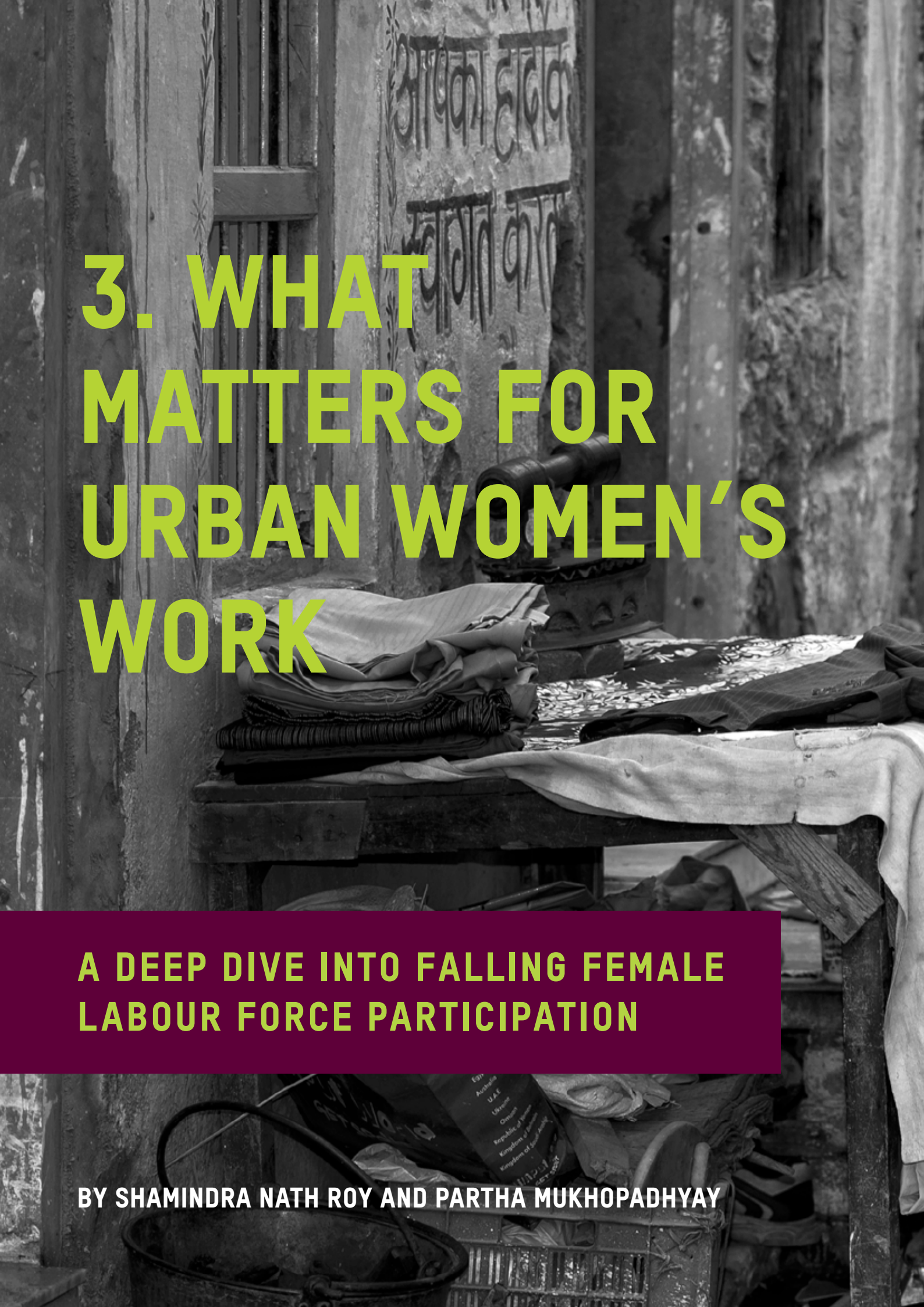

3. WHAT MATTERS FOR URBAN WOMEN'S WORK

A DEEP DIVE INTO FALLING FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

BY SHAMINDRA NATH ROY AND PARTHA MUKHOPADHYAY

In 2017, out of 195 countries, India ranked **127** in Gender Inequality Index and **149** in Gender Development Index (UNDP Human Development Report).

One out of three **(32.2%)** female workers in urban household manufacturing is Muslim. Manufacturing employs **39.2%** of Muslim women, **22.9%** of non-SC/ST Hindus and **20%** of Hindu SC women (Census of India, 2011).

Two of the most female-intensive industries of urban non-farm work are domestic work and manufacturing of tobacco products where **80.9%** and **77.5%** of the workforce respectively is female. These two industries employ **8.4%** of the female workforce but only **0.6%** of the male workforce. (Census of India 2011)

The two activities employing the largest number of urban women in India are education, at **13.2%**, and retail trade, at **6.1%** of the female workforce, but only one out of five **(20.4%)** workers in these two industries is female. (Census of India 2011)

Half **(49.5%)** of the married women workers work in the same industry of work as their husbands (NSS EUS 2011-12).

Four out of five **(81%)** of college educated women workers work in the service sector, while manufacturing employs **44%** of women workers who only have school level education (NSS EUS 2011-12).

3.1 DO INDIAN WOMEN WORK?

India is now (in 2017), 20th from the bottom, out of 187 countries, in terms of Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP), down 18 spots from its rank during the 1990s. In South Asia, India ranks second lowest only after Pakistan and globally, it is only better than the countries of Middle-East and North Africa (20.6 percent), but significantly lower than China (61.5 percent) and countries of East Asia and Pacific (60.1 percent), as well as Latin American and Caribbean countries (51.5 percent).[1] Indeed, at 16.8 percent, the latest estimate of India's urban FLFP is much lower than that of overall Middle East levels.

On the other hand, if Indian FLFP attained current Chinese levels, as above, it could add about 27 percent to GDP and if women in India had the same labour force participation rate (79.7 percent instead of 30.8 percent) as men, then India's GDP could rise by over 43 percent, that is, by INR 72 trillion.[2] That is an estimate of the loss caused by the low level of female workforce participation. Thus, even ignoring other reasons, of which there are many, possibly more important than economic activity (see Fletcher et al. 2017 for a review), for purely economic reasons one must ask: why is labour force participation in India so unequal?

Note that this does not even begin to address another important issue: is work, and therefore economic value, being measured properly? For example, care work, such as looking after people, seeing to their wants and needs, monitoring and maintaining machines, plants, animals is work that enables other work that is more socially valued to be productive. Yet, it remains largely unrecognized (see Box 3.1). This is discussed more extensively in the chapter on unpaid care work in this report.

Box 3.1: Who Works More?

The definition of work is undergoing change, but slowly. If any 'activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or provide services for use by others or for own use' (emphasis added) is counted as work, activities classified as domestic duties or work for household use by the NSSO (codes 92 and 93) would need to be included as in Mondal et al. (2018). Using this expanded definition, if we construct an expanded Labour Force Participation Rate, the male LFPR in 2011-12 increases from 76.4 percent to 76.7 percent, but the FLFPR increases from 20.5 percent to 81.7 percent! This is because women comprise 99.4 percent of the workforce performing domestic duties or work for household use. Thus, once we take such unpaid work into account, women work much more than men.

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1 *This is from the ILO model estimate for 15+ population in the World Development Indicators of the World Bank, 2018.*

2 *Derived from NSS 68th Round (2011-12) for males and females aged 15 years and above, and for both usual principal and subsidiary status. This assumes the additional female workers have the same productivity as the average worker. The increase is calculated using the provisional estimates for GDP at current prices at 167.7 trillion rupees for 2017-18.*

3.2 EXISTING EXPLANATIONS OF LOW AND DECLINING FLFP

There has been much discussion of women's work recently, but much of that has focused on why the low FLFP is declining further and relatively little attention has been paid to why it is low in the first place, especially in urban areas, where the latest (2015-16) official numbers (including subsidiary work) indicate urban FLFP of 16.6 percent and a female work force participation (FWFP) of 14.8 percent, with substantial variation across the country. One caveat to this is that many women report to be willing to work part-time, if it is 'available at [their] household'. If all these women are counted, the FLFP would increase by 21 percentage points (Fletcher, et. al. 2017).

The explanations of low and declining FLFP in India focus around the helix of cultural constraints and low returns from work. Factors such as education, both self and husband's, lack of skills, the competing responsibility of family care work, and social disapproval of working women are advanced as important cultural constraints of FLFP (Dasgupta et al. 2005, Kapsos et al. 2014). Concomitantly, issues of lower wages, low infrastructure provision, declining returns from agriculture and fragmentation of land and lack of 'suitable work' (Chaudhary & Verick 2014) reduce the returns from working. Depending on the viewpoint, the policy discourse also varies. Those privileging cultural explanations anticipate a slow change, while others argue that the solution lies in redressing structural constraints. This chapter tries to look a little deeper into this debate, to unpack viable interventions that could encourage more women to join the labour force.

FLFP has been falling relatively steadily since late 1970s in India, despite (or due to?) rapid economic growth, especially in the post-liberalization period (Mehrotra and Parida 2017). The rate of decline increased recently, and is more pronounced in rural than in urban areas (Desai et al. 2018). One argument is that this is the manifestation of a cross-country regularity, a U-shaped association between income and FLFP (Schultz 1990 & 1991, Kottis 1990, Goldin 1995). As the economy grows and women move out from agriculture and labour-intensive jobs, FLFP falls, rising eventually with higher education and better jobs. This strong decline in FLFP is evident when we compare illiterate women (high) to women who have secondary or higher secondary education (low), until it rises for women with college education (Chatterjee et al. 2018). For men, on the other hand, there is a steady increase in participation with education.

3.2.1 Demand side explanations

The first reason for falling FLFP is the decline in farm jobs, which has led to the withdrawal of females from labour force in rural and rapidly transforming urban areas (Kannan and Raveendran 2012, Chatterjee et al. 2015) and they have not been able to find other jobs suitable for them. This explanation encompasses many effects. Some of the major ones are described below:

3.2.1.1 Decreasing demand for farm work

One premise, valid more for rural areas, is that there is decreasing demand for farm work, especially casual farm work where women are overrepresented (Bardhan 1985, Srivastava and Srivastava 2010), in part as a result of mechanization or a move away from the farm. It is unclear why this leads to a lower FLFP, instead of FWFP – that is, why women report themselves as out of the labour force, rather than unemployed, though some explanation can be found in their availability for part-time work at home (ibid).

3.2.1.2 Change in Sectoral Composition

Another is that women withdraw because sectors where work is available – agriculture and construction – where less educated women worked, are considered unsuitable once women become more educated. Per contra, even in a patriarchal society such as Bangladesh similar to India, higher FLFP can result from growth of wage employment in industries such as garments (World Bank 2012). So, another way to state this is that there is low demand for employment from such 'suitable' sectors.

Indeed, over the period 2011-12 to 2015-16, when there has been an absolute decline in manufacturing employment, the burden of adjustment has been disproportionately on women, as brought out in the accompanying case study, with the share of manufacturing in urban female workforce dropping from 28.5 percent to 21.5 percent, while the share in male workforce fell from 22.1 percent to 18 percent, which resulted in the share of women in manufacturing reducing from nearly a fourth to a fifth of the workforce.

3.2.1.3 Nature of Employment

A related reason is that the nature of work on offer – non-regular/ non-salaried employment – is no longer compatible with higher levels of education. Women, especially after attaining a moderate level of education, are reluctant to accept casual work, especially out of the household. Chatterjee et al. (2018) find that the decline in FLFP among women with more education is highest in casual work (both farm and non-farm), even more than the decline in unpaid household work. Sanghi et al. (2015) also find that women no longer prefer to be working as helpers or casual labourers unless they are paid well.[3]

3.2.1.4 Occupational Segregation

Worryingly, it is precisely such work that is on offer. Chatterjee et al. (2018) also find that much of female employment is concentrated in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs, while desirable 'white collar' urban employment is mostly undertaken by men. Even when described as 'professionals, associate professionals, administrators and managers', most such urban women workers are either own account or unpaid family workers (Raju 2013, Mondal et al. 2018).[4] Two-thirds of urban female unpaid family workers are home based. In rural areas, even in the education and health sectors, with a greater presence of the public sector, women disproportionately occupy irregularly paid and informal jobs in the form of para-teachers, auxiliary midwives or AASHA workers. This reflects occupational segregation, that is, women are slotted into specific job roles.

3.2.1.5 Wage Discrimination

There is also wage discrimination, where similarly qualified women are paid less than men – a third less by some estimates International Labour Organization 2018) – for similar jobs. This is true across types of jobs. From the Fifth

3 *Women working as own account workers increased in lower consumption deciles, and unpaid helpers decreased in the higher deciles. While participation in casual public work rose between 2004-05 and 2011-12, it dropped across all decile classes for other casual work.*

4 *This could be because they are mainly engaged within the self-help groups (SHG) and co-operatives as partners and have been recorded as directors or working proprietors, even as they are for the most part confined to food processing and textile and garment manufacturing (Mondal et al. 2018).*

Annual Employment Survey, it can be seen that women are 1.9 to 2.4 times more likely to be in the bottom wage category as men.[5] It is important to recognize that if reservation wages – the wage that will encourage a person to seek work – does not vary as much by gender, while market wages for women are much lower, fewer women will join the labour force. This is because they are discouraged by the inequality in wage offers, not because they voluntarily stay out of the labour force. This effect is likely to be more pronounced as more urban women become educated – indeed in many states a higher share of women possess college degrees than men. This issue is discussed in detail in the preceding chapter on wage inequality in this report.

3.2.1.6 Regulatory burden

A number of states have specific regulations about workplace conditions for women which affect the incentive of employers to employ women. While these are advanced as a way to improve safety for women, they can also act as an employment dampener (Ghai 2018).

3.2.2 Supply Side Explanations

Women are studying instead of working. A common explanation is that more women are attending educational institutions, which is why they are not in the labour force. While it is true that proportionately more women are being educated, the share of women more than 15 years old who are Neither in Education nor in Employment or Training (NEET) rose from 48 percent to 55.7 percent in rural areas but only slightly from 66.7 percent to 67.3 percent in urban areas over in 1993-94 to 2011-12 (National Sample Survey Organization 1993-94, 2011-12, Ghai 2018).

