

## RECENT TRENDS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR'S EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE AN ANALYSIS BASED ON PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEYS

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A. Study design /

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C. Data analysis /

Dane – analiza i statystyki

D. Data interpretation /

Interpretacja danych

E. Preparation of manuscript /

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**Summary:** This paper aims to investigate recent employment trends in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir with the help of some key employment indicators such as UR, LFPR, and WPR.

**Material and methods:** The findings are based on the unit-level data of the PLFS over the period of 2017-18 to 2021-22.

**Results:** The study highlights that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Jammu and Kashmir in 2021-22 remains high (at 46.4%) compared to the northern states of Uttarakhand, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, and all of India's LFPR as well. The female LFPR in Jammu and Kashmir (at 34.1%) has also shown much better prospects compared to all India levels, which is exceptionally low at 24.8 per cent.

**Conclusions:** A continuous improvement in female LFPR and WPR is recorded after the imposition of the President's Rule in the state. High female WPR positively correlates with factors like a peaceful workplace, workplace security.

**Keywords:** workers, labour force, unemployment rate, employment, PLFS

### Introduction

The economy of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has long been marked by volatility, largely due to the complex political situation in the region. The earlier move to promote peace through reconstruction as mentioned in the Economic Survey of Jammu and Kashmir 2006-07 (Jammu and Kashmir Government, 2007) had not materialized. After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the government recognized the need to generate youth employment and opening-up of the J&K economy as felt earlier as well in 2007 (Navlakha, 2007). Jammu and Kashmir, has undergone several structural changes over the past decades. Looking at the present scenario, the primary sector contributes 18.07 per cent of Gross Value Added (or GVA) at current prices while employing approx. 40.93% of the workforce during 2020-21<sup>1</sup>. Secondary and tertiary sector share was 19.30 and 62.63 per cent of GVA of Jammu and Kashmir while employing approx. 27.73 and 31.34% of the workforce during 2020-21, respectively. These structural changes had an

<sup>1</sup> Workforce share of agriculture sector was declining till 2018-19 which later increased as an effect of covid-19.

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impact on various factors of employment in the economy and, if mismanaged, could create distress in the labour market and economy<sup>2</sup>. The recent Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) trends show a declining unemployment rate since 2019-20. The rising heap of idle youth signals underlying distress in the labour market and the economy. The present paper aims to highlight the recent changes in the labour market of Jammu and Kashmir, especially looking at the changes after the abrogation of article 370 and 35A from the constitution of India.

Employment statistics have always been debated in the public space, and these statistics have been put under the black box, making them hard to understand by the common citizens. The present paper tries to tackle this fundamental problem and endeavours to break down the employment trends into various categories to provide a holistic picture of Jammu and Kashmir's employment situation. Looking at the first four-year trends of employment statistics based on PLFS, it is visible that almost all the economic indicators highlight a slowdown in the economy between the first two survey years. However, the latest year reports, covering the period of 2020-21 and 2021-22, showed an improved situation in all aspects of employment, even when the Covid-19 pandemic engulfed the nation. Given that unemployment remains a key burning issue in India, a need for a comprehensive study of the labour market trends in the state of J&K was required, especially given the events of Covid-19 and the bifurcation and reorganisation of the state. Hence, the objectives of this paper are (a) to study the recent micro-trends within the labour market in Jammu and Kashmir, especially before and after the 2019-20 period; (b) to study employment indicators from a multi-dimensional approach; and (c) to suggest policy recommendations for overcoming the distress in the labour market.

Hence, this paper depicts the trends observed in the labour force participation rate, workers population ratio, and unemployment rate over age, gender, region, and sector. The sector-level analysis provided a picture of structural changes going on in the economy. Quinquennial Employment-Unemployment Surveys (EUS) were conducted at the interval of five years. For the estimation of the key employment and unemployment indicators (viz. Worker Population Ratio<sup>3</sup> (WPR), Labour Force Participation Rate<sup>4</sup> (LFPR), Unemployment Rate<sup>5</sup> (UR)) in the short time interval, EUS was replaced by PLFS. National statistical office conducted first PLFS survey in 2017-18<sup>6</sup> and after that it has been published annually. The paper summarises the trends obtained from PLFS and presents them to researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

## 2. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section deals with employment statistics over age, gender, and region. Besides, it also depicts the structural change (sector-wise distribution of workers) in the labour market. Finally, all the information is calculated on principal status<sup>7</sup> (us+ss) for Jammu and Kashmir economy.

