



WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING

The Female Factory Worker in Urban India

Background

- With shrinking employment opportunities in the agricultural sector, it is crucial to improve women's access to jobs in the manufacturing and service sectors.
- It is important to understand the demand and supply factors that determine women's participation in these sectors, which has been stagnating.

This factsheet is drawn from an ongoing IWWAGE-ISI study that seeks to examine the profile and background of women workers in contemporary industrial and urban landscapes – the kinds of opportunities available, barriers to participation, and aspirations and expectations from industrial employment. The study uses data collected from a survey of garment factory workers in Delhi-NCR. The data is supplemented with more detailed information on current or aspiring women workers obtained through focus group discussions and interviews with women workers, and interviews with factory owners/managers, labour contractors, and so on. Possible interventions to enhance women's economic empowerment in manufacturing would be systematically tested.

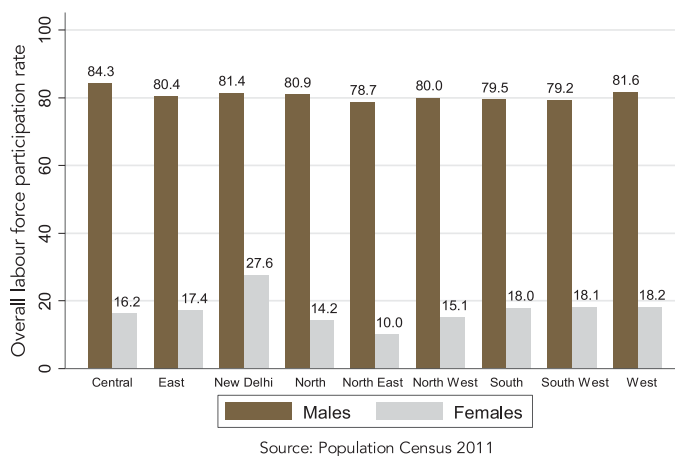
Facts and Figures

Labour force participation rates by gender in Delhi-NCR

- Labour force participation rate (LFPR) of men is over four times that of women in Delhi.

The female LFPR in Delhi is 16.1% as compared to the male LFPR of 80.1%. Within Delhi-NCR, New Delhi has the highest female LFPR while North East Delhi has the lowest rate. There is also more variation across regions in female LFPR than in male LFPR (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Labour force participation rates of women and men aged 15-59 years in Delhi



Distribution of factory workers by industry

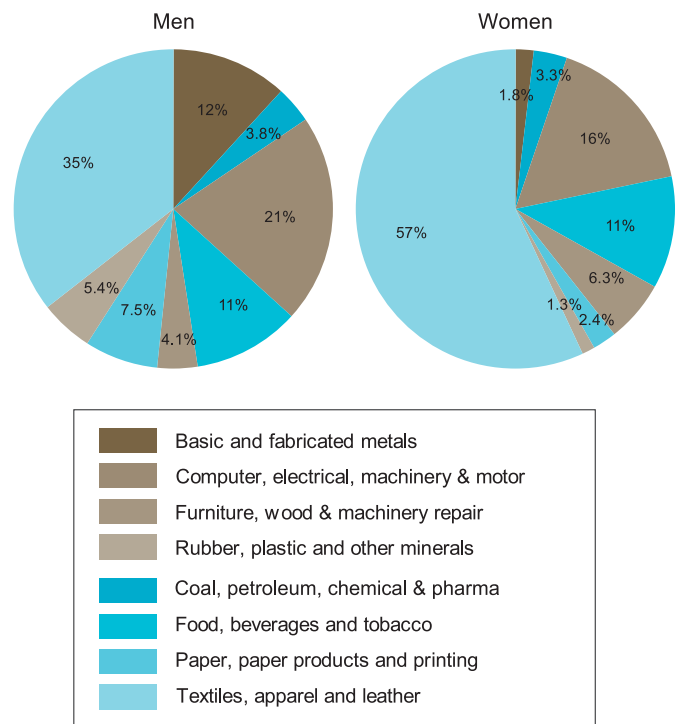
- Female factory workers in Delhi are mainly employed in the textile, apparel, and leather industries.

The textile, apparel, and leather industries employ the largest proportion of women workers in Delhi at 57%, followed by computer, electrical, machinery, and motor (16%), and food, beverages, and tobacco (11%). Field visits revealed that women prefer to work in factories where there are more women workers. Among men, there is a perception that women cannot operate certain factory machinery and can only do 'light work' (Figure 2).

