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WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE IN QUETTA: RESULTS FROM THE QUETTA URBAN HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

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Abstract. Pakistan's female labor force participation (FLFP) remains low by regional and global standards. Furthermore, data show major disparities between rural and urban FLFP, with the latter being significantly lower. This note contains analysis of women's labor market outcomes as reported by women in the city of Quetta, Balochistan Province, using data from the World Bank's 2021 Quetta Urban Household Survey (QUHS).[1] The multipurpose QUHS (as well as a similar survey conducted in urban Peshawar in 2020) attempts to improve measurement of FLFP by collecting information on labor market outcomes directly from all working-age household members. Hence, in terms of implementation, it differs from standard labor force surveys (LFSs) in Pakistan that use one or two proxy respondents to report for other household members. It also increases the number of questions that directly list all possible forms of female employment. Finally, it allows for a more comprehensive definition of employment by accounting for production of goods for family use.

Self-reporting of labor status in the QUHS allows for more accurate estimates of FLFP in urban Pakistan compared to what is reported in the most recent LFS. According to benchmarks from different subsamples in the 2020–21 LFS, the FLFP estimates from the QUHS always yield higher rates of FLFP (16.1 percent). The difference between the FLFP estimates in the two surveys is significant at the 99 percent level. On the contrary, in the case of men, the difference in estimates of labor force participation between the surveys is smaller and not always significant. When production of goods for family use is included in the accounting of female employment, FLFP increases by a small margin (17.6 percent). The employment profile of women in urban Quetta shows that they are mostly employed in low-value-added activities—mainly manufacturing, as garment and handicraft workers—and display a higher prevalence of own-account, informal, and home-based work. Men, on the contrary, are mostly paid employees. Moreover, women's jobs are in line with socially accepted occupations, likely a function of how easily these jobs can be done from home. Over 78 percent of employed women in urban Quetta are home-based workers who work on their own account and have low chances of upward mobility. These results are in line with figures for urban Peshawar and urban Pakistan.

The observed low level of FLFP and the nature of the profile of female employment in urban Pakistan are explained by factors such as low human capital endowment, lack of agency in various aspects of life, limited mobility, safety concerns, deep-rooted patriarchal norms, stereotypes about women's role in the household, time devoted to unpaid care and household work, and lack of information about labor market opportunities.

Introduction

Pakistan's female labor force participation, particularly in urban areas, remains one of the lowest in the world, not just in South Asia. According to the ILOSTAT database, in 2019 only nine countries had lower female labor force participation (FLFP) rates than Pakistan, where the rate was 22.6 percent. Official figures from the labor force survey (LFS) indicate that FLFP fell about 2 percentage points between 2014 and 2018. Moreover, urban FLFP in Pakistan has remained consistently low since 2005, at around 10 percent (Amir et al. 2018; Cho and Majoka 2020).

The World Bank's Women in the Workforce study in Pakistan (started in 2019 and ongoing) is a multimethod study to investigate urban FLFP and gain a nuanced understanding of the patterns of and constraints on women's work. The qualitative component of the study analyzed the labor market experiences of women in Quetta, Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi. The findings were used to design the 2021 Quetta Urban Household Survey (QUHS 2021), a multipurpose household survey to collect information on a range of themes, including living conditions, labor market participation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, safety, sexual harassment, aspirations and values, and many others. The QUHS follows a similar methodology as (and was informed by) previous work conducted in urban Peshawar in 2020 (see Mancini 2021). Both the Quetta and Peshawar surveys differ from standard LFSs in Pakistan in terms of implementation. They collect information on labor directly from all working-age household members, whereas the LFSs use one or two proxy respondents to report for other household members.

The aim of this report is to present the main findings from QUHS 2021 and address the following questions: Is FLFP in urban Pakistan truly as low as it appears (section 3)? Why does FLFP remain low (section 4)? What are the barriers to women's work (section 5)? What are the characteristics and quality of the jobs held by women and to what extent do these differ from men's jobs (section 6)? Finally, what can be done to promote greater FLFP (section 6)? The report also includes a brief description of the methodological innovations in the QUHS (section 2) and a special analysis on how the COVID-19 pandemic affects women's work (box 4).

BOX 1. QUETTA AT A GLANCE

Quetta is the largest city and provincial capital of Balochistan Province. Balochistan is the poorest province in Pakistan, with a poverty rate of 42.7 percent, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province with 29.5 percent. At the same time, Balochistan accounts for only 12 percent of Pakistan's poor.[2] Balochistan hosts the second-largest share of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan (22.8 percent), after KP (58.1 percent), making Quetta the second-most important urban center of settlement for these populations (UNHCR Data Portal).

According to the 2017 Census, Quetta District has a population of 2.3 million and Quetta City has 1 million people. Located in the northern part of Balochistan, close to the Durand Line, the de facto Pakistan–Afghanistan border, Quetta has served as a trade center between the two countries. The population's ethnicity is mainly Pashtun, followed by Brahui- and Balochi-speaking populations. There is also significant representation of the Hazara community, which settled in Balochistan after migrating from central Afghanistan, mainly in the nineteenth century.

The city has been adversely affected by incidents of terrorism and conflict due to security concerns. Further, violent insurgent groups have disproportionately targeted the Hazara community, which is largely of Shiite faith. This threat has resulted in the segregation of living communities, leading to the creation of settlements at the outskirts of Quetta dedicated to the Hazara population.

The social fabric is largely dominated by the importance of family ties and tribal kinship. Family members, mainly men, dictate women's choices. As per Pashtun customs, women are closely associated with family honor, so their actions and movements are systematically controlled (Paterson 2008; Sanauddin 2015). Because of conservative social and family norms that limit women's mobility outside the home or local community, a significant share of employed women in Balochistan are home-based workers (HBWs) in the informal economy (USAID 2012).

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2   World Bank estimates based on the 2018–19 Household Integrated Economic Survey.

Control over women can translate into gender-based violence (GBV). Regional data on violence against women (Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017–18) suggests that women in Balochistan experience the second-highest rate of GBV (48 percent) in Pakistan after women in former federally administered tribal areas (56 percent). Along with high incidence of GBV, there is wide acceptance of GBV, especially among women. As much as 52 percent of women and 31 percent men in Balochistan agree that wife beating is justified under specific circumstances. Further, 20 percent of women in Balochistan report that their husbands exert marital control over their actions, and 49 percent report having experienced incidences of spousal violence. In addition, only 69 percent of women report having control over their earnings, the lowest rate reported across all of Pakistan. These patterns indicate limited involvement of women in matters both within and outside the home, which are governed by restrictive patriarchal gender norms.

In Pakistan, many women manufacture embroidered products since it builds on traditional skills and gives them the opportunity to work from home without violating social norms. Balochistan has a rich tradition of embroidery, and many women, while homebound, work in the embellished garment sector (USAID 2012).

Survey Methodology: What Is New in the Quetta Urban Household Survey?

The QUHS is a multipurpose household survey designed to reach a statistically representative sample to study the welfare of the city's Pakistani host community and Afghan refugee populations. The survey questionnaire includes a range of themes, such as water and sanitation, urban poverty, labor market participation and economic empowerment, women's status and gender inequality (including, but not limited to, sexual harassment and perceptions of safety), domestic and international migration, and individual aspirations. Due to the timing of the survey, QUHS 2021 includes a series of questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey design is informed by and follows a similar methodology to previous research conducted by the World Bank in urban Peshawar.

Fieldwork took place between November 2020 and March 2021. Each respondent provided informed consent. Data were collected on paper via separate questionnaires for men and women. Census blocks were used as primary sampling units (PSUs) (see appendix A.1 for details on sampling). The sample was drawn at the household level, with a final sample of 2,406 households covering a total of 18,255 individuals. Data were collected from working-age (15–64) men and women separately (see descriptive statistics at the individual level in table 2 and at the household level in table A1 in appendix A).

TABLE 1. QUHS 2021 TECHNICAL DETAILS	
Characteristic	Description
Data collection	
Fieldwork period	Data collection (including pilot) from November 2020 to March 2021
Mode of data capture	Paper-assisted personal interviewing (PAPI) with separate questionnaires for men and women
Sampling	
Sampling frame	2017 Census
Primary sampling units	220
Final sample size (households)	2,406 (including 671 Afghan refugee households)
Sample composition	
Individuals	18,255
Males	9,414
Females	8,841
Working-age men (15–64)	5,227
Working-age women (15–64)	4,829
Afghan refugees	5,331
Working-age (15–64) Afghan refugees	2,638

With a focus on labor market outcomes, QUHS 2021 attempts to improve measurement of FLFP by implementing three design features. First, it asks each woman of working age directly about her labor market engagement. Second, it increases the number of questions that directly list all possible forms of employment to account for whether women (a) engage in wage, salary, or other paid work; (b) help with the paid job of a family member; (c) work in a nonfarm family business that they manage or another family member manages; or (d) work in family farming, livestock, or fishing. Finally, for those working in family farming, the survey allows for accounting of goods produced for family consumption by differentiating between products intended for sale and those for family use.

The module on sexual harassment is structured as a series of questions that capture information on different kinds of harassment. The first questions ask whether respondents have ever experienced various forms of sexual harassment. Follow-up questions ask about whom (if anyone) they spoke to about their experi-ence or, if they did not tell anyone, why they did not do so. The module includes an additional layer of consent above that required for participation in the survey overall. Enumerators were trained to report whether female respondents had full privacy or seemed visibly uncomfortable when answering questions in this module.

Unless otherwise specified, all figures in this report refer to the population in urban Quetta, including the Pakistani host community and the Afghan refugees. (See box 3 for relevant findings about the labor profile of Afghan refugee women.)

Measuring Women's Work

Among the many questions raised by the available estimates of FLFP in urban Pakistan is if the measurement is gender neutral and should be taken at face value. The literature warns of potential downward biases affecting the measurement of FLFP, especially in low-income countries. One factor that may contribute to underestimation of FLFP is widespread use of proxy

QUHS 2021 is designed to obtain a representative sample of Quetta City's population.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR WORKING-AGE WOMEN AND MEN PARTICIPANTS IN QUHS 2021		
Variable	Women (%)	Men (%)
Age		
15–18	14.0	15.9
19–24	21.1	20.8
25–44	45.8	43.3
45–64	19.1	20.1
Afghan refugees	12.1	11.5
Marital status		
Married	62.4	54.2
Single	30.3	41.7
Divorced/separated	0.4	0.2
Widow/widower	3.5	0.5
Engaged/promised	3.4	3.5
Age at marriage (years)	19.7	24.3
Literate	50.1	81.5
Education		
No schooling	47.0	17.6
Incomplete primary	5.9	5.2
Completed primary	19.1	27.4
Completed secondary (grade 10 or vocational)	11.8	19.7
Completed upper secondary (grade 12)	7.6	12.7
Completed tertiary	8.5	17.3
Completed upper tertiary	0.1	0.2

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR WORKING-AGE WOMEN AND MEN PARTICIPANTS IN QUHS 2021 (CONTINUED)		
Variable	Women (%)	Men (%)
Employment status		
Employed	15.6	69.8
Unemployed	0.5	2.4
Out of labor force	83.9	27.8
Number of cohabiting children 0–5	1.2	1.2
Number of cohabiting children 0–14	3.3	3.3
Adequate food consumption (reported by head of household)[a]	73.1	72.9
Access to cell phone	46.6	89.4
Access to internet	32.4	65.8
Language (spoken by head of household)		
Pashto	42.6	44.6
Brahvi	17.3	17.5
Urdu	10.8	10.9
Balochi	6.8	6.2
Hazargi	6.5	5.0
Punjabi	5.8	5.5
Other	10.2	10.3

a. Food adequacy takes a value of 1 if the male primary respondent considers the household's food consumption adequate or better.
b. Access to cell phone includes both owning a phone and access through a spouse, brother, or friend.
c. Access to internet includes both at home and through other means.

