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Employment Situation in India: A Gender Perspective

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Labour force participation of an economy is significant while analyzing the economic development of every nation. In order to gain reliable data on the trends and levels of employment situation in India, census figures and the Employment and Unemployment Surveys (EUS) conducted by NSSO are the authentic one. One of the surveys conducted regularly by NSSO is the quinqunniel survey on employment and unemployment. The first in this category is conducted during September 1972-October 1973 i.e. in the 27th round and the present one is the seventh in this series. By 1981 definition of worker and the reference period of one year for calculating work status is adopted. NSSO in the 32nd round of employment and unemployment survey in the year 1977-1978 three reference periods for the calculation of work status of the people was introduced. If the person has worked for a major part of the current year he is called as a Usual Status (US) worker, and if the reference period is related to one week it is called as Current Weekly Status (CWS) and if it is related to a single day it is known as Current Daily Status (CDS). Therefore while examining employment situation, census and surveys can be compared since both have reference period of one year. In the census estimates the persons are asked in relation to the time period of their work. If they work for more than 183 days in a year they are classified as main workers and if it less than 183 they are called marginal workers. Under NSSO the same can be applied in the case of usual status workers and they can be divided as principal status worker and those who work less during a year are called as subsidiary status workers.

Definition of economic activity by both census and NSSO is based on the guidelines of ILO. Main difference between census and surveys is that census is conducted in every 10 years and the surveys are quinqunniel. Enumerators in the surveys are well trained and are permanent employees of this organization. Census is carried out by government employees but are not employees of the census department thus are less trained which resulted in the under reporting of women workers. A very strict comparison of the time use data with the census or the NSSO is not possible because the minimum of one hour work per week is not included in the time use survey. A clear picture of the determinants of economic activity by census and NSSO is given in the table 1.

Table 1: Determinants of Economic Activity

Determinants	Census workers (main and marginal)	NSSO employed Usual status(PS and SS)
1. Minimum days of work	1 day	30 days
2.Minimum time	Not specified in 2001	1 hour per day
3.Unpaid apprentices	Worker	Out of the labour force (student)
4. Temporary sickness	Included in the count of days	Not included in the count of days
5. Gathering of forest products for home consumption	Some are workers such as those collecting minor forest produce while others such as those collecting fuel wood, fodder, grass etc for home consumption are non workers	All are taken as employed
6. Persons who did not work any time but was seeking/ available for work	Not a worker	Excluded from the employed but included in the labour force as unemployed

Source: Report on concepts and definitions at census and surveys

The labor force participation rate is the ratio between the labor force and the overall size of the national population of the same age range. In the NSSO time use data female work participation rate is much higher compared to census data because of correct specification of time spent on different activities within and outside the household. Three different reference periods to classify a worker is used in the NSSO surveys namely one year, one week and one day. Based on these reference periods three types of activity status like usual status, current weekly status, and current daily status is adopted. If the usual activity of a person extend to a longer period within the reference period of 365 days is considered as the principal usual status of the person. Time is adopted as a major criterion in specifying the status and if a person spends relatively less time on any other activity during the reference period is called his/her subsidiary economic activity.

The 66th round of NSSO (2009-10) found a decline in labour force participation rate of woman especially that of rural females. A detailed picture of such decline in woman employment is given in the table 2. One main reason for this decline is the financial crisis and its effect in 2008 which adversely hit export sector and the withdrawal of large number of women from labour force due to falling employment opportunities. A detailed look at the labour force participation rate reveals that concerning US, CWS or CDS male work participation rate had shown an increase in the labour fore but the female rate is only slightly increased and in the case with rural CWS the rate is shown a decline.

Table 2: Labour force participation rate according to US(usual status), CWS(current weekly status) and CDS (current daily status) during 1993-94, 1999-00, 2004-05, 2011-12 (Number of persons/person-days in labour force)

Status	Male				Female			
(Rural)	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12
US	549	533	546	788	237	235	249	280
US (PS+SS)	561	540	555	794	230	302	333	339
CWS	547	531	545	760	276	263	287	279
CDS	534	515	531	794	232	220	237	344
(Urban)	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12
US	538	539	566	733	132	126	148	179
US (PS+SS)	543	542	570	737	165	147	178	191
CWS	538	539	556	719	152	138	168	175
CDS	532	528	561	735	132	123	150	195

Source: Employment and unemployment situation in India, NSSO report no: (515 (61/10/1).and Report on employment and unemployment survey 2011-2012, vol.1.