- There is no clear correlation between female LFPR and manufacturing industries in Delhi.

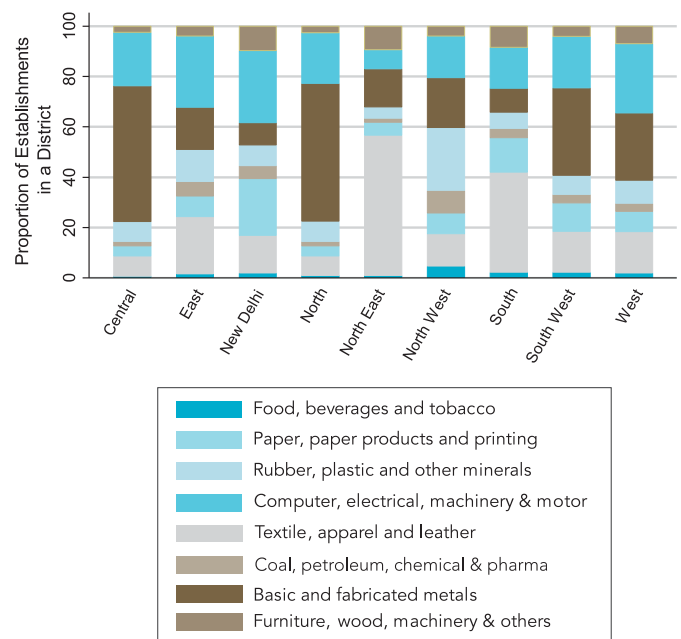
For instance, even though Northeast Delhi has a large number of textile, apparel, and leather

Figure 2: Distribution of male and female workers in manufacturing industries in Delhi



industries, it has the lowest female LFPR. Field visits indicated that women are more concentrated in low-end tasks like packing and packaging, and are thus paid less than men who are likely to be engaged in more skilled work such as stitching (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Distribution of industries by districts in Delhi

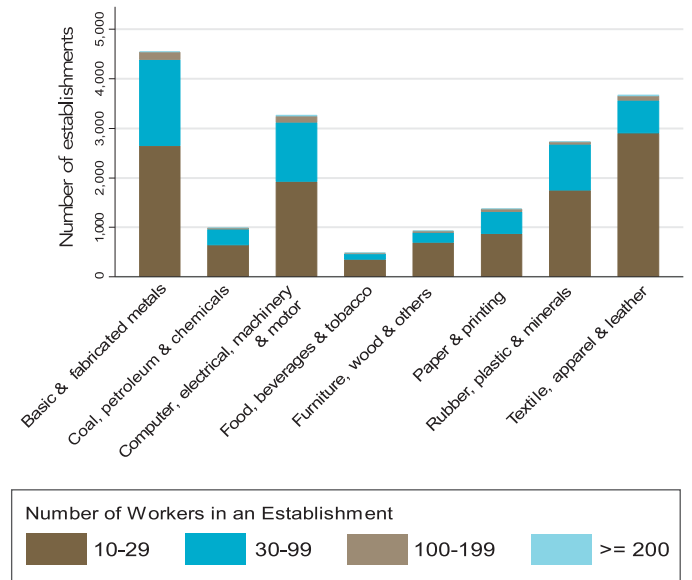


Scale of enterprises where women work

- Industries that employ more female workers comprise a large number of small-scale enterprises.

Industries that employ larger proportions of female workers are also among the top three in terms of number of enterprises. Further, these industry groups predominantly operate at a small scale – 78.9% of textile, apparel, and leather enterprises, and 58.7% of computer, electrical, machinery, and motor enterprises hire only 10–29 workers, on average (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Distribution of scale of enterprise by industry