3.2.2.1 Patriarchy

Ghai (2018) directly confronts the issue of low levels of FLFP by constructing a measure of patriarchy using the NFHS 2015-16 data and finds that it has a positive and significant correlation with share of college educated who are out of the labour force. Interestingly, some southern states such as Telangana or Andhra Pradesh turn out to be as patriarchal as northern states such as Haryana and Bihar.

3.2.2.2 Skill mismatch

Even in places where there is an increase in non-farm jobs in large cities, the skill level of female workers, who have been released from farm jobs are not aligned to the needs of such jobs.[6]

3.2.2.3 Marriage-related relocation

This skill mismatch is exacerbated by the spatially hypergamous nature of marriage in India. The tendency to marry daughters away from their natal homes creates challenges for them to secure a job if they migrate to relatively developed spaces, especially from villages to cities. Studies dealing with long distance hypergamous marriages show how economic impediments such as low skills and cross-cultural hindrances have affected

5 *While 36.4 percent, 17.9 percent and 7.9 percent of men earn less than 5000 rupees (bottom category), for casual work, contract work and regular salaried work respectively, the share of women in this category is 69.4percent, 43.65 and 19.2 percent respectively.*

6 *It is argued that the low skill and education level of women from poorer households in rural and urban areas makes them vulnerable to economic downturns, which is evident in cyclical fluctuation of female employment and higher incidence of temporary work in labour-intensive sectors (Mehrotra 2017).*

women's participation in market-oriented jobs at their spousal homes (Kaur 2004 & 2013).[7]

3.2.2.4 Changing nature of household domestic activities

Coupled with the decline in agricultural jobs, a shift in the nature of household domestic activities has caused a decline in the post marriage work of rural women (Mehrotra 2017). As children stop working and older girl children stay in school, domestic work activities such as child and elderly care and other duties such as collection of fuel, animal rearing, etc. devolve on older women, who were earlier working. Increase in the share of nuclear families in both rural and urban areas intensifies this effect. The contribution of this additional 'reproductive labour' (see Box 3.1), which actually increased at a higher rate than the purely domestic duties is largely ignored while determining work force participation, even though such labour is necessary for survival (Naidu and Rao 2018).

3.2.2.5 Income-effect of the household

Increased household income leads to withdrawal of married women from the labour force (Abraham 2009, Srivastava and Srivastava 2010, Himanshu 2011, Sarkar et al. 2019, Chatterjee et al. 2018). This is exacerbated by the phenomenon (Behrman et al. 1995) where women usually marry more educated men. The consequent increase in income discourages the wife from joining the labour market. She is, instead, occupied in 'status producing household work' (Abraham 2009, Sarkar et al. 2019)[8].

In this vein, MGNREGA is also a factor responsible for rural women's withdrawal from labour force. Some (Mehrotra 2017) have argued that a MGNREGA-induced increase in rural real wages after 2004-05 fostered male employment, and the increased income encouraged their wives to drop out of the labour force. Other studies (Desai et al. 2018, Mondal et al. 2018, Sarkar, et al. 2019) argue that MGNREGA instead increased women's participation in wage work in villages, especially where its implementation was strong. Since the wages for men and women are the same in this scheme, many families chose to have women participate in MGNREGA while men sought higher income elsewhere.

3.2.2.6 Infrastructure

Other than the explanations above, lack of access to infrastructure, especially roads, is regarded as a major factor responsible for low rural FLFP. Empirical work using the IHDS surveys have shown that the construction of either a kutcha or a pucca road increases the odds of women's participation in non-farm work by 1.5 and 1.4 times, respectively (Lei et al. 2017), which, given the expansion in rural roads under PMGSY (Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojana or rural roads programme), should have led to higher FLFP. In urban areas, safe working environments for factory workers, childcare for informally employed women are forms of social infrastructure that can help in increasing FLFP (Sudarshan & Bhattacharya 2009).

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7 Empirical studies show higher drop-outs from labour force post marriage migrants for younger women (Banerjee and Raju 2009). The spatial nature of such phenomena is also interesting, where lower sex ratio leads to an importation of brides, moving from higher FLFP to lower FLFP states.

8 Despite a decline in child marriage over time, the age of marriage for females is usually in early 20s in India (Desai and Andrist 2010). Hence, the unavailability of suitable work leads to an early marriage for a lot of educated women who do not prefer to do casual jobs post marriage.

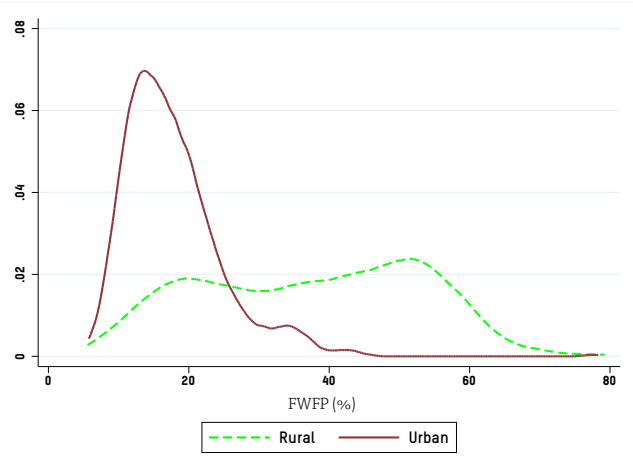
3.3 WHAT MATTERS FOR URBAN WOMEN'S WORK?

Much of the discussion thus far has been on the decline of FLFP. We will now focus on the low levels of participation in the urban non-farm sector. The reason for this is that urban FLFP has been both low and stable, indicating a structural deficiency, as compared to rural FLFP. Furthermore, if it continues to be lower than its rural counterpart, the transformation from a rural farm to urban non-farm workforce will lead to a lower FLFP simply by the compositional effect. We also move from looking at FLFP to FWFP that is, from labour force to workforce participation, to disentangle industry related effects on women's work.

3.3.1 Choice of data matters

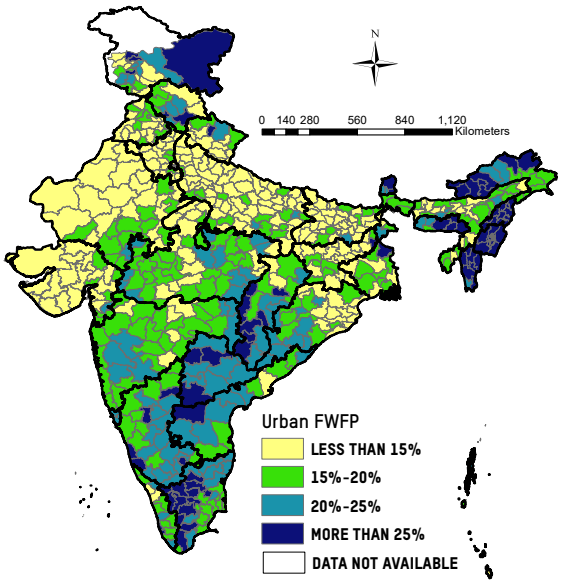
To begin with, it is useful to appreciate the variation in FWFP across India – that different parts of India have very different patterns of women's work. Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of rural and urban FWFP across 640 districts of India from the Census of 2011. As one can see, the rural FWFP distribution has much wider range than the urban distribution – 93 districts have an urban FWFP of more than 30 percent while rural FWFP is above this level in 476 districts. Similarly, while 317 districts have a rural FWFP of more than 50 percent, only 7 districts have an urban FWFP above this level.

FIGURE 3.1. RURAL-URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF FWFP



Source: *Authors' analysis from Census 2011*

FIGURE 3.2. SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN FWFP (ALL AGES)



Source: *Authors' analysis from Census 2011*

TABLE 3.1 MEASURES OF FWFP ACROSS VARIOUS DATASETS

DATA-TYPE	RURAL		URBAN	
	'Full-Time'	All Workers	'Full-Time'	All Workers
Census	26.34	46.23	15.38	20.77
NSS EUS	27.79	38.16	16.38	19.95
IHDS-II	4.89	41.44	5.26	14.76
NFHS-IV	17.01	33.31	17.83	23.79

Source: *Authors' analysis from Census of India 2011, NSS EUS 2011-12, IHDS-II (2011-12) and NFHS-IV (2015-16)*

But, is this a robust description of variation across districts? To answer this question, we bring together four datasets, namely (a) the various Economic Tables (B-series) and Primary Census Abstract of Census of India 2011, (b) NSS Employment-Unemployment Survey 2011-12, (c) IHDS panel and IHDS-II survey of 2011-12, and (d) NFHS-IV survey of 2015-16, each of whom have different definitions of work.[9] In order to compare FWFP estimates across the four datasets, we focus on two categories of work: a stringent 'Full-time' work (see Table 3.1), and Total work, including 'Part-time' work, which measures work done other than or in addition to full-time work. We then calculate district wise FWFP for 367 districts for two measures of each of these four datasets and correlate them to each other.[10]

What we find is that the one measure does not match the other, but it is low regardless of the measure used. The correlations, as shown in Figure 3.3 and Figure 4.4 shows that the spatial pattern of FWFP, that is, which district is seen as having relatively higher FWFP and which is seen as relatively lower FWFP would vary depending on which dataset is used. If the districts in the highest 25 percent (that is, 91 districts) for each of the datasets are considered, only 15 (27) common units show in case of Full Time-Rural (all Rural) workers, and 12 (13) units in case of Full Time-Urban (all urban) workers, indicating that there is considerable divergence of measurement even at the top end of the distribution. Depending on the data, urban FWPR (all work) can vary from 14.8 percent (IHDS-II) to 23.8 percent (NFHS IV). We need to measure female workforce participation better.

9 *The whole exercise is restricted to women aged 15-49 years, in order to make it compatible with NFHS-IV.*

10 *Both census 2011 and NFHS-IV covers all the 640 districts of India during 2011. NSS 2011-12 covers 625 districts existed within 2001-11. IHDS-II used the reference of census 2001 but it covered only 372 geographical units where some districts were aggregated as a single unit, mostly in the Northeast of India. We use IHDS as a baseline and the districts from the three other datasets were adjusted as per boundary changes to form 367 unique geographical units. These 367 geographical units covers 454 out of 640 Indian districts during Census 2011. Though technically they are units, we will continue to refer to them as districts for ease of understanding.*