respondents in household survey labor modules.[3] The male household head, who usually reports for other household members, may not be adequately informed about women's economic activities or may fail to report them due to implicit bias regarding women's work. A typical example is a woman who is unpaid but is supporting a family business managed by a male household member. Empirical evidence on the use of proxies in labor modules provides mixed results and is limited in covering different cultural contexts (Ambler et al. 2021; Bardasi et al. 2011; Benes and Walsh 2018; Desiere and Costa 2018; Dillon et al. 2012). In general, researchers have found that questionnaires that directly elicit all possible forms of labor market engagement constituting employment through separate questions achieve a more precise measurement of FLFP. But the discussion of measurement issues within the literature on women's work goes far beyond data collection into the definition of work itself. Even when recorded without error, the standard concept of work—which focuses on the production

of goods and services *primarily for the market* (International Conference of Labour Statisticians 2013)—leaves out many productive activities typically carried out by women, such as activities related to production of goods for family consumption or playing a supportive role (often unpaid) in family businesses.
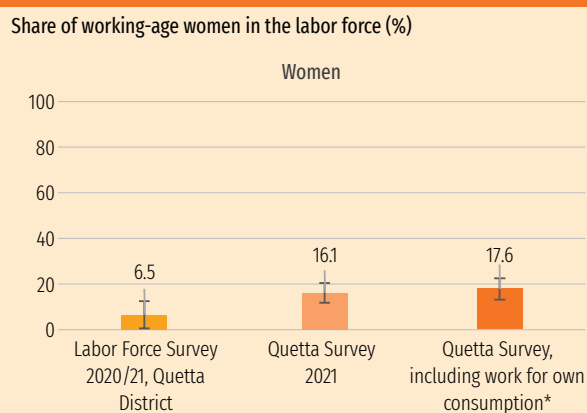
Self-reported labor status in the QUHS allows for more accurate estimates of FLFP in urban Pakistan than data from the latest LFS. These results are consistent with similar work conducted in Peshawar. Figures 1 and 2 and table 3 present FLFP rates calculated from the QUHS and from recent LFSs relevant for benchmarking purposes. In all cases, the FLFP measured using the QUHS is higher than the estimates from the LFSs. According to QUHS 2021, self-reported FLFP in urban Quetta is 16.1 percent. In contrast, the FLFP estimate for Quetta District in the latest LFS (2020–21) is 6.5 percent.[4] The FLFP rate estimate under QUHS 2021 represents a 9.6 percentage-point increase relative to

3   Most household and labor force surveys do not expressly require each household member to answer directly for themselves. Given the time constraints and difficulties in having all members present during the interview, the questionnaire is administered to only one or two respondents, who in most cases are the household head and the spouse.
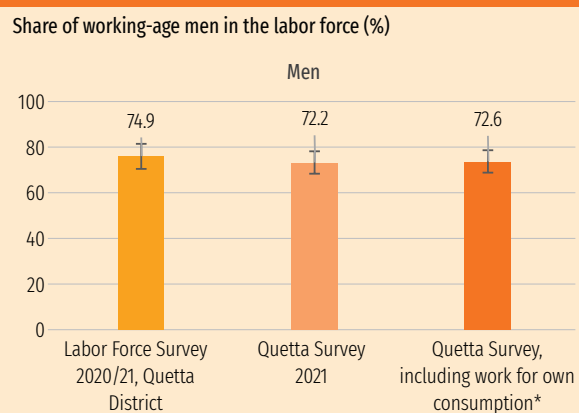
4   The universe for the Labour Force Survey consists of all urban and rural areas in the four provinces of Pakistan and Islamabad excluding military restricted areas. The population of excluded areas constitutes about 1 percent of the total population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2022).

Self-reported working status allows for more accurate estimates of FLFP.

FIGURE 1. URBAN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN, 2020–21	FIGURE 2. URBAN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, MEN, 2020–21

Share of working-age women in the labor force (%) — Women

Labor Force Survey 2020/21, Quetta District	Quetta Survey 2021	Quetta Survey, including work for own consumption*
6.5	16.1	17.6

Share of working-age men in the labor force (%) — Men

Labor Force Survey 2020/21, Quetta District	Quetta Survey 2021	Quetta Survey, including work for own consumption*
74.9	72.2	72.6

Note: All estimates refer to individuals ages 15–64. LFS estimates refer to Quetta District in 2020–21. Quetta Survey estimates refer to urban Quetta in 2020–21. Bars indicate a 95 percent confidence interval. The difference between the LFS and QUHS estimates is statistically significant at any conventional level for women only; it is not significant in the case of men. The difference between the extended and traditional definitions of LFP under the QUHS is significant at the 99 percent level for women and at the 90 percent level for men.
*The labor force estimate has been extended to include subsistence agriculture.

TABLE 3. LFP RATES FOR QUETTA CITY, QUETTA DISTRICT, AND URBAN BALOCHISTAN						
	Women			Men		
Data source/regional unit	LFP (%)	diff (QUHS − LFS)	Obs.	LFP (%)	diff (QUHS − LFS)	Obs.
LFS 2020–21, Quetta District	6.5	9.6***	1,165	74.9	−2.7	1,394
LFS 2020–21, urban Quetta District	2.4	13.7***	502	75.4	−3.2	591
LFS 2020–21, urban Balochistan	5.4	10.7***	3,347	77.6	−5.4***	3,921
LFS 2017–18, urban Balochistan	8.6	7.5***	3,273	79.7	−7.5***	3,705
QUHS 2021, Quetta City	16.1		4,733	72.2		5,113

Note: All estimates refer to individuals ages 15–64. About 28 percent of the population in Balochistan Province are urban, and the largest share live in Quetta District (29 percent), followed by Kech District (9 percent) (Population Census 2017). In this regard, the urban Balochistan estimate under the LFS is a good benchmark to compare with the estimates under the QUHS.
*$p < 0.1$ **$p < 0.05$ ***$p < 0.01$

the LFS (figure 1). Furthermore, the difference between the two estimates (QUHS and LFS) is significant at the 99 percent level.[5] These findings are in line with earlier work in urban Peshawar (Peshawar Urban Household Survey 2019) showing that self-reported FLFP is 4 percentage points higher than the LFS 2017–18 estimate for urban KP Province (Mancini 2021).[6] Finally, in the case of men, the difference between the QUHS and LFS rates is small and not always significant, indicating that self-reporting likely leads to better estimates for women. While the FLFP estimates under the QUHS are still low by international standards, they suggest that the methods for measuring women's work through survey data should be improved.

Adopting a more comprehensive definition of employment that includes production of goods for family use increases FLFP by a small margin. Extending the concept of employment to include people engaged in production of agricultural goods for own consumption (subsistence agriculture) generates a more comprehensive estimate of labor force participation (LFP). While

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5   The P value of a two-sample t-test for the difference of the two estimates being zero is 0.00. Note that the comparison refers to different populations (Quetta District versus Quetta City). In addition, it may be muddled by confounding factors. Only experimental evidence can definitively pin down the size of respondent bias in this context.
6   The LFS 2017–18 is representative at the province level only.

men's LFP does not change under the more comprehensive definition of employment, women's LFP increases from 16.1 to 17.6 percent (figure 1). This small difference is justified by the urban context. Nonetheless, in the case of women, the difference is statistically significant at any conventional level. The results are also in line with similar work conducted in Peshawar.

The following sections of this note are based on the traditional definition of employment (and LFP),[7] which excludes production of goods for family consumption.

Social Norms and FLFP

Research highlights a myriad of interconnected factors that greatly limit FLFP in Pakistan, including social and cultural restrictions on women's mobility, safety concerns, rigid gender role ideologies, and the association of women with family honor. As explained in multiple studies, an honor culture is strongly linked with social image or reputation—that is, representation of self in the eyes of others. For instance, Anjum, Kessler, and Aziz (2019) have termed Pakistan as having an "honor culture." In patriarchal societies like Pakistan, in order to control women's behavior and, hence, protect their honor, men often limit women from leaving the home and require women in their families (or clans) to limit their connections to the outside world. When women go out, they must be chaperoned and appropriately garbed. Within an honor culture, women are typically expected to display shyness in their demeanor, avoid eye contact with men, refrain from loud speech or laughter (especially in the presence of men), and limit their interactions and conversations with males outside their family to necessary topics. This results in restrained speech and movement for women (Sanauddin 2015), an effect that is significantly pronounced in Quetta.

Women typically abide by the honor code and are heavily influenced by it in terms of their decision-making, mobility, and interaction with spaces outside the home. Any violation of the code leads to severe repercussions. By restricting women's mobility and access to the public sphere, the honor code has a profound impact on the extent and quality of women's LFP. Asadullah and Wahhaj (2016) found that community norms such as the practice of purdah have a negative effect on women's participation in paid work. Since women often cannot leave home, they seek employment opportunities that can be managed at home. Qualitative research pertaining to FLFP in urban areas indicates that the traditional honor culture also influences the sectors in which women seek employment and creates a barrier to exploring jobs beyond those considered socially acceptable for women. Hence, women in Pakistan are frequently engaged in home-based work or in the education sector, and jobs for women in trade, food services, construction, transport, communications, and hospitality are virtually nonexistent.

Women have reported facing restrictions from male family members when they expressed interest in unconventional job roles, and men have opined that workplaces where the sexes mix freely are in defiance of local norms (World Bank 2019). For jobs outside the home, women may have to restrict their job search to proximal employers or locations where it is convenient for male household members to accompany them. These trends are observed and confirmed in the data from QUHS 2021 as well as in previous work in Peshawar.

Women's employment remains limited mainly to the household setting due to mobility restrictions and the burden of having the sole responsibility for care and housework. In Pakistan, as in other parts of South Asia, social norms around division of labor at home are relatively inflexible. Women tend to perform most household and care work. Using the Pakistan Time Use Survey 2007,[8] Field and Vyborny (2015, cited by Tanaka and Muzones 2016) found that women who are out of the labor force still spend many hours each day working on household chores, and employed women, on average, spend more time per day on household and care work than employed men. The latter finding could be, in part, because employed men typically work longer hours for a wage than employed women. But it is also possible that employed women spend fewer hours earning a wage because they must juggle their time between market work and household work. Indeed, when women are asked in LFSs why they are not available for work, the majority say they have home responsibilities that prevent them from working (Field and Vyborny 2015).

Analysis of mobility from the Pakistan Time Use Survey 2007 highlights wide mobility gaps between men and women across the country. For instance, women in Pakistan (age 11 or above) are about 16 times more likely than men to remain at home and not report any trip in the past day. This disparity increases into adulthood and

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7   Persons in employment are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. They comprise (a) employed persons "at work" (people who worked in a job for at least one hour, including sporadic/casual work, but excluding people who exclusively work in subsistence agriculture) and (b) employed persons "not at work" due to temporary absence from a job or working-time arrangements (such as shift work, flextime, and compensatory leave for overtime) (International Conference of Labour Statisticians 2013).

8   See https://catalog.ihsn.org//catalog/3537/download/49900.

marriage. On average, women make half as many daily trips as men (2.8 and 5.4, respectively), with the widest gender gaps in work- and socio-cultural-related trips. Compared to men's trips, women's are 46 percent shorter in duration, indicating that they are constrained in traveling outside their village or immediate neighborhood (Adeel and Yeh 2018; Adeel, Yeh, and Zhang 2013).

International evidence supports the finding that perceptions around women's roles as homemakers show a negative relationship with FLFP, suggesting that traditional gender roles within the household also play a role (World Bank 2022). This relationship appears to hold across South Asian countries. Analysis of World Values Survey data from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan across multiple periods and cohorts indicate a clear negative association between women's employment rate and gender-based attitudes about men having a greater right to jobs when they are scarce (World Bank 2022).

These mechanisms are hard to quantify, but they play an important role in determining women's representation in the workforce. In addition to socio-demographic variables, the instrument developed for the QUHS includes a set of questions aimed at eliciting social and cultural norms. Table 4 presents descriptive statistics on selected relevant characteristics of women in and out of the labor force. Results show that women in the labor force are more likely to live in smaller households than women outside the labor force. As expected, the presence of young children (ages 0–5) in the household is negatively associated with FLFP. These results reflect the role of childcare and household work in women's decision/ability to work. In regard to education, women with tertiary education are more likely to be in the labor force than women with less education. However, women with no education (less than primary) are also overrepresented among those in the labor force.