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Note: US (PS+SS) indicates usual status including both principal and subsidiary status

A look at the decadal change in the work participation rate (measure of economically active population in an economy) reveals that a slight increase of about 1.6 per cent change takes place in the case of male work participation rate. Turning to the female side it is somewhat disappointing because the work participation rate of females is reduced during the last decade (-0.1 per cent) and in total the work participation rate in India showed only a slight increase of 0.7 per cent during the last decade.

Table 3: Work Participation Rate in India: A decadal change

Category	2001	2011	% change
Male	51.7	53.3	+1.6
Female	25.6	25.5	-0.1
Total	39.1	39.8	+0.7

Source: Census 2001 and 2011

2011 Census defined a worker as a person who participated in any economically productive activity with or without compensation or profit with a reference period of one year preceding the date of enumeration. Turning to the type of workers, census 2011 defines main worker as persons who 'worked' for 6 months or more during the reference year and marginal workers are those persons who 'worked' for less than 6 months. Non workers are those persons who did not 'work' at all during the reference period and it includes students, persons engaged in household duties, dependents, pensioners, beggars, etc. A sub division of workers into main and marginal across gender is also made. Among main workers the share of male participation is decreased during the last decade from 87.3 to 82.3 in 2011, but the female per cent has shown a slight increase from 57.3 per cent in 2001 to 59.6 in 2011, but as a total the share of marginal workers has decreased from 77.8 per cent to 75.2 per cent in 2011. Females form the main category among marginal workers, but during the last decade male participation had shown an increase and female participation as marginal workers had shown a decline and in total marginal workers in the economy increased from 22.2 per cent to 24.8 percent in 2011.

Table 4: Percentage of Main and Marginal Workers, 2001 and 2011

Type of workers		2001	2011
Main workers	Male	87.3	82.3
	Female	57.3	59.6
	Total	77.8	75.2
Marginal workers	Male	12.7	17.7
	Female	42.7	40.4
	Total	22.2	24.8

Source: Various census reports

For the first time in Census 2011, the marginal workers have been sub-divided in two categories, namely, those who have worked for less than 3 months and those who worked for 3 to 6 months. A narrowing down to marginal workers is also made which reveals that the percentage of female marginal workers had shown a decline during the last decade.

Table 5: Classification of Marginal workers in 2011(millions)

Category	Total marginal workers	Marginal workers (3-6 months)	Marginal workers (less than 3 months)
Male	58.7	48.6	22.2
Female	60.6	48.5	10.1
Total	119.3	97.1	12.1

Source: Census 2011

To define work or economic activity and work status of the people is often a controversial issue. Different definition for work is given by census and surveys and it goes on changing during the years since the first census of 1872. The basic economic question since the 1891-1921 census relate to the occupation or means of livelihood of the people. The concept of work as economic independence existed prior to 1961 changed and a new concept of workers and non workers developed. The dual approach to the concept of work as usual status and current status developed in the 1971 census. Housewives who are engaged in the work for sale of the products produced within or providing domestic services for others are also treated as workers. The 1981 census classifies workers into two groups: main workers (those who work more than six months of a year) and marginal workers (those who work less than six months). During 1982 the 13th International Conference on Labour Statisticians used the term economically active population comprised by all those who supply their labour for the production of economic goods and services during the specified period. Unpaid economic activities in the area of cultivation is included in 1981 census and the unpaid work is elaborated during the 1991 census and it include all type of unpaid family work, but the calculation of care work, leisure, time spent on personal care, sleeping (which often enhances our ability and energy to work in the next morning) etc left out of the specified area. All these resulted in the under reporting of the work performed by women and children within the country and results in the vague calculation of the GDP. So that the Work participation rates of females is comparatively low. The 2001 census thus widened the definition of work and includes women, children, aged and those who work only during the peak season in ploughing, sowing, harvesting as well as the collection of farm products, and also those who rear animals for domestic production of milk, and growing of crops(except plantation) for domestic consumption as workers. But those who maintain a kitchen garden or flower garden within the area of house are not treated as workers. One commendable thing is that travel to work place and mode of travel is also considered which shows the remarkable improvement of census which results in the accurate knowledge of welfare and standard of living of the people. The 2001 census classified the main and marginal workers again on the basis of occupation and employment status into primary, secondary and tertiary sector, a nine fold classification of occupations can be found. Non workers are often grouped under household duties, students, dependents, retired persons, rentiers, beggars and others

