

CONTINUING GENDER STEREOTYPES OR SIGNS OF CHANGE: OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN OF WOMEN WORKERS¹

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Amidst the increasing number of women workers in India, this paper examines the occupational patterns for ascertaining whether the erstwhile gender stereotypes continue or any signs of change, howsoever meagre, are visible. Based on unit level NSS data, the actual magnitudes and incremental changes in occupational categories in which women are engaged, are analysed in the paper to highlight the gradual transformation visible. These shifts are being witnessed much more in the context of younger, educated urban women.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to identify the occupations in which women workers are concentrated to examine whether any shifts have been experienced over the recent past and the ways in which gendered roles are impacting work profiles. In doing so, it examines three dimensions. Amidst the overall hue and cry that employment has been difficult to come by even in the high-growth regimes, what do the latest figures (NSS, 2004-05) reveal? The first issue relates to whether women's employment has increased and in the ways in which it has. The second issue pertains to the overall shift away from casual to self-employment, and the occupations in which women are employed both as principal and subsidiary workers in the course of this shift. The last issue concerns the incremental change in the number of women workers by occupations in which they work as principal workers along with their relative shares. It needs to be examined whether there has been any change in the gender stereotypes which have predominantly marked the involvement of women in economic activities.

Given the level of population growth, the number of women in the workforce has, in fact, been increasing over time. It is this magnitude of women workers in actual numbers, which this paper focuses on. Recent employment statistics based on the quinquennial thick rounds of the NSS reveal an upward trend in the labour force and workforce participation of women. However, the analysis over a longer period does not reflect any remarkable change in women's work participation rates. In order to provide insights into whether any distinct and sharp changes or shifts have been witnessed over time in the kind of work undertaken by women, the occupations that provide employment for women as principal workers and incremental changes therein are examined here on the basis of unit level NSS data.

Section II, following the introduction, deals with the employment trends for over a decade along with the variations by age, marital status and location. The occupational

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distribution and share of employment within each occupational category is discussed in Section III. It also highlights the magnitude of women workers by occupations calculated as an incremental measure over time. Finally, the conclusions highlight the changes noted in the margins towards the availability of better employment options and how these are being opted for by young, educated, urban women and hopes for similar inroads being made for rural women with better education and expanding chances for salaried employment in future.

II. TRENDS IN EMPLOYMENT

Approximately 25 million women have been estimated to have been added to the workforce (in terms of both principal and subsidiary status)² during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05. The number of women workers approximately increased by about 7 million in urban areas over this ten-year period, while in rural areas, the number of women workers increased by 17 million. The bulk of these additional women were reported to be principal status workers, with only 3 million (that is, one-eighth only) being incremental subsidiary status women workers. The incremental additions during this ten-year period comprise nearly one-third of the urban women workers in 2004-05.

The gradual upward tendency reflected in the employment over the last quinquennial period of 1999-2000 to 2004-05 could have been interpreted as the overcoming of the jobless nature of growth in the Indian economy.³ However, some have welcomed this as the inevitable outcome of the high growth rates experienced, which are bound to set in sooner or later, while other sceptics are not yet convinced of the shift, viewing it over the longer time periods and observing not-so-significant alterations in the employment trends.⁴ The latter set of researchers has further indicated that most of the additional employment is perhaps that of women as subsidiary workers with very marginal gains as principal workers (Mazumdar and Sarkar, 2008; Narain, 2006).⁵

The observations based on statistical findings that are noteworthy here, especially in the context of women workers, is that the magnitude of women workers in sheer numbers has clearly gone up over time. Some of them have also entered job profiles that have the potential for challenging the stereotypical gender roles. The kinds of employment that women are undertaking, especially in urban areas and metropolises have a demonstration effect for others as well, in terms of changing the aspirations of many young entrants into the labour markets, while also bringing forth alterations in the perceptions and attitudes of their guardians. Society also seems to be receiving such changes well, albeit with some hiccups in certain domains.

Given its large population size, India continues to wield a distinct demographic advantage, which it will do so for some years to come. This implies that relatively larger proportions of the population are joining the workforce. The increase noted in the women's participation is, however, not only an outcome of the increasing availability of persons to undertake work and their willingness to do so, but also partly due to the enhancement of work opportunities. The decline in labour force in the 1999-2000 Round of the NSS was also noted for the withdrawal

effect due to poor labour demand conditions. The increase in both the labour force and unemployment trends, especially among the urban women and educated youth, respectively, in the 2004-05 NSS round is clearly an indication of the labour market demand signals and the exercise of choice by young educated women to supply their labour services.

A large mass of women remains occupied in the primary sector, especially in the rural areas as cultivators and farmers more than agricultural labourers. This trend continues, with the additional factor being that the relatively older women in the post-reproductive years are concentrated in agriculture and not the younger women or men for that matter. The latter are, in fact, shifting out of agriculture, which is leading to the feminisation of agriculture (referred to as ‘creeping feminisation’ by Srivastava and Srivastava, 2010), in that women’s share is increasing though in actual magnitude, the total number of women registered a decline over the period 1993-94 to 2004-05.

Women are interestingly shifting into manufacturing as well as services. A majority of these jobs are informal, low-paying and offer no social security benefits, though some of them are actually regular employment. Casual workers have been on the decline and a shift into self-employment has been noted (Rustagi, 2007). For women, this signifies a shift away from the paid to the unpaid employment categories and may not necessarily result in economic empowerment. An exploration of the occupations provides further insights into the nature of employment that women are undertaking.