Factors associated with female labor force participation

TABLE 4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FLFP OF WOMEN 15–64 ABLE TO WORK						
	FLFP = 1 (*n* = 928)		FLFP = 0 (*n* = 3,786)		Full sample (*n* = 4,810)	
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	32.35	11.25	31.62	12.56	31.69	12.37
Afghan refugee (dummy)	0.21	0.41	0.10	0.31	0.12	0.33
Married (dummy)	0.64	0.48	0.63	0.48	0.63	0.48
Education (completed grades)						
Less than primary	0.62	0.49	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.50
Primary	0.13	0.33	0.20	0.40	0.19	0.39
Secondary	0.14	0.35	0.20	0.40	0.19	0.39
Tertiary or above	0.11	0.32	0.08	0.27	0.09	0.28
Relationship to household head						
Spouse	0.48	0.50	0.42	0.49	0.43	0.49
Daughter	0.23	0.42	0.28	0.45	0.27	0.45
Daughter-in-law	0.07	0.25	0.15	0.35	0.13	0.34
Other	0.22	0.42	0.15	0.36	0.17	0.37
Household composition (number of members in age/sex group)	8.93	4.49	9.61	6.05	9.52	5.85
0–5	1.20	1.40	1.24	1.50	1.23	1.49
6–14	2.04	1.77	2.03	2.00	2.04	1.97
15–24	2.13	1.89	2.31	2.06	2.28	2.03
25–44, females	1.23	1.04	1.13	1.01	1.15	1.02
25–44, males	0.97	0.98	1.21	1.20	1.17	1.17
45–64	0.91	0.85	1.13	0.90	1.09	0.89
65+	0.34	0.60	0.30	0.59	0.31	0.59
Nuclear family (dummy)	0.45	0.50	0.43	0.49	0.43	0.50

TABLE 4. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FLFP OF WOMEN 15–64 ABLE TO WORK (CONTINUED)	FLFP = 1 (*n* = 928)		FLFP = 0 (*n* = 3,786)		Full sample (*n* = 4,810)	
Variable	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*
Education of household head (completed grades)						
Less than primary	0.44	0.50	0.28	0.45	0.31	0.46
Primary	0.18	0.39	0.21	0.41	0.20	0.40
Secondary	0.16	0.36	0.28	0.45	0.26	0.44
Tertiary or above	0.22	0.41	0.23	0.42	0.23	0.42
Food adequacy (dummy)[a]	0.64	0.48	0.75	0.43	0.73	0.44
Asset score[b]	−0.57	1.94	0.26	1.61	0.12	1.69
Access to cell phone (dummy)[c]	0.49	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.47	0.50
Access to internet (dummy)[d]	0.33	0.47	0.32	0.47	0.32	0.47
Purdah (dummy)	0.97	0.16	0.99	0.12	0.98	0.13
Feels safe outside own neighborhood (dummy)	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50
Experience of sexual harassment (dummy)	0.37	0.48	0.26	0.44	0.27	0.45
Involvement in decision-making[e]						
Work inside home	0.21	0.41	0.16	0.36	0.17	0.37
Work outside home	0.20	0.40	0.15	0.35	0.16	0.36
Community activity	0.21	0.41	0.15	0.35	0.16	0.36
Political activity	0.20	0.40	0.16	0.36	0.17	0.37
Shopping	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.50
Education	0.30	0.46	0.23	0.42	0.24	0.43
Marriage	0.04	0.18	0.04	0.20	0.04	0.19
Health	0.38	0.49	0.33	0.47	0.34	0.47
Beliefs in support of women's work	0.97	0.17	0.89	0.31	0.90	0.29
Number of patriarchal norms the male household head agrees with (0–5)	2.98	0.94	2.89	0.98	2.90	0.97

Note: The sample includes all working-age women (15–64 years old). "Able to work" refers to women who are not in school/training and not ill/injured/disabled. The variable for FLFP has 96 missing values. See detailed results (average marginal effects) from the probit FLFP equations in appendix B.

a. Food adequacy takes a value of 1 if the male primary respondent considers the household's food consumption adequate or better.

b. Asset index estimates follow a similar methodology to that of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHSs). The minimum value is −4.78, and the maximum is 6.91.

c. Access to cell phone includes both owning a cell phone and accessing one through a spouse, brother, or friend.

d. Access to internet includes access both at home and through other means.

e. Involvement in decision-making takes a value of 1 if a woman is included in the decision-making, whether she makes decision alone or together with a partner.

As discussed in the next sections, these findings are consistent with the female labor force in urban Quetta having low education in general and the fact that socially acceptable jobs for women are predominantly low skilled and low value-added. In addition, women in the labor force are more likely to live in poorer households, as measured by a lower average for the food adequacy dummy variable and a lower score on the asset index, compared to their peers outside the labor force. This suggests that women take up employment due to necessity. Also, not surprisingly, a positive attitude toward women's work and perceived involvement in women's decision to work inside or outside the home, as well as involvement in decisions regarding women's community and political activity, are positively associated with the probability of participating in the labor market.

Furthermore, according to a probit model showing conditional correlations for women's participation in the labor force, the addition of controls for social norms to a baseline specification for demographic characteristics does not affect the size or sign of the coefficients of these characteristics (marital status, household composition, education) (see detailed specifications and results in appendix B). This implies that beliefs, norms, and education, for example, are systematically linked. Prevailing norms influence decisions about women receiving education and therefore have a strong impact on labor market outcomes. These results make the case for going beyond the regression setting to better understand the role of culture in influencing women's representation in the workforce.

What Constrains Women's Work?

The previous section briefly discussed the interconnected factors associated with women's persistent low labor market engagement in Pakistan, including social and cultural restrictions on women's mobility, safety concerns, rigid gender role ideologies, and the notion of honor. Based on the data collected through the various modules in the QUHS, this section presents the analysis of and main findings on the barriers to women's LFP and the constraints employed women face in advancing in their job. This section focuses on the following constraints: low human capital endowment, limited agency, patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles, the gender gap in care and household work, limited outside mobility, concerns over safety in public spaces, and women's sources of information about jobs and household welfare. The analysis suggests that all of these play an important role in determining whether women can work for pay, what jobs they can do, and how they can perform within these jobs.

Human Capital Endowment

Women's human capital endowment in Quetta is low, reflected in the overall FLFP rate and the highly skewed educational profile of employed women. Educational attainment in urban Quetta is low in general, but it is strikingly low among women. Whereas 80 percent of working-age men are literate (can read and write), only 50 percent of working-age women are literate. Further-

more, 52 percent of women have either incomplete primary education or have never attended school (versus 23 percent of men). The share of women who have completed at least upper secondary school is only 16 percent (versus 30 percent of men). The low level of women's human capital endowment is reflected in the overall lower rate of FLFP but also in the highly skewed education profile of working women. As shown in figure 3, women with postsecondary education are a minority (8 percent) but are slightly overrepresented among employed women (11 percent).[9] Women with less than primary education are also overrepresented among the employed, which is linked to the fact that, along with the female labor force in urban Quetta having low education in general, the socially acceptable jobs performed by women in Quetta are predominantly low skilled and low value-added (see the next section).

In addition, women in younger cohorts attain, on average, more education than those in older cohorts. While 13.3 percent of women aged 45–64 have achieved secondary education or above, this figure is more than double among women aged 15–24 (32.6 percent). On the contrary, the difference between younger and older male cohorts is only 4 percentage points (42.3 and 46.6 percent, respectively), suggesting educational achievement among men is consistent across age groups. This is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when school closures imposed an extra burden for girls and younger women in school. For in-

The low level of women's human capital is reflected in the skewed educational profile of working women.

FIGURE 3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (COMPLETED GRADES) BY SEX AND WORKING STATUS
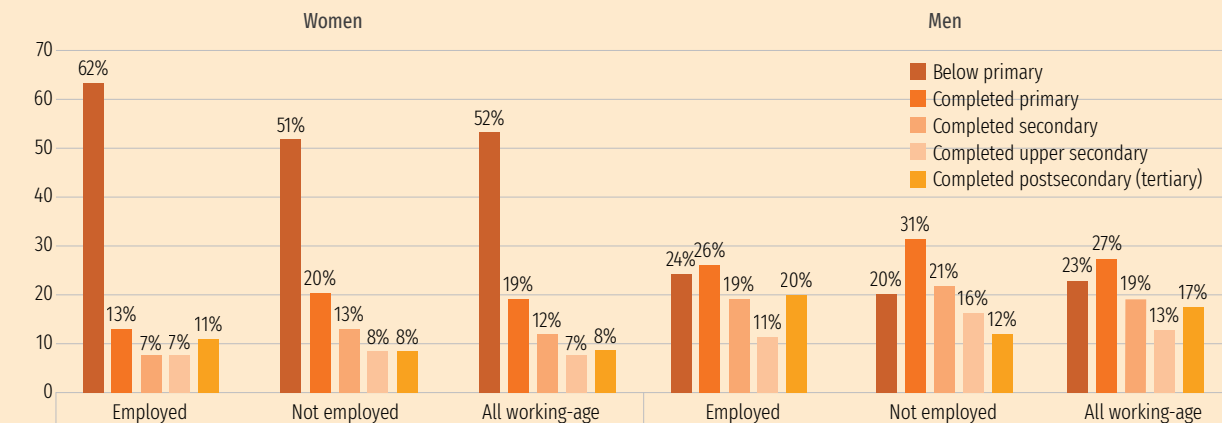
Note: All estimates refer to individuals ages 15–64. Below primary = did not complete grade 5. Completed primary = completed at least grade 5 but not grade 12. Completed lower secondary = completed at least grade 10 but not grade 12 (may include vocational diploma obtained after middle or metric school). Completed upper secondary = completed at least grade 12 but not the second year of university (may include vocational diploma obtained after grade 12). Completed postsecondary = completed at least the second year of university.

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9   No similar pattern emerges among men. Men with lower levels of education are relatively more likely to participate in the labor market and to be employed.

stance, recent qualitative work on changing household dynamics in response to mandated COVID-19 school closures in Punjab concludes that re-enrollment of girls is particularly challenging given their increased load of household tasks, loss of learning, and lack of engagement with educational TV programming (Malik et al. 2022).

Agency

Women's lack of agency encompasses all aspects of life and contributes to low FLFP. Low levels of FLFP contrast with women's beliefs concerning work for pay. Overall, 90 percent of working-age women believe that women should work for pay (compared to 76 percent of men). But only 6.6 percent of women are able to decide autonomously whether they can work for pay outside the home. When it comes to the decision to work inside the home, this number rises to just 7.9 percent. Table 5 shows that most women indicate their husband or father is the primary decision-maker about whether they can work for pay and whether from home or not. Furthermore, women are often excluded from decision-making about even

strictly individual matters—for instance, those regarding one's own political participation or access to health care.
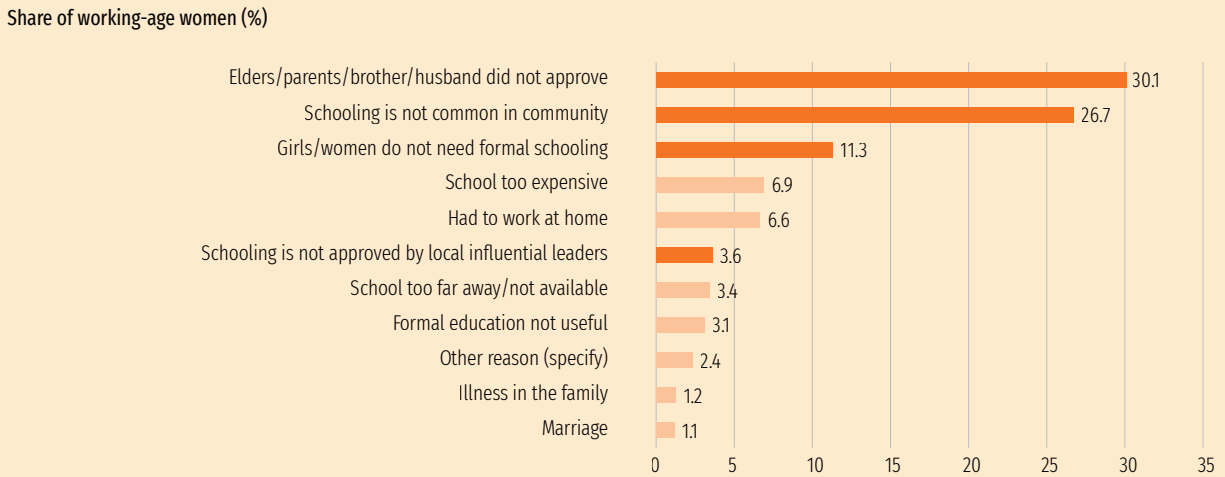
Beliefs on whether women should work for pay vary depending on educational attainment, the respondent's age, household composition, and other characteristics. Given the prominent role of the husband in making decisions regarding a spouse's labor market engagement, it is worth noting that 19 percent of men in Quetta believe women should never work for pay (in Peshawar, this figure is 25 percent). However, the share of women who believe that women should not work under any circumstance is 8 percent (in Peshawar, this figure is 13 percent). This signals greater acceptability of female work among women themselves. A closer look shows that men and women with lower secondary education or greater are more likely to accept female work. Similarly, younger cohorts of men and women (ages 15–18) express more acceptability of paid work among women. In the case of men, those living in households with children ages 0–5 are less likely to agree with women working than those in households with no young children. In the case of women, there is no difference in the share who

Women's lack of agency encompasses all aspects of life.

TABLE 5. DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S LIVES							
QUHS item	You (%)	Spouse (%)	You and spouse (%)	Mother/ mother-in-law (%)	Father/ father-in-law (%)	Parents/ parents-in-law (%)	Other family members (%)
Who mainly decides …							
if you can work outside your house for pay?	6.6	48.5	9.0	4.3	17.4	9.4	4.9
if you can work inside your house for pay?	7.9	47.2	9.0	4.2	17.6	9.4	4.8
whether you can participate in political activities?	7.5	47.3	9.0	4.1	17.7	9.5	4.9
about buying goods like clothes/shoes for yourself?	39.7	24.3	11.4	6.0	9.8	6.2	2.7
to start or continue your education?	12.4	41.2	12.0	3.9	15.5	11.0	4.0
to whom and when you should be married?	2.9	3.7	1.1	2.7	16.3	70.1	3.2
to seek professional medical treatment?	19.0	33.8	15.2	5.5	13.2	9.9	3.6
to seek professional medical help if you think you have COVID-19?	17.3	37.6	16.7	4.7	11.7	8.5	3.5
Married women only							
whether you should have more children?	3.0	45.3	45.4	1.2	3.4	1.0	0.8
whether to use birth control?	3.2	45.4	44.8	1.3	3.5	1.1	0.8
whether to buy or sell goods?	4.7	64.0	13.5	1.6	7.7	4.4	4.2

Patriarchal norms impact the decision to send girls to school, creating a vicious cycle threatening women's empowerment.

