pay substantial direct taxes, and indirect taxes (GST) significantly reduce disposable income available for consumption.

Even after the tax relief, the benefit may not fully translate into increased consumption, as many households choose to save rather than spend the additional disposable income, which is a behaviour typical during uncertain economic conditions.



Private Consumption As GDP Engine

India's domestic consumption contributes a large share to GDP; therefore, any weakening in household spending, especially among the middle class, can have far-reaching implications for growth. In 2025, consumption's role remained central even as investment slowed.

Yet, anecdotal and quantitative evidence indicate slowing discretionary purchases in urban markets, with consumers focusing on essentials due to inflationary

pressures and limited real wage growth. Experts have described this phenomenon as part of a broader "income crisis" limiting consumption demand.



Policy Responses And Their Impact

GST Simplification And Relief

The GST Council reformed the tax slabs in late 2025 and mainly set them at 5% and 18% for most goods and services. The purpose of this change was to bring

down indirect tax costs and encourage consumption.

SBI Research's report claimed that the reforms might result in consumer spending getting boosted to the tune of ₹1.98 lakh crore, while GST collection would be deficit by ₹85,000 crore a year, thus creating a policy trade-off.

The reduction in GST on basic goods, modestly priced household items, and some services will be a relief in terms of daily expenses for the middle-income group.



Budget Measures For The Middle Class

Personal income slabs were restructured for the 2025–26 Budget, and the limits for rebates were raised; all these measures were intended to raise disposable income and thus increase demand for goods and services. The government was prepared to lose around ₹1 lakh crore in revenue from these reforms. The plan was also to bring more taxpayers into the fold of the simplified scheme; hence, the idea of higher



compliance and broader participation in the formal tax system would be considered — this was the structural objective of the policy.

Equity, Progressivity, And Perceptions Of Fairness

Who Truly Bears The Burden?

Although media and public discussions often assert that the "middle class" bears too much of the tax burden, the actual data paint a more complex picture:

- The number of Indian adults who directly pay income tax is very low, but the tax payments made by those who do are considerable and unequal.
- An investigation into the GST burden has revealed that middle-income urban families and the bottom 50% of income earners have almost the same share of indirect tax responsibilities. Nevertheless, the role of indirect taxes on



consumption implies that even the non-direct income-taxpayers lose a part of their income through GST, which devalues their buying power, thereby cutting down their living standard to a great extent.

Regressivity Concerns

Consumption taxes (like GST) are considered by many as very regressive taxes because they take away a larger



percentage of income from low and moderate-income earners than high-income groups, especially if the exemptions are not liberalised.

The feature of India's tax structure causes the middle-income families to suffer most from the indirect taxes, as a larger part of their income has to be used for the purchase of goods and services that are taxed.

Potential Risks To Urban Consumption And Growth

Slowdown In Spending

When disposable income is constrained by tax outlays and living costs, households tend to cut back on non-essential consumption. Evidence from post-pandemic consumer patterns shows shifts toward essential spending in India.

Slowdown In Spending

India's tax base remains narrow, with only a small fraction paying income tax, which limits redistribution and welfare spending without excessive reliance on indirect taxes.

Inflation and Tax Interactions

With rising prices on essentials like food and energy, indirect tax revenues simultaneously grow while eroding real consumption levels, further squeezing household budgets.

In recent times, the government of India has been making a lot of changes that they're encouraging the middle-class and also trying to boost demand, changing the personal tax exemptions policy and simplifying GST, for example.

According to early data, it looks like the new reforms will lead to more disposable income and hence more consumption. But there are concerns about the structure that still exist:

- Due to the very limited number of people who pay direct taxes, it seems that the pressure is still on them more than on others.
- Indirect taxes that are applied uniformly could lead to the lower and middle classes losing their purchasing power.
- The situation of taxes imposed on

people is worsened by very slow wage hikes and increasing costs of living.

The task ahead for the policy-makers is to make the tax system of India fair so that it does not hinder consumption, and at the same time be able to cater to the needs of public investment in the areas of infrastructure, education, and health, which are all responsible for the long-term economic growth.

The government would need to implement smart, balanced policies that promote tax progressivity, broaden the tax base, and reinforce India's consumption to keep urban middle-class households as a major driver of India's growth and at the same time, not have a tax burden on them that they cannot cope with.



New Year
Special

Kicking Off 2026

Getting Your Finances In Order For The Year Ahead





As the calendar flips to 2026, it offers more than just a new date on the page. It brings a quiet reset—a moment to pause, take stock, and realign the way you manage what supports almost every part of your life.

New-year conversations often centre on fitness goals or lifestyle upgrades. Money, however, sits quietly at the core of all of it. It shapes the choices you

make, the confidence you feel, and the peace of mind you carry through the year. Getting your finances in order as you kick off 2026 isn't about rigid resolutions or chasing perfection.

It's about consistency, control, and clarity. Small, intentional steps taken now can create meaningful progress—not just for this year, but for the years that follow.

Save First, Then Spend What's Left

When payday arrives, it's tempting to treat saving as whatever remains after expenses and spending. A more effective approach is to reverse that order.

Start by setting aside money for savings and emergencies before you think about discretionary spending. What's left is yours to use without guilt. This simple



shift creates discipline without feeling restrictive.

A clear monthly budget makes this far easier. Automating the process—through direct deposits or scheduled transfers—ensures saving happens

quietly in the background. Over time, consistency does more work than motivation ever will.

Think of saving like paying yourself first. Once it's done, the rest of your spending becomes simpler and stress-free.

