CU Global Management Review
Volume 3, Issue 1, January-June 2014, pp. 38-44

Status Of Rural Female Work Force Participation Rates In India

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Introduction

A greater percentage of rural women are employed compared to their urban counterparts even as the number of women workers in the country has shown an increase of about 3 per cent. According to the labour surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization, the percentage of women workers in rural areas has increased from 29.9 per cent in 1999-2000 to 32.7 per cent in 2004-05. In the case of urban women, the percentage of women employed in jobs went up by just 2.7 percent, up from 13.9 per cent in 1999-2000 to 16.6 per cent in 2004-05, according to an official release. Nagaland had the highest percentage of working women in rural areas at 50.4 per cent while Mizoram had the largest percentage of women workers in urban areas. While Delhi has the lowest proportion of women workers in rural areas at 4.7 percent.

Definition Of Work

Work may be defined as participation in economically productive activity. Such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also effective supervision and direction of work. It also includes unpaid work as farm or in family enterprises.

It must be noted that work defined in Census does not include non-market economic activities. For example, processing of primary commodities for own consumption is excluded from the purview of economic activities as work.

Concept Of Work Force At Different Censuses

- In 1961 Census, mainly examined what work the person enumerated was doing during the 15 days preceding the day of enumeration.
- In 1971 Census, the reference period of one year preceding the data of enumeration for considering a person as worker was introduced. Further, the term 'Secondary Work' was also introduced, though information was collected on 'Secondary Work' both from workers and non-workers. Tabulation was done only on the persons reporting their main activity as non-workers and doing secondary work too.
- In 1981, the terms main activity and worker as used in 1971 Census were clubbed and a new term 'main worker' emerged. Therefore, there were three categories viz., Main worker, Marginal Worker and Non-worker. The term secondary work was also continued. Here the period of work was 183 days or more for main workers and less than 183 days for marginal workers during the reference period. In 1981 Census, the information on secondary work was restricted to main workers excluding the non-workers.
- In 1991 Census all questions on workers and non-workers remained same as in 1981 Census, including collection of information on 'Seeking/Available' for work from non-workers to net the number of entrants to the labour force.
- In 2001 Census the information was collected not only from non-workers but from marginal workers too.

Work Force Participation Concept and Definition According to Census of India

Work force 'Participation rate' w/p, the ratio of the 'economically active' (i.e. of 'members of the workforce') (w) to the Population of potential members (p) (i.e., equal in working-age). In other words work participation rate is defined as the percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to total population (census 2001).

$$\text{Work participation rate} = \frac{\text{Total Workers (Main + Marginal)}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

Classification of Work Force In India

The Census has divided the workers into ten major categories (since 1971). By clubbing together of 1 and 2, we get agricultural worker (farm workers) third category belonging to the allied activities and by adding up 4 to 9 categories, we will get non-agricultural workforce (non-farm workers). The classification of the workforce as follows:

Volume 3, Issue 1, January-June 2014, Print-ISSN 2349-1078

1. Cultivators
2. Agricultural Labourers
3. Animal Husbandry, Plantation, fishing, forestry, etc.
4. Mining and Quarrying
5. (a) Household Industries (HHI)
   (b) Non-household industries
6. Construction
7. Trade and Commerce
8. Transport, Storage and communication, and
9. Other services.

Work Participation Of Women In India

According to Maitureji Krishnaraj the type of work done by women in India may be classified into the following categories:

1. Wage and salaried employment.
2. Self-employment outside the household for profit.
3. Self-employment in cultivation and household industry for profit.
4. Self-employment in cultivation for own consumption.
5. Other subsistence activities in all allied sectors like dairying, other livestock rearing such as poultry, goats, pigs, etc., and fishing, hunting and cultivation of fruit and Vegetable gardens.
6. Activities related to domestic work such as fetching fuel, fodder, water, forest Produce, repairing of dwellings, making cow-dung cakes, food preservation etc.
7. Domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, care of children, the aged and the sick

Activity Wise Distribution Of Female Workers In India

Agriculture is the most important activity of the female workforce (84%) in the rural areas, with the highest number of women workers engaged as agricultural labourers (Table-1). However, the percentage of female workforce in agriculture is declining. Manufacturing and services are the other two sectors where women are employed in large numbers.

are (a) Tobacco, (b) Cotton textiles, (c) Cashew nut processing, (d) Machine tools and parts, (e) Matches, explosives and fireworks, (f) Clay, glass, cement, iron and steel, (g) Drugs and medicines, (h) Grain mill and bakery, (i) Garments.

Table-1: Percentage Of Workers In Various Industrial Categories (1999-2000)

Activity	% of Female Workers	
	Rural	Urban
Agriculture	84.0	14.5
Mining and Quarrying	0.4	0.4
Manufacturing	7.7	23.2
Electricity, Water et.	-	0.2
Construction	1.2	5.5
Trade, Hotels and Restaurant	2.3	16.4
Transport, storage	0.1	2.0
Services	4.3	37.8
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: NSSO, 55th round, 1999-2000, Report No.455.