FIGURE 4. REASONS FOR NEVER HAVING ATTENDED SCHOOL

Share of working-age women (%)

Reason	Value
Elders/parents/brother/husband did not approve	30.1
Schooling is not common in community	26.7
Girls/women do not need formal schooling	11.3
School too expensive	6.9
Had to work at home	6.6
Schooling is not approved by local influential leaders	3.6
School too far away/not available	3.4
Formal education not useful	3.1
Other reason (specify)	2.4
Illness in the family	1.2
Marriage	1.1

Note: Graph shows reasons with a share of 1 percent or more only.

agrees with women working based on the presence of young children. According to the asset index, men living in wealthier households are in greater agreement with women being able to work, whereas no major difference is found across wealth quintiles in the case of women. Lastly, employed men are slightly less supportive of female work than nonworking men.
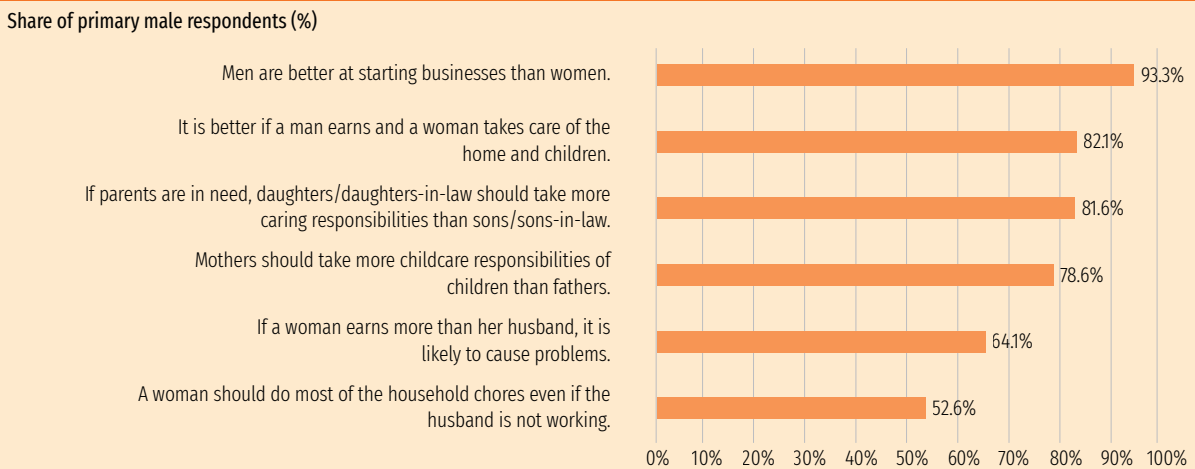
Norms

Patriarchal norms affect not only the decision (and ability) to work but also the decision to send girls to school, which creates a vicious cycle, as education increases the likelihood women will engage in work.

When it comes to starting/continuing their education, about 57 percent of women say that their father, husband, or father-in-law is the main decision-maker about whether they will pursue education. Furthermore, among working-age women who have never attended school (about half of all women aged 15–64), the vast majority cite a reason for never having done so related to patriarchal norms. Around 72 percent of these women say that a male relative, their husband, or (to a lesser degree) an influential leader did not approve; that schooling is not common in their community; or that schooling is not perceived as important for girls/women (figure 4). This pattern creates a vicious cycle in which women do not receive education, which prevents them from accessing bet-
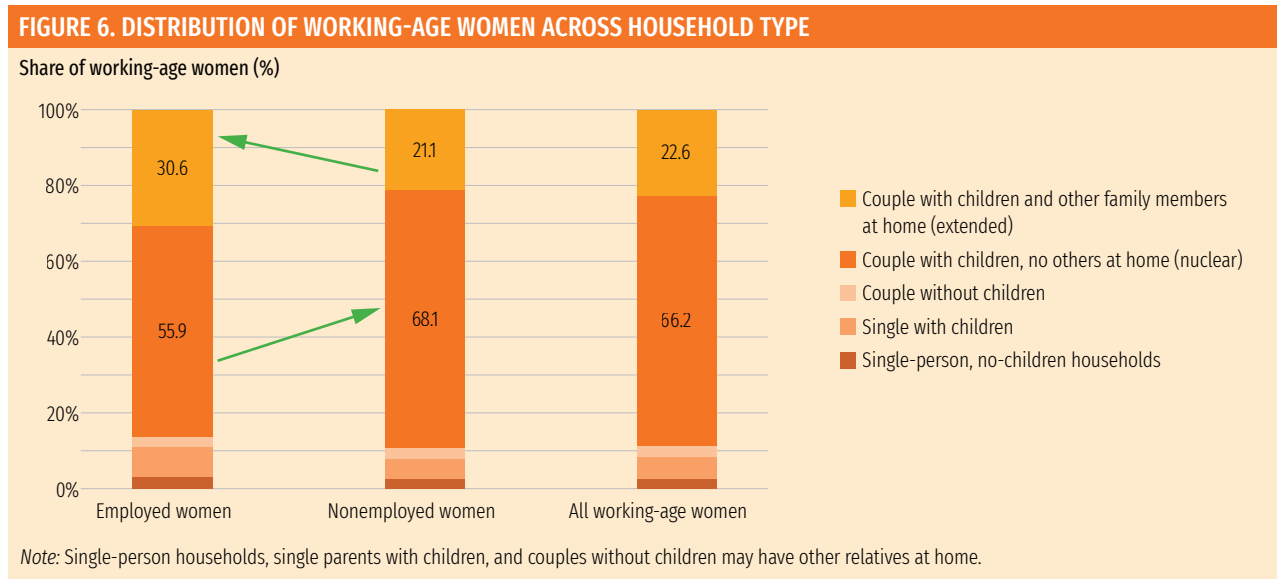
Most men in Quetta subscribe to deep-rooted patriarchal norms.

FIGURE 5. AGREEMENT WITH TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES AMONG MEN

Share of primary male respondents (%)

Statement	Value
Men are better at starting businesses than women.	93.3%
It is better if a man earns and a woman takes care of the home and children.	82.1%
If parents are in need, daughters/daughters-in-law should take more caring responsibilities than sons/sons-in-law.	81.6%
Mothers should take more childcare responsibilities of children than fathers.	78.6%
If a woman earns more than her husband, it is likely to cause problems.	64.1%
A woman should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working.	52.6%

Note: The set of questions on agreement with traditional gender roles was applied to male primary respondents (ages 20–60) only.

Childcare responsibilities impact women's ability to work.

FIGURE 6. DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING-AGE WOMEN ACROSS HOUSEHOLD TYPE

Share of working-age women (%)

Note: Single-person households, single parents with children, and couples without children may have other relatives at home.

ter and/or more productive jobs and ultimately resigns them to low earnings. Hence, the opportunity cost of staying home is low, which discourages them from joining the labor market. In addition, women with no education are less likely to be employed than women with some education (employment is 12.2 percent among those without schooling, compared to 19.7 percent among those with some schooling).

Traditional gender roles assign women a range of housework and care responsibilities, which inhibit their ability to work. As shown in figure 5, most men in Quetta subscribe to beliefs that women's rightful role is taking care of the home and children, indicating that patriarchal gender norms are deeply rooted. While QUHS 2021 asks primary male respondents only about agreement with traditional gender roles, data for urban Peshawar indicate that women also identify themselves with such roles. More than 80 percent of women agree that mothers should take more childcare responsibilities than fathers, and more than 90 percent agree that it is better if men earn money and women do housework. Not surprisingly, employed women in Quetta are more likely to be found in extended-family households[10] than nonemployed women because other family members might provide support with childcare and housework responsibilities, therefore enabling them to work (figure 6). Similarly, nonemployed women are more likely to be found in nuclear households, where childcare responsibilities are more likely to fall exclusively on them and therefore limit their ability to work.

Unpaid care and household work

It is well established globally that women perform more unpaid care and household work than men, but this disparity is greatest in Pakistan. According to UN Women (2019), Pakistani women spend 11 additional hours on unpaid household chores and caregiving for every hour spent by men on the same activities. While there are no time use data for Quetta, evidence for urban Peshawar indicates that men spend virtually no time on house or care work, while women spend on average 5.3 hours per day on this kind of work, an amount that decreases only slightly when they are employed. Furthermore, in a recent survey on the COVID-19 pandemic covering urban areas in Pakistan (Taş et al. 2021),[11] more women than men report an increase in unpaid work after the COVID-19 pandemic began regardless of employment status, though the gender gap is largest between working men and women. In line with this evidence, data from QUHS 2021 show that employed women work, on average, one hour per day less than they did before February 2020 (6.4 and 7.7 hours, respectively), likely because of increased housework and care responsibilities.[12]

Mobility

Women, including those who are employed, spend very little time outside the home and are usually accompanied when they do. Table 6 shows that women left their home no more than three times during the

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10 Extended-family households refer to a couple with children and other family members at home. Nuclear households refer to a couple with children only.

11 The authors used the administrative database of Pakistan's largest online job platform and an online COVID-19 survey. They collected information about the socioeconomic status and coping strategies of job seekers and employers.

12 The data show no difference in average hours worked per day among employed men (9.6 before and after the COVID-19 pandemic began).

week before COVID-19–related lockdowns took place, with employed women being slightly more mobile than nonemployed women. Women mostly leave their home to go to another house (82 percent); less often, they go to shops to buy groceries/clothes (45 percent), visit a clinic or health worker (38 percent), or go to social events (26 percent). The overwhelming majority observe purdah (table 7), and most are usually accompanied when leaving their home (85 percent, or 80 percent among employed women). The most cited companions are other women, the husband, or a child. Notably, these results were observed among all working-age women regardless of their working status, which implies that the prevailing social norms and values are equally binding for working and nonworking women. This is consistent with the idea that if women work, they most likely work from home (as shown in the next section), as this allows families to keep up with prevailing social norms. Not surprisingly, among employed women, only 12 percent indicate leaving their home to go to work.

Safety

Safety concerns when going out can further limit women's mobility and, therefore, are extremely important for female empowerment and FLFP. Women tend to feel safe within the bounds of their limited movements, but there is evidence that they would feel much less comfortable expanding their mobility. According to QUHS 2021, as many as 27.2 percent of all women report having experienced some form of sexual harassment outside the home (figure 7). These findings are in line with

Women, on average, regardless of their working status, spend little time outside home and are usually accompanied when they do.

TABLE 6. TIME SPENT OUTSIDE THE HOME AND REASONS FOR LEAVING THE HOUSE			
QUHS item	Employed women	Nonemployed women	All working-age women
In a typical week before the COVID-19 pandemic, how many days would you go outside your home? (average number of days per week)	3.0	2.6	2.7
Reasons for leaving the home before the COVID-19 pandemic (% positive responses for each item)			
To visit family, friends, or neighbors	84	82	82
To go to shops to buy groceries/clothes	49	44	45
To visit a clinic or health worker	42	38	38
To go to social events	30	26	26
To walk/for leisure	11	16	15
To attend school/literacy classes	10	13	12
To take children to school	4	4	4
To go to work	12	0	3
For Quran classes, *dars,* or other gathering	2	3	3

TABLE 7. OBSERVANCE OF PURDAH AND BEING ACCOMPANIED WHEN LEAVING THE HOME			
QUHS item	Employed women (%)	Nonemployed women (%)	All working-age (15–64) women (%)
Do you observe purdah?			
Yes	97.3	98.5	98.3
Who usually accompanies you? (if any)			
Child	18.7	14.5	15.2
Husband	29.9	28.9	29.0
Male relative	7.9	7.0	7.1
Female relative or nonrelative	41.8	48.1	47.1
Other	1.8	1.6	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: In the case of purdah, yes indicates any of the following responses to the question, "When you go outside for work or schooling or market, do you...?": cover head only, cover body but not face, or cover whole body. No indicates not observing any purdah.

Safety concerns can further limit women's mobility.