FIGURE 3.3 CORRELATION OF FULL-TIME WORKERS

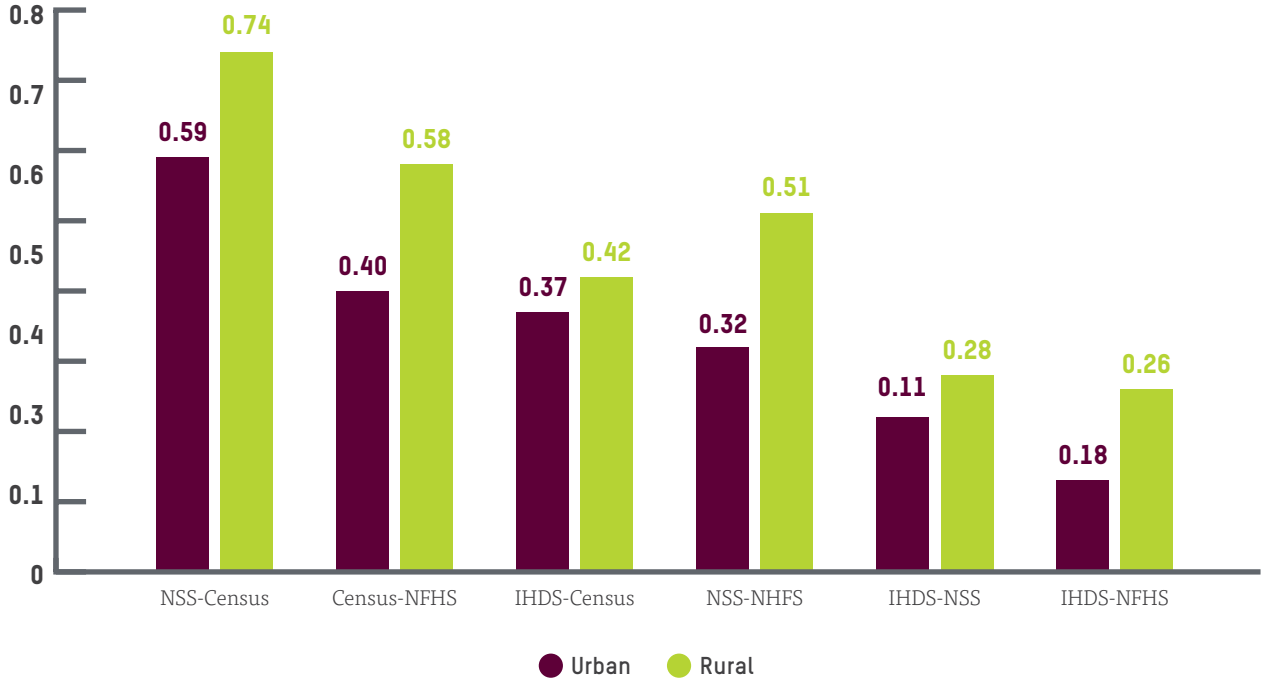
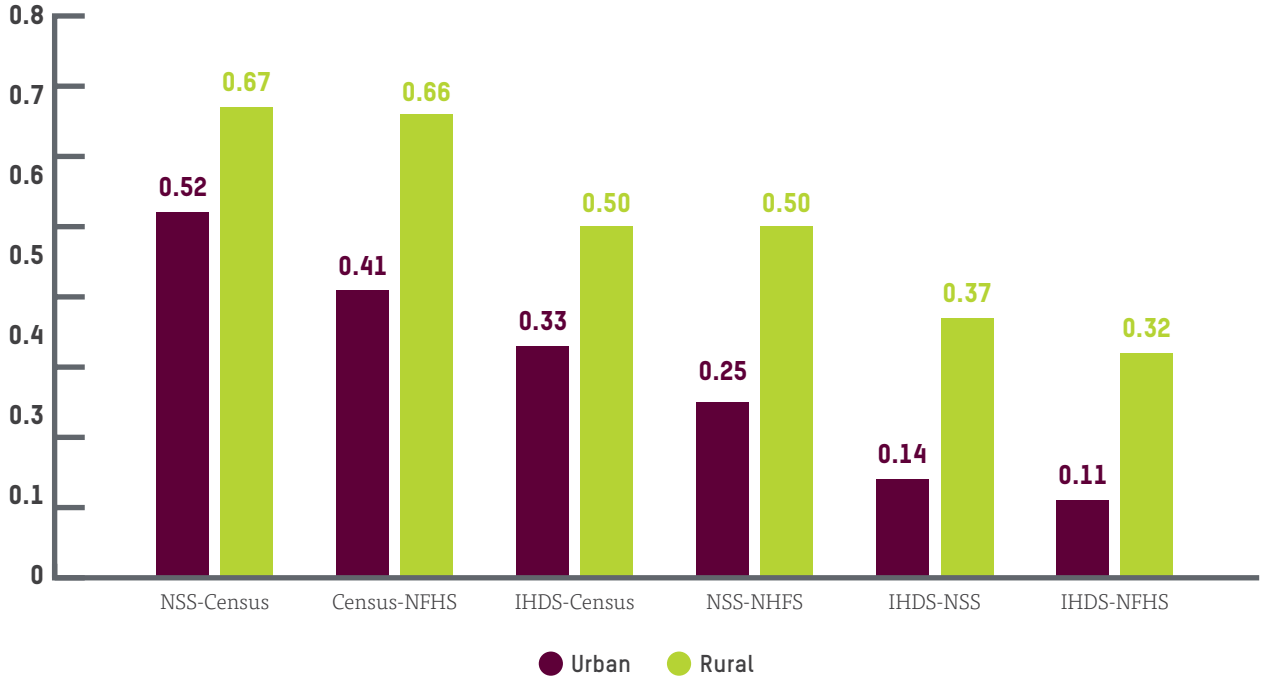
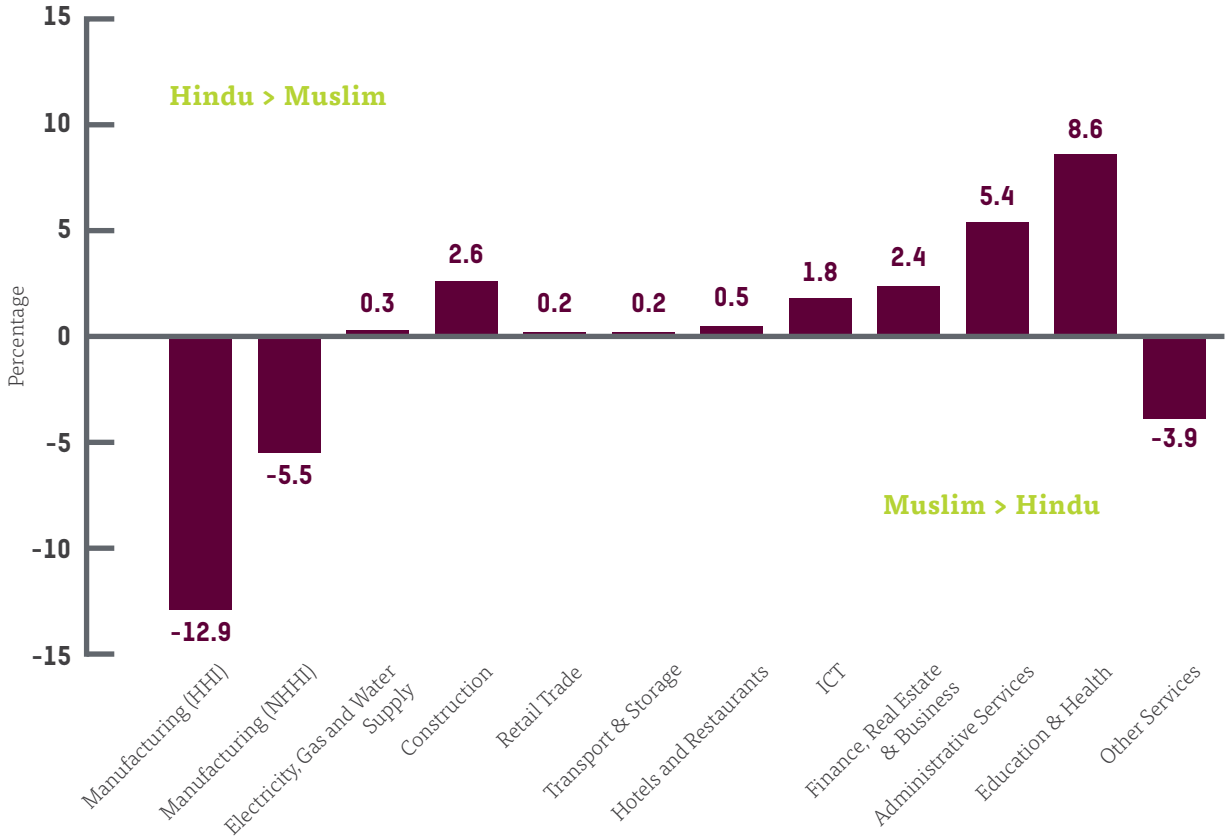


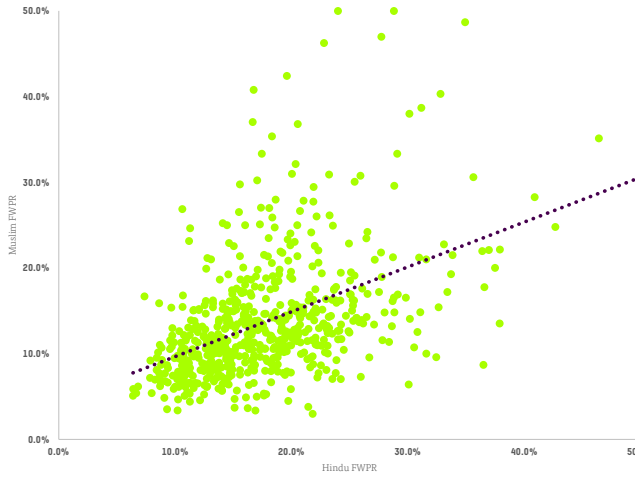
FIGURE 3.4 CORRELATION OF ALL WORKERS



Source: *Authors' analysis using various data sources*
Note: *All Correlation coefficients are statistically significant at 5% level, except the IHDS-NFHS pair in urban areas*

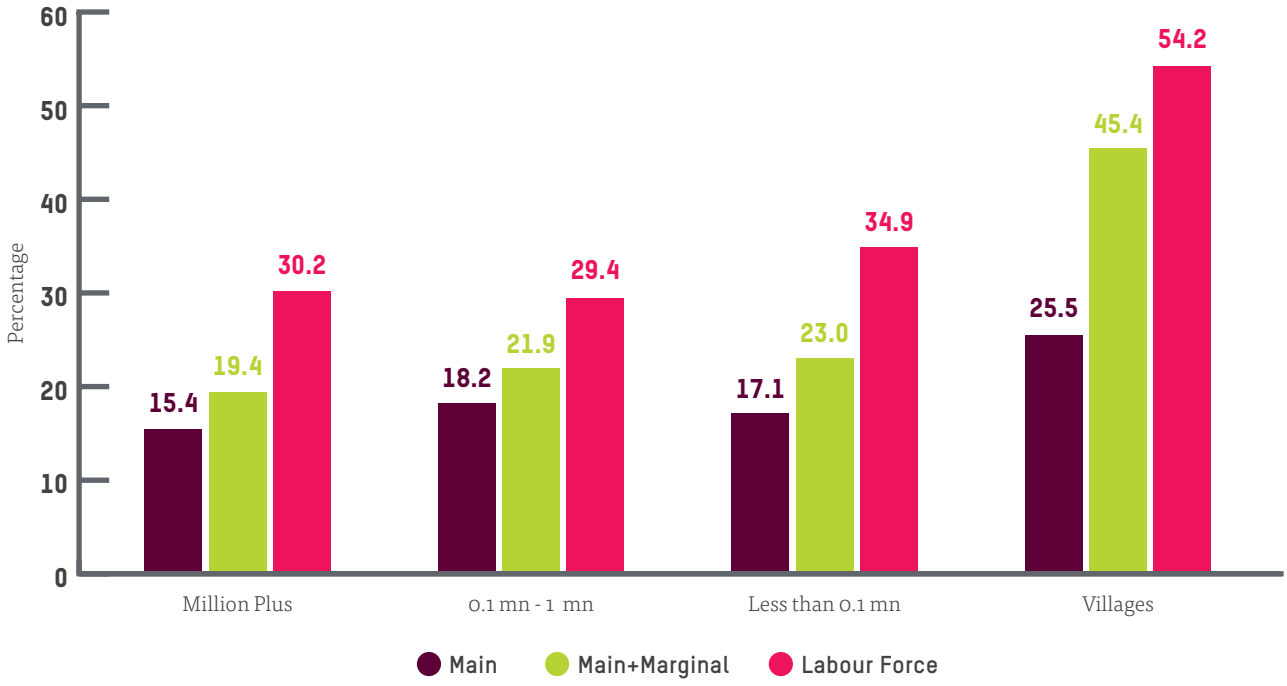
Box 3.2: Does Religion Matter?





Note: *While there is a lot of variation across districts, there does not seem to be a systematic difference in FWFP between Hindus and Muslims. Broadly, if proportionately more Hindu women work in a district, Muslim women are also more likely to work in that district. However, the industries of work differ. According to the Census 2011, Muslim women are more likely to work in manufacturing (disproportionately as unpaid workers in family enterprises), while Hindus are more likely to work in public and social services (as wage workers). Though the urban national Muslim FWFP (12.5 percent) is lower than the Hindu FWFP (18.2 percent), urban Muslim female workers are concentrated in certain districts. A closer look reveals that where urban Muslim FWFP is high and more than Hindu FWFP (more precisely, 128 districts consisting of 23 percent of Muslim female workers), 47.4 percent of them are engaged in household manufacturing, as compared to only 12.5 percent in other districts – indicating that the outlier districts with high Muslim FWFP have a specific industrial structure. It is also possible that there are cultural reasons for the low participation of Muslim women in public and social services.*

FIGURE 3.5 DISTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT FWFP ESTIMATES ACROSS VARIOUS SETTLEMENTS (15-59 YRS.)

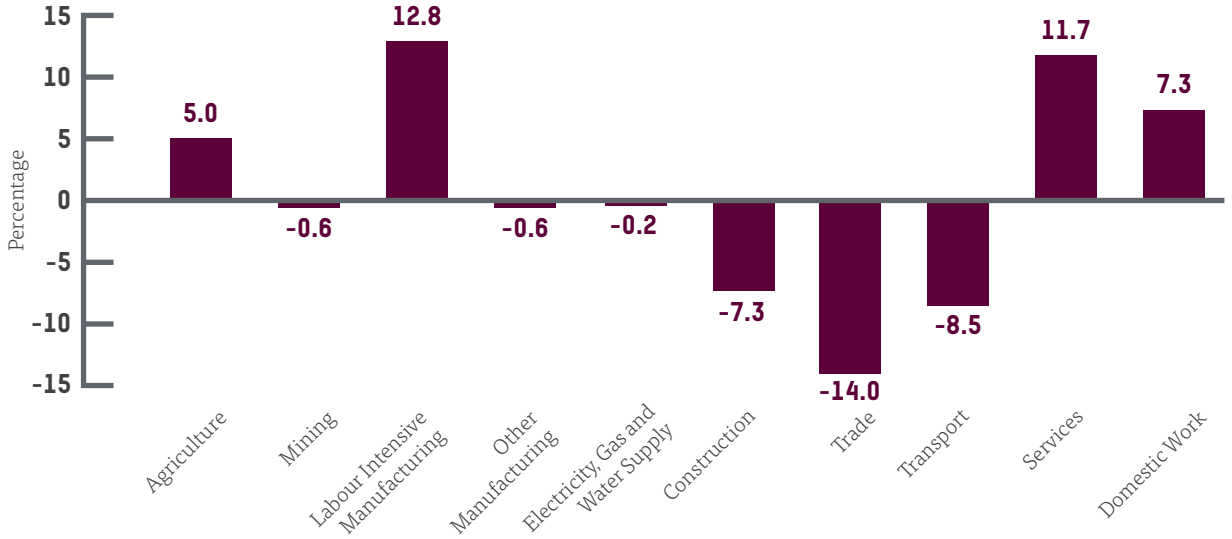


Source: *Author's analysis from Census 2011*

3.3.2 Location matters

The overall urban FWFP is lower (20.8 percent as per Census 2011) than rural FWFP, but the spatial distribution of urban FWFP also has substantial regional variation, with districts of southern and NE states showing considerably higher participation than the rest of the country. A disaggregation of urban FWFP across cities of various size-classes (Figure 3.5) shows that women's participation in work is lower in million plus cities compared to smaller urban areas. The difference between main and marginal work is also much higher in small towns than the larger ones, indicating that a lot more women are associated with subsidiary work in such areas compared to larger cities, a pattern that also emerges in other studies that look at location effects on FWFP (Chatterjee et al. 2015). This is very different from the males where the difference is stable across the various settlements. The smaller towns (villages are shown for comparison) also show larger proportion of women seeking jobs, as the FLFP goes up from 30.2 percent in million plus cities to 34.9 percent in small towns, as per Census 2011 (FLFP in mid-size towns is similar to large cities). So, location matters and women in smaller towns participate proportionately more in the workforce than those in larger cities. Is this another case of the income effect or is it a case of more flexible labour markets?

Box 3.3: Manufacturing or Services: Where is the potential for women's work?