The labour force figures reflect the higher share of the population that is willing to or already working. This increase across all categories is clear from the period 1993-94 to 2004-05, except for rural males (see Table 1). This exception too does not hold if the comparison is made across the last quinquennial period from 1999-2000 to 2004-05.⁶

Table 1
Labour Force Participation Rates and Worker Population Ratios—India
(%) (Usual Status (UPSS) and Principal Status (UPS))

| | UPSS | | | UPS | | |
|---|---------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | 1993-94 | 1999-2000 | 2004-05 | 1993-94 | 1999-2000 | 2004-05 |
| <i>Labour Force Participation Rates</i> | | | | | | |
| Rural Male | 56.1 | 54 | 55.5 | 54.9 | 53.3 | 54.6 |
| Rural Female | 33.1 | 30.2 | 33.3 | 23.7 | 23.5 | 24.9 |
| Urban Male | 54.3 | 54.2 | 57 | 53.8 | 53.9 | 56.6 |
| Urban Female | 16.4 | 14.7 | 17.8 | 13.2 | 12.6 | 14.8 |
| <i>Worker Population Ratios</i> | | | | | | |
| Rural Male | 55.3 | 53.1 | 54.6 | 53.8 | 52.2 | 53.5 |
| Rural Female | 32.8 | 29.9 | 32.7 | 23.4 | 23.1 | 24.2 |
| Urban Male | 52.1 | 51.8 | 54.9 | 51.3 | 51.3 | 54.1 |
| Urban Female | 15.5 | 13.9 | 16.6 | 12.1 | 11.7 | 13.5 |

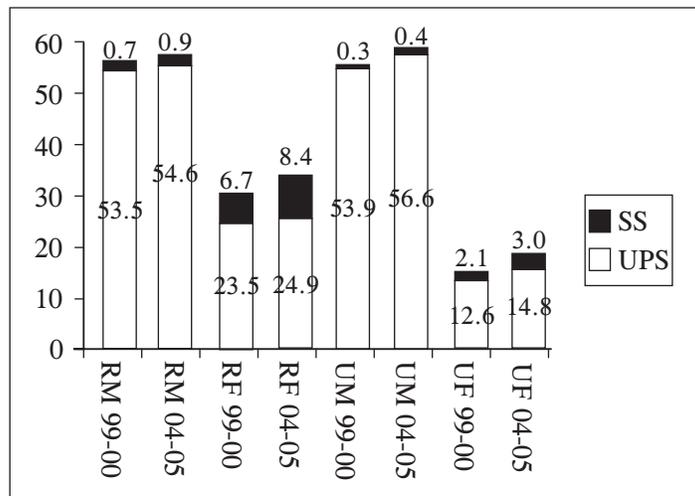
Source: NSS, various rounds.

Another argument made in the literature regarding women’s employment is that changes over time are the outcome of subsidiary status employment. Therefore, in other words, an

increase in women's work participation occurs if the number of subsidiary status women workers increase and vice-versa. To what extent is this so?

A substantial share of the subsidiary status workers are women and that too in rural agriculture. Agricultural activities are significantly influenced by seasonality and shifts in production decisions can affect the labour demand of paid and unpaid labour substantially. This has been aptly displayed in the literature in the context of pulse and soybean cultivation, for instance (see Sarkar, 2008; also Chand, 2000). Earlier too, researchers have noted the higher demand for women's labour in the paddy-cultivating areas of south and east India as compared to the north or west. However, in the context of the increase experienced in the magnitude of women workers over time, if the changes in the principal and subsidiary status workers are seen separately, the picture for urban women is different, though a large share of the increase in rural areas is explained by the subsidiary status workers, (Rustagi, 2007). In urban areas, the increase in the number of principal status workers is greater than that of the subsidiary workers (see Figure 1). While the principal status

Figure 1
Labour Force Participation Rate (in %)



labour force for urban women was 13 per cent in 1999-2000, which increased up to 15 per cent in 2004-05, the subsidiary status labour force moved from 2 per cent to 3 per cent over the same period.

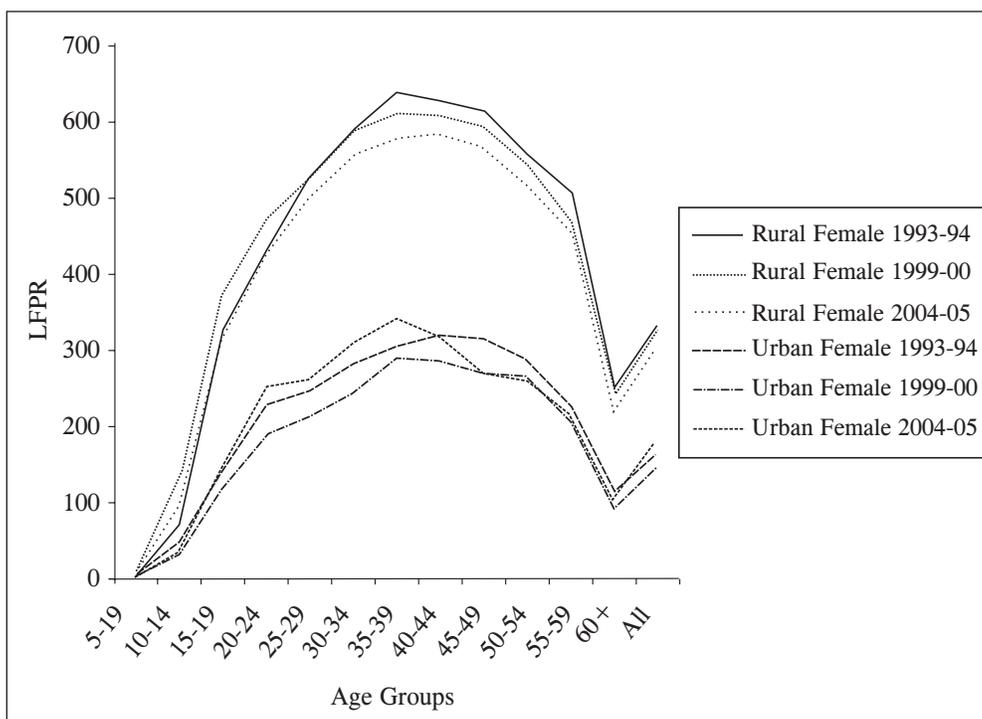
The number of rural females has risen from 30 per cent in 1999-2000 to 33 per cent in 2004-05. Of the 33 per cent rural females in 2004-05, 8.4 per cent are only subsidiary workers. However, it may be noted that subsidiary workers accounted for 6.7 per cent of the total in 1999-2000. Therefore, the labour force in both principal and subsidiary status has increased to some extent over time (see Figure 1).