Share of women respondents (%)

BY TYPOLOGY
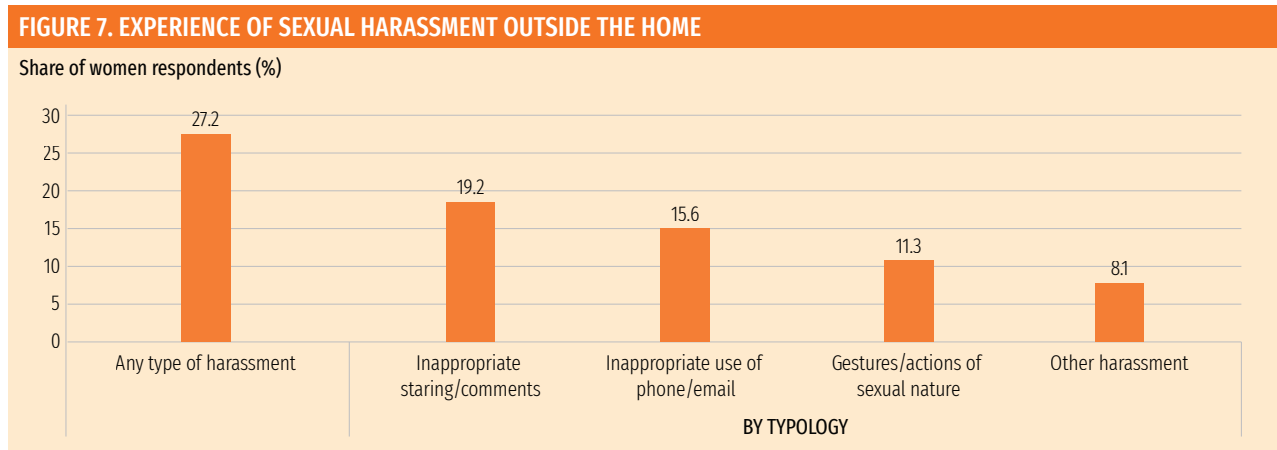
At least a quarter of working-age women (regardless of working status) express safety concerns when walking alone in public spaces.

TABLE 8. WOMEN'S FEELINGS OF SAFETY WALKING ALONE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD			
QUHS item	Employed women (%)	Nonemployed women (%)	All working-age women (%)
Do women feel safe walking alone outside in their neighborhood?			
Yes, anytime	45.7	45.9	45.8
During daytime only	26.1	29.0	28.6
No	28.2	25.2	25.6

results for urban Peshawar, where 30.8 percent of women reported an episode of sexual harassment. In both cities, inappropriate comments/staring stands as the most common episode of harassment but with very different shares (19 percent in Quetta, 28 percent in Peshawar). The second-most common form of harassment in Quetta is inappropriate use of phone/email (16 percent), whereas in Peshawar it is gestures/actions of a sexual nature (11 percent of women). Table 8 shows that most women (74.4 percent) consider walking alone in their own neighborhood to be safe; however, 29 percent would feel safe only during the day, and over a quarter would feel unsafe walking alone outside the neighborhood. As table 8 shows, safety perceptions and concerns are very similar between the employed and the nonemployed, which shows that safety is a concern for all women.

The chosen mode of transport when women go outside is public taxi (47.6 percent), followed by own/household car (25.3 percent). Less preferred methods are walking (14 percent) and public bus (9.3 percent).[13] This is consistent with prior analysis from the Time Use Survey 2007 showing that women in Pakistan rely on personal (rather than public) modes of motorized transport. For instance,

mean trip duration is higher for walking and personal automobile trips but considerably lower for travel by bus, bicycle, or other means of travel. Potential safety issues and interaction with unwanted men seem to affect women's trips and choice of mode the most (Adeel, Yeh, and Zhang 2013).

Furthermore, these findings on women's experience of harassment, safety concerns, and preferred mode of transportation suggest that the prevailing social norms that restrict women's mobility are also consistent with high risks to their personal safety and dignity.

Access to Information

Lack of information about labor market opportunities significantly hampers FLFP. Similar to findings from the LFS, official unemployment is very low in Quetta. According to QUHS 2021, the unemployment rate is 0.5 percent for women and 2.4 percent for men. In the case of women, this implies that nonworking women are mainly out of the labor force rather than unemployed (women out of the labor force represent 84 percent of working-age women). Interestingly, about 8 percent of women (and
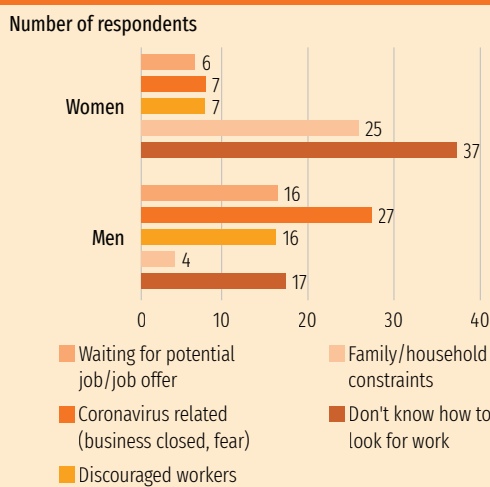
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13   The question on mode of transport refers to "during times of coronavirus"; therefore choices might also be influenced by perceived risk of contagion or lockdowns.

10 percent of men) who are out of the labor force report willingness to work even though they are not currently looking for a job (this refers to the economically inactive, who answered that "at present" they want to work, corresponding to 275 observations for women and 132 for men). Among these women, the most reported reason for not searching for a job (figure 8) is lack of knowledge about labor market functioning (37 percent), followed by care responsibilities (13.7 percent) and cultural and family prohibition (11.5 percent). Men who are out of the labor force represent 28 percent of working-age men, and the share of these who would like to work is 10 percent. The distribution of reasons among men is quite different and less biased than for women; still, 17 percent of men do not know how to look for employment either.

This lack of knowledge is mostly related to the job search process: 36 percent of women who are willing to work report not looking for a job because they do not know how. An additional 1 percent do not know what types of jobs they can do for pay, possibly proxying for lack of education and/or specific skills. Furthermore, if these women who lack knowledge about job opportunities were to join the labor market, FLFP in urban Quetta could increase from 16 to 19 percent.

Women lack knowledge about labor market functioning.

FIGURE 8. MAIN REASONS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE OUT OF THE LABOR FORCE BUT WANT TO WORK DO NOT TRY TO FIND A JOB OR START A BUSINESS

Number of respondents

Women
- 6
- 7
- 7
- 25
- 37

Men
- 16
- 27
- 16
- 4
- 17

Legend:
- Waiting for potential job/job offer
- Coronavirus related (business closed, fear)
- Discouraged workers
- Family/household constraints
- Don't know how to look for work

Note: Single-person households, single parents with children, and couples without children may have other relatives at home.

Household Welfare

Women living in poorer households tend to have higher participation rates, and FLFP decreases as household welfare increases, suggesting that women take up employment due to necessity and to increase household consumption. QUHS data allow for estimation of an asset index at the household level based on the household's ownership of selected assets. The index follows a methodology similar to that of the wealth index from the DHSs. Using the asset score as a proxy for household welfare, the analysis shows that female employment and FLFP are higher at the lower quintiles of the score and decrease as household welfare increases. For instance, while 27.7 percent of women from households in the first wealth quintile are in the labor force, the share goes down to 9.7 percent for women living in the wealthiest households.[14] These findings suggest that women are often required to take up employment (typically informal jobs) to increase household consumption. In fact, among women, economic necessity is the fourth-most cited condition that makes women working acceptable, after home-based or close-to-home work or working while observing purdah.

Characteristics and Quality of Women's Jobs

Employment status in urban Quetta differs substantially by gender: working women are mainly own-account workers, particularly those with low education, while men are mostly paid employees. Labor market outcomes in Quetta tend to be strongly segmented by gender, with more than half of employed women (58.5 percent) working on their own account and 60 percent of men working as paid employees (either as casual or by piece rate) (figure 9). However, when looking at employment status by educational attainment, the pattern among working women reverses.[15] While own-account is the most popular status for women with low education (69.9 percent), the majority of highly educated female workers (only a quarter of working women) are paid employees (65.6 percent). By contrast, employment status among men does not vary with educational attainment, though highly educated men have a higher probability of working as paid employees than those with less education. (See box 2 for definitions of employment statuses discussed in this note.)

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14   While the same pattern is observed among men, the difference in LFP between the lowest and highest quintiles is smaller.
15   In this report, low education refers to less than lower secondary education (below matric/grade 10). High education refers to having completed at least lower secondary education.

Employment status in urban Quetta differs substantially by gender, as women are mostly own-account workers.

FIGURE 9. EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Share of respondents (%)
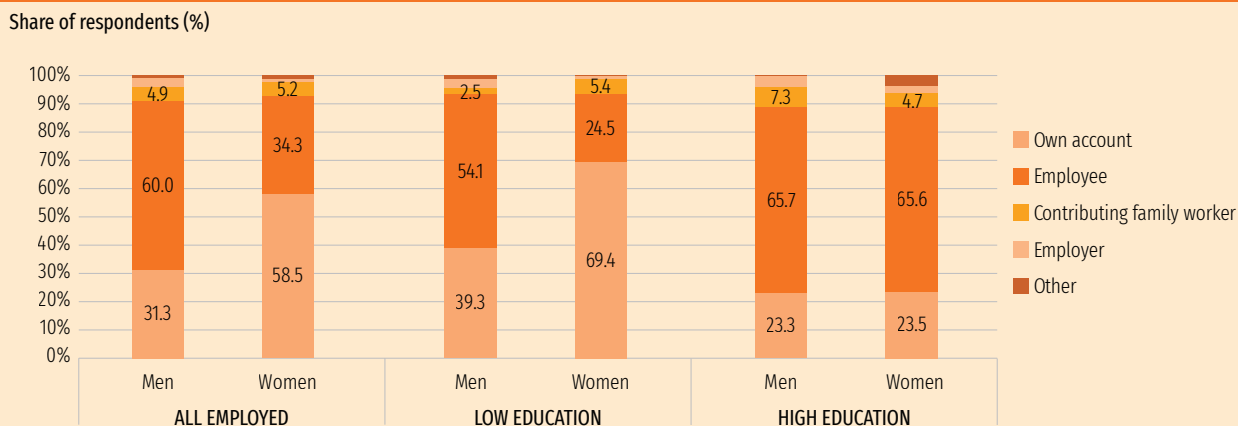
Note: Own account includes own-account workers (nonagriculture) and owner cultivators (not in subsistence agriculture). Employees include regular and casual paid employees, paid workers by piece rate, and paid nonfamily apprentices. Contributing family workers are those who work in a business owned by a family member or help a family member who works for someone else. "Other" includes paid nonfamily apprentices, sharecroppers, contract cultivators, members of a producer's cooperative, and others. High education means completing at least lower secondary education. Low education means less than lower secondary education (below matric/grade 10).

BOX 2. DEFINITIONS OF WORKING STATUS PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT

Employees are workers who hold jobs defined as paid employment jobs, where incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts that give them a basic remuneration that does *not* directly depend upon the revenue of the unit for which they work. In this report, based on QUHS 2021, this category includes the following workers: regular paid employees with fixed wages, workers receiving a fixed salary from a family business, casual paid employees, and paid workers by piece rate or work performed.

Employers are workers who, working on their own account or with one or a few partners, hold jobs defined as self-employment jobs (jobs where the remuneration directly depends on the profits derived from the goods and services produced) and, in this capacity, engage on a continuous basis one or more persons to work for them as employees.

Own-account workers are workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold jobs defined as self-employment jobs but have not engaged on a continuous basis any employees to work for them. In this report, this category includes contributing workers in nonagricultural activities (representing 31 percent of employed men and 56 percent of employed women in urban Quetta), workers in agriculture (representing 0.5 percent of employed men and 2 percent of employed women), and owner cultivators (0.2 percent of employed men and 0.1 percent of employed women).

Contributing family workers are those who work in a market-oriented business owned and operated by a family member or those who help a family member who works for someone else. In this report, this category corresponds to contributing family workers, mainly in nonagriculture.

Other workers include the following categories per QUHS 2021: paid nonfamily apprentices, sharecroppers, contract cultivators, members of producers' cooperatives, and other workers not classifiable by status.

Home-based workers are defined as (a) own-account workers and contributing family workers involved in production of goods and services in their homes for the market and (b) workers carrying out work in their homes for remuneration, resulting in a product or service as specified by their employer(s) irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials, or other inputs used, and contributing family workers helping such

workers.[16] HBWs work from their home or a family friend's home and include employees (as defined above), employers, own-account workers not in agriculture, and contributing family workers not in agriculture. Although the International Labour Organization (ILO) and WIEGO do not count employers as HBWs, given the nature of jobs women perform in urban Quetta, they are counted as such in this report (employers represent only 1 percent of employed women in urban Quetta).

ILO (2021) recognizes homeworkers as a subgroup of HBWs. In addition to working from home, homeworkers are defined statistically as employees or dependent contractors. According to QUHS 2021, regular paid employees and casual paid employees (who are more likely to be homeworkers) represent only 1 percent of women HBWs (see table 11). Women HBWs who are paid by the piece (20 percent) are mainly garment and handicraft workers. This suggests that the share of women HBWs who are homeworkers in urban Quetta is very small.[17]

Working women are highly segregated by industry and occupation, often performing low-value-added activities aligned with the skills gap and norms on socially accepted jobs. Figure 10 shows that working women in urban Quetta are employed mainly in two sectors: manufacturing, which employs the majority of women (61.7 percent), mostly in the textile sector producing garments, followed by education, which employs a smaller share of women (9.9 percent).[18] Segregation of women by industry is apparent when observing the two most prevalent working statuses among women (own-account and employee), though women working as wage employees are overrepresented in the education sector relative to all working women (figure 10). Along with limited sectoral diversity, female employment is also concentrated in socially accepted occupations such as garment workers, handicraft workers, and teachers or teachers' aides, and there is limited representation of urban women in services and retail. The top 10 occupations among women account for 92 percent of female employment, whereas in the case of men, the top 10 occupations account for only 62 percent of employment (table 9). Furthermore, segregation by occupation increases among workers with low education. Women's most frequent occupations differ greatly by education level, more so than among men. Women with low education tend to be manufacturers, refuse workers, cleaners, or shop salespeople, whereas highly skilled women tend to be teachers, childcare workers, or nursing professionals. Overall, the occupational profile of working women reflects stereotypically female roles and aligns with preferences expressed by men regarding the conditions under which it is acceptable for women to work for pay (table 10).