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

Note: *While there is a substantial difference between men and women in terms of workforce participation, the difference in the sectors of work is more mixed. The figure above shows the difference between the sectoral share of men and women, that is the share of construction workers in the male workforce is 7.3 percent higher than the share of construction workers in the female workforce. Thus, women have a much higher share of their workforce in labour intensive manufacturing, services and domestic work, while men dominate in construction, transport and trade. Thus, it would appear that there are both manufacturing as well as service-based strategies are feasible pathways to increasing FWPR.*

3.3.3 Industrial Structure matters

Women's work is more concentrated in specific regions and in specific industries (Box 3.3) compared to men's work. A common explanation for low FWFP is a dearth of suitable job opportunities where women choose to work, taking into account the wider social structure in the country that determines that women's place of work should be near to where they live (Das & Desai 2003, Klasen & Pieters 2015). So, do more women join the workforce where the share of 'female friendly' industry is high?

In order to check the effects of a district's job structure on FWFP, a measure is constructed which quantifies the share of all workers in ten industries (see Table 3.2). These ten industries have the highest share of women workers (to total women workers) and thus count as 'female friendly'. We then look at the relationship between the urban FWFP and the intensity of presence of these ten industries in a district.[11] Does FWFP increase with a rise in the share of such female friendly industries in a district?

11 *Statistically, the urban FWFP is regressed on this measure, controlled by the district's urbanization rate and state-specific fixed effects.*

TABLE 3.2 TOP TEN INDUSTRIES OF WOMEN'S WORK

NIC DIV.	NIC NAME	URBAN FEMALES	SHARE IN WORKFORCE (%)	URBAN MALES	SHARE OF FEMALES (%)
85	Education	3.3	13.2%	3.1%	50.9%
47	Retail trade, except for motor vehicles and motorcycles	1.5	6.1%	15.5	8.9%
14	Manufacture of wearing apparel	1.2	4.9%	2.6	31.9%
86	Human health activities	1.2	4.8%	1.3	47.5%
97	Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel	1.2	4.7%	0.3	80.9%
96	Other personal service activities	1.1	4.3%	1.5	42.0%
13	Manufacture of textiles	1.0	4.0%	3.3	23.0%
41	Construction of buildings	0.9	3.8%	6.7	12.3%
12	Manufacture of tobacco products	0.9	3.7%	0.3	77.5%
84	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	0.9	3.5%	5.7	13.2%
	Total of top ten sectors	**13.1**	**53.1%**	**40.2**	**24.6%**
	Total Urban Non-Farm Workforce	**24.7**	**100%**	**97.4**	**100%**

Source: *Authors' analysis from Census of India 2011*

The results from the analysis show that industrial structure of the district matters substantially, though not entirely in explaining the variation in urban FWFP. The predicted urban FWFP shows that the relationship is weak when the share of top ten industries is low, but increases with it after the share of top industries crosses a threshold (Figure 3.6) and the variation in this measure explains 55 percent of the variation in urban FWFP across all districts. The FWFP however remains low even in districts with a large share of female friendly industries, below 20 percent. In the top ten percent of the districts ranked by presence of the ten female-friendly industries, the FWFP is about 21.7 percent compared to other districts, where it is only 14.9 percent. Similarly, their share in the labour force in these districts is 27.7 percent compared to 19.7 percent in other districts. So, in the presence of such industries, the increase in participation also results in higher share of the total labour force. Per contra, for men, there is no appreciable difference in work force participation rate across these two groups of districts.

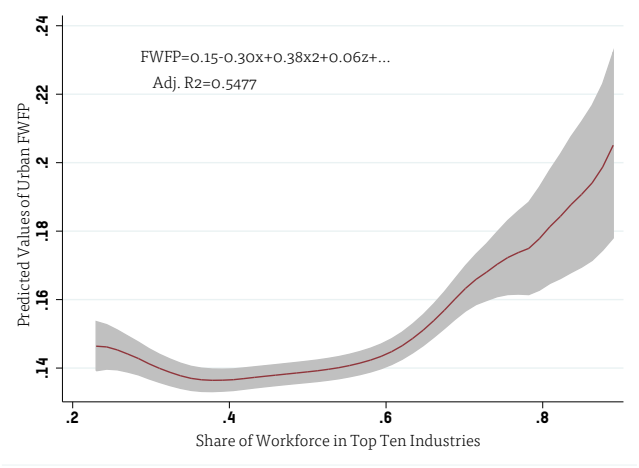
In the accompanying map (Figure 3.7), the shades of blue refers to districts where fewer women are actually working than is predicted by the industrial structure of the district. The yellow shaded areas are districts where the

model describes the variation in urban FWFP relatively well while areas with orange shades are districts where the actual urban FWFP is higher than predicted by the industrial structure of the district. There are 284 yellow-shaded districts out of 640, which indicates that in a large part of the country, after controlling for the regional structure and urbanization, the industrial structure actually determines the participation of women in work. In most other areas, the urban FWFP is higher than predicted by the industrial structure of the district.

3.3.4 Caste Matters

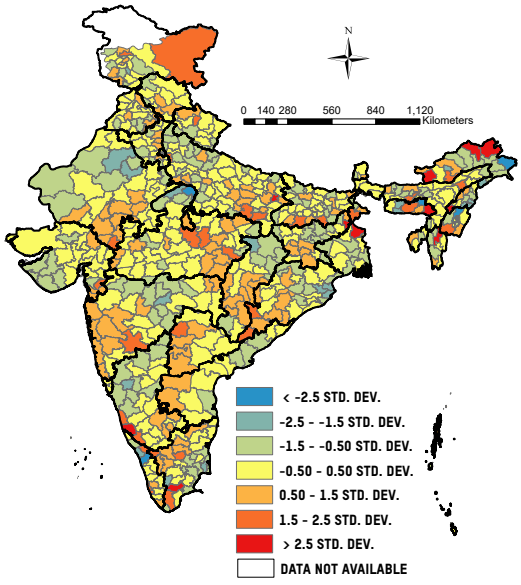
The urban FWFP of Scheduled Castes (21.1 percent) are higher than non-SC/STs (16.5 percent) but it shows a strong and positive correlation with non SC-ST women, indicating that districts that have higher workforce participation of non SC-ST women, usually have higher participation of SC women as well.[12] However, the industries in which they work are very different, with SCs concentrating in construction and services such as waste collection while the non-

FIGURE 3.6 SHARE OF TOP TEN INDUSTRIES AND PREDICTED FWFP



Source: *Authors' analysis from Census 2011*

FIGURE 3.7 WHERE THE MODEL FITS WELL AND WHERE IT DOESN'T



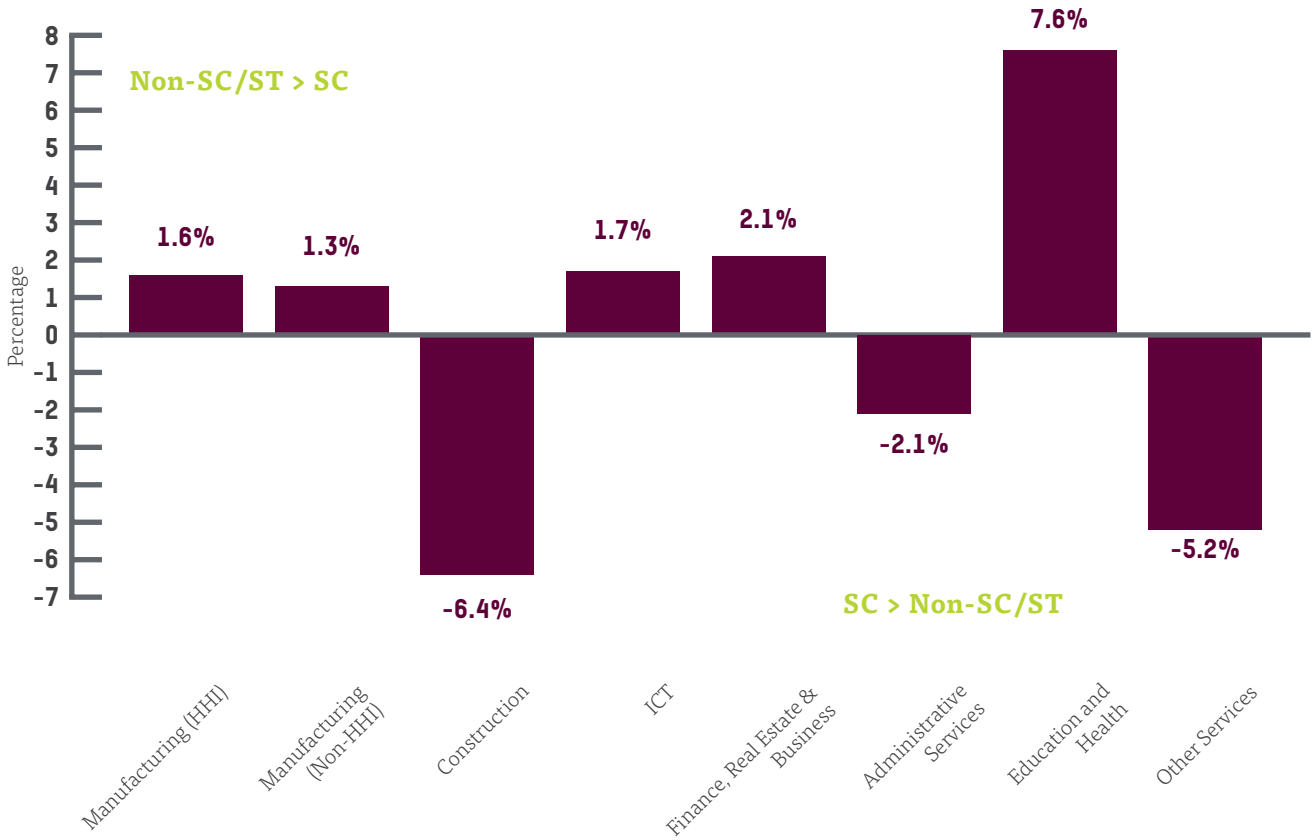
Source: *Authors' analysis from Census of India 2011*

12 In case of males, the urban workforce participation of non-SC/STs (61.1 percent) is higher than that of SCs (59.9 percent). ST women (27.7 percent) also work more than non-SC/ST women in urban areas, while the case of males is different. The correlation coefficient of SC and Non-SC/ST women is 0.61, while the rank correlation is even stronger (0.71).

SC/ST women are more likely to work in education and health services. Even within industries such as construction where SCs are relatively more concentrated (Figure 3.8), they are engaged in more menial jobs than the non-SC/STs in the same sector (Figure 3.9). For example, there are no SC women in the NSS sample who are in supervisory, professional or managerial jobs in construction, while about 15 percent of non-SC/STs in construction are engaged in such jobs. On the other hand, the share of SCs (67 percent) is much higher in elementary occupations under construction, while it is only 34 percent for non-SC/STs.

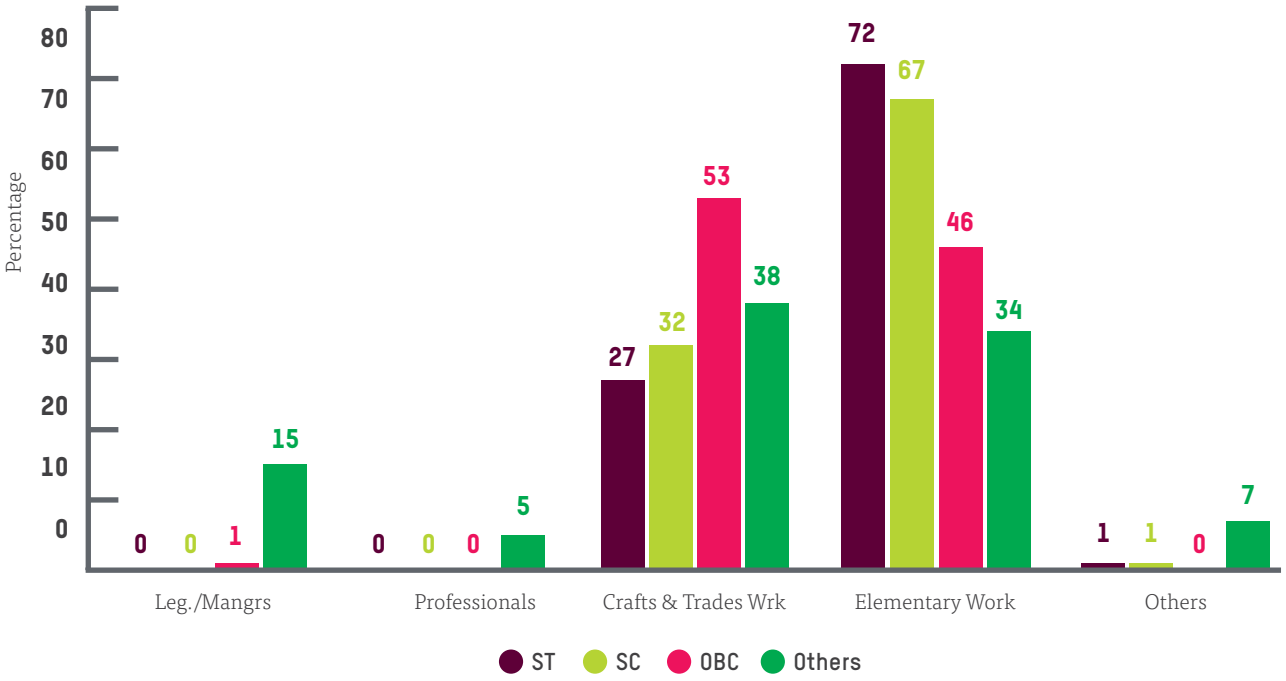
Thus, caste matters both for participation and for occupation. Being non-SC/ST does appear to reduce the participation of women in the workforce – in part because they are less present in more menial occupations.

FIGURE 3.8 DIFFERENCE IN SHARE OF WORKERS BY INDUSTRY (SC AND NON-SC/ST)



Source: *Authors' analysis from Census 2011*

FIGURE 3.9 OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF WORKERS BY SOCIAL GROUPS IN CONSTRUCTION



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

3.4 INTERACTION OF GENDER AND CASTE

While the industrial structure and occupational patterns are differentiated by caste in women's work, is there an effect of gender within caste, especially in industries such as education or health where women from most social groups are represented? We have already seen that there are clear differences by caste with the non-SC/ST being concentrated in health and education, but when we look within education, we find that both SC men and women tend to do similar kinds of jobs. Both of them have significant presence in teaching, but their presence in housekeeping and unskilled work is disproportionately higher than in other castes (Figure 3.10 and 3.11).

