



Garment worker in Udaipur, Rajasthan.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet South Asia



# Home-Based Workers in India: A Statistical Profile

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Between 2011-12 and 2017-18, the number of home-based workers decreased significantly. The drop was greater than the drop in India's total employment and was largely due to the significant decrease in the employment of women in home-based agricultural work.

In India, the number of home-based workers was 47.14 million in 2004-05 and 49.20 million in 2011-12 (**table 1**).<sup>1</sup> In both years, home-based work comprised 11 per cent of

total employment. By 2017-18, the estimated number of home-based workers had decreased to 41.85 million or 9 per cent of employment. This reduction of 7.35 million home-based

workers during the six-year period is greater than the 6.2 million decline in India's total employment – from 467.7 million to 461.5 million workers.

**Table 1: Home-based workers in total, agriculture and non-agriculture employments by sex in India, 2004-5 to 2017-18: Numbers in millions and per cent of employment in parentheses**

Year	Total			Agriculture			Non-Agriculture		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
2004-05	47.14 (10.5)	27.54 (19.2)	19.60 (6.4)	15.40 (6.1)	12.74 (12.2)	2.66 (1.8)	31.74 (16.3)	14.80 (38.0)	16.94 (10.8)
2011-12	49.20 (10.5)	25.48 (20.1)	23.72 (7.0)	11.15 (5.0)	9.02 (11.5)	2.13 (1.5)	38.05 (15.6)	16.46 (34.1)	21.59 (11.0)
2017-18	41.85 (9.1)	17.19 (16.4)	24.66 (6.9)	8.62 (4.4)	4.71 (8.2)	3.91 (2.9)	33.23 (12.4)	12.48 (26.5)	20.75 (9.4)

<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this brief are from the 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey and the 2011-12 and 2004-2005 Surveys of Employment and Unemployment. All are conducted by the India National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO).

## About this Brief

This is an update of an earlier brief, *Home-based Workers in India: Statistics and Trends* published in 2013.\* The present version is different than the earlier brief in several important ways. First, agricultural home-based workers are now included. Second, contributing family workers in this version are identified as dependent home-based workers. This follows the new standard set by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in the International Classification of Status in Employment-18 (ICSE-18). Previously, contributing family workers were classified as self-employed but in the new classification they are dependent workers because they do not have complete authority or control over the economic unit for which they work. A third point reflects the changes in the India labour force survey. The earlier data were based on the Survey of Employment and Unemployment conducted every five years. The 2017-18 is based on the Periodic Labour Force Survey conducted quarterly by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). The sample size of the new survey is smaller than that of the earlier surveys. This may lead to problems with the enumeration of home-based workers – a set of workers who are challenging to enumerate. Finally, there is special interest in a particular group of home-based workers: sub-contracted homeworkers. However the present survey, as well as the 2011-12 survey, did not have data elements for identifying this group of workers. As the ICSE-18 includes the new status category, dependent contractor, future labour force surveys should provide the data needed to identify this category of home-based workers.

\* Govindan Raveendran, Ratna Sudarshan and Joann Vanek. 2013. *Home-based Workers in India: Statistics and Trends*, WIEGO Statistical Brief no.10.

In 2004-5, 15.4 million home-based workers were in agriculture and twice as many (31.74 million) were in non-agricultural activities. By 2017-18, home-based work in agriculture decreased significantly to 8.52 million workers but home-based employment in non-agricultural activities increased somewhat to 33.23 million workers. As a share of total employment, both agricultural and non-agricultural home-based work declined over the 13 years: agricultural home-based work declined from 6 per cent to 4 per cent, while

non-agricultural home-based work declined from 16.3 per cent to 12 per cent.

