



A home-based worker in Nepal.
Photo by Carol Wills



Home-Based Workers in Nepal, 2017/18: A Statistical Profile

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There are over 1.5 million home-based workers in Nepal, who represent 22 per cent of total employment.

In Nepal, there were about 1.01 million non-agricultural and 554,606 agricultural home-based workers, according to the 2017/18 Labor Force Survey. This represents, respectively, 14 and 8 per cent of the employed population aged 15 and older (**table 1**). Non-agricultural home-based work decreased slightly overall from 2008, where there were about 1.09 million home based workers (**figure 1a**). However, the

number of women home-based workers in the non-agricultural sector has risen over time, from 463,516 to 552,148, while the number of men home-based workers fell from about 625,083 to 458,074. This resulted in an increase in the share of women home-based workers, relative to total home-based workers, from 43 per cent in 2008 to 55 per cent in 2017/18 (**figure 1b** page 3).

Figure 1a. Number of non-agricultural home-based workers (HBW) by sex: 2008 and 2017/18

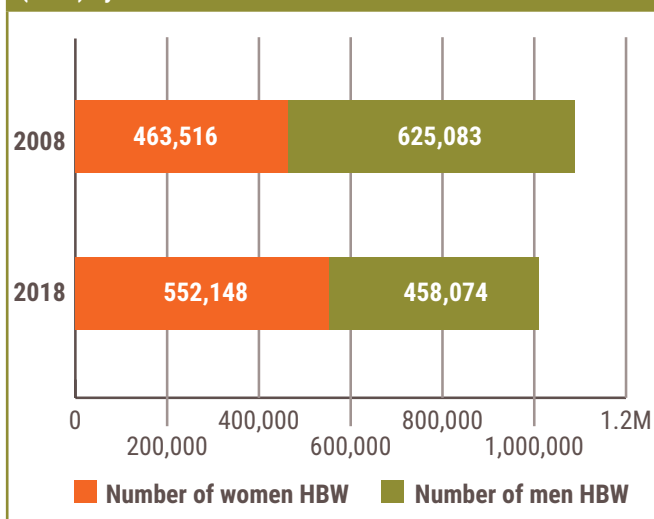


Table 1: Home-based workers in total, agricultural and non-agricultural employment by sex, 2017/18: Numbers and per cent of employment (in parentheses)*

	All	Women	Men
All	1,564,828 (22.1)	912,138 (34.4)	652,690 (14.8)
Non-agriculture	1,010,222 (14.3)	552,148 (20.8)	458,074 (10.4)
Agriculture	554,606 (7.8)	359,990 (13.6)	194,616 (4.4)

* The shares of total employment for women and men were calculated relative to total number of women employed and total number of men employed, respectively.

About this Brief

This brief is an update of *Statistics on Home-Based Workers in Nepal*, published in 2013.¹ Home-based work is employment that takes place in one's own home or in a structure or grounds attached to one's home. The 2013 brief was based on the 2008 Nepal Labor Force Survey (LFS). This brief presents data from the 2017/18 LFS, including some comparisons with the 2008 LFS.² This work differs from the earlier brief in several important ways:

- The earlier brief included statistics only on non-agricultural home-based workers, not those in agricultural home-based work. In the 2008 round, it was not possible to distinguish between crop farming – which should not be included as home-based work – and other types of agricultural work that are included, such as livestock rearing, since they include activities carried out near to the home. The 2017/18 survey provides for this distinction. For this reason, comparisons of the two surveys focus only on non-agricultural home-based work.
- Data on the status in employment of home-based workers are not included. Problems were discovered in the responses to the question on status in employment for home-based workers in the 2017/18 round, as well as in the 2008 survey. An excess of employers, relative to the number of employees, was found among respondents who identified their place of work as “at home” and “structure attached to home”, but not among respondents to the other categories in the place of work question. Errors in the responses of own-account workers may contribute to the over reporting: in businesses with contributing family workers, home-based workers may report themselves as employers rather than as own-account workers if they receive help in their work from other family members. The undercount of employees is more difficult to explain. These problems present strong grounds for adopting the International Classification of Status in Employment 2018 (ICSE-18) in the next LFS in Nepal. The revised classification includes a new category: "dependent contractor". This, along with the ICSE-18's recommendations on clarifying the status categories, should resolve the problems identified in this and the earlier survey.