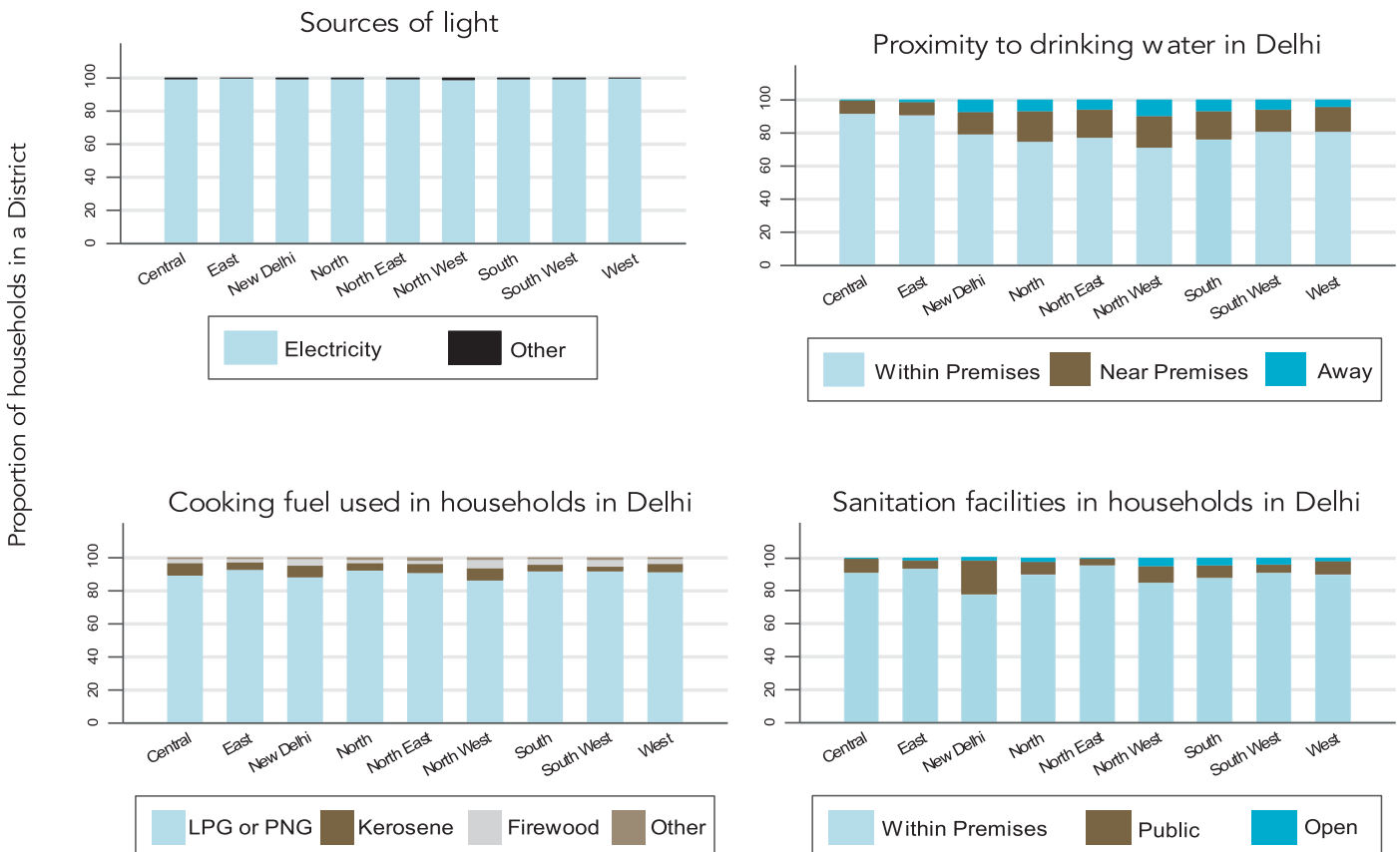
Source: Sixth Economic Census 2013-14

Household access to civic amenities and women's time poverty

- As women bear the primary responsibility of domestic work, poor access to civic amenities adds to their time poverty and constrains labour force participation.

A significant proportion of households have inadequate access to drinking water, and other amenities within their premises (Figure 5). Field visits revealed that women have no time for work outside home as they have to carry out several domestic chores, and they prefer work-from-home options for this reason and due to safety concerns.

Figure 5: Access to civic amenities by households in Delhi



Source: Population Census 2011



Policy Implications

- Opportunities for women on the shop-floor need to be systematically expanded beyond 'light work' to ensure gender parity in work and pay.
- Work-from-home options for women need to be regulated to ensure adherence to minimum wages.
- Safe and adequate public transport facilities need to be provided for women to commute between home and factory.
- Safe drinking water, free installation of LPG/PNG pipeline for cooking, and subsidised provision of gas service are required to reduce time poverty of women.

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