A narrowing down is made to examine the employment in the organized and unorganized sector in Kerala. Regarding those occupations which fall under organized sector, collection of data is made on a regular basis by different authorities. But in the case of those who come under the unorganized sector activities data collection is not regulated by any authority or any proper and regular accounts are kept. To measure the contribution of informal sector to the national economy the United Nations Statistical commission constituted an international expert group on informal sector statistics which is popularly known as 'Delhi group'. In the Indian context the term informal sector is not used in regular accounts but we call it as unorganized sector. Time allocation problem became grave in the case of unorganized workers whose time spent on paid work is often not specified accurately. They include small and marginal farmers, forest workers, beedi workers, fishing laborers, toddy tappers, construction workers, domestic servants, loading workers, barbers, news paper, fruits and vegetable vendors etc. NSSO in its 61st round which was conducted in 2004-2005 shows that out of 457.5 million workers 62.6 million are employed in the organized sector and the number in the unorganized sector is massive that is 394.9 in million the country. It is clear that among the different categories of work only 8.9% of total working women form regular workers and their figures shoot up in the case of unor-

ganized workers and agricultural workers.

The organized sector comprises private and public sectors and in this sector wages is regular and working conditions are more favourable. In Kerala, employment in the organized sectors are coming down as it was 12.26 lakhs in 2000, 11.15 lakhs in 2010 and 10.89 in 2012. Table 6 gives employment details in the organized sector of Kerala since 2000.

Table 6: Employment in the organized sector in Kerala (lakh persons)

Year	Public Sector			Private Sector			Total		
	Men	Woman	Total	Men	Woman	Total	Men	Woman	Total
2000	4.51	1.93	6.44	2.96	2.86	5.82	7.47	4.79	12.26
2005	4.27	1.88	6.15	2.63	2.62	5.25	6.90	4.50	11.40
2006	4.29	1.87	6.16	2.47	2.39	4.86	6.76	4.26	11.02
2007	4.17	1.87	6.04	2.57	2.50	5.07	6.74	4.37	11.11
2008	4.14	1.93	6.07	2.55	2.52	5.07	6.69	4.45	11.14
2009	4.19	1.95	6.14	2.61	2.57	5.18	6.80	4.53	11.32
2010	4.18	1.95	6.13	2.49	2.53	5.02	6.67	4.48	11.15
2011	4.21	1.91	6.12	2.45	2.54	4.99	6.66	4.45	11.11
2012	3.92	1.85	5.77	2.48	2.64	5.12	6.40	4.49	10.89

Source: Directorate of Employment, Government of Kerala, 2012.

As per NSSO there are three main categories of informal workers like self employed, regular workers and casual labourers. On the basis of this classification there are 74.6 per cent of workers in informal sector of Kerala and the corresponding figure is 71.1 per cent in India. On this basis table 7 gives a detailed explanation of the informal sector on Kerala and India.

Table 7 Per 1000 distribution of informal sector (P&P) workers (PS+SS) engaged in AGEGC and non agricultural sectors for different statuses in employment-Kerala and India

Status of employment	Male	Female	Total
Kerala			
Self employed	98.1	98.4	98.2
Regular wage/salaried employees	43.7	33.4	39.8
Casual labour in other than public work	87.0	64.9	82.8
Total	79.3	63.3	74.6
India			
Self employed	93.5	96.2	94.2
Regular wage/salaried employees	42.3	28.3	39.8
Casual labour in other than public work	75.1	67.4	73.9
Total	71.5	69.8	71.1

Source: Informal sector and conditions of employment in India, Published by NSSO in January 2012.

Conclusion

Informal or unorganized sectors form a major segment of every economy, whether developed or developing. Census data or the data gained from the employment and unemployment surveys of NSSO gives a much clear picture about the employment situation of our nation. But a close watches on the categories of non workers, we can find that those who perform household work form the largest category who are left unaccounted. This shows the main drawback of the census and main stream of the time use surveys. Time use surveys often complement the labour force surveys in every economy, and thus provide better estimate of labour force statistics.

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