

The Labour Force of Pakistan : A Note on the 1961 Census

by

LEE L. BEAN, DANIAL M. FAROOQ and MUSIHUR RAHMAN KHAN*

One of the interesting phenomena evidenced by a rough comparison of the 1951 and 1961 Censuses of Pakistan is that the proportion of the population in the labour force has increased from 30.7 per cent to 32.6 per cent. This is surprising from the demographic point of view, since it is well known that under the mortality and fertility conditions extant in Pakistan the likelihood of a proportionate increase in available supply of manpower is low [1]¹. Specifically, with a high fertility rate the proportion of the population available as manpower will be low [2; 2a]. Mortality improvements from a high initial level of mortality typically make a population still younger and reduce the proportion at working age. Thus it is unusual that the comparison of the 1951 and 1961 Censuses would indicate an increase in the proportionate size of the labour force of Pakistan, since mortality has been declining in Pakistan and there is no evidence that fertility has declined.

TABLE I

AGRICULTURAL AND NONAGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE (12 YEARS AND OVER) PAKISTAN AND PROVINCES, 1951 AND 1961

Area	Year	1951		1961	
		Number	Per cent in total population	Number	Per cent in total population
<i>Pakistan</i>					
All labour force	...	22,392,684	30.7	29,412,747	32.6
Agricultural labour force	...	16,902,827	23.2	21,746,206	24.1
Non-Agricultural labour force	...	5,489,857	7.5	7,666,541	8.5
<i>East Pakistan</i>					
All labour force	...	12,886,340	30.7	16,858,393	33.2
Agricultural labour force	...	10,715,467	25.6	14,336,496	28.2
Non-Agricultural labour force	...	2,170,873	5.2	2,521,897	5.0
<i>West Pakistan*</i>					
All labour force	...	9,506,344	30.6	12,554,354	31.8
Agricultural labour force	...	6,187,360	19.9	7,409,710	18.8
Non-Agricultural labour force	...	3,318,984	10.7	5,144,644	13.0

* Excluding the Agencies and Special Areas.

Source: [8, Table 45, pp. V-42-43].

* The authors are members of the Demographic Section of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

¹ It is possible, of course, for the proportionate size of the labour force to increase while the proportionate size of the supply of manpower remains constant but only if the conditions of labour change. Specifically such a change may occur if a large body of individuals not in the labour force but available as part of the pool of manpower became employed during the given period of analysis. There is no evidence to suggest that such a change did, in fact, occur in Pakistan between 1951 and 1961.

While theoretically there is no reason to believe that the proportion of the population in the labour force should have increased in Pakistan between 1951 and 1961, the figures have apparently been accepted with no comment. Haroon and Jan, for example, in their review of the *Census Bulletin No. 5* dealing with economic characteristics of the labour force make no comment on this strange phenomenon [3]. This only serves to point out the danger of reviewing data from one census without attempting to compare the results with other data—preferably external comparisons[4, pp. 85-86].

Still, without detailed analysis, the data as indicated in Table I clearly show a rise in the proportion of the population of Pakistan in the labour force between 1951 and 1961; yet when the labour force is broken down by sex, the data indicate a different picture. The proportion of males in the labour force decreased while the proportion of females in the labour force increased in Pakistan. For both East and West Pakistan the proportion of female employment appears to have increased significantly, but most rapidly in terms of agricultural employment (Table II). In fact, a large part of the increase in the proportionate size of the labour force between 1951 and 1961 in Pakistan must be attributed to the remarkable increase in the proportion of females in the agricultural labour force.

As a note of caution, the comment that the female labour force has increased at a rapid rate must be viewed in the context of labour in Pakistan. Female labour force participation rates are relatively low for both 1951 and 1961; the proportionate increase between 1951 and 1961 of the female labour force is, nevertheless, striking—3.8 per cent in 1951 to 8.5 per cent in 1961.

Perhaps the most remarkable case of the increase in the size of the female labour force between 1951 and 1961 as recorded in the censuses is found in the district of Comilla in East Pakistan. In 1951, 80,160 females aged 12 and over were in the labour force; in 1961, 788,446 females aged 12 and over were in the labour force. On the basis of the 1951 and 1961 Census returns the proportionate increase of females in the labour force is 883.6 per cent. This is astounding, particularly in a Muslim nation where *supposedly* the females are subservient [5]².

Nothing has happened between 1951 and 1961 to upset the socio-cultural balance of the country so that opportunities for female employment would be naturally expanded to the point that social change itself would account for this trend. What has happened between 1951 and 1961 is that the census question used to indicate labour force participation has changed [6, pp. 121-148 and

² The problem of subservience of females and its impact on a related problem, fertility is discussed in [5].