Perhaps the most significant trend in table 1 is the drop in agricultural home-based work among women. In 2004-5, 12.74 million women were in agricultural home-based work; by 2017-18, the number had dropped to 4.71 million. As a share of women's employment in agriculture, women's home-based work declined from 12 to 5 per cent during the 13-year period. By contrast, the employment of

### Box 1: Defining home-based workers

Place of work is the main variable used for the identification of home-based workers. Any worker whose location of work is own dwelling, a structure attached to the dwelling, or a detached structure/open area adjacent to the dwelling within the homestead land is a home-based worker. In India, the place of work question was not asked to those engaged in crop production. Home-based workers in agriculture are thus comprised by those engaged in

- animal production;
- support activities to agriculture and post-harvest crop activities;
- hunting, trapping and related service activities.

men in agricultural home-based work increased from 2.66 million to 3.91 million workers and from 2 to 3 per cent.

The pattern was similar for non-agricultural home-based work. Among women the drop was much smaller in number than it was in agriculture – from 14.8 million to 12.48 million – but the drop as a percentage of women's non-agricultural employment was from 38 to 22 per cent. Among men, although there was an increase in absolute number from 16.94 million to 20.75 million workers: in percentage terms, though, there was a drop from 11 to 9 per cent of men's non-agricultural employment.

**Table 2: Home-based workers by sex and rural and urban in India, 2004-5 to 2017-18: Numbers in millions and per cent share in parentheses**

Year	Total		Women		Men	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
2004-05	14.20 (30.1)	32.94 (69.9)	6.70 (24.3)	20.83 (75.7)	7.50 (38.3)	12.10 (61.7)
2011-12	18.24 (37.1)	30.96 (62.9)	8.15 (32.0)	17.33 (68.0)	10.09 (42.5)	13.63 (57.5)
2017-18	17.00 (40.6)	24.86 (59.4)	6.78 (39.4)	10.42 (60.6)	10.22 (41.4)	14.44 (58.6)

Throughout the 13-year period, the percentage of home-based workers in rural areas declined while the share in urban areas increased. In 2004-5, 70 per cent of home-based workers were in rural areas; by 2017-18 the share had decreased to 59 per cent (**table 2**). The same pattern was visible among both women and

men workers, though the magnitude of change was much larger in the case of women. In 2017-18, 39 per cent of women home-based workers were in urban areas, up from 24 per cent in 2004-5; among men, 41 per cent were in urban areas, up from 38 per cent.

### Independent Self-employed and Dependent Homeworkers

Independent home-based workers represent a larger share of home-based workers than dependent home-based workers. They also represent an increasing share of home-based work due mainly to increases in women working as independent home-based workers.

The share of independent home-based workers increased from 61 per cent in 2004-05 to 75 per cent in 2017-18 (**table 3**). This increase is due mainly to changes among women home-

based workers. Among women, 49 per cent of home-based workers were independent in 2004-05 and the share increased to 67 per cent by 2017-18. Among men, the increase was only



*A home-based worker in Delhi.  
Photo by Rashmi Choudhary*

from 78 per cent to 81 per cent. A larger share of women in home-based work than men are dependent. In 2004-5, 51 per cent of women were dependent home-workers in comparison

**Table 3: Home-based workers by sex and dependency, 2004-05 to 2017-18: Numbers in millions and per cent share in parentheses**

Year	Total			Women			Men		
	Total	Independent	Dependent	Total	Independent	Dependent	Total	Independent	Dependent
2004-05	47.14 (100.0)	28.90 (61.3)	18.24 (38.7)	27.53 (100.0)	13.58 (49.3)	13.96 (50.7)	19.60 (100.0)	15.33 (78.2)	4.28 (21.8)
2011-12	49.21 (100.0)	35.50 (72.2)	13.70 (27.8)	25.48 (100.0)	16.02 (62.9)	9.46 (37.1)	23.72 (100.0)	19.49 (82.1)	4.24 (17.9)
2017-18	41.85 (100.0)	31.57 (75.4)	10.28 (24.6)	17.19 (100.0)	11.50 (66.9)	5.70 (33.1)	24.66 (100.0)	20.08 (81.4)	4.58 (18.6)