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<sup>2</sup> Movement from agriculture to manufacturing and services sector reflects the structural transformation which is accompanied by upheaval in the market and economy. For such process, markets fail to deliver efficient outcome and hence require government regulations. For detail, see Joseph Stiglitz (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Worker population ratio (WPR) is defined as the percentage of employed persons in the population.

<sup>4</sup> Labour force participation rate (LFPR) is defined as the percentage of persons in the labour force in the population.

<sup>5</sup> The unemployment rate (UR) is defined as the percentage of persons unemployed among the persons in labour force.

<sup>6</sup> The period of 2017-18 is considered as one year, i.e., July 2017-June 2018, the same calendar for remaining years.

<sup>7</sup> Principal status (us+ss) is the amalgam of usual status and subsidiary status of employment. The reference period for usual status (us) is 365 days based on major time criterion and subsidiary status (ss) means subsidiary economic activity (not less than 30 days).

## 2.1. Overview

Employment statistics over age, gender, and region have been depicted to understand the state's employment scenario, enabling us to make sound comments on the employment indicators of Jammu and Kashmir. Employment issues always move around the politics and policy formulation for the state.

### 2.1.1 Age-wise Employment Statistics

Employment statistics for the youth population (15-29) showed a high unemployment rate (18.5%) in 2020-21. In the latest year it has shown decrement in unemployment rate by 4.1 percentage points, but still, it is very high. Hence, the youth of Jammu and Kashmir is distressed due to unemployment. The downward movement in UR provided a little bit relief. According to latest unemployment rate (14.4%) every seventh person is unemployed among those who would like to work on the existing market wages.

**Table (1) Employment indicators classified on age: Jammu and Kashmir (in percentage)**

Years	15-29			Overall population <sup>8</sup>		
	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR
2017-18	40.8	34.7	15.0	40.8	38.6	5.3
2018-19	43.7	37.7	13.8	42.9	40.7	5.1
2019-20	42.4	34.8	18.0	42.0	39.3	6.5
2020-21	40.7	33.2	18.5	44.8	42.2	5.8
2021-22	47.0	40.2	14.4	46.4	44.0	5.2

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data.

At the India level, the employment scenario is not unique, but studies have shown that the unemployment rate has risen (Kannan and Raveendran, 2019; Mehrotra and Parida, 2017). The current unemployment rate (UR) among the youth in India was 12.4% which is slightly lower than Jammu and Kashmir's UR (14.4%). On the other hand, the youth UR in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand state was reported as 12.8 and 21.1 per cent, respectively. There can be various factors behind the high UR, mismatch in capability and wage expectations, mismatch in skill set versus market requirements, and regionally lopsided development making the opportunity cost of jobs higher because of probable displacement costs (displacement cost is the cost of shifting from home to other towns for employment and higher living costs in the new cities besides psychic costs). But high unemployment among the youth (15-29 age-group) is still a major challenge for policymakers.

The labour force participation rate (46.4%) and worker population ratio (44.0%) are also low in Jammu and Kashmir. WPR has slightly increased (by 5.4% point) over the last five years in Jammu and Kashmir for the overall population. The increasing WPR has economic implications as it reflects a rise in job opportunities. The increasing WPR is good for the health of economy. The labour force participation rate reveals the overall labour market situation, and the figures highlight that the rising LFPR (or stagnant for youth) substantiates the labour market distress.

### 2.1.2 Gender-wise Employment Statistics

Analyzing employment trends across genders shows that the female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) has always remained much below the normal level attained by the other states in the country. The current trends for 2020-21 show FLFPR at 34.1 per cent, which is unusually low and a worrisome issue. Interestingly, the female LFPR increased by 11.2 percentage points between 2017-18 and 2021-22. Further, for the same period, female WPR also increased by 10.2 per cent, reflecting

<sup>8</sup> Overall population means all persons (either employed or not employed) having age between zero to hundred years.

that female participation is increasing and a positive sign for the state economy. On the other hand, the female UR also showed a decline of 3.4 percentage points between 2019-20 and 2020-21, but it has again increased to 8.5 per cent. The gap between female and male employment statistics has increased in all five rounds.

In India, the FLFPR was 24.8 per cent, which is also very low but also lower than the FLFPR of Jammu and Kashmir. During the same period, the FLFPR of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand was 52.3 and 26.1 per cent, respectively. Surprisingly, the FLFPR of Himachal Pradesh is relatively higher than other states of India. However, it primarily shows the poor economic conditions of their households that compel the female members of the family to join the workforce despite poor work conditions.