1. Age-wise Variations

An examination of the age-wise variations over the last six-year period highlights the shifts in the labour force participation of women. While there was a decline in the lower age cohorts of up to 14-year olds from 1999-2000 to 2004-05 for both males and females, irrespective of location, the situation changed after that. The decline in the age group of 5-14 years is a direct outcome of the emphasis on getting every child in this age group into school under the mission programme of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The decline of children in the labour force is also an offshoot of this increase in the school enrolments for both males and females. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, which was finally passed in 2009, ought to reinforce this trend of ensuring that all children at least up to the age of 14 years are enrolled in school.

Figure 2 shows that while the labour force participation rate (LFPR) for women in urban and rural areas has been increasing among women in their thirties, it peaks for women in the age group of 35-39 years. However, while the rural women join the labour force at a later age during the post-reproductive period, that is, 35-59 years, in the urban areas, the number of younger women, that is those in the age group of 20-44 years, seems to be increasing in the labour force. This could be seen as an outcome of the higher educational pursuits and entry at a young age into labour markets among urban girls, which also works towards delaying the age at the time of marriage. This is a reflection of the positive outcome

Figure 2
Women LFPR over Time and Location



of educational access and its associated opening up of spaces for negotiation along with the changing aspirations for women.

2. Never Married versus the Married Women

The female work participation rate among the currently married women is quite high as compared to those who are never married, irrespective of the women being from rural or urban areas. Across the age groups in rural areas, currently married women reportedly display a higher work participation rate as compared to the never married women, who constitute a small proportion of about 14 per cent. Srivastava and Srivastava (2010) reiterate this point based on the odds ratio measure. They found that older women have a higher probability of participating in agricultural work (*ibid.*, p. 56). The importance for the currently married women on bearing and rearing of children in their active reproductive years constrains their labour market participation as principal workers. This appears to be stronger in the rural areas, where the fertility rates and average household sizes are higher than in urban areas. Larger shares of subsidiary workers are added on with age, from the younger to the older age cohorts, in rural areas (see Table 2).

The situation in urban areas is different with the participation rates being higher among the 'never married' groups in all age cohorts except the 60-plus category. Another interesting element is the fact that most of the women among the 'never married' category, who are in the labour market, are principal workers or rather the proportion of subsidiary workers is relatively higher more among the married women. This is especially so among the 45-60 year old women, who have remained unmarried. The working women among this set are all principal workers.

Table 2
Female WPR across Never Married and Currently Married Women

| Age Cohort | UPS | | UPSS | |
|---|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Never Married | Currently Married | Never Married | Currently Married |
| <i>Urban Female Work Participation Rate</i> | | | | |
| 15-24 | 13 | 11 | 17 | 16 |
| 25-34 | 48 | 18 | 51 | 23 |
| 35-44 | 53 | 23 | 56 | 29 |
| 45-60 | 38 | 18 | 38 | 22 |
| 60+ | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Total | 16 | 18 | 20 | 22 |
| <i>Rural Female Work Participation Rate</i> | | | | |
| 15-24 | 22 | 28 | 32 | 40 |
| 25-34 | 43 | 38 | 51 | 54 |
| 35-44 | 42 | 46 | 51 | 62 |
| 45-60 | 37 | 41 | 41 | 55 |
| 60+ | 11 | 21 | 11 | 29 |
| Total | 24 | 38 | 33 | 52 |

Source: Calculated from unit level records of Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 61st Round, 2004-05.

A bulk of the workers during 2004-05 was in the age group of 15-44 years, with close to three-fourth of all women workers who are usually employed being in this age bracket in the rural (71 per cent) and urban (74 per cent) areas. The number of women workers in the relatively older age groups of 45-59 years and above 60 years has marginally declined in 2004-05 from the earlier two NSS rounds in urban areas, further accentuating the phenomenon of induction of a larger number of younger urban women into the workforce. The situation in rural areas, however, does not display such a decline. Is the lowering of the labour force participation rates in the 45-60 year age group an offshoot of the voluntary retirement scheme, especially for the urban women who are educated and in formal sector employment or the fact that adult children are able to contribute to the household income by joining the labour force, as in the case of the relatively poorer rural households?

What are the areas wherein these new jobs, which are absorbing women's labour supplies, are being created? A detailed analysis of the occupational distribution and increases over time in women's employment, based on calculations using unit level NSS data (2004-05, 61st Round), is presented in the following section.

III. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION AND SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT

The occupational profile portrays a different picture, especially when a detailed disaggregation is undertaken to examine changes reported in the one-⁷ and two-digit level occupational categories.⁸ Through a detailed analysis of the occupational categories, the paper examines the categories that have generated additional employment to the magnitude of 50,000 UPS workers or more for the country during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05. Since the numbers alone are inadequate, the analysis here also measures the share of women workers within any given occupation as compared to men in order to identify the jobs in which women are engaged in the labour market.

Since male employment is much higher (and this is generally so in most occupations), the select occupations wherein women constitute a significant share have also been identified. This shows tremendous variation across rural-urban locations. Relative shifts or changes in the male workforce participation in specific occupations may also alter the share of women workers in these occupations. Further, the occupational groups which have recorded a relatively higher share of women workers have also been identified. At the one-digit level, these are agriculture and the related professions of farming, fishing, hunting, and logging, among others; service workers; clerical workers; and professional and technical workers. This increase can be noted in both rural and urban areas over the decade 1993-94 to 2004-05 (see Table 3).