## Box 2: Identifying independent and dependent home-based workers

Home-based workers may be either independent or dependent workers. Independent home-based workers are employers or self-employed with no employees, referred to as own account workers.<sup>2</sup> Dependent workers include employees, contributing family workers and sub-contracted piece-rate workers. Sub-contracted piece-rate workers have contractual arrangements of a commercial nature to provide goods or services for another economic unit, are not employees of that economic unit but are dependent on that unit for the organization and execution of that work and for access to the market.<sup>3</sup> They are also referred to as homeworkers. The labour force surveys used for this brief did not capture the information needed to identify homeworkers/subcontracted workers. Sub-contracted piece-workers are often misclassified as independent home-based workers.

<sup>2</sup> Contributing family workers were classified as self-employment under the previous International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93). However, under ICSE-93, contributing family work is considered a dependent work arrangement and these workers are therefore considered as dependent in this analysis.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Office (ILO) 2018. Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships. 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), Geneva.

to only 18 per cent of men. However, throughout the period, the percentage of women in home-based work who were dependent workers decreased to 33 per cent in 2017-18. For men, there was little change in the percentage who were dependent workers, a decrease from 22 per cent to 19 per cent.

The majority of women home-based workers and an even higher percentage of men home-based workers are own account workers (**table 4**). Among women 66 per cent are own-account workers and among men 75 per cent. However as noted in box 2, it is likely that some of these

workers are misclassified and are dependent. A very small share of home-based workers were employers—less than 1 per cent among women and 4 per cent among men. A large share of home-based workers are contributing family workers: 18 per cent in comparison to 7 per cent of other dependent workers. There is a large difference between the shares of women and men home-based workers in contributing family work: 28 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men. But even for men, contributing family workers represent a larger share of home-based workers than employees which are only 8 per cent.

**Table 4: Distribution of home-based workers by status in employment and sex, 2017-18: Numbers in millions and per cent in parentheses**

All Home-Based Workers	
<b>Independent</b>	<b>31.57 (75.5)</b>
Employer	1.16 (2.8)
Own account worker	30.41 (72.7)
<b>Dependent</b>	<b>10.28 (24.5)</b>
Contributing family worker	7.38 (17.6)
Employees	2.90 (6.9)
Women Home-Based Workers	
<b>Independent</b>	<b>11.50 (66.8)</b>
Employer	0.13 (0.7)
Own account worker	11.37 (66.1)
<b>Dependent</b>	<b>5.70 (33.1)</b>
Contributing family worker	4.84 (28.1)
Employees	0.86 (5.0)
Men Home-Based Workers	
<b>Independent</b>	<b>20.07 (81.4)</b>
Employer	1.03 (4.2)
Own account worker	19.04 (77.2)
<b>Dependent</b>	<b>4.59 (18.6)</b>
Contributing family worker	2.55 (10.3)
Employees	2.04 (8.3)

## Industry

The number of home-based workers in manufacturing decreased significantly between 2011-12 and 2017-18. And, as a share of total employment, home-based workers in manufacturing declined from 36 to 27 per cent. By contrast, the number of home-based workers in services increased substantially for both women and men, although as a share of total employment, home-based work in services remained at 11 per cent. These shifts reflect decreases in manufacturing and increases in services, especially construction, in the Indian workforce.

The most recent survey shows the composition of home-based work across the major industry categories as: 38 per cent in the manufacturing sector, 39 per cent in the service sector, and the remaining 23 per cent in agriculture and other industries (**table 5**). The number of home-based workers in manufacturing increased from 19.40 million in 2004-05 to 21.04 million in 2011-12 but decreased significantly to 15.84 million by 2017-18. A large share of this reduction was among women home-based workers as the reduction in numbers was 3.32 million among women and only 1.87 million among men between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

The three manufacturing sub-groups with the largest percentages of home-based workers are (i) wearing apparel (10%); (ii) textiles (9%); and (iii) food products and beverages (7%). Together, these three sub-groups account for 26 per cent of home-based workers in manufacturing in the year 2017-18. The percentage of home-based workers engaged in manufacturing wearing apparel increased between 2004-5

and 2017-18, but the percentage of those in manufacturing textiles and tobacco products decreased. The percentage of women home-based workers in these three manufacturing sub-groups increased from 28 to 43 per cent during these years, while the share of men decreased from 20 to 13 per cent.