¹ *Statistics on Home-Based Workers in Nepal* was prepared by Govindan Raveendran and Joann Vanek. It is available on the WIEGO website at <https://www.wiego.org/publications/statistics-home-based-workers-nepal> and on the HomeNet South Asia website at <https://hnsa.org.in/resources/statistical-brief-home-based-workers-nepal>.

² The 2008 and 2017/18 LFS were collected by the Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics. The data are weighted by population adjusted multipliers and are for the population aged 15 and older.



A home-based worker manually draws and twists masses of cotton wool to fabricate yarn. Photo courtesy of HNSA

The share of women in non-agricultural home-based work relative to total women's employment also rose from 8 per cent in 2008 to 21 per cent in 2017/18, whereas for men this share has remained relatively stable, at around 10-11 per cent.

For both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors in 2017/18, home-based work represents a greater percentage of employment for women than for men. For women, non-agricultural and agricultural home-based work account for 21 and 14 per cent of women's total employment respectively; for men, they account for 10 and 4 per cent, respectively.

According to the 2017/18 LFS, the majority of home-based workers are in urban areas (61 per cent) as compared to rural areas (39 per cent) (**table 2**). For women, a total of 562,527 (36 per cent) home-based workers were in urban areas, compared to 349,612 (22 per cent) in rural areas. For men, 262,315 (17 per cent) were in rural areas and 390,375 (25 per cent) in urban areas. The highest concentration of home-based workers in rural and urban, by sex, is urban women in non-agricultural home-based work; they represent about 24 per cent of all home-based workers. The next highest was urban men in non-agricultural home-based work (19 per cent). The lowest concentration of home-based workers was men in agricultural home-based work (about 6 per cent in rural as well as urban areas).

Figure 1b. Women and men non-agricultural home-based workers (HBW) as share of HBW and of employment: 2008 and 2017/18