Growth rates alone are not adequate for undertaking an analysis since even a low magnitude that experiences a big change carries the risk of showing higher growth rates. For instance, in rural areas, the number of painters as a category has increased probably due to the inclusion of the new category of village painters who work on wall and clay objects. This inclusion may have resulted in a spurt of workers under this code, leading to a phenomenal increase in these workers in growth terms but not in terms of the actual numbers, which implies that this is not a very significant category in terms of the focus in this paper.

Table 3
Share of Employment within Each Occupational Category

| <i>UPSS Occupation</i> | <i>1993-94</i> | | <i>2004-05</i> | |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> | <i>Male</i> | <i>Female</i> |
| <i>Rural</i> | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 79.8 | 20.2 | 71.1 | 28.9 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 70.4 | 29.6 | 77.4 | 22.6 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 92.1 | 7.9 | 89.1 | 10.9 |
| Sales Workers | 81.9 | 18.1 | 83.7 | 16.3 |
| Service Workers | 67.5 | 32.5 | 65.2 | 34.8 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunter, Loggers and Related Workers | 60.6 | 39.4 | 58.0 | 42.0 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 75.6 | 24.4 | 77.7 | 22.3 |
| Total | 64.1 | 35.9 | 63.4 | 36.6 |
| <i>Urban</i> | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 69.5 | 30.5 | 66.2 | 33.8 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 88.2 | 11.8 | 87.5 | 12.5 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 86.5 | 13.5 | 83.6 | 16.4 |
| Sales Workers | 89.3 | 10.7 | 88.7 | 11.3 |
| Service Workers | 66.4 | 33.6 | 60.7 | 39.3 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunter, Loggers and Related Workers | 57.6 | 42.4 | 55.2 | 44.8 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 82.9 | 17.1 | 83.1 | 16.9 |
| Total | 78.8 | 21.2 | 78.3 | 21.7 |
| <i>Total</i> | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 74.2 | 25.8 | 68.5 | 31.5 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 81.7 | 18.3 | 83.7 | 16.3 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 88.4 | 11.6 | 85.5 | 14.5 |
| Sales Workers | 85.7 | 14.3 | 86.3 | 13.7 |
| Service Workers | 66.9 | 33.1 | 62.7 | 37.3 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunter, Loggers and Related Workers | 60.4 | 39.6 | 57.9 | 42.1 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 78.9 | 21.1 | 79.9 | 20.1 |
| Total | 67.1 | 32.9 | 66.7 | 33.3 |

Source: Calculated from unit level data, 50th and 61st Rounds.

The highest growth rate experienced for women's employment in India over the period 1993-94 to 2004-05 is for the NCO group 37, that is, transport conductors and guards (see Appendix Table 1). It has grown at an annual compound growth rate of 32 per cent.

Computing machine operators constitutes the next occupation, with a 13 per cent growth in women's employment. It is the highest occupational group for urban areas, wherein the growth is 17 per cent per annum.

In rural areas, however, the occupational group registering the highest growth is that of elected and legislative officials, a direct offshoot of the reservation policy post the 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments, whereby 30 per cent of the seats at all rungs of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions (PRIs) are reserved for women.⁹ The focus here is more on the actual magnitude of women workers, which highlights the occupations in which women are involved in larger numbers.

1. Professional and Technical Workers, Especially Teachers

The category of professional, technical and related workers has reported an increase in the share of women as compared to men during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05, in both rural and urban areas. This gain is a direct outcome of the increasing educational qualifications among women, as a larger part of these technical workers are engaged in the IT and ITES-related jobs such as computing machine operators, while some women are also involved in the scientific, medical and engineering occupations. This signifies a very positive change in terms of the increase in the number of women UPS workers over time in the 0-1 NCO of professional and technical workers. This is occurring in both rural and urban areas (see Tables 3 and 4).

Female teachers, especially at the primary school level, constitute another prominent occupation. The increasing emphasis of ensuring adequate female teachers at the elementary levels, with efforts being made to universalise eight years of schooling for every child under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in order to encourage the enrolment and retention of girls in school, is reflected in the magnitude and growth of employment witnessed in this occupation. Teachers constitute over 3 per cent of the entire female workforce and 11 per cent of the female workforce in urban areas (2004-05 figures).

The gender composition in the profession of teaching is more equal in urban areas, where more than 50 per cent of the teachers are women (the corresponding figure for rural areas is 34 per cent). The increase over time in the occupational category is significant—with more than 12 lakh women joining as teachers at different levels—over the period 1993-94 to 2004-05. Of this additional workforce over time, close to 8 lakh are employed in rural areas. The efforts to improve girls' enrolment and retention in rural areas, where wide gender disparities are seen in terms of educational attainments, are reflected in the 7 per cent per annum growth rate of teachers in rural India.

A very large number of the women in this profession are primary school teachers, and their share significantly exceeds those of men among the pre-primary school teachers. Women constituted 86 per cent of all pre-primary school teachers in India in 2004-05. A similar situation can be noted for craft teachers, 80 per cent of whom are women, though the actual numbers concerned are not so large. This is one occupation wherein the demand for jobs is certainly expected to increase after the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, and the stipulated student-teacher norms, which would immediately thereafter create a huge gap in the demand and supply of teaching personnel. The preference for female teachers for promoting the enrolment and retention of girls in school is an added factor.