The importance of the manufacturing sector in home-based work declined through the period. By contrast, the numbers of home-based workers in the service sector increased from 12 million to 16.3 million workers, representing an increase from 25 to 39 per cent of all home-based workers. Among women, the numbers increased only slightly – from 3.6 to 3.7 million workers – but this represents a substantial increase in the percentage of women home-based workers, from 13 to 22 per cent. Among men home-based workers, the numbers in services increased significantly from 8.3 to 12.6 million workers and the percentage from 42 to 51 per cent.



*This kitemaker in Ahmedabad makes 1,000 kites a day in her small home. Photo by Paula Bronstein, Getty Images Reportage*

Trade is the most important activity within the service sector. The percentage of trade among home-based workers in the service sector increased from 13 to 24 per cent. The increase was reflected among both women (from 6 to 12 per cent) and men (from 23 to 32 per cent). The other service categories with increased numbers and percentages of home-based workers were (i) hotels & restaurants; (ii) transport, storage & communication; (iii) real estate, renting & other business activities; and (iv) education.



Garment worker in Bikaner, Rajasthan.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet South Asia

Among home-based workers, across industry sectors, the largest but consistently decreasing percentage are in agriculture: representing 33 to 21 per cent of home-based workers in 2004-05 and 2017-18, respectively. The decrease was almost solely among women home-based workers (from 46 to 27 per cent), while among men there was only a slight increase (from 14 to 16 per cent).

Table 5 reports the composition of home-based work by industry sub-categories. Table 6 reports the significance of home-based workers as a share of total employment in the industry

**Table 5: Home-based workers by industry and sex, 2004-05 to 2017-18: Per cent distribution**

Industry Group	Total			Women			Men		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
<b>Manufacturing million and (per cent)</b>	<b>19.40 (41.2)</b>	<b>21.04 (42.8)</b>	<b>15.84 (37.8)</b>	<b>11.14 (40.5)</b>	<b>12.06 (47.3)</b>	<b>8.74 (50.8)</b>	<b>8.27 (42.2)</b>	<b>8.97 (37.8)</b>	<b>7.10 (28.8)</b>
Wearing apparel	7.5	10.1	10.1	8.3	11.9	16.2	6.3	8.0	5.9
Textiles	9.6	9.1	8.6	9.6	10.7	11.2	9.6	7.5	6.8
Tobacco products	7.4	8.4	6.6	10.0	13.8	15.2	3.6	2.6	0.6
Food products & beverages	3.1	3.3	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.2	4.1	4.0	2.8
Furniture	2.4	1.3	2.3	1.9	0.0	1.5	3.2	2.6	2.9
Wood & products of wood	5.8	3.7	2.3	4.8	3.1	2.0	7.3	4.3	2.6
Other non-metallic mineral products	2.0	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.0	0.9	3.1	1.6	2.4
Fabricated metal products	0.8	1.1	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	1.7	1.9	1.8
Tanning & dressing of leather	0.6	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.2	1.1	0.4	1.1
Other manufacturing industries	2.0	4.3	1.6	1.8	3.8	1.2	2.2	4.9	1.9
<b>Services million (per cent)</b>	<b>11.98 (25.4)</b>	<b>16.73 (34.0)</b>	<b>16.31 (39.0)</b>	<b>3.64 (13.2)</b>	<b>4.37 (17.2)</b>	<b>3.71 (21.6)</b>	<b>8.34 (42.6)</b>	<b>12.36 (52.1)</b>	<b>12.60 (51.1)</b>
Trade	13.2	19.9	23.7	6.2	8.9	12.1	23.1	31.7	31.8
Other community, social & personal services	3.6	3.9	3.5	2.5	2.5	2.4	5.3	5.5	4.4
Hotels & restaurants	1.7	2.9	2.9	1.4	2.1	2.2	2.1	3.7	3.4
Transport, storage & communication	2.0	1.5	2.5	0.2	0.1	0.0	4.4	3.0	4.2
Real estate, renting & business activities	1.2	1.8	2.3	0.2	0.2	0.6	2.6	3.4	3.5
Education	2.5	2.3	2.8	2.3	2.6	3.7	2.7	2.1	2.1
Others	1.2	1.7	1.3	0.4	0.8	0.6	2.4	2.7	1.7
<b>Agriculture &amp; Other Industries million and (per cent)</b>	<b>15.75 (33.4)</b>	<b>11.44 (23.2)</b>	<b>9.71 (23.2)</b>	<b>12.76 (46.3)</b>	<b>9.05 (35.5)</b>	<b>4.74 (27.6)</b>	<b>2.99 (15.3)</b>	<b>2.39 (10.1)</b>	<b>4.97 (20.1)</b>
Agriculture	32.7	22.6	20.6	46.2	35.4	27.4	13.6	9.0	15.9
Others	0.7	0.6	2.6	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.7	1.1	4.2