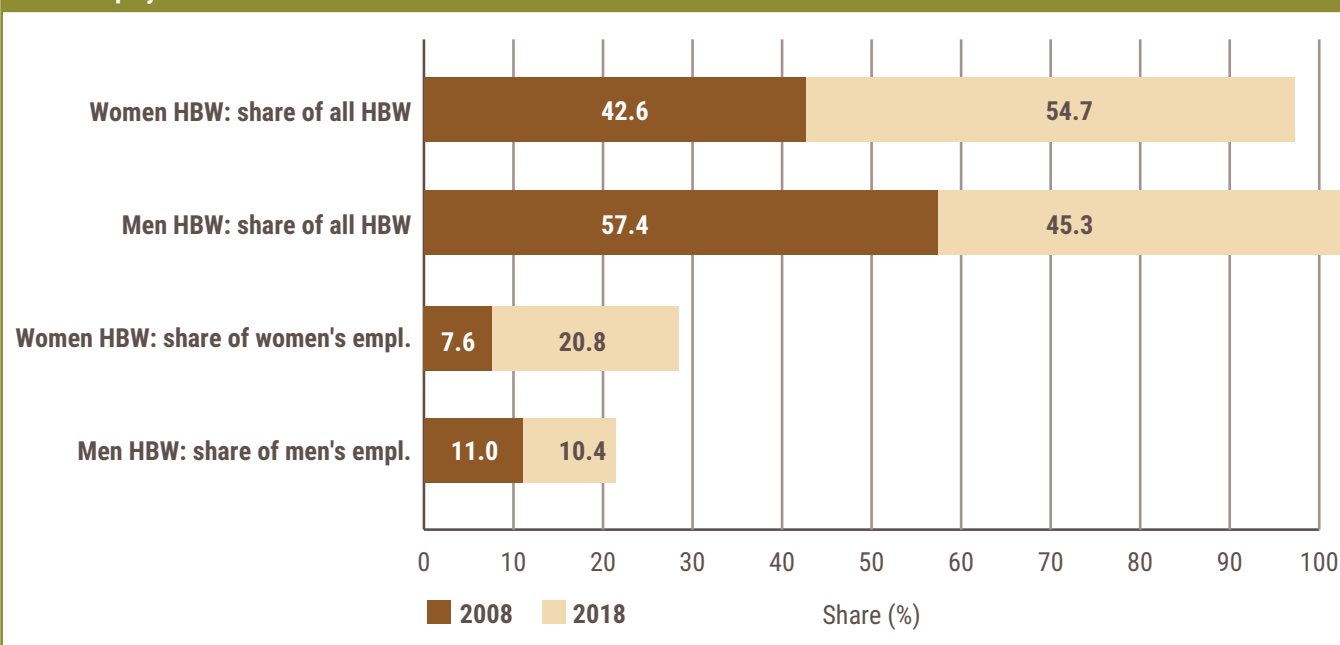
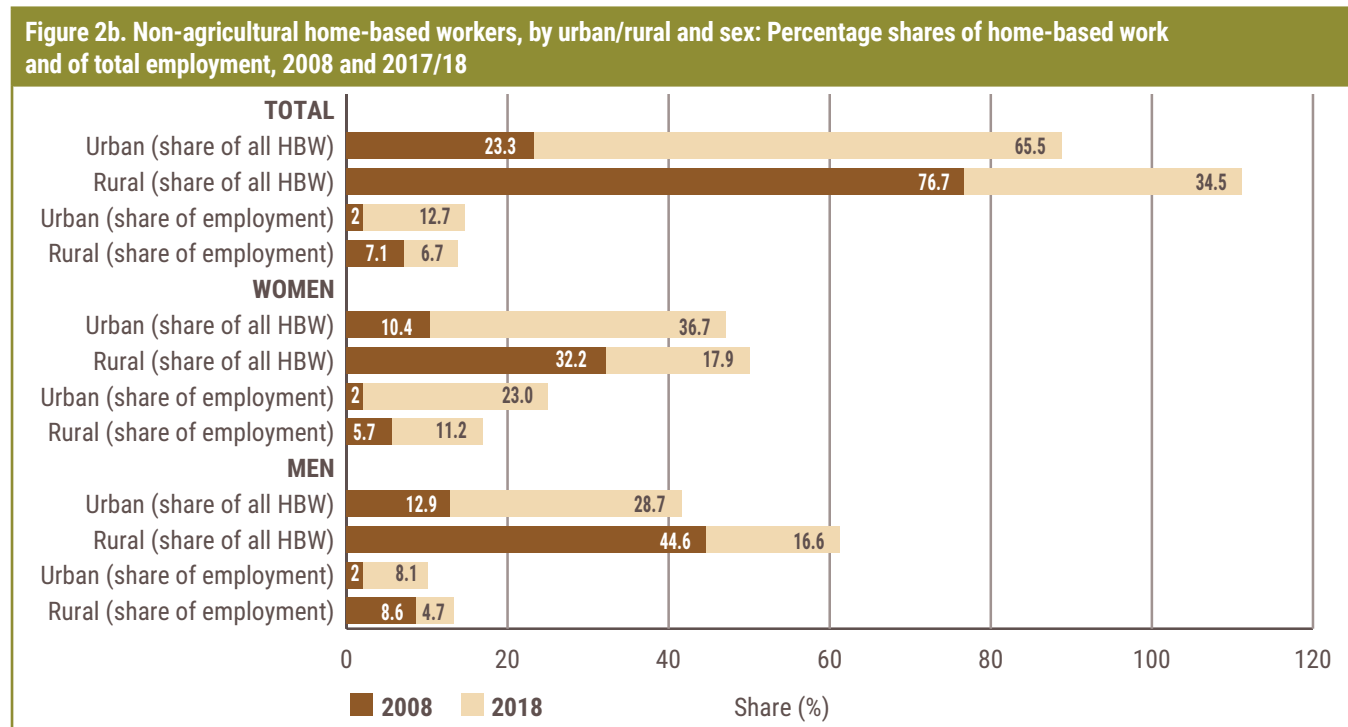
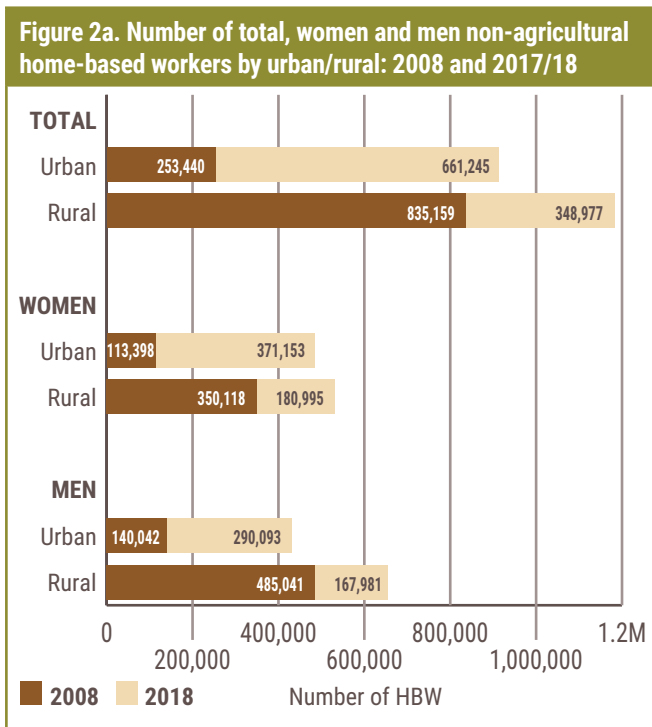