Table 4
Occupational Distribution of UPSS Women Workers

| UPSS Occupation | 1993- | 2004- | 1993- | 2004- | 1993- | 2004- |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| | 94 | 05 | 94 | 05 | 94 | 05 |
| | Male | Male | Female | Female | Total | Total |
| RURAL | | | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 2.3 | 2.5 | 1.0 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 2.2 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 0.9 | 1.9 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.6 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 1.7 | 1.6 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Sales Workers | 5.1 | 6.2 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 4.0 | 4.7 |
| Service Workers | 2.0 | 2.3 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.3 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers and Related Workers | 74.1 | 66.3 | 86.3 | 83.2 | 78.5 | 72.5 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 13.9 | 19.1 | 8.0 | 9.5 | 11.8 | 15.5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| URBAN | | | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 7.4 | 7.8 | 12.1 | 14.3 | 8.4 | 9.2 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 6.5 | 10.2 | 3.2 | 5.3 | 5.8 | 9.2 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 10.1 | 8.1 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 9.2 | 7.6 |
| Sales Workers | 18.9 | 20.0 | 8.5 | 9.2 | 16.7 | 17.6 |
| Service Workers | 7.6 | 7.8 | 14.4 | 18.2 | 9.1 | 10.1 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers and Related Workers | 9.1 | 6.2 | 24.9 | 18.1 | 12.4 | 8.8 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 40.4 | 39.8 | 31.0 | 29.2 | 38.4 | 37.5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| TOTAL | | | | | | |
| Professional, Technical and Related Workers | 3.5 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 3.6 | 3.2 | 3.8 |
| Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers | 2.3 | 4.1 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 3.3 |
| Clerical and Related Workers | 3.7 | 3.3 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.8 | 2.6 |
| Sales Workers | 8.4 | 9.8 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 6.6 | 7.6 |
| Service Workers | 3.3 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 4.5 | 3.3 | 4.0 |
| Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers and Related Workers | 58.4 | 50.7 | 78.2 | 73.8 | 64.9 | 58.4 |
| Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers | 20.3 | 24.4 | 11.1 | 12.3 | 17.3 | 20.4 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Calculated from unit level data, 50th and 61st Rounds.

2. Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers

A similar increase to that of teachers is noted in the case of administrative, executive and managerial occupations, mostly in urban areas, where their share is seen to be improving.

In other words, the number of rural men taking up these jobs has increased proportionately to a larger extent than that of women workers. In most sectors, there has been a change in the nomenclature of clerical workers, shifting them to managerial and executive posts, especially in urban private sector employment; and a large number of males are also taking up these jobs. Thus, in effect, the share of males is increasing among the NCO 2 category and declining in the case of clerical jobs, resulting in an increase in the share of women in clerical occupations, though their share shows no improvement in the case of administrative, executive and managerial occupations.

The number of women merchants and shopkeepers, working proprietors, managers and directors in wholesale and retail trading units (NCO group 22) have also been increasing over time, with over two lakh women UPS workers reporting being engaged in this occupation. This category is prominent for additional employment generation to boost the magnitude of women workers in both rural and urban areas (see Appendix Tables 2 and 3).

Interestingly, women's share as working proprietors, directors and managers in different occupations such as mining, construction, and manufacturing concerns (NCO group 24) as well as other services (NCO group 25) has also been registering an increase over time. This is reported in both rural and urban areas.

3. Sales and Service Workers¹⁰

Women have gained as service workers more than men, especially in urban areas, and their share has increased over time. In the case of the sales worker categories, an increase in the number of both males and females has been witnessed over time, but the increase is higher for males, thereby reducing the share of females in the NCO 4 category, especially in rural areas.

The NCO group 40 relates to trading occupations. For all workers, male and female together, this constitutes the segment of occupational families, which has reported the largest magnitude of increase among the non-agricultural activities. Women as shopkeepers, also involved in wholesale, but predominantly retailing units, constitute another significant employment category that has reported an increase over time. Over three lakh women workers have been added as principal status workers alone, and this figure does not include subsidiary status workers. Although trading activities, especially in retailing, have increased tremendously over the period of study and are visible in urban locations, it is in the rural areas that women workers are involved in this occupation. In urban areas, it is mostly the men who are merchants, wholesale and retail shopkeepers.

The segment of occupations in which women, especially young girls, are most prominently visible in the mushrooming urban retail units, is that of salespersons, shop assistants and related workers (NCO group 43). Again, the increase over time in actual magnitude is much more in urban areas (over 3 lakhs), while it is over one lakh in rural areas as well.

Another occupational segment wherein women have experienced an increase in terms of net additional employment over time (during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05), is that of

hotels and restaurant keepers (NCO group 50), and cooks, waiters, bartenders and related domestic and international workers (NCO 52). Again, there is another set of occupations reporting increases in women's employment in both rural and urban areas. This would include all the small eateries on pavements and highway roads run by self-employed owners as well as the eateries mushrooming in growing number of the malls and shopping complexes/multiplexes.

The one occupation wherein women are predominantly involved in both the urban and rural locations, and which showed an increase of over 11 lakh workers over the period 1993-94 to 2004-05 is that of group 53, that is, maids and other housekeeping service workers (not elsewhere classified). This is the topmost ranking occupation for generating additional employment in urban areas to the magnitude of nearly 8 lakhs. Many of these women workers are interestingly recorded as regular workers as well.

Another related category is that of building caretakers, sweepers and cleaners (NCO group 54), which has registered an additional employment of more than one-and-a-half lakh women UPS workers. Most of this increase in magnitude has been noted in urban areas over the given period 1993-94 to 2004-05, though rural areas have also recorded a positive growth rate of 2 per cent, which is only marginally lower than that noted for urban areas, viz. 3 per cent.

Other service workers whose number has been increasing in both rural and urban areas, albeit more in the latter, include hairdressers, barbers, beauticians and related workers (NCO 56). Thus, the emphasis on beauty culture in the demand for skill/training courses among women/young girls, and the number of beauty parlours mushrooming in all urban localities is also being captured in the occupational categories of employment.

4. Cultivator–Farmers in Agriculture

The category of farmers, fishermen, hunters, loggers and related workers has shown an increase in the relative share of women as compared to men. Although a substantial proportion of workers in this segment are women, a gradual decline has been reported in their numbers over time (see Table 4). While the primary sector occupations predominate in rural areas, the production-related categories of workers do so in urban locations for both men and women. Although the proportion of women workers has declined, the reduction in numbers has been more substantial for men, thereby resulting in a higher share of women workers in this employment category.