**Table 6: Home-based workers as per cent of total employment by industry and sex, 2004-2018**

Industry Group	Total			Women			Men		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>69.0</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>64.0</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>15.5</b>
Wearing apparel	47.4	51.8	42.7	79.5	77.7	72.2	27.1	33.8	23.9
Textiles	47.1	49.4	41.4	72.8	76.8	69.3	31.4	32.1	28.3
Tobacco products	80.1	91.4	86.3	82.5	92.9	91.4	71.8	83.9	43.7
Food products & beverages	26.3	26.9	17.8	46.3	46.1	34.0	19.5	20.8	14.2
Furniture	25.8	26.0	19.9	76.4	49.9	56.3	16.8	25.8	16.2
Wood & products of wood	54.6	48.3	32.4	91.2	89.9	89.9	39.9	35.3	24.1
Other non-metallic mineral products	22.1	12.9	18.4	32.9	27.0	26.3	18.6	9.6	17.0
Fabricated metal products	14.7	17.4	9.7	44.2	35.9	34.4	13.3	16.1	9.1
Tanning & dressing of leather	22.4	8.7	23.4	32.3	9.3	17.6	20.4	8.6	24.4
Other manufacturing industries	9.8	14.0	4.9	36.3	47.6	15.7	5.3	8.8	3.8
<b>Services</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>10.3</b>
Trade	14.6	20.4	19.4	35.4	43.1	39.1	11.9	17.6	17.2
Other community, social & personal services	46.8	41.5	24.8	51.2	33.7	14.5	44.3	47.0	33.8
Hotels & restaurants	13.6	17.9	13.4	34.4	43.4	23.9	8.6	13.2	11.2
Transport, storage & communication	5.1	3.5	4.2	11.4	3.2	1.2	4.9	3.5	4.3
Real estate, renting & business activities	12.0	10.2	6.9	10.3	5.8	5.8	12.2	10.8	7.1
Education	13.0	14.0	14.6	60.0	65.2	55.9	6.7	6.9	7.6
Others	2.1	2.5	1.4	1.0	1.6	0.7	2.8	3.1	1.9
<b>Agriculture &amp; Other Industries</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Agriculture	6.1	5.0	4.4	12.2	11.5	8.2	1.8	1.5	2.9
Others	1.2	0.5	1.9	0.6	0.3	0.5	1.3	0.6	2.0



Garment worker in Udaipur, Rajasthan.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet South Asia

categories. The share of home-based workers in relation to total employment in the respective industry categories decreased significantly in manufacturing – from 36 per cent in 2011-12 to 27 per cent in 2017-18. Further, home-based work represented a decreasing share of agriculture employment – from 6 to 4 per cent – but the share in services remained at around 11 per cent. Generally, home-based workers comprise a decreasing share of employment in each sub-category within the major groups except in the following: (i) tobacco; (ii) tanning & dressing of leather; (iii) trade; (iv) transport, storage & communication; and (v) education.