Occupational sex segregation in urban Quetta is in line with similar findings for urban Peshawar and urban Pakistan. Data for urban Peshawar from the Peshawar Urban Household Survey (Mancini 2021) show that almost 80 percent of all employed women are concentrated in the 10 most common occupations for women workers, as opposed to 60 percent of employed men in

Working women are highly segregated by industry and occupation.

FIGURE 10. DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN ACROSS SECTOR OF ACTIVITY BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS (ACCORDING TO ISIC CLASSIFICATION)
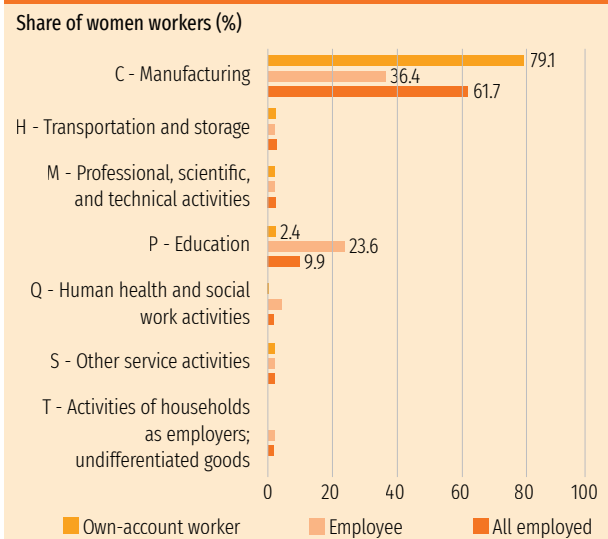
Note: Graph shows International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) sectors that employ at least 1.5 percent of all working women.

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16   For more information on HBWs, see the definition by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) at https://www.wiego.org/definition-home-based-workers.

17   For more on the ILO's definitions, see https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/concepts-and-definitions/description-employment-by-status.

18   According to the latest wave of the LFS (2020–21), for women ages 15–64 in Quetta District, the distribution of employed women (excluding those in agriculture) follows the same pattern across industries seen in QUHS 2021, but the share of women in each industry is different. For instance, the share of women working in manufacturing is smaller (29 percent) in the LFS than in the QUHS, whereas the shares of those in education and in human health are larger (34 and 24 percent, respectively). In addition, the LFS yields a greater share of women classified as service and sales workers (30 percent) and a smaller share of craft workers (16 percent). While the QUHS yields a higher FLFP rate, it also yields a slightly different composition of female employment, suggesting that the gap in LFP is not random.

The top 10 occupations among women account for 92 percent of female employment.

TABLE 9. TOP 10 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS BY GENDER AND EDUCATION LEVEL (ACCORDING TO ISCO 3-DIGIT CLASSIFICATION)						
	Women	(%)	Cumul. (%)	Men	(%)	Cumul. (%)
1	Garment and related trades workers	63.6	63.6	Shop salespersons	15.0	15.0
2	Handicraft workers	11.8	75.4	Street and market salespersons	14.5	29.5
3	Secondary education teachers	4.6	80.0	Building frame and related trades workers	6.4	35.9
4	Primary school and early childhood teachers	4.5	84.5	Car, van, and motorcycle drivers	6.3	42.3
5	Refuse workers	2.7	87.2	Garment and related trades workers	4.3	46.5
6	Hairdressers, beauticians, and related	1.4	88.6	Machinery mechanics and repairers	4.0	50.5
7	Other teaching professionals	1.1	89.7	Business services agents	3.8	54.3
8	Childcare workers and teachers' aides	1.0	90.7	Numerical clerks	3.2	57.5
9	Other health professionals	0.9	91.6	Regulatory government associate professionals	2.5	60.0
10	Shop salespersons	0.9	92.4	Domestic, hotel, and office cleaners and helpers	2.5	62.5
	Women with low education			Men with low education		
1	Garment and related trades workers	74.8	74.8	Street and market salespersons	17.6	17.6
2	Handicraft workers	13.9	88.7	Shop salespersons	14.6	32.2
3	Refuse workers	3.6	92.4	Building frame and related trades workers	11.5	43.7
4	Shop salespersons	1.2	93.5	Car, van, and motorcycle drivers	8.8	52.5
5	Domestic, hotel, and office cleaners and helpers	1.0	94.5	Garment and related trades workers	6.3	58.8
6	Personal care workers in health services	0.9	95.4	Machinery mechanics and repairers	6.1	64.9
7	Hairdressers, beauticians, and related	0.8	96.1	Food processing and related trades workers	3.3	68.2
8	Painters and building structure cleaners	0.5	96.7	Manufacturing laborers	3.3	71.5
9	Primary school and early childhood teachers	0.4	97.1	Domestic, hotel, and office cleaners	2.7	74.1
10	Building frame and related trades workers	0.3	97.4	Building finishers and related trades workers	2.4	76.5
	Women with high education			Men with high education		
1	Garment and related trades workers	28.6	28.6	Shop salespersons	15.4	15.4
2	Secondary education teachers	18.6	47.2	Street and market salespersons	11.6	26.9
3	Primary school and early childhood teachers	17.0	64.1	Numerical clerks	5.8	32.7
4	Handicraft workers	5.3	69.4	Business services agents	5.6	38.4
5	Other teaching professionals	4.6	74.1	Regulatory government associate professionals	4.4	42.8
6	Childcare workers and teachers' aides	4.0	78.0	Car, van, and motorcycle drivers	4.0	46.8
7	Other health professionals	3.8	81.8	Protective services workers	2.6	49.5
8	Client information workers	3.4	85.2	Primary school and early childhood teachers	2.5	51.9
9	Hairdressers, beauticians, and related	3.3	88.5	Garment and related trades workers	2.4	54.3
10	Nursing and midwifery professionals	2.3	90.8	Secondary education teachers	2.3	56.6

Note: Men and women with high education are those who have completed at least lower secondary education, while men and women with low education have not.

the 10 most common occupations for working men. In urban Pakistan, the top five occupations make up two-thirds or more of the share of employment for women, whereas there is more diversity for men. Urban men are more likely to be engaged in trades such as construction and services (shopkeepers), whereas urban women are more likely to be engaged as domestic help or in apparel and textiles (Amir et al. 2018). This partially explains why FLFP rates are higher in rural areas of Pakistan: on a farm, it is easier to create jobs aligned with socially acceptable occupations. For instance, according to the Pakistan LFS 2020–21, the female employment rate (ages 15–64) in urban Quetta District was 2.2 percent, whereas in rural Quetta District it was 9.7 percent. Similarly, for Balochistan Province, the female employment rate was 3.8 percent in urban areas and 17.2 percent in rural. A previous round of the LFS (2017–18) was also in line with these results: the employment rate among women ages 15–64

in urban Balochistan was 5.8 percent, whereas the rate increased to 9 percent in rural areas.

A closer look at the two most prevalent working statuses of women—own-account workers and paid employees—confirms the pattern of segregation by industry but also reveals that industry/occupation choice varies by status. Women working as own-account workers are more likely to be found in manufacturing (79 percent), while female paid employees have greater representation in education (23.6 percent) compared to the overall average (figure 10). Similarly, in terms of occupation, own-account women work mainly as craft (and related) workers, whereas paid employees are more evenly split between craft workers (46 percent) and professionals (32 percent). This further reflects lower representation of women in high-skilled professions and indicates that own-account jobs held by women tend to be low skilled (small-scale and home-based).

There is a strong emphasis on employment that is acceptable to men and ideal to women, reflecting the actual job profile of women. Working from home is the most important condition that makes female employment acceptable to men and women and is considered the ideal form of employment for women. However, there are important gender differences in the conditions that make paid work acceptable for women (table 10). According to women, the two most important conditions besides home-based work are that women can observe purdah while working and, if the job is outside the home, the workplace must be close by. In contrast, men consider having no interaction with non-*mahram* men and working as a teacher or nurse make it acceptable for women to work (only 0.3 percent of women cite the latter). When asked about the characteristics of an ideal job, 54 percent

FIGURE 11. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL JOB FOR WOMEN, ACCORDING TO WOMEN

Share of women respondents (%)
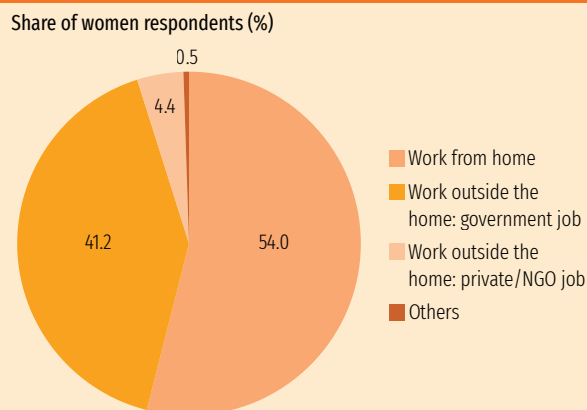
Note: Women were asked what their ideal job was before the COVID-19 pandemic.

of women reported a preference for it being home-based (figure 11). However, it is noteworthy that for 45 percent of women, work outside the home is the ideal job, particularly a government job. Such preferences are clearly reflected in the actual profile of jobs held by women. For instance, less than 1 percent of men work inside the home versus 83 percent of women (table 11). As a reference, work from home is more prevalent among women in urban Quetta than among those in urban Peshawar. In the case of Peshawar, 65 percent of women work inside the home, compared to just 5 percent of men.

In addition, as table 11 shows, women with low education are more likely to work from home, whereas women with high education are much more likely to work in a shop or office (43 percent). This is consistent with the vicious cycle described in the previous section whereby

Strong emphasis on forms of employment "acceptable" to men and "ideal" to women

TABLE 10. CONDITIONS THAT MEN AND WOMEN VIEW AS ACCEPTABLE FOR WOMEN TO WORK FOR PAY

Condition	Men (%)	Women (%)
Home-based work	54.1	47.4
Work as a teacher or nurse	10.9	0.3
No interaction with non-mahram men	8.8	5.4
No overnight travel or travel outside the city	7.1	0.5
Ability to work while observing purdah	6.9	20.7
If work is outside the home, the workplace should be close by.	6.2	12.8
If work is outside the home, proper coronavirus safeguards are in place.	2.0	0.0
A good salary	1.7	0.0
If work is outside the home, the workplace is sex segregated.	1.4	0.4
Economic necessity	1.0	6.5

Note: Responses shown for categories with a response of 1 percent or more.

Women engage in jobs that do not require physical interaction, and most work from home, particularly those with low education.

TABLE 11. LOCATION OF MAIN EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATION			
	Low education (%)	High education (%)	All employed (%)
Women			
At home	92.7	45.5	81.3
At other's home (family friend or employer)	3.2	0.5	2.5
On the street or outside	1.7	6.2	2.8
In a shop, office, or factory	1.8	42.9	11.8
Other	0.6	4.9	1.6
Men			
At home	0.5	0.5	0.5
At other's home (family friend or employer)	2.7	2.3	2.6
On the street or outside	33.1	13.1	22.9
In a shop, office, or factory	61.9	81.9	71.9
Other	1.8	2.3	2.2

Note: Men and women with high education are those who have completed at least lower secondary

the social norms that determine women's educational attainment (or the decision to go to school) later determine a path toward employment outside the household, which often generates better earning opportunities.

HBWs make up the majority of employed women in urban Quetta, in line with national figures. Under a statistical definition of HBWs in line with ILO/WIEGO—which includes workers who carry out remunerative work in their homes (work resulting in a product or service), whether as own-account workers, paid workers, or contributing family workers—the share of employed women in urban Quetta who are HBWs is 78.6 percent. This is in line with national figures showing that home-based work has grown in recent years in Pakistan due to an increase in female workers and a decrease in male workers. In fact, nonagricultural home-based work has become a primary source of employment for women in Pakistan. According to LFS data, between 2013/14 and 2017/18, the share of female HBWs in nonagricultural employment increased from 20.5 to 46.2 percent (Akhtar 2020). See box 2 for detailed definitions of HBWs and homeworkers.

QUHS 2021 included a question about the reasons why the respondent works from their own dwelling or home. In the case of women, 51 percent answered they were "not allowed to leave," followed by 21 percent who answered it is "easier to work from home" and 17 percent who reported they "can't leave home because [they need] to attend family." Men's reasons were very different. About

half of men working from home indicated they did so because it was cost-effective, and 30 percent stated it was "easier to work from home."[19] These results show that in the case of women, working from home is not much of a choice but rather an alternative to other forms of work that are less aligned with existing social norms.