A large number of women workers, constituting a proportionate share across different occupations as well as within occupations, are involved in agriculture, as both labourers and cultivators. The additional employment over the period under study has been in the category of cultivators and farmers (up to 5,714,000 women cultivators and 1,724,000 women farmers) (see Appendix Table 2). The category of farmers other than cultivators, which comprises workers executing the supervisory role, accounts for almost 5 per cent of all women workers and the share of women in this category has been increasing in direct relation to the exit of men from the profession of agriculture.

5. Production-related Workers¹¹

In production and related activities, the number of women has registered an increase over time in magnitude (in absolute numbers) and more so in rural areas, but their share has registered a decline—this being a reflection of the overall increase in numbers in these occupations with the male workers having increased in greater numbers!

Women workers involved in tobacco preparation and its products, primarily *bidi*-making, constitute 2.3 per cent of the workers in this category, which is next to the three occupations within agriculture. It may be borne in mind that these proportions seem insignificant in relation to the large numbers of women workers involved in agriculture. If non-agricultural workers were to be considered separately, these numbers and their proportions would have been higher. For instance, workers engaged in tobacco preparation and *bidi*-makers alone would account for 11 per cent of the total if only non-agricultural women workers were taken into account. The number of rural women workers has been increasing over time with approximately more than five lakh women being added in these occupations over the period under study (see Appendix Table 3).

Among women workers engaged in non-agricultural activities, there has been a significant increase over time in the number of those working as tailors, dress-makers, sewers, upholsterers and in related categories. This is in contrast to the NCO group 75, consisting of spinning and weaving-related activities, which reportedly has a large share (with more than one-third of all UPS workers being women) but one that is gradually declining, with men losing employment more than women in these occupations. The actual magnitude of women workers involved in these activities has also declined by 2.5 lakh while the number of male workers has shrunk by over 4 lakh.

The increasing involvement of women workers in the garments sector can be specifically noticed in the area of finished products, such as the preparation of dresses and garments through embroidery, tailoring, and so on. This is covered under group 79 of the NCO classification. It has registered an additional employment of over 9 lakhs during the decade 1993-94 to 2004-05, which amounts to an annual growth rate of 5.3 per cent. Almost similar magnitudes of additional employment have been reported from both rural and urban areas in this occupation—5 lakh and upwards in rural areas and over 4 lakh in urban areas.

Food and beverage processors constitute another NCO group (77), wherein a substantial number of women are principal workers. The increase in this occupational group is primarily in the rural areas for grain millers, food preservers and canners, bakers, confectioners, sweetmeat makers, and related food processors. The number of women UPS workers in urban areas engaged in this occupational group 77 has declined during the period 1993-94 to 2004-05.

The occupational categories related to production (NCO group 94) and construction (NCO group 95) work have also reported additional women's employment in both urban and rural areas. In the category of construction labourers, not elsewhere classified, an additional employment of over 1 lakh women has been noted, while the number of bricklayers and construction workers has registered an increase of over 6.6 lakhs in total magnitude. In the category of production-related workers, women involved in making brooms, *chics* (bamboo

curtains), and bamboo, reed and cane furniture account for the prominent occupations wherein a substantial number of women workers are involved.

In rural areas, NCO group 97, that is, material handling and related equipment operators (loaders and unloaders), records an additional employment of nearly 64,000 women UPS workers over the period under study. A large majority of them work as packers, labellers, checkers, testers, sorters, and staff at the weighing counters. The urban areas, however, have not recorded an increase in this category, but have, in fact, shown a marginal decline in the number of women workers over the given time period.

6. Occupations with Higher Share of Women Workers

Let us now assess which occupational categories are engaging women workers in relatively larger proportions in 2004-05. The share of women is greater than 40 per cent in the case of maids/housekeeping service workers, tobacco preparers and *bidi*-makers, farmers other than cultivators, nurses and other medical/health technicians and teachers, predominantly primary school teachers during this year (see Table 5).

Table 5
Share of Women Workers within Occupational Category—2004-05

| > 40 % | |
|--------|---|
| 53 | Maids and Other Housekeeping Service Workers n.e.c. |
| 78 | Tobacco Preparers and Tobacco Product Makers |
| 62 | Farmers other than Cultivators |
| 51 | Housekeepers, Matron and Stewards (Domestic and Institutional) |
| 08 | Nursing and other Medical and Health Technicians |
| 15 | Teachers |
| 30-40% | |
| 63 | Agricultural Labourers |
| 94 | Production and Related Workers, n.e.c |
| 55 | Launderers, Dry cleaners and Pressers |
| 64 | Plantation Labourers and Related Workers |
| 13 | Social Scientists and Related Workers |
| 54 | Building Caretakers, Sweepers, Cleaners and Related Workers |
| 75 | Spinners, Weavers, Knitters, Dyers and Related Workers |
| 66 | Forestry Workers |
| 79 | Tailors, Dress-makers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related Workers |
| 61 | Cultivators |

Source: Calculated from NSS unit records, 61st Round.

Table 6 lists occupations in which women constitute a significant proportion of the workforce. Many of these occupations are obvious and reflect gender stereotypes, such as those of maids, workers in housekeeping services, *bidi*-makers, farmer-supervisors, nurses, health technicians, and teachers. Apart from the primary sector occupations such as

agricultural labourers, cultivators, plantation workers and forestry workers, women are also concentrated in production-related work (including that which has not elsewhere classified),¹² and are employed as launderers, dry cleaners and pressers; building caretakers, sweepers, upholsterers; and also social scientists.

IV. CONCLUSION

Amidst the bulk of women workers in agriculture and related occupations, there are some shifts and transitions, howsoever gradual but which can be noted especially in the urban areas in the kinds of jobs that women are engaged in. While the stereotyped jobs of teaching, sales and service, and a host of production-related occupations continue to utilise women's labour, women are also progressively found to be working in other managerial, professional and technical occupations.