**Table 7: Percentage distribution of home-based workers by marital status, age and sex, 2017-18**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15-24</b>	<b>25-34</b>	<b>35-44</b>	<b>45-54</b>	<b>55+</b>
<b>All</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>16.3</b>
Single	13.5	8.9	3.5	0.7	0.3	0.2
Married	79.9	3.2	20.1	24.7	18.3	13.7
Widowed	6.0	0.0	0.5	1.2	1.9	2.4
Divorced/separated	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Urban women</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>
Single	12.7	9.6	2.1	0.6	0.2	0.2
Married	73.6	3.9	23.2	26.2	13.5	6.7
Widowed	12.6	0.0	0.9	2.5	3.8	5.4
Divorced/separated	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1
<b>Rural women</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>10.9</b>
Single	11.2	8.9	1.9	0.2	0.1	0.0
Married	78.2	5.8	23.7	24.3	16.4	7.9
Widowed	9.9	0.0	0.8	2.2	4.0	2.9
Divorced/separated	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.0
<b>Urban men</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>20.1</b>
Single	16.7	8.7	6.0	1.1	0.6	0.3
Married	80.8	1.1	16.0	23.8	21.4	18.5
Widowed	2.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.3	1.4
Divorced/separated	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0
<b>Rural men</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>19.3</b>
Single	13.4	8.6	3.6	0.8	0.3	0.2
Married	83.5	2.3	18.9	24.9	19.7	17.7
Widowed	2.7	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.7	1.3
Divorced/separated	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1

The trend for both women and men is similar, with decreasing shares of home-based work in each of the specific categories. The exception for women is home-based work in tobacco and in trade and for men in tanning and dressing of leather, trade and, to a lesser degree, education.

## Age and Marital Status

### Almost three quarters of home-based workers are between ages 25-54.

Most home-based workers (72 per cent) are in the peak employment years of 25-54 (**table 7**). The highest share (27 per cent) are in ages 35-44, and the lowest (12 per cent) in ages 15-24. A significant per cent (16 per cent) of home-based workers are over 55 years of age. The age composition of home-based workers is generally similar for women and men and in urban and rural areas. However, a larger share of men than women home-based workers are aged 55 or older: around 20 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women. However, a somewhat larger share of women home-based workers are between 15-24 years of age: 14 per cent of women in urban and 15 per cent in rural areas, compared to 10 per cent of urban men and 11 per cent of rural men.

Most home-based workers (80 per cent) are married; 14 per cent are single and 7 per cent are widowed or divorced. A higher percentage of men than women are married and slightly more in rural than in urban areas: among men 84 per cent in rural areas and 81 per cent in



**Table 8: Home-based workers by average workweek and percentage distribution of weekly hours of work by sex, rural- urban and dependency, 2017-18**

Category of worker	Average work hours per week	Percentage of workers in different weekly hours of work				
		<=36 hours	37-42 hours	43-52 hours	53-56 hours	57+ hours
<b>All Home-Based Workers</b>						
<b>All</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>23.4</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>52.9</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Urban women	38.9	52.5	17.6	8.4	11.1	10.5
Rural women	38.3	53.2	19.1	9.8	10.9	7.0
<b>All men</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>33.2</b>
Urban men	58.2	8.4	7.8	10.5	32.2	41.2
Rural men	53.6	11.8	10.3	15.6	34.6	27.7
<b>Independent Home-Based Workers</b>						
<b>All</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>26.8</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>49.6</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>10.1</b>
Urban women	39.2	50.2	18.2	7.4	11.7	12.5
Rural women	38.3	49.3	19.4	10.4	12.5	8.4
<b>All men</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>35.9</b>
Urban men	58.3	7.4	7.2	10.9	30.9	43.6
Rural men	54.1	10.4	9.4	14.9	34.8	30.4
<b>Dependent Home-Based Workers</b>						
<b>All</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>59.8</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Urban women	34.8	57.7	16.1	10.6	9.5	6.1
Rural women	38.7	61.0	18.5	8.6	7.7	4.1
<b>All men</b>	<b>51.9</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>21.4</b>
Urban men	57.2	13.1	10.2	8.6	37.9	30.2
Rural men	49.6	18.3	14.3	18.6	33.6	15.2