Most women HBWs in urban Quetta are own-account garment workers who have low chances of upward mobility. The second-most prevalent employment status among women HBWs is paid employment by piece (20 percent) (table 12). Women HBWs are also largely employed in manufacturing as garment workers, though about 10 percent are teachers (likely telecommuting due to pandemic-related school closures or tutoring neighborhood children from home). The share of HBWs is higher among women with low education (88 percent), compared to women with high education (40 percent). Moreover, women HBWs with high education tend to have completed lower secondary education only and work in manufacturing (garments, handicrafts) or teaching. This suggests that while these workers have flexibility in terms of their hours, working from home limits the quality and type of jobs women can take and, thus, negatively affects their upward mobility and income (Amir et al. 2018). Additionally, home-based work affords women fewer opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, or learning from other peers in the same occupation/industry, as well as fewer opportunities for improving the quality of their employment and their productivity growth, further depressing their earnings.

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19   The survey item gave "regular workplace closed because of COVID-19" as an answer choice, but it did not register any observations.

Most women HBWs are own-account workers, followed by paid workers by piece.

TABLE 12. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WOMEN HBWs	
Employment status	Percentage (%)
Regular paid employee with fixed wage	0.5
Casual paid employee	0.5
Paid worker by piece or work performed	20.2
Paid nonfamily apprentice	0.0
Employer	1.2
Own-account worker (nonagriculture)	71.5
Contributing family worker (nonagriculture)	6.3
Other	0.0
Total	100.0

Childcare responsibilities play an important role in shaping women's employment profile. The vast majority of households in urban Quetta (85 percent) have at least one child in the 0–14 age group, a sharp contrast to the share of households with an adult 65 or older (21 percent). The presence of children (ages 0–14) in the household increases the likelihood that women work as own-account workers. Among working women living in a household with children, the share of own-account workers is 61.2 percent, whereas a quarter are paid employees. The trend reverses among women living with no children (who are a minority, as more than 90 percent of households have children). Most of these women (60 percent) work as paid employees. The presence of children increases the likelihood of women working as HBWs, which could signal that the decision to have children and the expectation to work from home are driven by the same underlying factors. These findings further reflect the primary role of women in caregiving and household (unpaid) work and help to explain why women spend on average three hours a day less performing market work than men (6.4 and 9.6 hours per day, respectively).

BOX 3. LABOR PROFILE OF AFGHAN REFUGEE WOMEN IN QUETTA

At present, an estimated 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees live in Pakistan, mainly in the KP and Balochistan Provinces and in urban/semiurban centers. According to QUHS 2021, the Afghan refugee population represents approximately 13.5 percent of the Quetta population and a lower share (11.8 percent) of Quetta's working-age population. This is in line with what was previously observed for Afghan refugees in Peshawar. The QUHS shows a higher number of young dependents in Afghan refugee households, with an average of 4.7 children below age 15, compared with 3.9 in Pakistani households. This is not surprising since the Afghan refugee population in Quetta is somewhat younger than the Pakistani population (for both men and women), by an average of two years (21.5 versus 23.6 years).

Table A.1 in appendix A shows that Afghan refugee women are more likely to be active in the labor force (and employed) than Pakistani women, particularly in the younger cohorts. While Afghan refugee women represent 12 percent of the female working-age population (for men, the share is 11.3 percent), their share among those in the labor force is almost double (21 percent) (for men, the share is 13.2 percent). In addition, the overall rate of FLFP is 28 percent for Afghan refugee women and 15 percent for Pakistani women (table B3.1).[20] This result is in line with the lower level of welfare observed among Afghan refugee households in Quetta and, therefore, their relatively greater need to participate in the labor market.

Analysis of educational attainment of working-age women reveals a significant education gap between Afghan refugees and hosts, with the former being most likely to be illiterate and having substantially lower educational attainment. About 82 percent of Afghan refugee women have less than primary education, whereas the corresponding figure among Pakistani women is 49 percent. The share of Afghan refugee women with less than

20   The overall rate of male labor force participation is 84 percent for Afghan refugees and 71 percent for Pakistanis.

TABLE B3.1. LABOR MARKET INDICATORS FOR WOMEN 15–64 IN URBAN QUETTA, BY NATIONALITY			
Indicator	Pakistani (%)	Afghan refugee (%)	All nationalities (%)
LFP rate	14.5	27.6	16.1
Employment rate	14.0	27.2	15.6
Unemployment rate	0.5	0.4	0.5
LFP extended, including work for own consumption	16.1	28.2	17.6

primary education increases when considering the population of working-age women (86 percent, compared to 55 percent among the Pakistani female labor force).

The lower human capital of the Afghan refugee female labor force in Quetta is reflected in its sectoral and occupational structure. Compared to Pakistani women, Afghan refugee female workers are almost exclusively employed in manufacturing (76.5 percent work in this sector, compared to 58.1 percent of their Pakistani peers). Female Afghan refugee workers are mostly employed as craft and trade-related workers. Furthermore, most of them are HBWs (93.2 versus 74.5 percent of Pakistani women), own-account workers (68.6 versus 52.8 percent of Pakistani women), or garment workers in the textile sector. The share of Afghan refugee women working as professionals is barely 1.5 percent, whereas among Pakistani women this figure is 16.7 percent. Businesses operated by Afghan refugee workers (regardless of their sex) tend to be on average smaller than those owned by Pakistani workers.

Sources: Figures from Operational Data Portal, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland (accessed May 31, 2022), https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/pak. Other data in this section are from Redaelli (2022) and the Quetta and Peshawar Urban Household Surveys.

The earnings differential between men and women is fully explained by observables, highlighting prevailing social norms.

TABLE 13. OAXACA-BLINDER DECOMPOSITION OF GENDER GAP IN HOURLY EARNINGS (WITH HECKMAN CORRECTION FOR SELECTION)		
Indicator	Coefficient	Difference (%)
Dependent variable: Log (hourly earnings)		
Difference men-women	1.034*** (0.131)	
Explained	0.894*** (0.149)	86
Unexplained	0.140 (0.153)	14
Observations	1,978	

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Hourly earnings are reported monthly earnings normalized by days per week and by hours per day usually worked at main job. A coefficient of positive sign indicates an increase in the wage gap. Explanatory variables include age, age-squared, education level, employment status, workplace, and occupation. Inclusion of sector (alone or with occupation) returns nonsignificant coefficients. Variables used for Heckman correction for selection include age, age-squared, education level, marital status, presence of children 0–14 in household and dummy for Afghan refugee populations.
*$p < 0.1$ **$p < 0.05$ ***$p < 0.01$

Overall, women have a lower-quality job profile than men, which mostly explains the gender earnings gap. Working women in urban Quetta are mostly employed in low-value-added activities that display a higher prevalence of own-account, informal, home-based work. They work in the manufacturing industry mainly as garment and hand- icraft workers; only a minority perform more skilled jobs, such as teachers or health professionals. These low-quality jobs do not create incentives to increase their participation in market work. Not surprisingly, the decomposition of the earnings differential between men and women (table 14) is largely explained by observable demographic and job

characteristics—namely, age, educational attainment, employment status, work location, and occupation).[21]

The results presented in this section indicate that the polarization of men's and women's working lives extends far beyond the decision to join the labor force. They also highlight that education makes a difference in working women's experiences. Employed women are not just a minority but a segregated one in terms of their occupations, the restricted location of their jobs, their working hours, and their pay. Women's predominantly domestic roles and responsibilities toward their families appear to be a strong influence, even when they are employed. The need for reconciliation of house care and work for pay is reflected by the characteristics of their jobs. While this is universally true, educated women are far more likely to work outside the home and have careers that are more similar to their male counterparts. Women with low education, by contrast, are mostly engaged in informal, own-account home-based work, often in manufacturing.

BOX 4. IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

On March 21, 2020, as COVID-19 cases rose, Pakistan authorities imposed a lockdown. The first lockdown lasted until May 9, 2020. Thereafter, sporadic temporary lockdowns ensued. Baseline data from different COVID-19 surveys in Pakistan[22] show that the pandemic led to severe household economic and food insecurity; job losses due to the economic lockdown, particularly in urban areas; and slowdowns/closures in business activity. Nonwage workers (own-account workers not in agriculture), daily/weekly wage workers, and youth and less educated workers were affected the most. Fortunately, as of August 2020, a V-shaped recovery process seemed to have begun, with the employment rate reaching close to prepandemic levels (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2020; World Bank 2021). In a recent study focusing on the gender effects of COVID-19 in Pakistan,[23] Taş et al. (2021) concluded that the sectors where women are most likely to be employed, such as education and health, were the most severely affected. Further, the postpandemic recovery has been faster for males.[24] As in many countries, the pandemic has led to a disproportionate increase in women's unpaid care work in Pakistan, as well as increases in their reported rates of stress, anxiety, and exposure to violence.

The QUHS includes a module on labor before the pandemic (February 2020) and during the lockdown period (March–July 2020), along with the labor situation at the time of the survey (collected between November 2020 and March 2021). In line with findings at the national level, the data show that in urban Quetta, 14.8 percent of women employed before the pandemic had lost their job by the time of the survey (compared to 1.8 percent of men). At the same time, 1.6 percent of nonworking women (versus 7.5 percent of nonworking men) took on a job, mostly in low-skilled occupations, such as craft or elementary workers, probably in response to income loss in the household.

It is noteworthy that for both men and women, the change in LFP rates before and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic is not statistically significant at any level (table B4.1). Possible explanations might be that social distancing policies, which had a profound impact in other countries, were implemented as micro lockdowns in Pakistan (as opposed to citywide lockdowns). Also, the type of jobs that women in Quetta have, which are mostly home-based and rarely contact-intensive, exposed them less to the adverse effects of lockdowns. Moreover, female employment has been extremely low since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The data suggest that the only significant change in urban Quetta's labor market after the pandemic began is an increase in male employment, which is consistent with a faster postpandemic recovery among men than among women. These findings should also be interpreted with caution because the number of observations with a valid (nonmissing) LFP status is significantly lower in the prepandemic labor module relative to labor at the time of the survey.[25]

21   The QUHS includes a module on earnings from an individual's main job. Data show high nonreporting of earnings. Among respondents who indicated being employed in a paid job and reported a valid (nonmissing) sector and occupation, 35.8 percent are missing data on earnings. Analysis of the probability of nonreporting shows that nonreporting does not seem to be systematic. For instance, 33 percent of employed women and 36 percent of employed men are missing earnings; most missing earnings are found in manufacturing (where most women work) and in construction (which is a male-dominated sector). Only three respondents (women) indicated having zero earnings, which makes it difficult to distinguish between paid and unpaid workers.

22   The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics COVID-19 special survey was collected October–November 2020. The World Bank COVID-19 phone survey was conducted November 2020–April 2021.

23   The study used the administrative database of Pakistan's largest online job platform and an online COVID-19 survey.

24   According to the authors, male-dominated sectors such as hotels, restaurants, food service, and transportation were also hit hard in terms of job losses.

25   While there were 210 missing observations on labor force status at the time of the survey (in a sample of 10,056 working-age individuals), the number of missing observations increases to 1,853 when the question refers to labor market status in February 2020.

TABLE B4.1. DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED YOUTH (15–29) ACROSS ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, BY SEX						
	Women			Men		
Indicator	Pre–COVID-19 pandemic (February 2020)	At time of survey	Difference	Pre–COVID-19 pandemic (February 2020)	At time of survey	Difference
LFP (%)	16.8	16.1	0.7	71.4	72.2	−0.8
Employment (%)	14.2	15.6	−1.4	66.3	69.8	3.6***
Unemployment (%)	2.5	0.5	2.1***	5.1	2.4	2.7***
Out of labor force (%)	83.2	83.9	−0.7	28.6	27.8	0.8
Observations	4,417	4,733		3,786	5,113	

Note: Observations refer to number of respondents with a valid status in the labor force (nonmissing observations).
*$p < 0.1$ **$p < 0.05$ ***$p < 0.01$

A closer look at respondents who were employed before the pandemic but experienced job loss shows that female-dominated sectors and occupations were severely affected by the containment measures—namely, lockdowns and school closures. QUHS 2021 shows that women in professional activities, education, and human health—which are also high-skilled sectors—were more likely to lose their jobs (table B4.2). These sectors concentrate female employment in Quetta, along with manufacturing. In the case of men, there is less variation by sector in the share of men experiencing job loss. The highest share is found in the construction sector, where 3.8 percent of men lost their jobs.