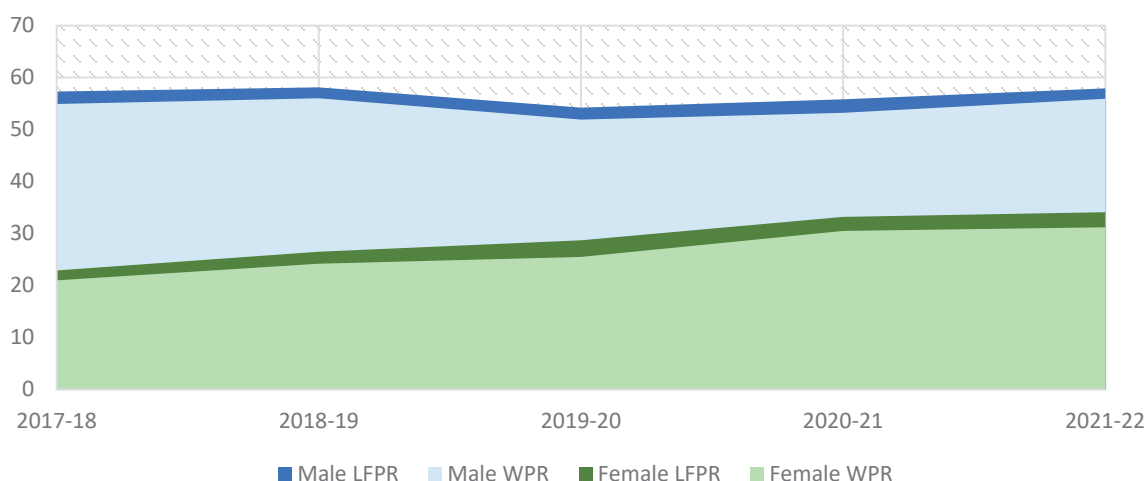
**Table (2) Employment indicators classified on gender: Jammu and Kashmir (in percentage)**

Years	Male			Female			Persons		
	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR
2017-18	57.3	54.9	4.2	22.9	21.0	8.4	40.8	38.6	5.3
2018-19	58.1	56.0	3.5	26.5	24.2	8.8	42.9	40.7	5.1
2019-20	54.2	51.9	4.2	28.7	25.5	11.3	42.0	39.3	6.5
2020-21	55.8	53.2	4.7	33.2	30.5	7.9	44.8	42.2	5.8
2021-22	57.9	55.9	3.4	34.1	31.2	8.5	46.4	44.00	5.2

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data.

On the other hand, the inference from the FLFPR of Haryana (14.6%) and Punjab (19.3%) clearly shows that with improved economic conditions of the households and educational level, the aspirations of the females have increased the demand for more well-paying jobs besides superior working conditions. Unfortunately, state economies have failed to create jobs in organized sectors, particularly in the hinterland of the states, resulting in the low FLFPR in Haryana and Punjab, the relatively prosperous states. In South Asia, female labour force participation rates vary from under 30 per cent in Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan to almost 80 per cent in Nepal and nearly 60 per cent in Bhutan (Dhar, 2020).

**Figure 1. Gender-wise Trends of LFPR and WPR**



Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data.

However, the rising female LFPR and WPR in Jammu and Kashmir regions show that female participation has been increasing in job markets, which is a positive sign. Before the abrogation of article 370 and 35A, Jammu and Kashmir region was adversely affected by Pak-sponsored terrorism. The noticeable point is that after the imposition of governor’s rule/ president’s rule in Jammu and Kashmir, (and after that the abrogation of article 370 and 35A) the female worker population ratio has

been increased by 10.2 per cent. Hence, a drastic improvement was noticed in female WPR. Indirectly, it is the result of maintenance of peace in Jammu and Kashmir region and female encouraged to participate in labour market. A pathbreaking movement has taken place in labour market of Jammu and Kashmir state of India.

### 2.1.3 Region-wise Employment Statistics

The region-wise employment statistics show the structural economic changes. The population of rural LFPR stands at 47.7 per cent in 2021-22, which has been increasing over the years. In comparison, LFPR for urban regions rose to 41.1 per cent 2021-22. Further, rural WPR went up 6.0 percentage points, while in urban areas, it increased by 1.8 percentage points during the study period. During the study period, the UR converged at 3.7 per cent in rural and 12.9 per cent in urban areas. However, the trends infer that employment opportunities are relatively better in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir. Generally, the development of urban centers created more job opportunities and provided a better division of labour, stimulating more employment and better-earning potential. Because urban areas should act as growth engines. But in Jammu and Kashmir, rural areas employment statistics are moving in the right direction compared to urban areas. If we compare the LFPR of the country, we found that the LFPR of India stands at 42.2 in rural, 39.0 per cent in urban, and 41.3 per cent in rural+urban areas in 2021-22, is lower than that of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Table (3) Employment indicators classified in the region (in percentage)**

Years	Rural			Urban			Rural+Urban		
	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR	LFPR	WPR	UR
2017-18	41.6	39.9	4.2	37.8	34.0	10.0	40.8	38.6	5.3
2018-19	44.4	42.7	3.9	37.0	33.2	10.1	42.9	40.7	5.1
2019-20	42.5	40.4	5.1	40.0	34.8	13.0	42.0	39.3	6.5
2020-21	45.7	43.8	4.2	41.0	35.6	13.2	44.8	42.2	5.8
2021-22	47.7	45.9	3.7	41.1	35.8	12.9	46.4	44.0	5.2

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data.