urban areas, and among women, 78 and 74 per cent. Fewer women than men are single: 13 per cent in urban and 11 per cent in rural areas compared to 17 per cent of men in urban areas and 13 per cent in rural areas. Only 2 per cent of men home-based workers are widowed while, among women, the per cent is significantly higher: 13 per cent in urban areas and 10 per cent in rural areas.

## Hours of work

**Over half (53 per cent) of women home-based workers work as many as 36 hours per week in home-based work alone; over a quarter (29 per cent) of women work 43 hours or more.**

The average workweek for women in home-based work is significantly lower than for men, in both urban and rural areas: an average of 38.5 hours for all women and 55.5 hours for all men (**table 8**). This is only part of the full workweek for home-based women as they also have responsibility for most household and family care responsibilities.

Among women home-based workers, the workweek for over half (53 per cent) is 36 hours or less; over a quarter (29 per cent) worked 43 hours or more. By contrast only 10 per cent of men home-based workers worked only 36 hours or less per week while 80 per cent worked 43 hours or more.

**Table 9: Home-based workers by highest level of education completed, by rural-urban and sex, 2017-18: Per cent distribution**

	Below Primary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
<b>All Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Urban women	33.5	35.7	21.1	9.7
Rural women	47.6	34.9	14.0	3.5
<b>All men</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>12.3</b>
Urban men	18.0	34.8	28.7	18.6
Rural men	26.7	42.1	23.3	7.9
<b>Independent Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>
Urban women	30.2	35.7	22.1	12.0
Rural women	45.6	35.4	14.7	4.3
<b>All men</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>12.1</b>
Urban men	17.6	34.8	28.9	18.8
Rural men	27.0	41.7	23.8	7.5
<b>Dependent Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>7.6</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Urban women	40.9	35.7	18.9	4.5
Rural women	51.6	33.8	12.4	2.1
<b>All men</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>13.0</b>
Urban men	20.0	34.9	27.6	17.5
Rural men	25.4	43.7	21.1	9.8

The average hours worked is somewhat longer for independent than dependent workers, especially among men: among women 39 hours for independent home-based workers and 37 for dependent home-based workers; among men 56 hours and 52 hours respectively. Longer hours for independent than dependent workers are also found among men in rural areas: 54 hours per week for independent workers and 49 hours for dependent. Among women in urban areas, independent home-based workers averaged 39 hours as opposed to 35 for dependent workers. However for men in urban areas and women in rural areas, there is little difference in the length of the workweek between independent and dependent workers.

## Education

**Around 40 per cent of women home-based workers and 23 per cent of men home-based workers have not completed primary education.**

Many home-based workers in India have little or no education (**table 9**). Around 40 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men have less than a primary education. Rural women have lower levels of education than urban women. Nearly one-half of rural women (48 per cent) have not completed primary school, in contrast to 34 per cent of urban woman. Among home-based workers, women's level of education – even in urban areas – is considerably less than men's. Among men in rural areas, 27 per cent have below primary education, compared to



*This incense roller works at home in Ahmedabad.  
Photo by Leslie Vryenhoek*

18 per cent in urban areas. At the opposite end of the education hierarchy, few home-based workers have completed tertiary education. More men have done so than women, and more women and men in urban have done so than their counterparts in rural areas. Around 10 per cent of urban women and 19 per cent of urban men have completed tertiary education.