Know Where Your Money Is Actually Going

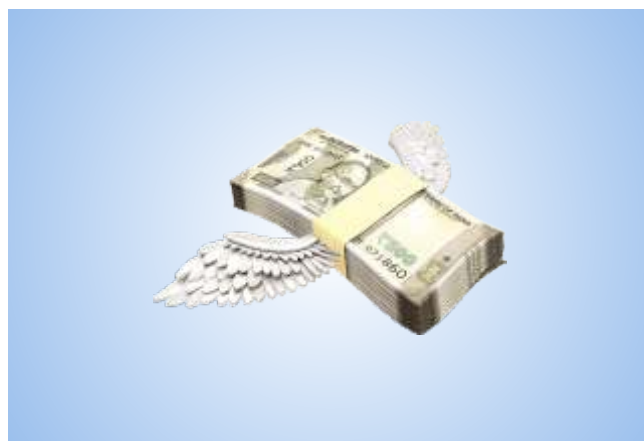
Once saving is in motion, the next step is awareness. Tracking your spending can be surprisingly revealing.

Log everyday expenses—your morning coffee, fuel costs, online shopping, food deliveries, or subscriptions you barely notice anymore. The goal isn't to eliminate small joys, but to understand patterns.

Often, it's not one big expense that throws a budget off track, but several small, frequent ones. When you see the full picture, decisions become easier.

You can choose what truly adds value—and what quietly drains it.

Clarity doesn't restrict spending. It gives you permission to spend with intention.



Use Credit Cards With Intention, Not Impulse

Credit cards are powerful tools when used well. They offer convenience, rewards, and help build a strong credit profile. But ease of use can quickly turn into overspending if left unchecked.

A higher-than-expected bill can disrupt your monthly plan, while unpaid



balances attract interest that compounds quietly over time. This reduces cash flow and limits your ability to save.

Using credit responsibly means treating

it as a payment method—not extra income. Paying bills in full and on time keeps your finances flexible and predictable.

Don't Postpone Retirement— Time Is the Advantage

Retirement often feels far away, which makes it easy to delay saving for it. Many assume they'll start later, when their income increases or expenses settle down.



In reality, life rarely becomes less expensive. Housing, family responsibilities, and lifestyle upgrades tend to grow over time. Delaying retirement savings often leads to playing catch-up later, limiting choices and flexibility.

Starting early—even with modest amounts—allows compounding to work in your favour. Simply put, money earns money over time. The earlier you begin, the less pressure you place on your future self.

Give Your Savings A Purpose

Saving feels far more motivating when it's linked to clear goals. An emergency fund, a planned vacation, a car purchase, or preparation for major life milestones—each goal gives direction to your money.



Automating contributions toward these goals removes the need for constant decision-making. Progress becomes steady and predictable, rather than

dependent on willpower.

When savings are tied to purpose, consistency becomes easier—and far more rewarding.

Live Within Your Means— And Sometimes Slightly Below Them

Living within your means doesn't mean cutting out comfort or enjoyment. It means making choices that support both your present and your future.

Just because you can afford a higher expense doesn't always mean it serves your long-term goals. Stretching your budget too far today can restrict opportunities tomorrow—whether it's buying a home, investing more, or retiring with confidence.

Some people choose to live slightly below their means, not out of restriction, but to create flexibility. That margin often translates into peace of mind.



Review Your Financial Plan— It's Not Set-And-Forget

As your year unfolds, your financial plan should evolve with it. Regular check-ins help you see what's working and where adjustments are needed.

Review progress, identify gaps, and seek professional guidance if required. Equally important—acknowledge milestones along the way. Taking control

of your finances is an achievement worth recognising.

Consistency, not intensity, is what keeps plans effective.



Take A Fresh Look At Your Investments

The start of the year is an ideal time to review how your investments are spread across different asset types. As your life stage and priorities change, your investment approach should evolve too. Periodic rebalancing helps maintain your intended level of risk, especially during volatile market phases. A review also keeps both short-term needs and long-term goals clearly in focus.



Check If You're Still On Track With Your Goals

Markets move, life happens, and plans sometimes drift. Take time to assess whether you're progressing toward key objectives like retirement, education funding, or long-term wealth creation. If you're on track, consider whether you can strengthen your position by increasing contributions or setting new targets. If not, early adjustments can help



regain momentum before small gaps become bigger challenges.

Revisit Your Household Budget

Beyond long-term planning, day-to-day cash flow deserves attention. Compare income against fixed and variable expenses to see exactly where your money goes each month.

If surplus funds exist, decide their purpose—saving more, reducing debt, or strengthening your emergency cushion. A clear budget turns income into intentional action rather than passive spending.

Tackle Debt Strategically, Not Emotionally

Even well-managed debt needs periodic review. High-interest balances deserve priority, especially if you receive additional income during the year.

Consolidating multiple payments into one manageable obligation can also simplify finances. Fewer liabilities often translate into lower stress and greater control.

The goal isn't just repayment—it's reclaiming flexibility.



Review Insurance And Estate Planning

Financial planning isn't complete without protection. The beginning of the year is a good time to review insurance coverage and estate plans.

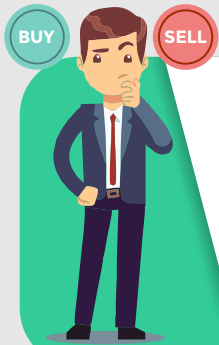
Ensure they reflect your current life situation, responsibilities, and dependents. Major life changes can quietly make old plans outdated. Regular reviews ensure your finances protect not just wealth, but the people who rely on it.



By the time February arrives, many resolutions fade. Real progress, however, comes from consistency—not perfection.

Kicking off 2026 with your finances in order means staying engaged, making thoughtful adjustments, and focusing on steady improvement. When money is managed with clarity and intention, it quietly supports every other goal you pursue.

Get the foundation right, and the rest of the year has room to grow.



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