Further, the UR in rural and urban India was 3.3, and 6.3 per cent, respectively, lower than that of Jammu and Kashmir. In Himachal Pradesh, the UR in rural and urban areas were reported as 3.6 and 8.7 per cent, respectively. Similarly, the UR in Uttarakhand was 7.0, and 10.6 per cent in rural, and urban areas in 2021-22, respectively. However, UR is high in Jammu and Kashmir than in its neighboring states. Furthermore, the urban LFPR has increased by 3.3 percentage points to 41.1 per cent. Moreover, it has also increased by 6.6 percentage points for rural regions. The rural WPR is rising, while urban WPR has shown a 1.8 percentage point increment during the study period. Overall, rural areas employment statistics depicted an improving picture compared to urban areas in Jammu and Kashmir. Chand and Singh (2022) discussed workforce changes and employment level in India over gender and region. They reported that LFPR and WPR has been increasing over the times (2017-18 to 2019-20). Further, female WPR has shown sound increment compared to male WPR. The present study also found sound increment in female LFPR and WPR in Jammu and Kashmir as depicted in figure 1.

### 2.2 Sector-wise Employment Statistics

In this section, the sectoral distribution of workers is analyzed. Economic activities are grouped into three broad sectors as per the NIC 2008 code by the MOSPI GoI: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The following studies (Abraham, 2009; Mitra and Verick, 2013; Mehrotra et al., 2014; Parida, 2015; Aggarwal, 2016; Mehrotra and Parida, 2017; Verick, 2018;) focused on the growth and structural transformation at the national level in India. In this paper, we have looked at the distribution of workers in these three broad sectors as follows:

**Table (4) Sector-wise percentage distribution of youth workers (15-29 year age-group)**

Years	Primary sector			Secondary sector			Tertiary sector		
	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P
2017-18	27.9	70.8	39.2	35.6	12.8	29.6	36.5	16.3	31.2
2018-19	22.7	60.6	33.8	36.1	26.1	33.2	41.2	13.3	33.1
2019-20	20.3	50.4	29.4	37.6	31.9	35.8	42.1	17.7	34.7
2020-21	22.9	54.4	33.1	40.1	30.4	37.0	37.0	15.2	30.0
2021-22	19.5	64.9	34.6	39.8	21.8	33.8	40.7	13.3	31.6

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data. (Where, M = Male, F = Female, and P = Persons)

As depicted in table 4, the percentage share of workers engaged in the primary sector declined by 4.6 percentage points between 2017-18 and 2021-22. In contrast, the percentage share of young workers increased by 7.4 percentage points in the secondary sector in between 2017-18 and 2020-21, after that a dip was noticed in 2021-22 by 3.2 percentage points. The tertiary sector also showed a dip over the years compared with 2019-20. However, the data depict that the secondary sector attracted youth for more employment opportunities instead of the primary and tertiary sectors in Jammu and Kashmir up to 2020-21. But in the latest year a dip was noticed even in secondary sector. In the latest survey years, the primary and tertiary sectors showed one and half percentage point increment in percentage share of workers. Over the years, there is no smooth one directional movement in the percentage share of youth workers. The gender-wise distribution showed that majority of female workers engaged in the primary sector.

Table 5 depicts the sector-wise percentage distribution of workers for 15-64 years in Jammu and Kashmir. The sector-wise statistics showed that the percentage share of workers engaged in primary sector increased by only 1.2 percentage points over the years. Further, the secondary sector showed a creeping consistent growth in the percentage points among the workers. In the tertiary sector, the percentage share of workers declined from 34.7 to 31.4 per cent between 2017-18 and 2021-22, beside a minute increment in 2018-19. Overall, the percentage share of workers increased in primary and secondary sectors but decreased in tertiary sectors.