Dependent homeworkers tend to have lower levels of education than independent workers. Among dependent home-based workers, 36 per cent have less than primary education in comparison to 29 per cent of independent

**Table 10: Average hourly earnings of home-based workers by dependency, urban- rural and sex by average earnings and per cent distribution, 2017-18\* (in rupees)**

	Avg hourly earnings	Earnings strata		
		<=23	23 to 45	>=45
<b>All Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>27.4</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>10.0</b>
Urban women	29.3	58.0	26.6	15.5
Rural women	20.3	71.2	22.5	6.2
<b>All men</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>18.4</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>36.8</b>
Urban men	59.1	14.3	37.8	47.9
Rural men	40.9	21.3	49.5	29.3
<b>Independent Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>28.6</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>10.5</b>
Urban women	29.9	57.4	26.6	16.0
Rural women	20.3	71.0	22.3	6.7
<b>All men</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>38.4</b>
Urban men	60.1	13.9	36.6	49.5
Rural men	41.4	22.4	47.0	30.5
<b>Dependent Home-Based Workers</b>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>52.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>
<b>All women</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Urban women	23.2	63.6	26.8	9.6
Rural women	19.8	73.8	25.3	0.9
<b>All men</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>65.0</b>	<b>20.8</b>
Urban men	44.9	19.6	54.4	26.0
Rural men	36.1	11.7	69.9	18.4

\* Data exclude contributing family workers.

home-based workers. Among dependent as well as independent home-based workers, women have lower education levels than men: 48 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men dependent workers have not completed primary education. For independent workers, the comparable figures are 39 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men.

Among women independent home-based workers, 30 per cent in urban areas and 46 per cent in rural areas have not completed primary education; among women dependent home-based workers, the comparable figures are 41 per cent and 52 per cent. The pattern for men is similar: among dependent homeworkers, 20 per cent in urban areas and 25 per cent in rural areas have not completed primary education; among independent workers, the shares are 18 per cent in urban and 27 per cent in rural areas.

## Income from Employment

### The average hourly earnings of men home-based workers are twice that of women home-based workers.

The average hourly earnings of men home-based workers are 48 rupees in comparison to 24 rupees among women. The average hourly earnings for women are not even half of the recommended minimum wage in India of 46.88 rupees.<sup>4</sup> Average hourly earnings are higher for both men and women in urban than

<sup>4</sup> In India, the recommended minimum wage is 375 rupees per day or 46.88 rupees per hour (assuming an average working duration of eight hours per day.)



Textile worker in West Bengal.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet South Asia

in rural areas. Both in rural and urban areas, men home-based workers earn more than women: 20 rupees in rural areas and 30 rupees in urban areas.

On average, independent home-based workers have higher hourly earnings than dependent home-based workers: 40 in comparison to 33 rupees. The difference in earnings between independent and dependent workers is shown consistently in comparisons of women and men and urban and rural workers. All women



Garment worker in Udaipur, Rajasthan.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet South Asia

independent home-based workers earn 24 rupees per hour while all women dependent home-based workers earn 21 rupees per hour; among men home-based workers, the average hourly earnings are 49 and 39 rupees, respectively.

Two-thirds of women home-based workers but only 18 per cent of men are in the lowest income strata of 23 rupees per hour or less. Among women, slightly fewer independent than dependent home-based workers are in

the lowest strata: 66 per cent in comparison to 70. Among men, only 19 per cent of independent home-based workers and 14 per cent of dependent workers have such low hourly earnings. By contrast, few women are in the highest strata of 45 rupees per hour: 11 per cent of independent home-based workers and 4 per cent of dependent. Among men, however, 38 per cent of independent and 21 per cent of dependent workers are in the highest income strata.

This brief was prepared at the request of and in collaboration with **HomeNet South Asia** (HNSA). HNSA is South Asia's network for home-based workers in the region.

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