Gender segregation and segmentation has been a strong characteristic of the Indian labour markets. The tasks and jobs performed by women are generally influenced by the traditional gender division of labour or remain at best concentrated in occupations that are close fits. Thus, domestic responsibilities extending to labour market contexts constitute the most common jobs, including those of maids, cooks, tailors, and nurses, among others. The jobs of primary school and crafts teachers are also closer to the traditional jobs performed by women both in terms of being extensions of parenting as also means of inculcating cultural values and social acceptance among their pupils. Nursing may extend to other medical professions such as technicians; similarly, cooks and maids in domestic households may move on to becoming chefs and housekeepers in institutional set-ups; further, tailoring and sewing may be utilised for garment-making or other related tasks.

These gendered stereotypes are not the only jobs that women undertake, and some of the young educated entrants in the urban labour market are taking up professional occupations as well. Although occupations such as those of social scientists and researchers are also considered to be relatively more acceptable professions for women, as compared to jobs pertaining to the other sciences, a definite increase in the latter is certainly a positive trend. Jobs generated in the newer occupations within the media, both print and visual; information technology-enabled service-related jobs such as in call centres; and knowledge process outsourcing jobs are some of the occupations that offer lucrative and attractive options to younger educated urban women, a trend that is also reflected in the employment data. Therefore, the fact that women, especially younger, educated urban women, are taking up paid employment in these spheres that take them out of the private household domain, wherein their roles are narrowly defined by patriarchal structures, and that they are contributing to the household income signifies not only the growing economic empowerment of women but is also a harbinger of unprecedented social change in the hitherto tradition-dominated milieu in the country.

Notes

1. This is an abridged and revised version of the paper titled *Employment Trends for Women in India* prepared for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Gender Discussion Paper, 2010, and presented at the National Consultation on *Current Employment Strategies and Women's Work*, organised by the Ministry

- of Labour and Employment and ILO, 6-7 July 2009.
- 2 The estimated figures are based on the age-adjusted population figures from the Registrar General's office.
 - 3 Although it may be noted here that the latest thin rounds 62nd and 64th (which are based on a reasonably large sample size) again report a slight decline in the work participation rates (WPRs) of females. This is, however, not taken for the trend analysis, as most thin rounds generally report a lower WPR for females.
 - 4 Also, the issue of under-employment or disguised unemployment, which is prevalent despite the larger numbers in the workforce, must not be lost sight of.
 - 5 Most of these arguments were proffered during the earlier phase when the discouraged drop-out effect of women was witnessed under a spell of low employment generation (see Mitra, 2008).
 - 6 The data for 1999-2000 is stated to be under-enumerated for employment and, therefore, most of the analysis in this paper pertains to the ten-year period from 1993-94 to 2004-05.
 - 7 The eight one-digit level occupational categories presented in this section are: 0-1: Professional, Technical and Related Workers; 2: Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers; 3: Clerical and Related Workers; 4: Sales Workers; 5: Service Workers; 6: Farmers, Fishermen, Hunter, Loggers and Related Workers; 7-8-9: Production and Related Workers, Transport Equipment Operators and Labourers; and a category X for workers not classified by occupation.
 - 8 The NCO-1968 issued by the Directorate General of Employment and Training consists of 8 divisions (at the one-digit level), 95 groups (at the two-digit level) and 465 families (at the three-digit level). The office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, has modified the three-digit level classification in 1991 to accommodate certain occupations pursued by Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Now, with an addition of 47 new categories, there are a total of 512 families.
 - 9 The reservation in the local bodies (Panchayati Raj Institutions or PRIs) in some states is even higher, that is, up to 50 per cent.
 - 10 NCO single-digit codes 4 and 5.
 - 11 NCO single-digit codes 7-8-9.
 - 12 This is a reflection of the various survival strategies adopted by women for sustaining their livelihoods, which are not adequately registered in the occupational coding. Another point to be noted is that the category of NCO X9 denoting workers who do not report any occupation has been gradually increasing over the years for women. In all, 30 per cent, and in urban areas 90 per cent of all workers who are listed under this code are women.

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Appendix Tables

Appendix Table 1

Higher Growth Rate in Women's Employment over 1993-94 to 2004-05 - TOTAL

| <i>NCO2</i> | <i>Occupational Group Description</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------|---|--------------|
| 37 | Transport Conductors and Guards | 31.8 |
| 34 | Computing Machine Operators | 12.6 |
| 56 | Hair Dressers, Barbers, Beauticians and Related Workers | 12.1 |
| 25 | Working Proprietors, Directors, Managers and Related Executives, Transport, Storage and Communication | 11.1 |
| 31 | Village Officials | 10.4 |
| 22 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 9.9 |
| 20 | Elected and Legislative Officials | 9.4 |
| 03 | Engineering Technicians | 9.0 |
| 02 | Architects, Engineers, Technologists and Surveyors | 8.8 |
| X9 | Workers Not Reporting any Occupations | 8.6 |
| 74 | Chemical Processors and Related Workers | 7.6 |
| 41 | Manufacturers, Agents | 7.3 |
| 52 | Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Related Worker (Domestic and Institutional) | 6.9 |
| 26 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Other Service | 6.8 |
| 68 | Fishermen and Related Workers | 6.7 |
| 09 | Scientific, Medical and Technical Persons, Other | 6.7 |
| 50 | Hotel and Restaurant Keepers | 6.7 |
| 36 | Transport and Communication Supervisors | 6.4 |
| 93 | Painters | 6.1 |
| 07 | Physicians and Surgeons (Allopathic, Dental and Veterinary Surgeons) | 5.8 |
| 84 | Machinery Fitters, Machine Assemblers and Precision Instrument Makers (except Electrical) | 5.6 |
| 19 | Professional Workers, n.e.c. | 5.6 |
| 79 | Tailors, Dress Makers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related Workers | 5.5 |
| 29 | Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers, n.e.c. | 5.4 |
| 95 | Bricklayers and Other Constructions Workers | 5.4 |
| 66 | Forestry Workers | 5.4 |
| 10 | Mathematicians, Statisticians and Related Workers | 5.3 |