Table 2: Home-based workers (HBW) by agricultural or non-agricultural, urban or rural, and sex: Numbers and percentage share, 2017/18

	All HBW			Agricultural HBW		Non-agricultural HBW	
	Total	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Rural							
Number	611,927	349,612	262,315	168,616	94,334	180,995	167,981
Per cent share of all HBW	39.1	22.3	16.8	10.8	6.0	11.6	10.7
Urban							
Number	952,901	562,527	390,375	191,374	100,282	371,153	290,093
Per cent share of all HBW	60.9	35.9	24.9	12.2	6.4	23.7	18.5

Since 2008, the number of non-agricultural home-based workers in urban areas has risen dramatically (**figures 2a-2b**). In 2008, there were 253,440 urban home-based workers, compared to 835,159 in rural areas; by 2018, the number of urban home-based workers grew to 661,245, while those in rural areas shrank to 348,977 (**figure 2a**). Home-based work increased for both men and women in urban areas. Relative to all home-based workers, the share of urban women home-based workers increased from 10 to 37 per cent between 2008 and 2018, while for urban men, the share increased from 13 to 29 per cent (**figure 2b**).

Home-based work has also become a more important source of employment among women. Among all employed women, the share of women home-based workers has increased in both urban and rural areas, with a greater increase in urban areas (from 2 to 23 per cent) compared to the increase in rural areas (from 6 to 11 per cent). Among all employed men, while the share of urban home-based workers increased from 2 to 8 per cent, it fell from about 9 to 5 per cent among rural home-based workers.



Branch of Economic Activity/Industry

Between 2008 and 2017/18 non-agricultural home-based work shifted to a large degree from manufacturing and towards service sector work in both rural and urban areas.

Between 2008 and 2017/18, rural and urban non-agricultural home-based workers increasingly worked in the services sector (**table 3a** and **3b**). The percentage of urban women in services rose from 54 to 62 per cent; the corresponding increase among rural women was from 43 to 56 per cent. Among men home-based workers, services employment rose from 48 to 66 per cent in urban areas, and 41 to 53 per cent in rural areas.

Box 1: Defining Home-based Work

Home-based work is employment that takes place in one's own home or in a structure or grounds attached to one's home. Home-based work includes a wide range of activities, from professional occupations in the service sector to manufacturing to agricultural work that takes place near to the home. Farming and kitchen gardening are not included as agricultural home-based work. Agricultural home-based work in Nepal consists mainly of raising livestock and, to a lesser degree, support activities to crop production.

Within the services sector, most men and women have been concentrated in retail trade activities. In 2008, around 25 per cent of women and men home-based workers in rural areas and about 32 per cent in urban areas were in retail. By 2017/18, the percentage increased to around 50 per cent for women in both rural and urban areas and for urban men; for rural men, it increased to 39 per cent. Data not shown in tables 3a and 3b indicate that most retail activities involved the selling of food and beverages.

