

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2003-04 provides data on (a) age, sex, marital status, literacy, level of education and migration of the population, (b) dimensions of country's labour force, such as (i) employed labour force classified by industry, formal & informal sectors, occupation, employment status, hours worked and level of education, (ii) occupational safety and health information of the employed persons, and (iii) unemployed labour by level of education and previous experience. Some of the main findings are outlined as under:

A. Literacy and Employment

- i) Literacy rate improves from 50% in 2001-02 to 52% in 2003-04. Improvement in females literacy is relatively more pronounced as compared to that of males, particularly, in urban areas. However, females are yet to catch up with the historical lead of males.
- ii) Participation rate reflects marginal increase from 29.6% of 2001-02 to 30.4% in 2003-04. The improvement is chiefly rural based. Males fare evenly in rural and urban areas while female participation recedes in urban areas. Comparative participation rates notch up significantly (37.4 vs 38.5%) if female participation is augmented with a set of specific activities performed within house premises. Among the provinces, Punjab has the highest participation rate.
- iii) An analysis of the structure of employment by industry exhibits rise in the share of agriculture sector from 42% in 2001-02 to 43% in 2003-04. Male employment loses a wee bit while that of female scales more than 2% up. Non-agriculture sector such as manufacturing, services, transport and construction descend a bit during 2003-04. Loss in the employability of secondary and tertiary activities, in conjunction with female-led rise in primary (agricultural) activities presages receding frontier of organized economy.
- iv) The employment status indicates that the categories of employees, self-employed and unpaid family helper constitute, in the same order, 99% of the total employment. The foremost is down a bit from 40% in 2001-02 to 38% in 2003-04, steeper for females (37 Vs 31%) than males (40 Vs 39%). The middle one also comes down, though not for women, from 39 to 37% during the same period. The lattermost, home to over one-half of women, scales up (21 Vs 24%) steeper for females (47 Vs 53%) vis-à-vis males (16 Vs 18%) during the comparative periods. The situation obliquely points out to increasing expanse of informal activities.
- v) Working hours of the employed persons show that more than 80% worked beyond the watershed "35 hours a week". Of these, a large proportion (31%), constitutes the top slab of "56 hours or more a week". All this bespeaks prevalence of "less than subsistence wages" in the job market.

Urban workers are relatively more over burdened than their rural compatriots.

- vi) Unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of unemployed to the total labour force. The data shows that overall unemployment rate has decreased from 8.3% in 2001-02 to 7.7% in 2003-04, due, mainly, to steeper decline in women's unemployment (16.5 Vs 12.8%) vis-à-vis that of men (6.7 Vs 6.6%). The unemployment rate in 2003-04 whittles down to 8.9% if persons worked less than 15, as against 35, hours during the reference week are treated as unemployed. Unemployment has receded during the comparative periods, steeply for rural areas and fair sex. As for age specific unemployment, the three early age groups (10-24) exhibit women-led decline in unemployment overtime. Men's unemployment has also shrunk except for the latter most (20-24) interval. The seven age groups between 25 to 59 years reflect mildly rising men-led profile of unemployment over time save for the fourth (40-44) and last two (50-59) age interval. Women's unemployment has consistently been on decline across the constituent age intervals. Unemployment has thus receded during the comparative periods, steeply for rural areas and fair sex.

B. Informal Sector

- vii) Informal sector during 2003-04 accounts for 70% of the employment in main jobs outside agriculture sector, higher (73%) in rural area than that of urban areas (67%). Formal sector activities are more concentrated in urban areas (33%) as compared to rural areas (27%). Male workers are relatively more concentrated in informal sector both in rural and urban areas of the country. Informal sector's employment has surged by five percentage points from 65% in 2001-02 to 70% in 2003-04, across the area & gender evenly.
- viii) According to classification of the informal sector employment by major industry divisions, the largest slice (35%) goes to wholesale and retail trade followed by manufacturing sector (21%), community, social and personal services (19%), construction (13%) and transport (11%). The other categories including mining & quarrying; electricity, gas & water and finance, insurance, real estate & business services account for less than two percent. Comparative Labour Force Surveys indicate relative decline in all categories except "wholesale and retail trade" and "others" grouping. Both groups reflect relative rise in the male employment.

C. Occupational Safety & Health

- ix) Questions on occupational safety and health, introduced firstly in Labour Force Survey for 2001-02, are asked from the employed persons ten years of age and above. About one out of thirty-three (2.8%) employed persons has reported some sort of occupational injury/disease. Explicably, the percentage suffered finds male workers (3.2%) more vulnerable relative to female workers (1%). Same holds for rural workers (3.1%) vis-à-vis urban workers (2.2%). Nevertheless, urban women (0.5%) is much more shielded in comparison with her rural and urban compatriots of same and opposite sex. Susceptibility to occupational hazards has improved over time across the area and gender. However, the lot of urban women has improved most eminently.
- x) As for occupational grouping, majority of sufferers (38.8%) are concentrated in skilled agriculture and fishery activities. Comparative survey figures (38% Vs 39%) don't bespeak improvement over time. Women's exposure to risk has increased from one and half (56 Vs 36%) of men's in 2001-02 to more the twice (76 Vs 36%) in 2003-04. Since three-fourth of women victims belong to this group, one need not be feminist to get alarmed. Craft & related trade activities and elementary occupations are the next major occupational groups (21%) followed by legislators, senior officials & managers (6%) and plant and machine operators & assemblers (6%).
- xi) Majority of sufferers falls in the category of self-employed, The comparative proportions (46% in 2001-02 Vs 49% of 2003-04) adduce risk as increasing function of time for self employed. Men's exposure to risk has increased whereas that of women declined steeply. The second important category is employees (41%) followed by unpaid family helpers (10%). Both groups seem to be improving over time. The former reflects sharp improvement in the lot of women (27% in 2001-02 Vs 7% in 2003-04). The latter-home to majority of women sufferers-paints acutely rising exposure to risk from four times (41% Vs 10% in 2001-02) to more than eleven time (68% Vs 6%) as higher as that of men. This bespeaks "much lesser half" status of the female unpaid family helpers.
- xii) It is observed that majority (61%) of the sufferers workers are reported to have consulted a doctor or other medical professionals. Of the total, 19% have taken time off work and 12% have been hospitalized. Women have got more savvy for doctor's advice relative to men (64 Vs 61%). Similarly, women appear to be better disposed to take time off work (21 Vs 19%). However, the incidence of hospitalization has declined gender-neutrally during the comparative periods. 8% did not avail themselves any of the aforementioned option.