However, in the case of health, there is evidence of difference across both caste and gender. SC women and men are significantly overrepresented in cleaning work. While 30 percent of SC women (and 22 percent of men) working in the health sector are employed in cleaning work (as compared to single digit shares for other castes), there are very few doctors (2 percent) among SC women and only a little more (4 percent) among SC men. There is, however, a significant share (56 percent) of SC women working as nurses or technicians.

However, in the case of OBCs, while only 6 percent of the women are doctors and 68 percent are nurses or technicians, among OBC men 32 percent are doctors, which is less than upper caste men (48 percent), but much higher than SC men. Hence, the share of doctors among OBC women remains low and comparable to SC men, OBC men are catching up with upper caste men, referring to a narrowing caste divide but persistent gender divide within the OBCs (Figure 3.12 and 3.13).

FIGURE 3.10 EDUCATION (FEMALES)

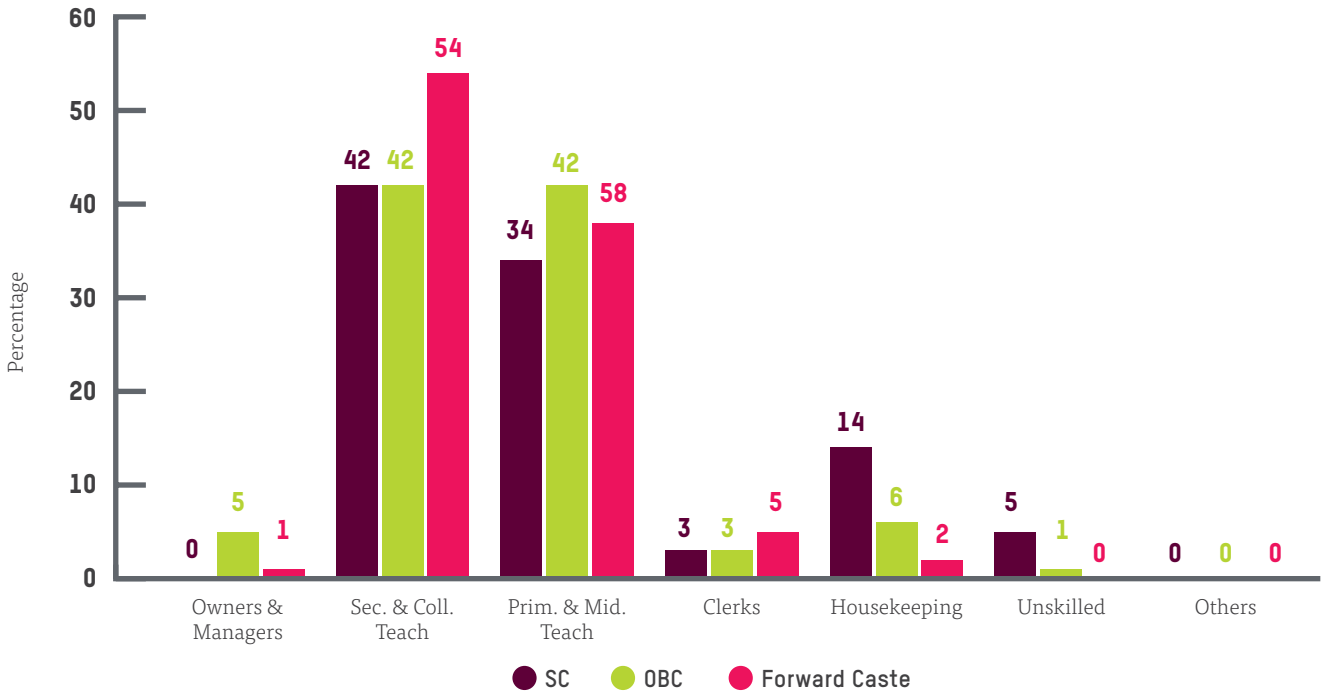
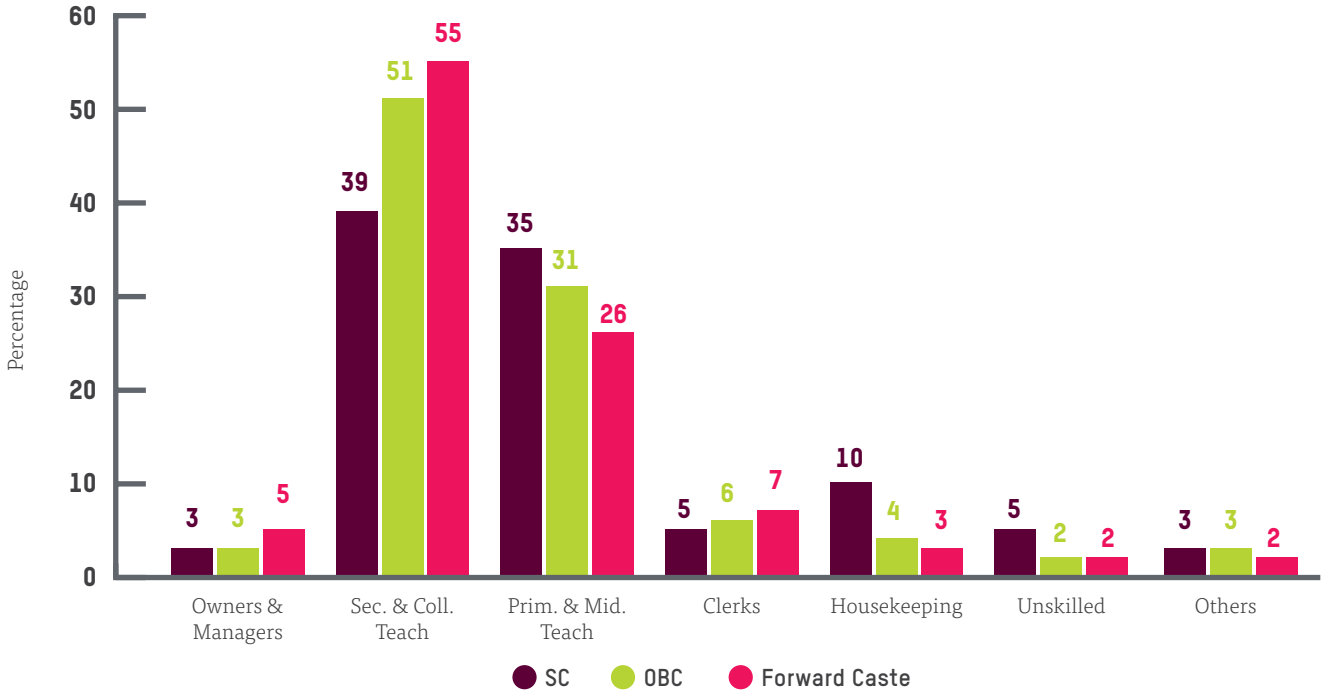


FIGURE 3.11 EDUCATION (MALES)



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

FIGURE 3.12 HEALTH (FEMALES)

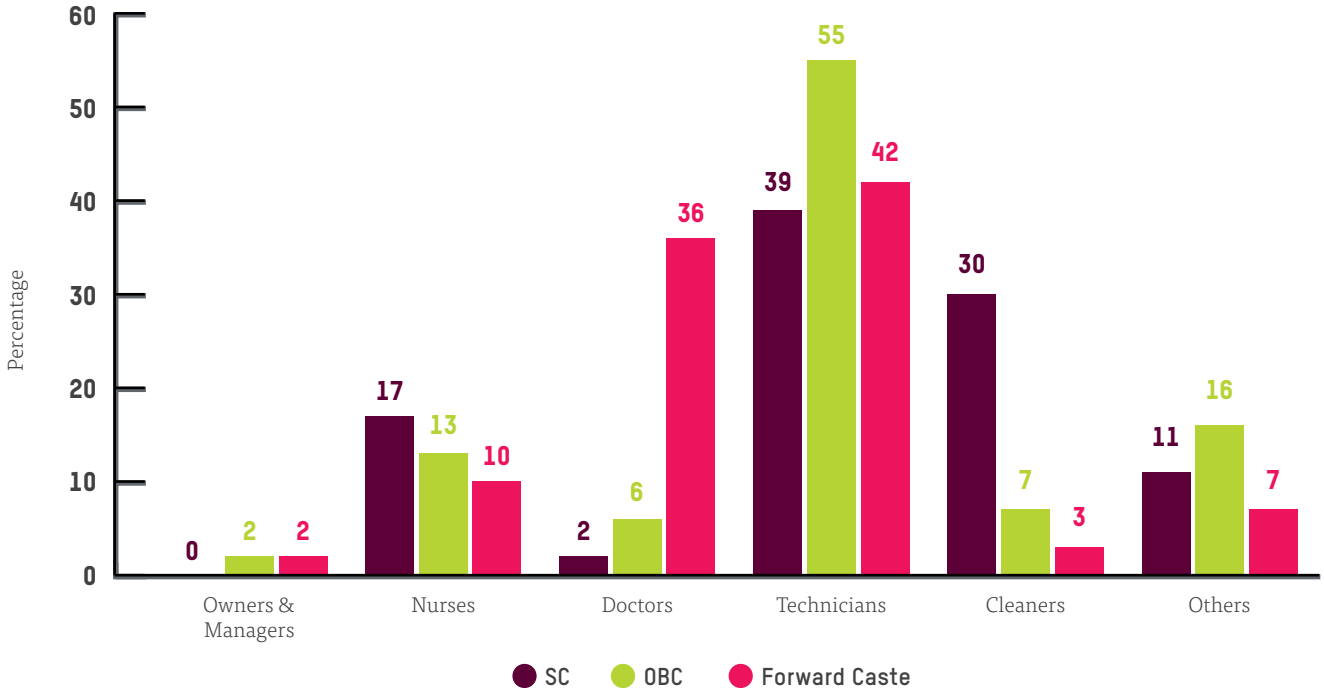
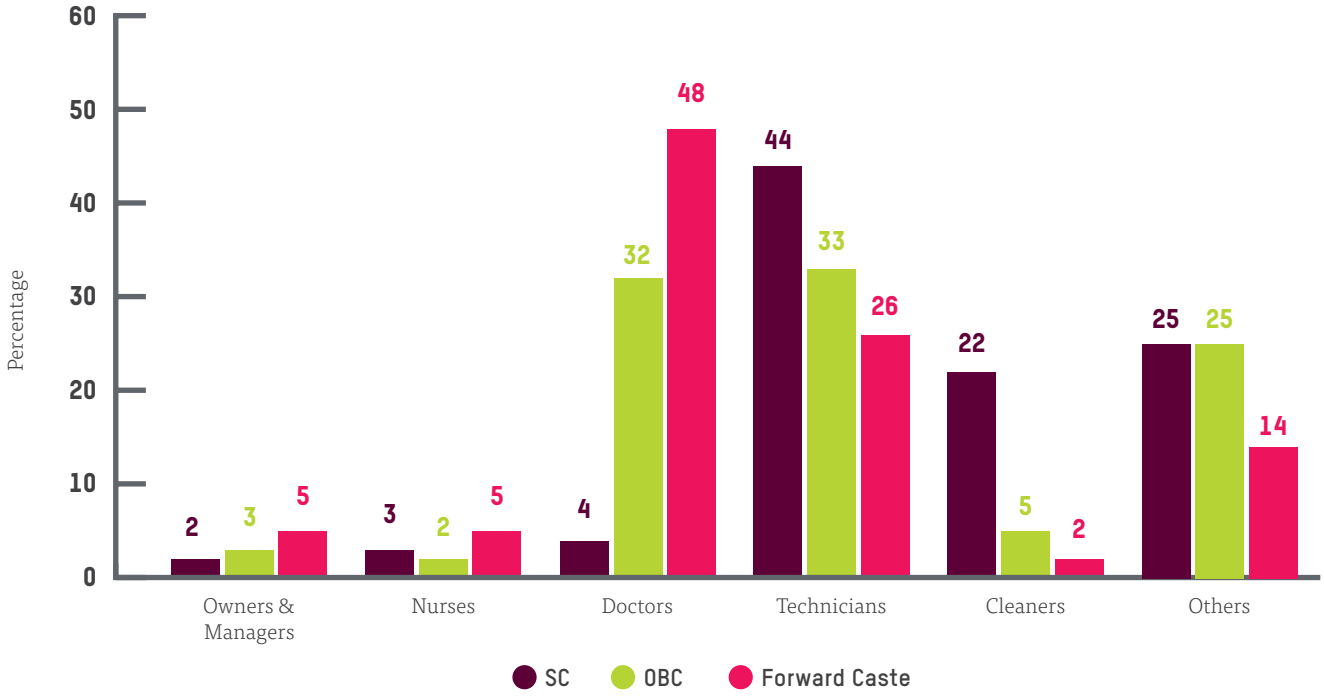


FIGURE 3.13 HEALTH (MALES)



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

These intersections of gender and caste at different levels show that the manner in which caste affects women's work is layered and complicated and not amenable to simple solutions.

3.4.1 Income Matters

It is difficult to decipher whether income matters from the data, since the presence of a working woman in the household would raise the household's income and thus higher income households would be associated with a higher share of working women. However, Sarkar et al. (2019), using careful statistical techniques to analyse the IHDS data finds that an increase in income of other members of the household and change in the asset ownership of a household lowers a woman's probability of entry into and increases the probability of exit from the workforce overall, but not so clearly in urban areas, where it is affected by change in assets but not in income.

So, while there does seem to be indirect indications of a negative income effect on women's work, this is not so clearly evident when it comes to urban areas.