Appendix Table 2
Additional Employment of UPS Women Workers Over 1993-94 To 2004-05—Total
(Rural and Urban) (Greater than 50,000 Women Workers)

| <i>NCO</i> | <i>Occupational Group Description</i> | <i>Additional Employment (in '000s)</i> | <i>Growth Rate</i> |
|------------|---|---|------------------------|
| 61 | Cultivators | 5713.7 | 1.7 |
| 62 | Farmers other than Cultivators | 1723.6 | 3.2 |
| 15 | Teachers | 1129.5 | 4.0 |
| 53 | Maids and Other Housekeeping Service Workers n.e.c. | 1082.0 | 4.3 |
| 79 | Tailors, Dress Makers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related Workers | 919.6 | 5.3 |
| 95 | Bricklayers and Other Constructions Workers | 645.7 | 5.2 |
| 94 | Production and Related Workers, n.e.c. | 533.4 | 4.5 |
| 78 | Tobacco Preparers and Tobacco Product Makers | 472.9 | 1.9 |
| 43 | Salesmen, Shop Assistants and Related Workers | 453.6 | 4.6 |
| 40 | Merchants and Shopkeepers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 322.0 | 1.5 |
| 24 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and Related Concerns | 289.3 | 3.4 |
| 52 | Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Related Worker (Domestic and Institutional) | 240.4 | 6.6 |
| 50 | Hotel and Restaurant Keepers | 221.6 | 6.5 |
| 22 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 201.9 | 9.7 |
| 26 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Other Service | 176.8 | 6.6 |
| 08 | Nursing and other Medical and Health Technicians | 159.7 | 3.3 |
| 54 | Building Caretakers, Sweepers, Cleaners and Related Workers | 158.2 | 2.5 |
| 56 | Hairdressers, Barbers, Beauticians and Related Workers | 122.4 | 11.7 |
| 66 | Forestry Workers | 114.0 | 5.4 |
| 34 | Computing Machine Operators | 88.3 | 12.3 |
| 68 | Fishermen and Related Workers | 82.3 | 6.8 |
| 41 | Manufacturers, Agents | 79.0 | 7.2 |
| 99 | Labourers, n.e.c | 78.3 | 0.5 |
| 35 | Clerical and Related Workers, n.e.c. | 71.1 | 0.8 |
| 77 | Food and Beverage Processors | 65.1 | 1.1 |
| 07 | Physicians and Surgeons (Allopathic, Dental and Veterinary Surgeons) | 64.6 | 5.4 |

Appendix Table 3
Additional Employment of UPS Rural Women Workers Over 1993-94 to 2004-05
(Greater than 50000 Women Workers)

| <i>NCO</i> | <i>Occupational Group Description</i> | <i>Additional Employment (in '000s)</i> |
|------------|---|---|
| 61 | Cultivators | 5,641.4 |
| 62 | Farmers other than Cultivators | 1,697.9 |
| 15 | Teachers | 759.2 |
| 78 | Tobacco Preparers and Tobacco Product Makers | 556.6 |
| 95 | Bricklayers and Other Constructions Workers | 532.2 |
| 79 | Tailors, Dress Makers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related Workers | 512.1 |
| 94 | Production and Related Workers, n.e.c. | 408.1 |
| 40 | Merchants and Shopkeepers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 346.6 |
| 53 | Maids and Other House Keeping Service Workers n.e.c. | 314.1 |
| 99 | Labourers, n.e.c. | 265.0 |
| 52 | Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Related Worker (Domestic and Institutional) | 171.1 |
| 24 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and Related Concerns | 159.6 |
| 50 | Hotel and Restaurant Keepers | 149.3 |
| 77 | Food and Beverage Processors | 129.0 |
| 22 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 125.3 |
| 08 | Nursing and other Medical and Health Technicians | 118.0 |
| 66 | Forestry Workers | 110.9 |
| 43 | Salesmen, Shop Assistants and Related Workers | 110.6 |
| 97 | Material Handling and Related Equipment Operators, Loaders and Unloaders | 63.9 |
| 68 | Fishermen and Related Workers | 59.2 |
| 56 | Hair Dressers, Barbers, Beauticians and Related Workers | 49.6 |

Appendix Table 4
Additional Employment of UPS Urban Women Workers over 1993-94 to 2004-05
(Greater than 50,000 Women Workers)

| <i>NCO</i> | <i>Occupational Group Description</i> | <i>Additional Employment (in '000s)</i> |
|------------|---|---|
| 53 | Maids and Other Housekeeping Service Workers n.e.c. | 767.9 |
| 79 | Tailors, Dress Makers, Sewers, Upholsterers and Related Workers | 407.5 |
| 15 | Teachers | 370.3 |
| 43 | Salesmen, Shop Assistants and Related Workers | 343.1 |
| 26 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Other Service | 143.3 |
| 24 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and Related Concerns | 129.7 |
| 94 | Production and Related Workers, n.e.c. | 125.3 |
| 54 | Building Caretakers, Sweepers, Cleaners and Related Workers | 114.3 |
| 95 | Bricklayers and Other Constructions Workers | 113.5 |
| 34 | Computing Machine Operators | 86.3 |
| 22 | Working Proprietors, Directors and Managers, Wholesale and Retail Trade | 76.6 |
| 56 | Hair Dressers, Barbers, Beauticians and Related Workers | 72.7 |
| 61 | Cultivators | 72.4 |
| 50 | Hotel and Restaurant Keepers | 72.3 |
| 41 | Manufacturers, Agents | 71.6 |
| 52 | Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Related Worker (Domestic and Institutional) | 69.3 |
| 88 | Jewellery and Precious Metal Workers and Metal Engravers (Except Printing) | 54.1 |
| 33 | Book-keepers, Cashiers and Related Workers | 51.7 |