The manufacturing sector work has lost importance for home-based work. The percentage of men and women home-based workers employed in manufacturing declined (from 47 to 38 per cent for urban women; 57 to 44 per cent for rural women; 52 to 34 per cent for urban men; and 59 to 47 per cent for rural men). Much of this decline was in manufacturing that involved basic materials such as wood, paper, metals, chemicals and plastics. The percentage of women home-based workers in food products manufacturing also

Table 3a: Percentage distribution of women non-agricultural home-based workers by industry sector and urban/rural: 2008 and 2017/18

	Women					
	Total		Urban		Rural	
	2008	2017/18	2008	2017/18	2008	2017/18
Manufacturing						
Total number	253,247	219,695	52,692	140,509	200,555	79,187
Per cent	54.6	39.8	46.5	37.9	57.3	43.8
Food products	21.7	11.9	15.5	8.9	23.7	18.0
Textiles	18.6	21.8	19.4	22.0	18.3	21.3
Basic materials (wood, chemicals, etc.)	13.4	2.5	8.7	2.1	14.9	3.3
Final non-textile goods (tools, furniture)	1.9	3.6	2.9	4.9	0.4	1.1
Services						
Total number	210,269	332,453	60,706	230,644	149,563	101,809
Per cent	45.4	60.2	53.5	62.1	42.7	56.2
Wholesale	11.6	2.2	12.1	2.5	11.5	1.6
Retail	26.4	49.9	31.5	50.7	24.7	48.2
Professional activities	3.1	3.0	4.5	3.9	2.7	1.0
Other services	4.3	5.1	5.5	4.9	3.9	5.5
Total number of non-agricultural home-based workers	463,516	552,148	113,398	371,153	350,118	180,995



A home-based worker prepares the colourful threads that will go into the making a silken tapestry featuring Buddha, an important handicraft in Nepal. Photo courtesy of HNSA

declined, although the reverse has occurred for the share of men in this industry. A substantial percentage of women work in the production of textiles, and this increased slightly for urban and rural women from 18-19 per cent of women home-based workers in 2008 to 21-22 per cent in 2017/18. The percentage of men working in textiles is much smaller than for women, but also grew since 2008 (from about 4 per cent to 9 per cent in urban areas, and 6 per cent to 9 per cent in rural areas).

Table 3b: Percentage distribution of men non-agricultural home-based workers by industry sector and urban/rural: 2008 and 2017/18

	Men					
	Total		Urban		Rural	
	2008	2017/18	2008	2017/18	2008	2017/18
Manufacturing						
Total number	359,984	175,641	72,464	97,385	287,520	78,256
Per cent	57.8	39.4	51.7	33.6	59.3	46.6
Food products	3.3	10.3	3.3	9.0	3.3	11.9
Textiles	5.8	8.9	4.1	8.9	6.2	8.9
Basic materials (wood, chemicals, etc.)	42.5	13.3	38.0	7.7	43.7	20.3
Final non-textile goods (tools, furniture)	6.2	6.8	6.4	7.9	6.1	5.4
Services						
Total number	265,099	282,433	67,577	192,708	197,522	89,725
Per cent	42.6	62.3	48.3	66.4	40.7	53.4
Wholesale	6.0	5.2	5.9	5.6	6.1	4.2
Retail	28.6	45.1	33.0	48.0	27.0	38.8
Professional activities	4.6	5.5	4.8	7.0	4.6	2.1
Other services	3.4	6.6	4.5	5.8	3.0	8.3
Total number of non-agricultural home-based workers	625,083	458,074	140,042	290,093	485,041	167,981

Hours of Work

In non-agricultural home-based work, half of men in rural areas and 61 per cent in urban areas work an average of 40 hours or more a week; this is true for more than one third of women. In agricultural home-based work, the average workweeks are shorter, with around one third of men and a little less than one third of women working more than 40 hours. While women home-based workers tend to work fewer hours on average than men, certain categories of workers – specifically, urban women in services – work more hours than men.