TABLE II
AGRICULTURAL AND NONAGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE (12 YEARS AND OVER): PAKISTAN
AND PROVINCES, BY SEX: 1951 AND 1961

Year Area	1951				1961							
	Male		Female		Both sexes		Male		Female		Both sexes	
	Number	% in total population	Number	% in total population	Number	% in total population	Number	% in total population	Number	% in total population	Number	% in total population
Pakistan												
All labour force	21,100,256	54.6	1,292,428	3.8	22,392,684	30.7	25,761,540	54.2	3,651,207	8.5	29,412,747	32.6
Agricultural labour force	15,885,914	41.1	1,016,913	3.0	16,902,827	23.2	18,634,032	39.2	3,112,174	7.3	21,746,206	24.1
Nonagricultural labour force	5,214,342	13.5	275,515	0.8	5,489,857	7.5	7,127,508	15.0	539,033	1.3	7,666,541	8.5
East Pakistan												
All labour force	11,887,080	54.2	999,260	5.0	12,886,340	30.7	14,307,399	54.3	2,550,994	10.4	16,858,393	33.2
Agricultural labour force	9,899,006	45.1	816,461	4.1	10,715,467	25.6	11,997,999	45.5	2,338,497	9.5	14,336,496	28.2
Nonagricultural labour force	1,988,074	9.1	182,799	0.9	2,170,873	5.2	2,309,400	8.8	212,497	0.9	2,521,897	5.0
West Pakistan*												
All labour force	9,213,176	55.1	293,168	2.0	9,506,344	30.6	11,454,141	54.1	1,100,213	6.0	12,554,354	31.8
Agricultural labour force	5,986,908	35.8	200,452	1.4	6,187,360	19.9	6,636,033	31.3	773,677	4.2	7,409,710	18.8
Nonagricultural labour force	3,226,268	19.3	92,716	0.6	3,318,984	10.7	4,818,108	22.8	326,536	1.8	5,144,644	13.0

Source: [8, Table 45, pp. V-42-43.]

* Excluding the Agencies and Special Areas.

appendix on Enumerators' List; 6a, pp. V-IV-21 and Appendix B]. The difference, in the proportion of females in the labour force and consequently the increase in the proportionate size of the labour force may be traced to a simple shift in terminology.

In 1951 the individuals enumerated in the census were asked, directly or indirectly, if they were "self-supporting", partially or in full. If a negative response was given to this "eliminating" or "screening" question, no further occupational questions were asked. Individuals responding "yes" were included in the labour force, including those individuals without work but looking for work. In the 1961 Census the "self-supporting" question was dropped. Instead a different screening question was included: "Are you working?" In contrast to the 1951 Census the enumerators were specifically instructed to include in the working group the females (and others) who were assisting any members of the family in his profession or trade even if they were not remunerated in cash or in kind. Thus for the females, the notion of labour changed completely between 1951 and 1961. In 1951 a female must have been self-supporting or partially self-supporting to be included in the labour force. Given the patriarchal organization of the Pakistan family, it would be very difficult to secure acquiescence to this question.

In 1961, it was only necessary to be *helping* a member of the family in order to be included in the labour force. Self support or partial self support was not a question in the 1961 Census³.

Thus it is quite clear by comparing Tables I and II that Pakistan has not been able to increase the relative size of the labour force between 1951 and 1961. The apparent increase in the proportionate size of the labour force can be attributed to a large extent to the fact that females who were unpaid family workers were excluded from the labour force in 1951 but were included in the 1961 Census⁴.

³ It is interesting that these categories are used in the *Census Bulletin No. 5* [7] although they are not actual categories which can be established directly on the basis of any specific 1961 Census question. Because of the importance of these categories for establishing the size of the labour force in Pakistan and the change between 1951 and 1961, it is unfortunate that Haroon and Jan did not examine the basis for these categories closely. While this note is not meant as a critique of the Haroon and Jan article, it is quite clear that the conclusions reached strongly suggest that an appropriate evaluation of census data cannot be based on only internal comparisons but must also draw on external comparisons. Moreover, it should be remembered that the most appropriate external comparison is another survey of the same population and not, as Haroon and Jan seem to feel, comparison with other countries.

⁴ While some females who were unpaid family workers were included in the 1961 Census, the actual number of females actively engaged in such labour is probably underestimated in Pakistan.

REFERENCES

1. Durand, John D., "Population Structure as a Factor in Manpower and Dependency Problems of Under-developed Countries", *Population Bulletin*, No. 3, October 1953, pp. 1-16.
2. Coale, Ansley J., "The Effects of Changes in Fertility and Mortality in Age Composition", *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, January 1956, pp. 79-101.
- 2a. Keyfitz, Nathan, "Age Distribution as a Challenge to Development", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. LXX, No. 6, May 1965, pp. 659-668.
3. Haroon, Khurshid and Yasmin Azra Jan, "Main Economic Characteristics of the People of Pakistan: Sixth Release From the 1961 Census", *Pakistan Development Review*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Summer 1964, pp. 314-331.
4. Jaffe, A. J., *Handbook of Statistical Methods for Demographers*. (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951).
5. Kirk, Dudley, "Factors Affecting Moslem Natality". Unpublished paper presented at the session on research and evaluation, International Conference on Family Planning Problems, Geneva, August 23-27, 1965.
6. Pakistan, Office of the Census Commissioner, *Pakistan Census, 1951, East Bengal, Reports and Tables*. Vol. 3. (Karachi: Manager of Publications)
- 6a. Pakistan, Office the of Census Commissioner, *Pakistan Census, 1961, East Pakistan*. Vol. 2. (Karachi: Manager of Publications).
7. Pakistan, Office of the Census Commissioner, *Census Bulletin No. 5. 1961 Census*. (Karachi: Manager of Publications).
8. Pakistan, Office of the Census Commissioner, *1961 Census. Vol. 1. Pakistan Population*. (Karachi: Manager of Publications).