However, the pattern of employment is very different across consumption quintiles. Figure 3.14 shows that the urban FWFP varies irregularly within a range of 13 percent to 16 percent across household consumption quintiles. However, this overall variation masks significant changes in the structure of work, as shown in other panels (Figure 3.14-3.17). As households' economic condition improves, the effect on self-employment is limited, though proportion of women in self-employment (as a share of women in the workforce) drops sharply for the top 20 percent of the households. In contrast, the share of women in unpaid work in household enterprises and casual work drop steadily as economic condition improves, with casual work decreasing faster than unpaid work at home. Women also have a higher incidence of home based work (25 percent compared to 10 percent for men, based on NSS 2011-12), which can lower income (see the chapter on unpaid care work for a more detailed discussion).[13] Finally, as expected, increase in the share of women in regular salaried/wage work (as a share of women in the workforce) is associated with improved economic condition. In this, the possibility of reverse causality, that is, an improvement in economic condition because someone finds regular salaried work, cannot be ruled out.

3.4.2 Education and Family Structure Matters

In this section, we look at the effect of education and family structure on the work of married women aged 15-49. We focus on married women because married women constitute about 65 percent of the urban female workforce within 15-49 years and this allows us to investigate the interactions between husband's work and education and the women's propensity to work. The workforce structure of married women differs from the total women workforce in urban areas, for example, the share of salaried workers among married women is lower (35.8 percent) than total women (47.4 percent).

13 *In a study on industrial areas in Delhi by Sumangala Damodaran, Sonal Sharma and Eesha Kunduri, 77 female workers (24 home-based workers and 53 factory workers) were surveyed in 2013-14. Their median monthly earnings (not wages) was 1400 rupees, ranging from a minimum of 200 to a maximum of 3000 rupees, for home-based workers compared to 4000 rupees for factory workers, ranging between 3000 to 5000 rupees (private communication from Eesha Kunduri).*

FIGURE 3.14 FWFP BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILES

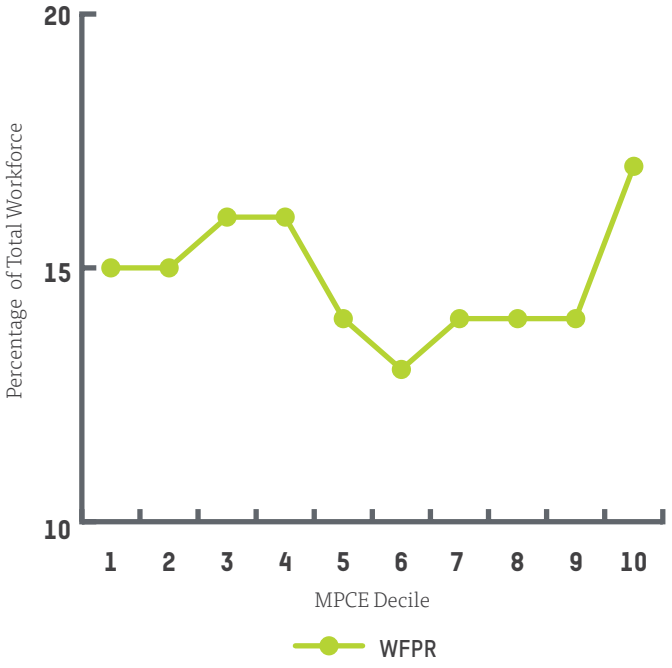


FIGURE 3.15 SHARE OF SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILES

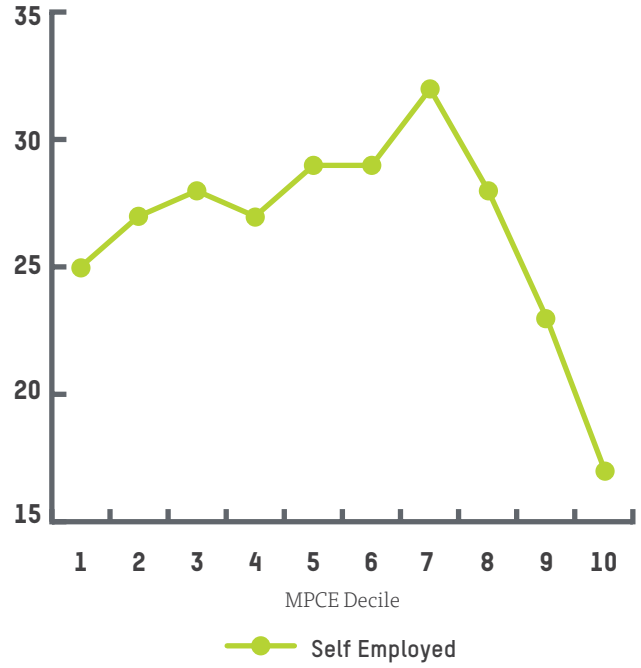


FIGURE 3.16 SHARE OF UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS AND CASUAL WORKERS BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILES

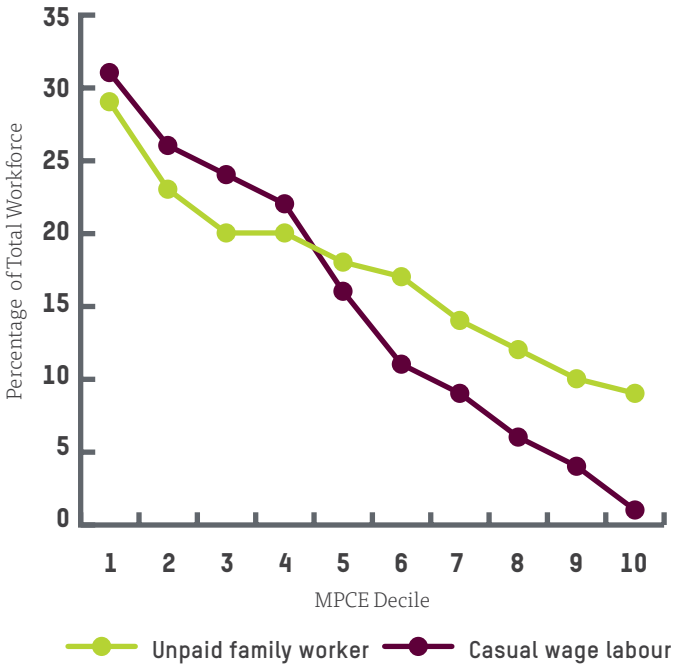
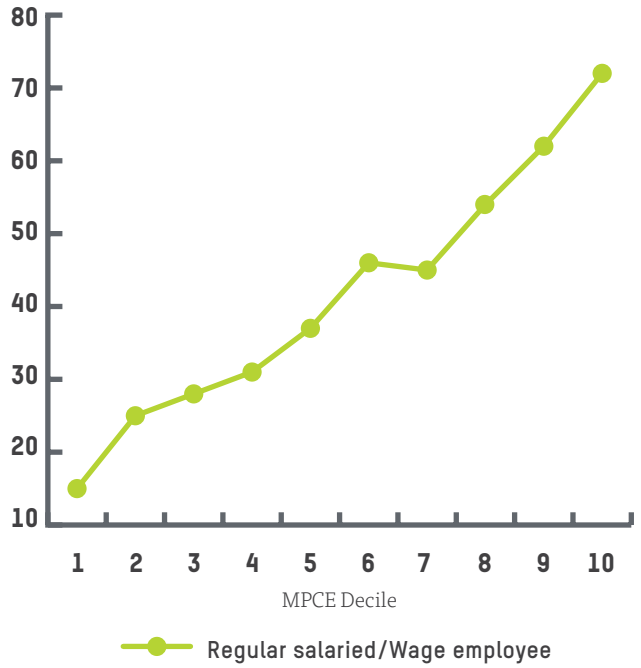


FIGURE 3.17 SHARE OF SALARIED WOMEN BY CONSUMPTION QUINTILES



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

Box 3.4: Costs and Benefits of Multiple employers: Domestic work in India

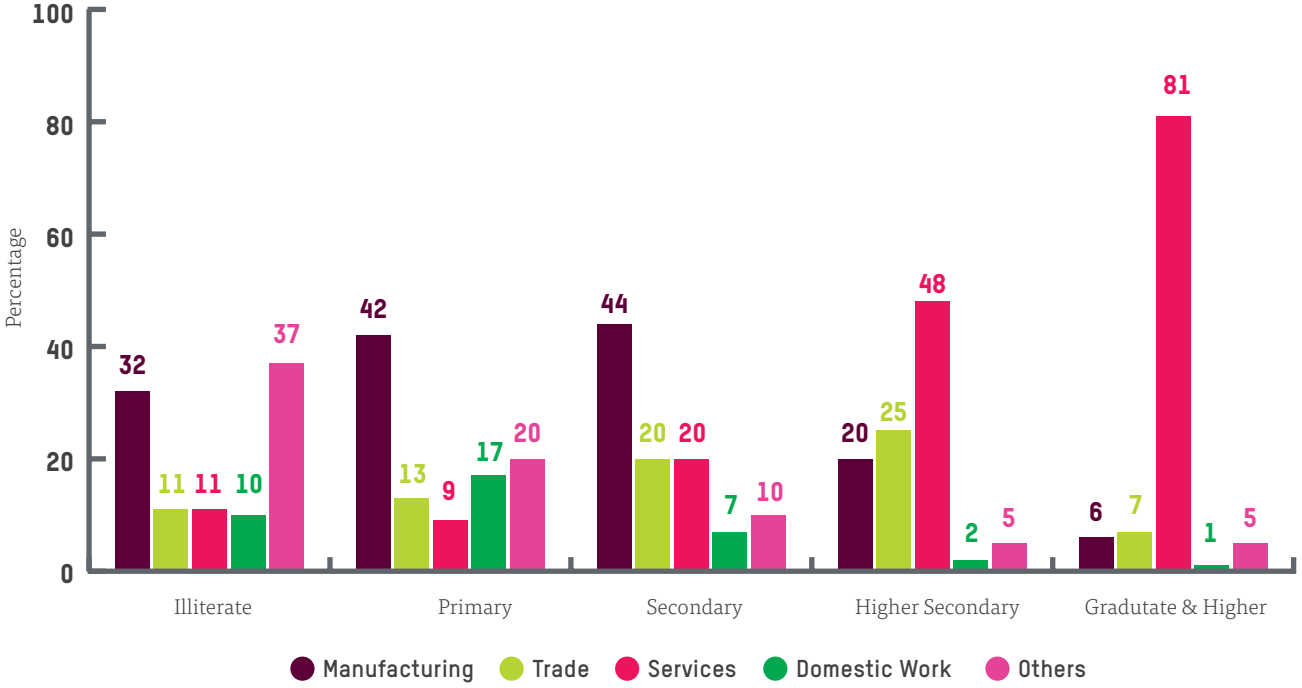
According to the Census, domestic work ranks fifth among the occupations employing women, accounting for 4.7 percent of the work force. Also, women comprise over 80 percent of the workers in this sector. Many of these workers are employed in multiple households (Neetha 2019, Neetha and Palriwala 2011). In their sample of 500 workers in Kolkata, Qayum and Ray (2003) found that 77 percent of the workers were part-timers. In the IHDS-II data also, 60 percent of domestic workers are part-time. While this work is 'part-time' from the employers' point of view, implying that each worker spends limited time in each household. For the workers, however, the total number of hours spent in multiple households could amount to a full working day or even more (Neetha and Palriwala 2011). Such 'part-time work is both more unstable and more flexible.' Neetha and Palriwala (2011: 108). It carries the risk of arbitrary dismal and unlike older arrangements for family retainers, no living arrangements are provided (Neetha 2019). Employers prefer the arrangement because it allows them to hire multiple workers for various needs, such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, etc. (Neetha 2019). From the workers' perspective too, part-time domestic work grants relatively greater autonomy, bargaining power and flexibility (Ray and Qayum 2010; Neetha and Palriwala 2011). For example, workers can return to their homes within the day to take care of domestic responsibilities, particularly childcare (Neetha and Palriwala 2011) . Workers are not tied to a single employer, and 'no one employer can hope to command their full attention and loyalty' (Qayum and Ray 2003: 533).

In urban areas, manufacturing, services, trade and domestic work (see Box 3.4) comprise 81 percent of the married women workforce. Within these four key sectors, increasing education leads to a change in industrial composition of work. For example, only 20 percent women with secondary schooling are employed in services but this share increases to 81 percent for women with graduate degrees (Figure 3.18). The opposite relationship can be observed for labour intensive manufacturing work, where the share of less educated women is higher.

3.5 RELATIONSHIP WITH EDUCATION OF HUSBAND

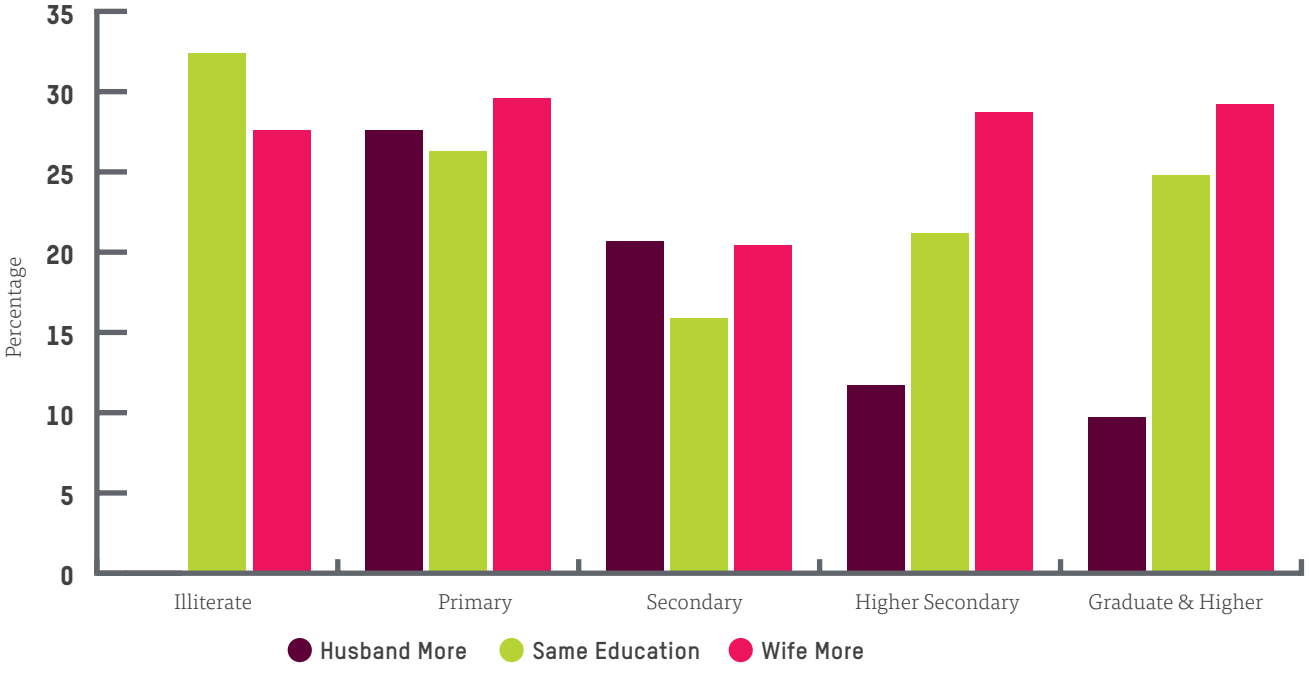
The education level of the wife in relation to the husband matters. Increased education of married women in comparison to their husbands leads to an increase in work force participation. While higher education women increases their likelihood of being in salaried jobs, the share of such jobs in the total work of women is even higher if women are more educated than their husbands. On the other hand, if the husbands are more educated than wives, then the wife is more likely to own a business or work as an unpaid family worker (Figure 3.19 and 3.20) – two-thirds of whom are home-based.