The statistics in this section and the brief as a whole focus on market-oriented work. Since women also shoulder disproportionately greater unpaid domestic and care burdens in managing their household and family, it is striking that substantial shares of women home-based workers – at least a third of non-agricultural workers, and about 20 per cent of agricultural workers – work more than 40 hours per week (**table 4**). On average, men tend to work 7-8 hours longer per week than women in non-agricultural home-based work, and 3-4 hours longer in agricultural home-based work. The average workweek in non-agricultural home-based work is about 40 hours for rural men, 46

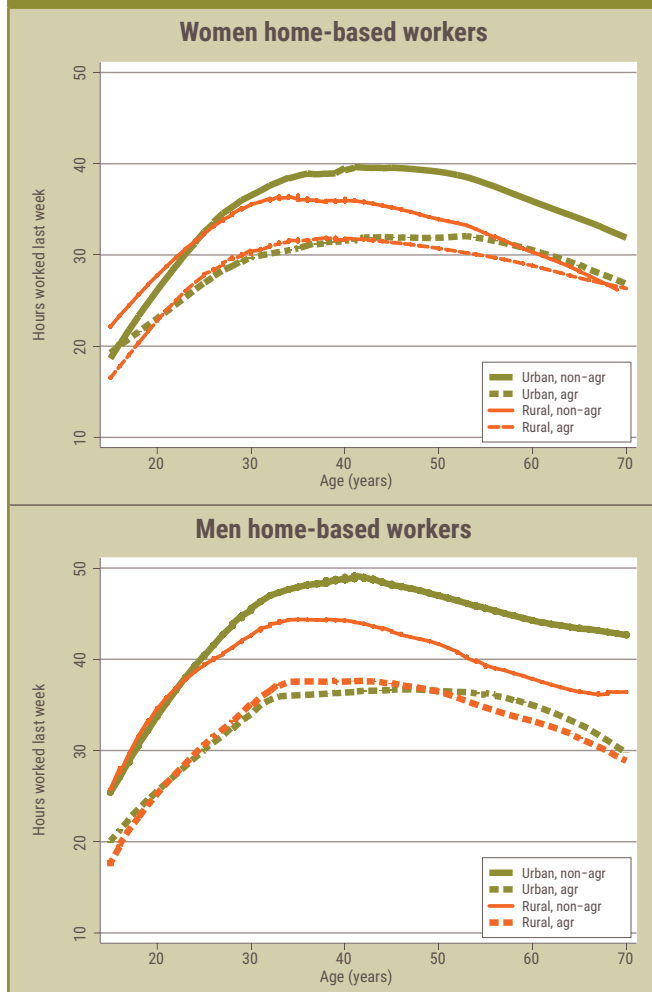
hours for urban men, 33 hours for rural women, and 37 hours for urban women. In agricultural home-based work, the average workweek is about 30 hours for women and about 33 hours for men across both urban and rural areas.

In non-agricultural home-based work, the average weekly hours for women and men tend to be greater in services than in manufacturing. In services, rural and urban, women average 39 and 49 hours per week, respectively,

Table 4: Percentage distribution of home-based workers by hours of work and average hours per week and by industry sector, urban/rural, and sex: 2017/18

	Weekly hours				Average hours/week
	<35	35-40	41-55	56+	
Urban women					
All non-agriculture	44.0	14.0	23.3	18.6	36.8
Manufacturing	52.2	18.2	21.6	7.9	31.7
Services	20.5	9.7	28.8	40.9	48.7
All agriculture	59.5	17.3	17.2	6.0	30.6
Rural women					
All non-agriculture	52.5	11.4	18.1	18.0	33.3
Manufacturing	69.0	12.6	14.6	3.9	25.9
Services	39.7	10.5	20.8	29.0	39.0
All agriculture	64.8	16.8	15.6	2.8	29.5
Urban men					
All non-agriculture	25.5	13.8	25.4	35.3	45.6
Manufacturing	25.6	12.0	27.2	35.2	45.4
Services	25.4	14.7	24.5	35.4	45.8
All agriculture	46.5	20.2	24.8	8.4	33.4
Rural men					
All non-agriculture	34.8	16.0	24.5	24.7	40.2
Manufacturing	42.4	18.4	22.1	17.1	37.0
Services	28.2	13.9	26.7	31.3	43.0
All agriculture	46.4	20.2	24.8	8.7	34.4

