

# Women dominate manufacturing jobs in urban India

Mospi report says women lead in agri sector in rural areas, but still face barriers to entering labour market

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New Delhi, 12 August

A greater proportion of female workers in urban India are employed in manufacturing (23.9 per cent) and other services (40.1 per cent) compared to their male counterparts, according to the latest “Women and Men in India, 2023” report.

In contrast, the report by the statistics and programme implementation ministry released on Monday shows a major proportion of urban male workers are engaged in sectors, such as construction (12.6 per cent), trade, hotels and restaurants (26.5 per cent), and transport, storage and communications (13.2 per cent).

“Surprisingly, a greater proportion of urban women are engaged in manufacturing than urban males,” the report said, without providing an explanation.

In rural India, females continue to dominate the agriculture sector, with 76.2 per cent of rural female workers engaged in the sector compared to 49.1 per cent of rural male



workers. The report has relied on the annual Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) for the data.

Despite progress, the report highlighted, females still encounter numerous barriers when entering the labour market and seeking access to quality employment. “The substantial disparity between male and female representation in the workforce can be mitigated through strategic measures, such as the implementation of improved incentive mechanisms, tar-

## GENDER GAP

Distribution of workers (%)

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Agriculture	49.1	76.2	4.7	11.7
Construction	19.0	4.2	12.6	3.1
Trade, hotels, restaurants	10.5	4.1	26.5	15.2
Transport, storage, communications	5.3	0.2	13.2	5.5
Manufacturing	8.2	8.3	20.5	23.9
Other services	7.9	7.0	22.5	40.6

Source: Women and Men in India, 2023 report

geted training programmes, job reservations, and the establishment of safe workplace environments,” it added.

These steps, according to the report, aim at creating a more equitable and supportive framework that fosters increased participation of females in the workforce while addressing the specific challenges they confront.

The average wage of females is lower than that of males, and the disparity is greater in urban than in rural

areas and across occupations, the report said. Quoting the PLFS survey for the April-June quarter of 2023 for casual labourers, the report showed that the average wage for rural male workers (₹416) was higher than for rural female workers (₹287). Similarly, urban male casual workers (₹515) earned far more than urban female casual workers (₹333) during the quarter.

In terms of broad employment status, though a higher proportion of

females (71 per cent) than males (58.8 per cent) are self-employed, 43.1 per cent of rural females were helpers in household enterprises compared to just 11 per cent for males. In urban areas, 50.8 per cent of female workers were in regular wage/salary employment compared to 47.1 per cent of male workers.

In rural areas, the female unemployment rate (1.8 per cent) has been lower than that of males (2.8 per cent) over the years. However, in urban areas, female unemployment (7.5 per cent) is higher than male unemployment (4.7 per cent).

“One key reason behind such data may be that fewer females seek work in rural areas, and there are more opportunities for work in agricultural and other informal sectors in rural areas. Further, such opportunities may not be available for females in urban areas. It needs to be highlighted that the unemployment rate is the highest for urban females in the 15-29 years’ age group, followed by urban males in that age group,” the report said.