FIGURE 3.18 INDUSTRY OF WORK BY EDUCATION OF MARRIED WOMEN (15-49 YRS.)



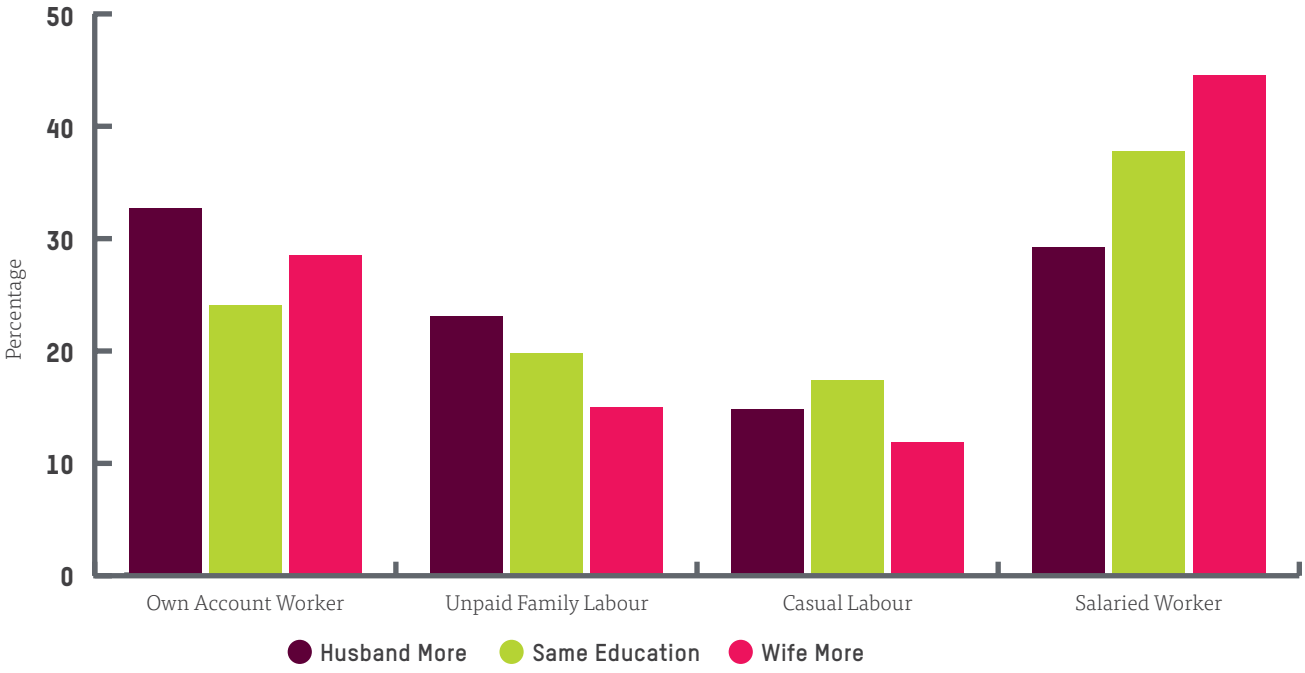
Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

FIGURE 3.19 FWFP BY HUSBAND'S EDUCATION



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

FIGURE 3.20 NATURE OF WORK BY HUSBAND'S EDUCATION



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

3.6 RELATIONSHIP WITH HUSBAND'S INDUSTRY OF WORK

The nature and industry of jobs where married women are engaged in urban areas depends a lot on their husbands' industry of work. Urban married women are much more likely to work in the same sector as their husbands (Table 3.3), and the share of women working in their husband's sector to total women in that sector is usually 3-6 times of the share of that sector to total women workforce[14]. In the case of most of the sectors, women who do not work in their husband's sector are mainly distributed in labour intensive manufacturing and services, and if these three are added, it constitutes over 80 percent to 90 percent of working women across various sectors of working men. It can be observed that only wives of transport and construction workers have a somewhat more diversified job profile, and are not concentrated in these three sectors. However, the share of women working in transport sector is only 0.4 percent of the total urban female workforce.[15]

14 We do not present this ratio for mining and electricity, gas and water supply, where there are very few women workers.

15 Age-specific estimates, available on request show that older wives are less likely to be working with husbands in manufacturing, while younger wives are more likely to be working in the same sector of their husbands, if the husbands are engaged in services.

TABLE 3.3 ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MARRIED WOMEN AND THEIR HUSBAND'S INDUSTRY OF WORK

WIFE \ HUSBAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	TOTAL	RATIO
A	75%	20%	4%	4%	6%	13%	4%	6%	4%	2%	12.1%	6
B	0%	31%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0.2%	..
C	12%	12%	76%	27%	14%	19%	18%	29%	13%	3%	26.0%	3
D	0%	0%	3%	33%	0%	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	5.4%	6
E	0%	12%	0%	1%	41%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1.1%	36
F	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	31%	2%	2%	1%	1%	5.4%	6
G	4%	8%	3%	5%	4%	6%	44%	10%	5%	6%	13.3%	3
H	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0.4%	5
I	6%	11%	9%	26%	33%	14%	15%	30%	69%	34%	27.6%	3
J	1%	6%	3%	4%	0%	11%	13%	16%	5%	54%	8.5%	6
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*
Note- *A: Agriculture, B: Mining, C: Labour Intensive Manufacturing, D: Other Manufacturing, E: Electricity, Gas & Water Supply, F: Construction, G: Trade, H: Transport, I: Services, J: Domestic Work*
**Ratio refers to ratio of the share of women in same sector as their husbands to share of sector to total women workforce*

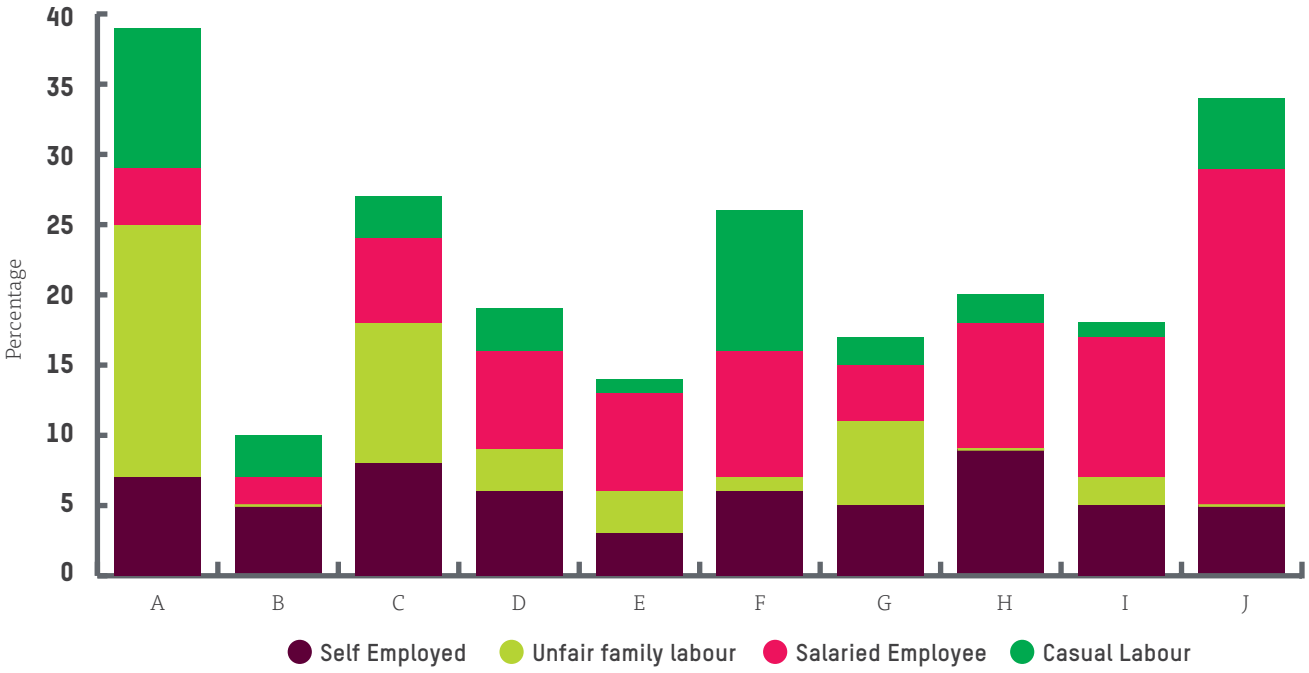
The nature of work undertaken by married women also depends largely on the industry where the husband works. Working wives are more likely to be unpaid workers in the family business in case the husband works in labour intensive manufacturing near home or in a trade or service business. However, in case of trade, if the husband does not own the trade business but works as a salaried wage worker then the wife can also be a wage worker or can run a small business herself. Similarly, if the husband works as a wage worker in the service sector, the wife is more likely to be a wage worker in the same sector (Figure 3.21).

Thus, not only does education of the woman matter, it also matters how it interacts with the education of their husband. Furthermore, women are much more likely to be in the same industry as their husbands.

3.6.1 Children Matter

Finally, we look at the effect of children on FWFP. Given the nature of survey data, it is not easy to check the effect of children on women's workforce participation. We approach this in two ways: the first one is through an indirect measure in which the urban households surveyed by the NSS is divided into two groups: households

FIGURE 3.21 FWFP OF MARRIED WOMEN AND NATURE OF WORK OF WIVES BY INDUSTRY OF WORK OF HUSBAND



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*
Note: *A: Agriculture, B: Mining, C: Labour Intensive Manufacturing, D: Other Manufacturing, E: Electricity, Gas & Water Supply, F: Construction, G: Trade, H: Transport, I: Services, J: Domestic Work*

with at least one child below 5 years of age and all other households. Across these two kind of households, the difference in workforce participation of married and unmarried women (aged 25-44 years) are compared. The share of unmarried women living in a household with a child is 0.8 percent to total urban women in the selected age-group, and the share of married women in such households is 58.8 percent. In households without such a child, the share of unmarried women is 4.9 percent to total urban women, while it is 35.5 percent in case of married women.

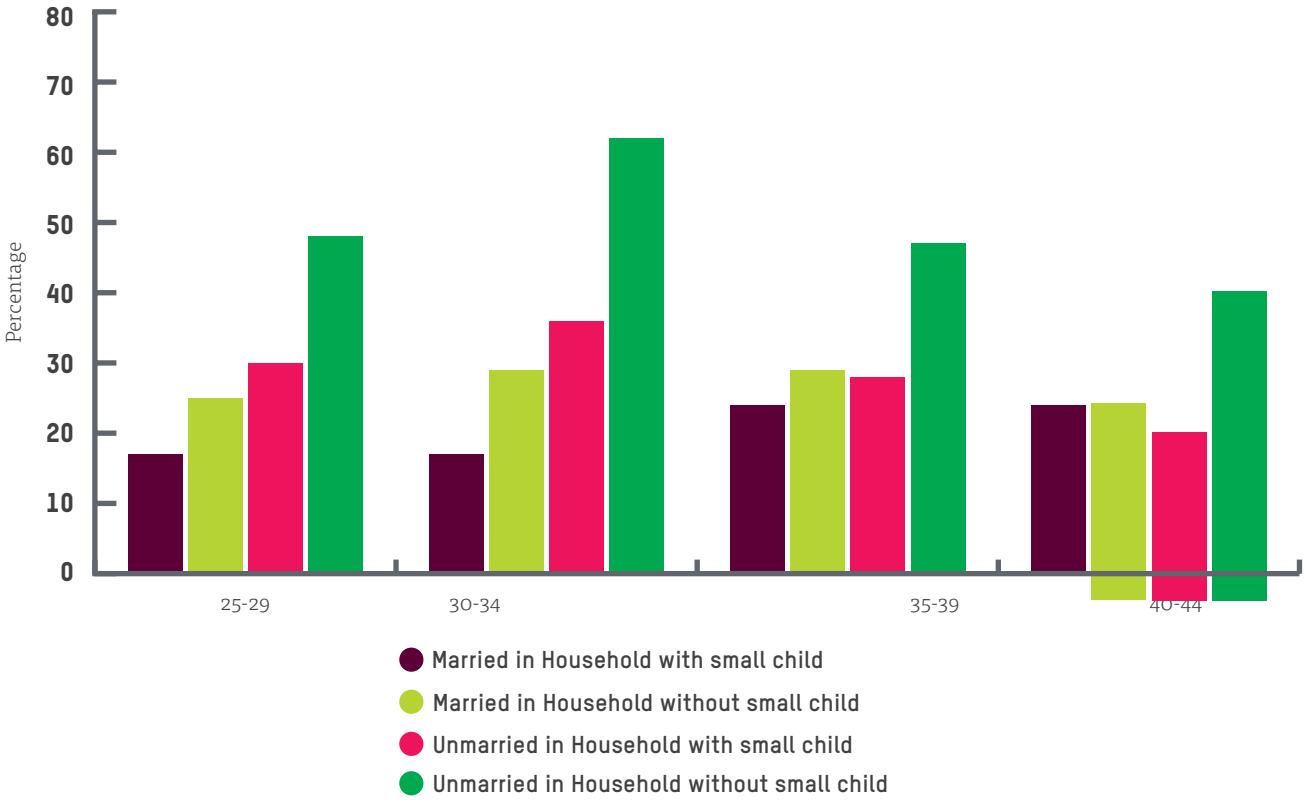
Results show that women are more likely to work in households that do not have a child, and such likelihood is more for unmarried women in those households (Figure 3.22). The workforce participation of married women in households with a child is the least, followed by married women in households without a child, and thereafter (younger) unmarried women in households with a child and unmarried women in household without a child. This is suggestive of the dual burden of marriage and childbearing on workforce participation.