Figure 3: Average hours worked in the last week among non-agricultural home-based workers by age, urban/rural and sex: 2017/18



while rural and urban men average 43 and 46 hours per week, respectively. In contrast, in manufacturing, the average is 26 and 32 hours per week, respectively, for rural and urban women and 37 and 45 hours per week, respectively, for rural and urban men. Additionally, urban women in services have

Table 5. Home-based workers by highest educational attainment, urban/rural and sex: Percentage distribution, 2017/18

	Below primary	Primary	Lower secondary	Secondary	Tertiary
Urban women					
All	19.9	12.9	16.1	46.1	5.1
Non-agricultural	14.3	11.6	15.5	52.4	6.2
Agricultural	33.8	15.9	17.6	30.5	2.2
Rural women					
All	23.2	17.5	18.6	40.1	0.7
Non-agricultural	17.6	17.5	18.1	45.7	1.1
Agricultural	31.0	17.6	19.3	32.1	0.0
Urban men					
All	14.7	10.9	17.5	50.3	6.5
Non-agricultural	12.7	10.5	17.0	52.1	7.8
Agricultural	21.7	12.5	19.3	44.4	2.2
Rural men					
All	25.8	11.8	17.1	43.6	1.6
Non-agricultural	27.4	11.3	16.7	42.8	1.8
Agricultural	22.7	12.8	18.0	45.2	1.4

particularly long workweeks, with 41 per cent reporting working over 55 hours; only 35 per cent of urban men in services reported such long hours.

The number of hours worked weekly tended to be higher for those less than 35 years of age for urban and rural women and men in both agriculture and non-agricultural home-based work (**figure 3**). However, the average workweek tended to be lower for both sexes in this age group in rural non-agricultural home-based work than in urban areas.

Education

Among urban men and women home-based workers, more than half have completed secondary level of education or higher. The percentage is greater for workers in non-agricultural than in agricultural home-based work.

A large percentage of home-based workers in Nepal have secondary or tertiary levels of education (**table 5**): among women, 51 per cent

in urban and 41 per cent in rural areas; and among men, 57 per cent in urban and 45 per cent in rural areas. More detailed tabulations not presented in table 5 show that about 23 per cent of women and men home-based workers with secondary or tertiary education are in agriculture; 19 and 27 per cent, respectively, in manufacturing; and 57 and 51 per cent, respectively, in services. Within manufacturing, most were concentrated in textile-related activity. Within services, most were focused in retail.

Home-based workers in agriculture have somewhat lower education levels. The differences across the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors are particularly pronounced for women. In agricultural home-based work, around half of women in both urban and rural areas had completed only primary or less education, while for women in non-agricultural home-based work, this was true for 26 per cent in urban areas and 35 per cent in rural areas. The pattern is similar for men, though there is no urban/rural difference in agricultural home-based work, with around 35 per cent in both areas completing only primary school or less. However, in non-agricultural work, 23 per cent of men in urban areas completed primary or less education in comparison to 39 per cent in rural areas.

Age and Marital Status

Over 80 per cent of both women and men home-based workers are married and around 40 per cent are concentrated in the age group 35-54. Among married home-based workers, women tend to be younger than men.

The majority of home-based workers are in the peak employment ages of 25 to 54 and are married (**table 6**). Roughly two-thirds of women in urban and rural areas are in this category, as well as 58 per cent of urban men and 55 per cent of rural men. Married women home-based workers tend to be younger (aged 15-34) than married men home-based workers. The per cent of women and men who are young (15-24) and single are roughly similar: about 10 and 8 per cent of women home-based workers in urban and rural areas, respectively, and about 11 per cent of men. In tabulations not shown in **table 6**, patterns for non-agricultural and agricultural home-based workers are similar, with the exception that agricultural home-based workers – and married men in particular – tend to be older (55+) than those in non-agricultural home-based work.