**Table (5) Sector-wise percentage distribution of workers for 15-64 year age-group**

Years	Primary sector			Secondary sector			Tertiary sector		
	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P
2017-18	25.0	75.9	38.5	33.9	7.0	26.8	41.0	17.1	34.7
2018-19	20.8	73.5	36.0	33.9	11.6	27.5	45.3	14.9	36.5
2019-20	22.5	68.3	37.1	34.9	13.6	28.1	42.6	18.1	34.8
2020-21	21.3	72.9	39.9	37.5	12.0	28.3	41.2	15.1	31.8
2021-22	19.0	78.7	39.7	38.7	10.4	28.9	42.3	10.9	31.4

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data. (Where, M = Male, F = Female, and P = Persons)

Furthermore, the gender-wise distribution again showed majority of female worked in primary sector. Female workers' participation is exceptionally low in secondary tertiary sector in 2021-22, their share was only 10.4 and 10.9 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, 78.7 per cent of female were engaged in primary sector. The noticeable thing is that female worker's share in secondary and tertiary sector employment have been continuously shrinking over the years, beside 2019-20. Hence, secondary, and tertiary sector jobs were dominantly occupied by male. Female participation should increase in secondary and tertiary sectors.

**Table (6) Sector-wise percentage distribution of workers for overall population**

Years	Primary sector			Secondary sector			Tertiary sector		
	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F	P
2017-18	28.3	76.7	40.9	32.3	6.7	25.7	39.4	16.7	33.4
2018-19	23.7	74.4	38.2	32.6	11.2	26.5	43.7	14.3	35.3
2019-20	25.2	68.8	38.7	33.5	13.4	27.2	41.3	17.8	34.1
2020-21	23.4	72.9	40.9	36.4	12.0	27.7	40.3	15.1	31.3
2021-22	21.0	79.1	40.8	37.7	10.2	28.3	41.3	10.7	30.9

Source: Calculations from PLFS unit-level data. (Where, M = Male, F = Female, and P = Persons)

Table 6 depicts the sector-wise percentage distribution of workers for overall population of Jammu and Kashmir. Primary sector workers' share is almost constant over the times, whereas secondary sector workers' share was increased by 2.6 percentage points in between 2017-18 and 2021-22. The tertiary sector showed a decrement (by 2.5 percentage points) in the percentage share of workers in between 2017-18 and 2021-22. The overall statistics showed that the secondary sector share was increasing consistently, whereas the tertiary sector's worker share declined over the last four years. Chand and Singh (2022) also discussed sectoral distribution of workers in India and findings of this paper supported the present study. They depicted primary sector provided highest number of employment (45.6%), whereas secondary and tertiary sector provided (23.7%) and (30.8%) employment to workers, respectively.

The gender-wise distribution of workers showed that majority of female workers were engaged in primary sector. Around eight female workers out of ten is engaged in primary sector. Hence, primary sector is female dominated and secondary and tertiary sector is male dominated in Jammu and Kashmir state. In case of overall population, primary sector is dominated by female workers, but in case of youth workers (15-29 age group), the share in secondary and tertiary sector is 21.8 and 13.3 per cent.

### 3. Conclusions and Way Forward

This way, we can conclude that Jammu and Kashmir's workers are switching from the tertiary sector to secondary and primary sectors, showing a structural reverse transformation of the state economy at a creeping rate. Therefore, policy makers must reorient their policy to further strengthen the tertiary sectors for providing quality employment to qualified and more ambitious workers near their home base to minimize the cost of displacement for work-related activities. Approximately 62.63 per cent of GVA share was generated from tertiary sector with 31.3 per cent of the workforce in 2020-21. Hence govt should focus on developing more employment opportunities in the service sector.

The sudden dip in workers share in tertiary sector may impact the Covid-19 pandemic and it is likely to take a more normal course in the near future. That means the share of workers in the primary sector would continue to decline, and in the secondary and tertiary sectors it would improve. However, the tertiary sector is the second parking lot of labour force. This academic literature and empirical evidences from across the world suggest that the declining share of primary sector is a welcome sign of the maturing economy, and Jammu and Kashmir is following a well-trodden path in this regard with the reflection of stagnant worker's share in primary sector for the overall population.

Figures depict that the state economy's unemployment rate is increasing over the years. However, solely focusing on the unemployment rate to gauge the labour market condition could be misleading. Unemployment hides much more than it reveals. Hence, it is time for the concerned policymakers to pay attention to all the indicators focusing on LFPR and WPR as well. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, employment policies should also focus on increasing LFPR and WPR. The continuous increasing female WPR depicts the increasing contribution of women workers in level of employment. It is a good sign. This process (increasing WPR) might trigger the unemployment rate initially, but it will eventually help to solve the larger problem of labour markets and provide access to reap demographic dividends to the economies.

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