Unlike the NSS which does not allow to map every child in the household with its mother, IHDS-II survey allows an exact match of the mother and child. Hence, a more direct approach is taken to ask whether workforce participation is affected if any woman has a child below 6 years, and between 7 to 14 years. The 0-6 years children are

taken as a separate group because they are most likely the children of women who have given birth to a child between the previous and recent round of IHDS. However, unlike NSS, the IHDS results does not show any change in overall FWFP across the women who has such a child, but there is a small tendency to shift from full-time work to more part-time or occasional work for those women, and more so for women who have a child aged 0-6 years and have probably given birth over the survey interval (Figure 3.23).

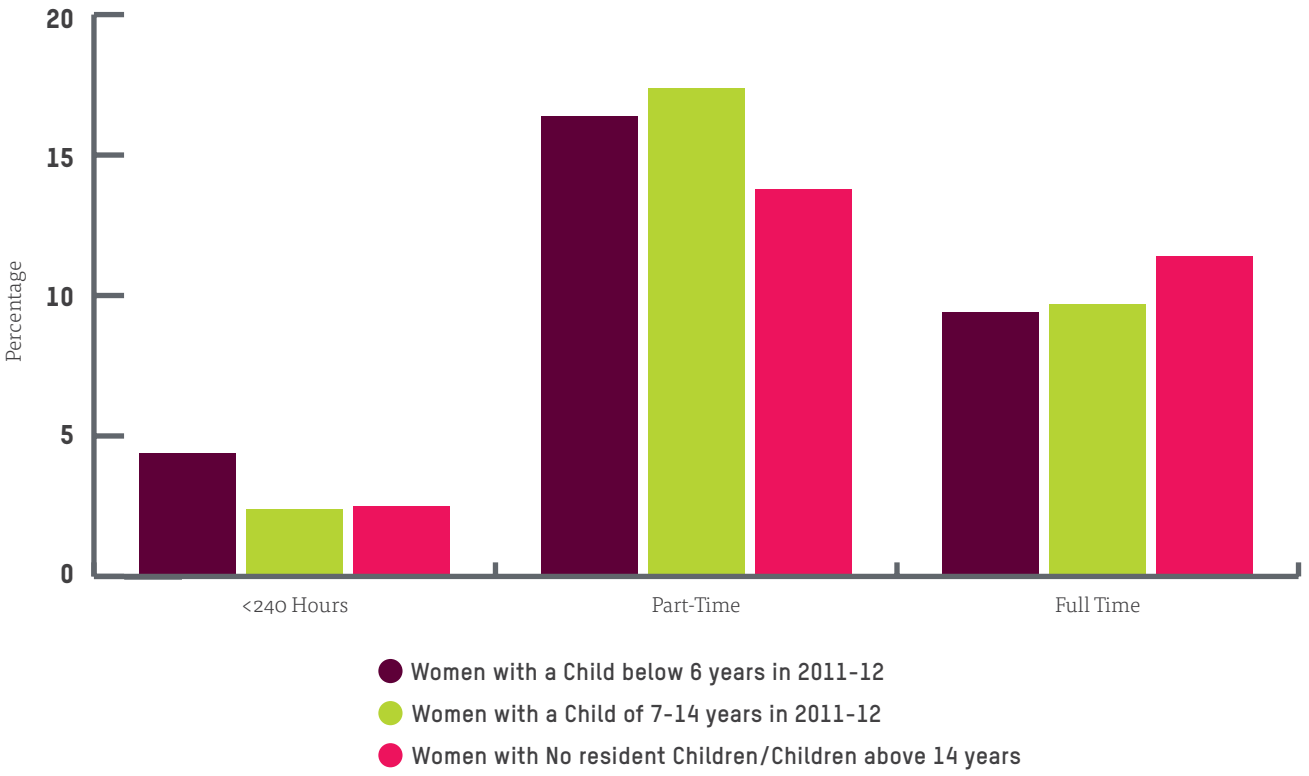
Care work for other family members also plays a role in determining whether a woman will work. However, at this stage, empirical studies, such as Sarkar, et al. 2019, seem to indicate that the presence of an older family member does not lead to a statistically significant drop in FWFP. This could be because such family members could take over child care duties, which partially counteracts the effort involved in caring for them. This issue is discussed in more detail in the chapter on unpaid care work. Also, as the accompanying case study shows, women may choose to stay at home to supervise the upbringing of older school-going children, beyond the usual age of child care provision.

FIGURE 3.22 URBAN FWFP BY TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD IN TERMS OF CHILDREN AND MARITAL STATUS



Source: *Authors' analysis from NSS EUS 2011-12*

FIGURE 3.23 EXTENT OF WORK BY AGE OF CHILD



Source: *Authors' analysis from IHDS-II*

3.7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

3.7.1 What implications do these patterns have for policy?

There is much that has not been explored in this chapter, in particular the issue of patriarchy and how it affects female workforce participation, some of which are addressed in other chapters. Nor must we ignore the role of early education and wider behavioural change campaigns in combating prejudices that emerge from patriarchy. It is important to recognize that as long as these prejudices persist, other measures can only be palliative and not transformative.

While different sources of data do give a conflicting picture of the spatial pattern of women's work in India, they all agree that female work force participation is very low, especially in urban areas. However, much of the analysis and patterns that follow draw upon patterns in the data – which may vary by source. We have tried to use census data wherever possible to limit the sampling differences but it would be useful for policy to reconcile the reasons why estimates of FWFP vary so widely across data sources.

FWFP is also higher in smaller towns as compared to larger cities. This may be due to the differential

skills involved or the ease of navigating a smaller town or the ability to undertake subsidiary work. Policy needs to focus on smaller urban areas to ensure that they stay women-friendly.

If there are jobs, the women will come, but not too many – at least in urban areas. While there is an increase in FWFP if the share of 'female-friendly' industries and services increase, the rise in FWFP is not large. Moreover, while the share of women's work in services as a share of all working women is relatively more compared to men, it is also relatively more in labour intensive manufacturing too. So, policy can adopt a two-pronged approach – to increase employment opportunities in both labour intensive manufacturing and services. However, while it is important to do this, we must recognize that it will at best be a partial solution.

Caste still continues to matter, especially in accessing particular types of work. In part, this can be because of the lack of opportunity to acquire specific skills. Furthermore, within caste, gender may play an exacerbating role, as seen in the health sector. Policies to increase access to hitherto disadvantaged social groups must be sensitive to the fact that gender could be an additional hindrance in overcoming such disadvantage.

To the extent that a rise in income affects FWPR negatively, it reflects cultural preferences that do not perceive an intrinsic benefit in women's work – adopting only an instrumental approach to their employment. Fortunately, the effect in urban India may be weak. However, it is also true that rising income can enable women to give up precarious casual work or unpaid work in home enterprises, and focus on self-employment and regular salaried/ wage work.

It is also the case that more educated women are more likely to be doing regular salaried/ wage work. This is more so the case if she is as well or better educated compared to her husband, when she is more likely to participate in the work force, as well as work at regular salaried/ wage positions. It is important for policy to continue the focus on female education to build on recent gains.

This implies that the importance of policy to increase regular salaried jobs is even greater for encouraging women and especially educated women to join the workforce. Furthermore, investing in women's education would mean that they are more likely to be as well or better educated compared to their husbands and hence more likely to work. The attachment to the husband's industry is perhaps due to the familiarity of the industry and it is important to undertake information dissemination exercises to broaden the choices of such women. As we are now getting more educated entrants into our workforce, it is important to recognize that our manufacturing does not appear geared to leverage the productivity gains that come from such educated workers, as is evident by lack of opportunities for workers who have completed schooling in manufacturing.

Childcare (more than elder care) has been an issue and it does seem to affect both participation and the nature of work (part-time vis-à-vis full time). Even as a variety of policy initiatives (leave, child care facilities, etc.) are implemented, it is important to recognize that the ability to do part-time work may be important in retaining women (and men) in the workforce, post the arrival of a child. Firms may need to explore the possibilities of going beyond full-time work to retain their workforce. As the chapter on unpaid care work argues, location (home based or elsewhere) and timing of work affects the participation of women significantly and in a complicated manner.

3.8 GETTING THE WOMEN IN

There are no silver bullets or simple answers to mitigate the inequality between female and male labour force and workforce participation. Even though there is variation across the country, the participation rates of women in the workforce is low by international standards even in locations where it is relatively high in our context. Yet, it is important to pursue this endeavour because the benefits are many and multi-faceted – ranging from economic advancement to a social environment that is more nurturing and facilitative for all genders, for this inequality is as much as loss for men as it is for others.

Much of what can be done is similar to what is needed to redress other inequalities – the focus on smaller towns, on caste inequities, on increasing jobs in manufacturing, on ensuring that more such jobs have regular wages, etc. The improved educational profile of women has many other benefits – from enabling access to new job markets to enabling more meaningful decision making at home. Similarly, as manufacturing policy creates jobs that can leverage educated workers, educated women may be able to go beyond services in seeking employment opportunity. Yet, in pursuing these paths, it is important to always keep in mind that gender brings its own complexities that add to the inequities brought on by location, by caste and lack of good jobs. If policymakers are sensitive to these nuances, more meaningful progress can be achieved towards equity.

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OUT OF THE LABOUR FORCE

Gayatri and Deepak* Sahni made a conscious decision soon after their first child Divyansh was born. Deepak would continue to work from home for the steel pickling units - making metal washers, and Gayatri would be a stay at home mother. Gayatri had worked as a nurse for nearly 10 years in a government hospital in Gorakhpur, prior to her wedding. Deepak earns Rs 14000 a month. Had Gayatri sought employment her salary would have certainly augmented their household income.

'It is a "small price" to pay to ensure that my children have a better future. The locality that we live in isn't the most conducive for children,' said Gayatri. She says that at some point she did contemplate joining the workforce but the day her son came home with some money, having sold a bottle to a scrap dealer, she dropped the idea. 'Children in the locality, with parents away at work, are left to fend for themselves. Some end up picking waste and selling them for money,' she said. Gayatri and Deepak, with their two sons, live in an eight feet by ten feet, double storeyed house. Her two sons go to private schools in the neighbourhood under the EWS category. They want their sons to have good education and a good job; the older one is an aspiring IAS officer.

While Gayatri is skilled and has stayed out of the workforce voluntarily, women who have a job are always on tenterhooks, ready to be let go whenever there is an employment problem. Not far from Gayatri's house, live Reshma and Kanti. They lost their jobs almost six months ago, when the steel pickling unit[1] they were working in shut down. These units have been under the scanner of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) for a few years now. Steel pickling falls in the list of 'prohibited' industrial activities under the Delhi Master Plan 2021 and DPCC ordered its closure in 2013.[2] The effluents from these are discharged into open drains that ultimately empty into the Yamuna. About 90 units were shut down in just the last few months for violation of pollution norms and those that remained have downsized big time.[3] The first casualty were women.

The gendered aspect of the work is one of the reasons that women are dispensable. Women do not operate the heavy polish machines; it is very heavy and requires a lot of strength. While men are hired for operating furnaces (*bhatti ka kaam*), polish work (*kaarigars*) or in supervisory roles, women are hired for subsidiary, unskilled work

1 *Steel pickling is the process of removing impurities, such as stains and inorganic contaminants, from the metal, often using strong acids.*

2 *http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/steel%20pickling%20units%20NGT%20Delhi.pdf*

3 *https://thewire.in/labour/human-cost-of-quick-fix-air-pollution-control-measures*

such as packing, packaging, and *chaak-mitti* (where the excess polish dust is wiped off the vessel). Child helpers can easily replace them (Krishnan 2015). 'In fact, to cut cost the units also hire the new migrant workers who will agree to work for very little,' explains Sunil, a researcher with the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). Moreover, a study shows that most steel units do not want to employ women as they do not want to take any responsibility for the safety of women workers and avoid any scandal at the workplace (Ibid.).

Reshma and Kanti are hoping for a turnaround. What they are clutching on to are just straws with the sealing drive likely to take away more jobs. But going back to their hometown is not an option.

There are few like Radha from Moradabad, who still has employment in the area. She took up the chaak-mitti work six months ago, when her husband fell ill and was in the hospital for a few months. Radha's husband Raju Singh works in a hosiery company in Jahangirpuri. He corroborates that the number of women have reduced drastically in his unit. 'The orders have reduced. They were in packing and thread cutting, which can be done by men or cheaper labour. Moreover, once the women get pregnant, they leave for a few months. After which they might or might not get their old job, especially if there has been a downsizing.' These units not just flout minimum wages, they do not give any maternity benefits either. Crèches, therefore, are not even in the radar of these units.

A rise in female employment rates to the male level would provide India with more than two hundred million additional workers, making India potentially much richer and well on its way to middle-income status (The Economist 2018). Beyond the obvious economic benefits are the incalculable human ones.

*all names have been changed

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