Proportion Of Total Workers In India, 2001

The 2001 Census reveals that the total number of workers had gone up during the 1990s. Table-2 shows that 39.3 per cent of India's population in 2001 comprised of workers as against 37.6 per cent in 1991. Of these 78 per cent were main workers and about 22 per cent were marginal workers, as against 90.6 per cent and 9.4 per cent respectively in 1991. This shows that the number of casual (marginal) workers has increased quite sharply during the nineties. In 1991, 35.8 per cent of rural population consisted of main workers and 4.3 per cent as marginal workers. In 2001, the share of main workers increased to 31 per cent and that of marginal workers rose to about 11 per cent. The proportion of marginal workers in urban population has also risen over the period. But the situation is better in urban areas because the proportion of main workers had remained almost steady at 29.3 per cent of the total urban population in 2001. But the proportion of urban marginal workers increased from 1 per cent in 1991 to 3 per cent in 2001.

In 2001, India had a working population of 402.5 million, both main and marginal workers. Over 58 per cent were working either as cultivators or agricultural workers, and 4.1 per cent as household industry workers and 37.9 per cent as 'other workers'.

Table-2: Proportion Of Total Workers In India, 2001

(In percentage)

Type of Workers	Persons	Males	Females
Total			
Total Workers	39.3	51.9	25.7
Main Workers	30.6	45.3	14.7
Marginal Workers	8.7	6.6	11.0
Rural			
Total Workers	42.0	52.4	31.0
Main Workers	31.1	44.5	16.8
Marginal Workers	10.9	7.9	14.2
Urban			
Total Workers	32.2	50.8	11.5
Main Workers	29.3	47.4	9.1
Marginal Workers	2.9	3.4	2.4

Source: Census Report, 2001.

Gender-Wise Rural And Urban Work Participation Rates In India

The gender-wise rural and urban work participation rates in India during 1971-2001 are shown in Table-3. The work participation rate is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. This is true both in the case of males and females. In 2001, work participation rate for rural males was 52.4 per cent and that for rural females 31 per cent. On the other hand, it has 50.9 per cent for urban males and 11.6 per cent for urban females. Since 1971, the work participation rate for rural males has been on the decline. It declined from 53.8 per cent in 1971 to 52.5 per cent in 1991. But it increased for rural females from 15.9 per cent to 27.2 per cent over the period. So far as urban males are concerned, their work participation rate was almost stationary at 49 per cent.

But for urban females, it increase from 7.2 per cent to 9.7 per cent over the period due to the spread of education. The reason for higher work participation rate of both males and females in rural areas than in urban areas are larger concentration of population in rural areas and diversification of agriculture related activities like horticulture, pisciculture, dairy and poultry farming, etc. Moreover, both men and women are engaged in productive activities in rural areas. Where as only men work and the majority of women remain at home in urban areas.

Table-3: Gender-Wise Work Participation Rate In Rural And Urban Areas: 1971-2001

Year	Total/Rural/Urban	Persons	Males	Females
1971	Total	34.17	52.75	14.22
	Rural	35.33	53.78	15.92
	Urban	29.61	48.88	7.18
1981	Total	36.70	52.62	19.67
	Rural	38.79	53.77	23.06
	Urban	29.99	49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.68	51.56	22.73
	Rural	40.24	52.50	27.20
	Urban	30.44	48.95	9.74
2001	Total	39.26	51.93	25.68
	Rural	41.95	52.36	30.98
	Urban	32.23	50.85	11.55

Source: Registrar General of India.

- Promotion of self-employment among women through entrepreneurship development programmes. Development of macro-enterprises, cottage industries and handicrafts will help tackle the twin problems of poverty and unemployment. These would generate additional employment for women as they are labour intensive and also export oriented. Further, supportive services such as timely availability of loan, supply of required raw materials, market existence and preferential treatment should be extended to self-employed women.

On the whole, the above noted measures will increase employment opportunities, increase incomes and reduce poverty in the primary sector and bring changes in the occupational structure of the work force in favour of women, particularly rural women.

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CU Global Management Review
Volume 3, Issue 1, January-June 2014, pp. 45-57

New Dimensions in Service Sector – Banking, Insurance and Transport

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The Services Sector constitutes a large part of the Indian economy both in terms of employment potential and its contribution to national income. The Sector covers a wide range of activities from the most sophisticated in the field of Information and Communication Technology to simple services pursued by the informal sector workers, for example, vegetable sellers, hawkers, rickshaw pullers, etc. The following broad grouping of activities can be considered to form part of the Services Sector:

Activities Comprising the Services Sector

- Trade
- Hotels and restaurants
- Transport including tourist assistance activities as well as activities of travel agencies and tour operators
- Storage and communication
- Banking and insurance
- Real estate and ownership of dwellings
- Business services including accounting; software development; data processing services; business and management consultancy; architectural, engineering and other technical consultancy; advertisement and other business services
- Public administration and defense
- Other services including education, medical and health, religious and other community services, legal services, recreation and entertainment services
- Personal services and activities of extra-territorial organisations and bodies

The Services Sector has been the most dynamic sector of the Indian economy, especially over the last ten years. Table 1.1 shows the changes that have been taking place in the Services Sector over the last few decades.

From a low level of 27.52 per cent of GDP in 1950-51, the share of services increased to 47.88 per cent in 1999-2000. Between 1950-51 and 1990-91, the share of Services Sector in GDP