Table 6: Home-based workers by age, marital status, urban/rural and sex: Percentage distribution, 2016/17

	Age				
	15-24	25-34	35-54	55+	All
Urban women					
Single	9.5	0.9	0.6	0.1	11.1
Married	9.4	27.0	40.0	7.0	83.4
Divorced/separated	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.8
Widowed	-	0.2	2.1	2.4	4.8
All	18.9	28.1	43.3	9.7	100.0
Rural women					
Single	8.0	1.0	0.7	-	9.7
Married	13.7	24.1	37.4	10.2	85.4
Divorced/separated	-	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.6
Widowed	-	0.2	1.6	2.4	4.3
All	21.7	25.4	40.2	12.8	100.0
Urban men					
Single	10.5	2.4	0.1	0.2	13.1
Married	3.9	12.6	45.4	22.5	84.5
Divorced/separated	-	-	0.2	-	0.2
Widowed	-	-	0.4	1.8	2.2
All	14.3	15.0	46.1	24.5	100.0
Rural men					
Single	11.2	1.0	0.1	0.1	12.5
Married	5.0	15.1	39.7	25.0	84.8
Divorced/separated	-	-	-	-	-
Widowed	-	-	0.7	2.0	2.7
All	16.2	16.1	40.5	27.2	100.0

Characteristics of Businesses

The vast majority of home-based workers are engaged in businesses that are not registered with the relevant authority and do not have an accounting system.³ Women, particularly in the non-agricultural sector, are more likely than men to be in unregistered businesses and to have worked in that business for a shorter period of time. Women are more likely than men to be working in single-person businesses in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Only 19 per cent of women and 27 per cent of men are in registered businesses (**table 7**). Few agricultural businesses are registered. Among non-agricultural businesses, the per cent registered is higher: 29 per cent of women's businesses and 35 per cent of men's.

³ The data in this section refer to the business that the home-based worker is associated with. However because of the problems with the status in employment data in the survey (see About this Brief), it was not possible to link it to the home-based worker's status as employer, own-account worker, employee or contributing family worker. Registration of the enterprise and having an accounting system are criteria used to classify the formality or informality of the business.

Home-based workers in agricultural businesses are more likely to report maintaining accounts of business assets and expenditures than being registered. Around 17 per cent for both women and men report maintaining business accounts, while less than 10 per cent report a registered business. The opposite is true among home-based workers in non-agricultural businesses, where fewer women and men report having an account for the business in which they are

engaged than report registration and there are large differences between women and men in the frequency of registration and account holding – 17 per cent of women reported maintaining an account, compared to 29 reporting registration and 23 per cent of men reported an account compared to 35 per cent reporting registration.

Table 7: Characteristics of the businesses of home-based workers by agricultural/non-agricultural and sex: Percentage, 2017/18

	All HBW		Agricultural HBW		Non-agricultural HBW	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2017/18						
Business is registered	18.8	26.6	3.4	6.4	28.9	35.2
Business has an account	17.5	21.7	17.6	17.1	17.4	23.7
Number of persons (including owner)						
1 person	46.6	33.5	37.9	24.3	52.3	37.5
2-4 persons	51.1	62.7	60.2	74.1	45.2	57.9
5 or more employees*	2.3	3.7	2.0	1.6	2.5	4.7
Duration of work in business						
Less than 6 months	6.1	5.8	3.3	4.2	8.0	6.5
6 months – 1 year	8.5	8.2	7.2	8.7	9.4	8.0
1-3 years	22.4	18.0	20.4	18.5	23.7	17.8
3-5 years	17.1	13.7	14.9	13.5	18.5	13.8
5-10 years	18.3	18.8	17.2	15.9	19.0	20.0
10 years or more	27.5	35.5	36.9	39.2	21.4	33.9

* Of this small group, most were concentrated in the 5-9 employees category.

Women home-based workers were more likely than men to be in single-person businesses. This was true for 52 per cent of women and 38 per cent of men in non-agricultural home-based work, and 38 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men in agricultural home-based work.

Women home-based workers are more likely to have worked for less time in the business than men. Across all home-based workers, about 54 per cent of women have worked in the business for 5 years or less, compared to 46 per cent of men. Again, the disparities are greater in the non-agricultural sector – 60 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men reported working in the business for 5 years or less. Furthermore, 34 per cent of men and only 21 per cent of women in non-agricultural home-based work reported being involved for 10 years or more in the business.



A woman measures cloth at the Association for Craft Producers in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo by Carol Wills

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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