TABLE B4.2. JOB LOSSES AMONG WOMEN AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC		
ISIC sector of activity	Share of women employed in the sector pre-COVID (%)	Share of employed women in the sector who experienced job loss after the COVID-19 pandemic began (%)
C - Manufacturing	70.8	3.0
E - Water supply; sewerage, waste management, and remediation activities	0.9	0.0
F - Construction	0.7	0.0
G - Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	0.6	0.0
H - Transportation and storage	3.9	3.2
M - Professional, scientific, and technical activities	5.4	26.9
P - Education	9.5	13.1
Q - Human health and social work activities	2.4	19.6
R - Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.9	0.0
T - Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods	1.3	2.8

Analysis using the latest waves of the LFS for urban Balochistan (2017–18 and 2020–21; the 2017–18 round is representative at the province level only), gives a more representative picture of the situation before and after the pandemic. The comparison between the distribution of employed women (ages 15–64) across industries (excluding agriculture) before and after the pandemic supports the findings from the QUHS. According to the LFS rounds, there was an increase in the share of women working in manufacturing (from 17 percent in 2017 to 44 percent in 2020), suggesting that women who took on jobs did so mostly in manufacturing. At the same time, the shares of female employment in education and human health showed the greatest decline (5 and 12 percentage point decreases, respectively), suggesting that these two sectors were hardest hit by the pandemic.

Conclusions and Policy Options

Only 16 percent of working-age women in urban Quetta participate in the labor market, compared to 72 percent of men. Efforts aimed at increasing FLFP will likely contribute to higher economic growth and poverty reduction. Along with experiencing low levels of labor market participation, women employed in urban Quetta mostly work in low-value-added activities, with a high prevalence of own-account, informal, and home-based work. At the same time, they perform jobs in line with socially accepted occupations, likely a function of how easily these jobs can be done from home. Eberhard-Ruiz and Gutierrez (forthcoming) estimate the potential job and GDP gains from closing the country's employment gap between men and women relative to peer countries with a similar level of development. According to the study, 7–19 million new jobs could be created, and the estimates for GDP gains range from 5 to 23 percent, depending on the benchmark scenario.[26] The remainder of this section discusses policy options aimed at promoting greater FLFP in urban Pakistan.[27]

Working women are mainly employed in the manufacturing industry as garment and handicraft workers. Only a minority (the highly educated) perform more skilled jobs such as teachers or health professionals. Representation in other nontraditional sectors is very low. Women's career fields are perceived to align with traditional gender roles. Employment in other fields, especially nontraditional sectors, can be especially challenging for women. Rigorous evidence on what works in assisting women to cross over into male-dominated nontraditional sectors is scarce but promising. For instance, informational nudges—particularly those that emphasize the differential earnings between female- and male-dominated occupations—can encourage women to enroll in training programs to enter male-dominated trades (Hicks et al. 2011). Providing information on sector-specific profitability could also change beliefs about profitability. Schools could offer information through career guidance, informational sessions accompanying skills training programs, or edutainment (Bjorvatn et al. 2020). Similarly, early exposure to male role models has been shown to improve the likelihood of women crossing over into male-dominated sectors and occupations (Alibhai et al. 2017; Campos et al. 2015). Exposure to a successful role model may provide information about the returns in male-dominated

fields and help women gain market information (Field et al. 2016).

Investing in girls and young women's education and skills-based training (with a gender focus) is an important precondition to increasing FLFP and breaking the vicious cycle of low education and low employment. As demonstrated by a large body of evidence and the Peshawar and Quetta household surveys, women are more likely to be involved in the labor force if they are more educated. Addressing both demand and supply constraints that limit girls' education remains a key priority. Similarly, a lack of marketable skills can discourage women from seeking jobs. Skills-based interventions can improve income, empowerment, and labor market outcomes for women through increased business knowledge (such as financial planning, marketing, and other business-related skills), improved life skills (such as outlook on life, motivation, self-esteem, and career aspirations), and greater decision-making inside and outside the home (Chinen et al. 2017). In a recent systematic review of skills-based interventions in South Asia, researchers concluded that interventions sensitized to the prevailing social and logistical barriers for women—household work, family obligations, childcare, and gendered norms against travel—had larger impacts.[28] Examples of these interventions are programs that provide monetary incentives, childcare services, mentoring for life skills, organized training sessions in villages and close to women's homes, training delivered through local providers, and advertising campaigns that employ social mobilizers (Zahra, Javed, and Munoz Boudet 2021).

Social norms seem to be the most powerful factor in determining women's interactions with the public sphere and workforce. Household attitudes and behavior and social norms play an important role in determining whether, when, and how women can work for pay. In this context, steady long-term policy efforts are needed to influence social norms toward encouraging women's empowerment. Research indicates that possible interventions to influence norms include strategic use of positive messaging about strong female role models. Furthermore, global evidence suggests that engaging men is crucial in changing norms surrounding women's economic activities. For example, men can act as "gatekeepers" for women by providing access to capital, information, and networks.

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26 Eberhard-Ruiz and Gutierrez (forthcoming) chose Bangladesh as a benchmark country because it has managed to substantially increase women's employment in recent years while sharing similar cultural and labor market characteristics with Pakistan.

27 For a comprehensive review, see World Bank (2021).

28 Women targeted by these training programs, either as intended beneficiaries or as a subsample, generally have low levels of education, are poor or from marginalized backgrounds, work in low-skilled occupations, or are active in the informal sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic could worsen already unfavorable prospects for women's labor participation and employment, so the gendered effects of the pandemic should be considered in recovery efforts. As businesses close temporarily or permanently, jobs have disappeared for both men and women. However, the sectors where women are more likely to be employed, such as education and health, have been most severely affected. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a disproportionate increase in women's unpaid care work, which, if prolonged, will make women more likely to quit the labor market altogether. In addition, the fall in household income and the rise in unpaid work are likely factors creating higher stress and anxiety among women, as well as increased exposure to domestic violence. Recovery policies must incorporate elements aimed at restoring household dynamics and incentives that encourage women to work, such as childcare support services and targeted social safety nets for informal and home-based female workers who do not benefit from social protection coverage. Women who have lost their jobs in the hardest-hit sectors can serve as frontline workers to roll out public COVID-19 response programs for contact tracing, testing, vaccination, and remote learning.

Most employed women (78.6 percent) in urban Quetta are HBWs who are largely employed in informal jobs of low upward mobility. For women, working from home is an alternative used to work around existing social norms. Effective implementation of recent legislation to recognize the status of HBWs can improve women's economic participation in the province.[29] In April 2022, the Balochistan assembly passed the Home-Based Workers Bill, aimed at protecting the rights of women and other workers involved in home-based work in the province. The law recognizes informal HBWs (the majority of whom are women) as formal workers and entitles them access to social security benefits and a minimum wage. This recognition will enhance HBWs' access to decent wages and social security benefits. Furthermore, this will also improve measurement of the overall FLFP rate in Balochistan, as research shows the number of HBWs is underestimated in Pakistan and other parts of the world due to definitional issues in standard LFSs and use of proxy respondents for women.[30] Effective implementation of provincial and federal HBW laws will aid economic participation of women who are constrained to work from home due to social norms and other care work responsibilities.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has the potential to provide women with increased access to better markets while allowing them to circumvent obstacles related to mobility and social norms. The QUHS shows that 55 percent of working-age women in urban Quetta do not have internet access and 13 percent do not know about the internet (versus 32 percent and 2 percent, respectively, among men). These shares are much higher among women with low education. Emerging ICT jobs could provide new opportunities for women, especially women living in urban areas. In Pakistan, freelancers in ICT generally work 34 hours per week, with flexible hours, and a gender gap in earnings does not seem to exist. Some records even suggest that female freelancers in Pakistan earn more than their male counterparts (Cho and Majoka 2020). ICT can help connect women and men with the labor market in different ways—for example, by expanding their skills, expanding their options for the job search, providing access to online and remote learning trainings, and providing access to e-commerce platforms. ICT could also boost female employment by enabling women to telework from their home in more productive jobs compatible with preferences around home-based work and care responsibilities—especially as these preferences have become more pronounced and unavoidable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures to promote women's ICT jobs include creating workspaces for women with internet connections, networks, and mentors.

Additional key areas for action to support FLFP include investments in infrastructure to (a) facilitate transportation and safety of public spaces and (b) adapt workplace environments to the needs of women. Security concerns and gender norms that inhibit mobility of women directly stunt women's LFP. In this context, affordable, safe public transport systems responding to the specific needs of women and supporting their participation in the workforce are critical (ADB 2016). Relevant measures include (but are not limited to) pedestrian walkways that are adequately lit and easy access to reporting incidents of harassment and swift resolution of these issues with support from law enforcement. Equally important is investing in workplace environments where there is access to facilities such as childcare, dedicated transport, and separate rest areas for women, as all of these are conducive to women's work. There is compelling evidence of the positive impact of childcare availability on women's employment, including in low- and middle-income

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29   The World Bank–financed development policy credit program SHIFT 1&2 recently supported the government in passing 11 laws in Sindh, KP, and Balochistan. HBW laws were passed in KP and Balochistan to recognize informal HBWs as formal workers and support HBWs' access to decent wages and social security benefits.

30   The World Bank is undertaking mixed-methods research on HBWs in KP and Balochistan to support the provincial governments in implementing HBW laws. This will also entail supporting the government in developing rules and aiding HBW registration.

countries (see the review of evidence in Devercelli and Beaton-Day 2020). In the context of Pakistan, state-subsidized childcare programs, public-private partnerships for day care facilities, and communal childcare facilities are all feasible options to support working women and ease the burden of household and market work. Provisions for separate toilets and rest/prayer areas for women are also crucial to establish comfortable workplaces for women.

The analysis presented here suggests that existing surveys typically underestimate women's work, so different approaches are needed to better measure all of women's economic contributions inside and outside the home. As demonstrated by the Peshawar and Quetta surveys, techniques to measure FLFP should be modified to capture more robust data on productive activities by expanding estimates of economic contributions. Future labor surveys could also be adapted to the approach of collecting data from all household members, going beyond proxy respondents for women.

APPENDIX A: QUHS SAMPLING METHODOLOGY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The Quetta Urban Household Survey (QUHS) was planned with the objective of delivering a representative sample of the city of Quetta (Metropolitan Corporation) as a whole and of Afghan refugees living in the city. To this end, sampling was conducted in two stages.

First Stage: Selecting Primary Sampling Units for Listing

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has demarcated Quetta Metropolitan Corporation into 508 urban enumeration areas, or primary sampling units (PSUs). Using sampling proportional to size, 220 PSUs were selected for listing.

Second Stage: Selection of Households for Interview

In the second stage, 2,020 households were selected—11 in each of the 220 PSUs selected in the first stage. The sample frame for the second stage was a full list of all structures (both dwellings and nonresidential units) and households in the 220 PSUs. The household listing operation identified 35,913 Pakistani and 3,745 Afghan refugee households in total. The latter were very concentrated in certain PSUs.

The number of Afghan refugees and Pakistani households to visit in each PSU was defined as follows: If the PSU had less than 10 Afghan refugee households, all were visited; otherwise nine were selected. Then, taking into account the number of Afghan refugee households, as many Pakistani households as needed to visit 11 households in total were selected. If there were not enough Pakistani households in the PSU, additional Afghan refugee households were selected.

The sample of households, or the *target sample*, was selected by systematic equal-probability sampling from the list of all households in the PSU, sorted by structure number,[1] independently for each nationality. The households of each nationality not selected in the target sample were assigned a serial *mobilization number* to indicate the order in which they could be used to substitute nonrespondent households of the same nationality from the target sample. Households with mobilization numbers 1 or 2 are referred to as the *reserve sample*.

Selection Probabilities and Sampling Weights

The probability P_{hbj} of interviewing a household of nationality j (Pakistani or Afghan refugee household, determined at time of listing) in block b is the product $P_1 P_2$ of (a) selecting the PSU for listing in the first stage and (b) selecting the household from the listing data in the third stage. These probabilities are given by equations 1 and 2:

$$P_1 = \frac{k\tilde{N}_b}{\tilde{N}}, \tag{1}$$

$$P_2 = \pi_b \frac{m_{bj}}{M_{bj}}, \tag{2}$$

where

k is the total number of blocks selected for listing;
$\tilde{N}_b$ is the number of households in the block, per the 2017 Census;
$\tilde{N}$ is the total number of households in Quetta Metropolitan Corporation, as per the 2017 Census;
π_b is the fraction of households in the block for which a nationality (as defined at listing) was reported;
m_{bj} is the number of households of the nationality (as defined at listing) interviewed in the block; and
M_{bj} is the total number of households of the nationality (as defined at listing) listed in the block.

To obtain unbiased estimates from the survey, the data reported from a household must be affected by a sampling weight w_{hbj}, equal to the inverse of its selection probability ($w_{hbj} = p_{hbj}^{-1}$).

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1   Households were identified using a structure number written by fieldworkers near the door of the dwelling and recorded in the listing data sets. A substructure number was assigned to avoid ambiguity in the few cases where the same structure number was mistakenly reported for more than one household.

TABLE A.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL		
Statistic	All households	Non–Afghan refugee households
Household size	7.7	7.6
Number of children (ages 0–14) living at home	3.0	2.9
Dependency ratio (expressed as % of adults 15–64)		
Child	90.5	86.4
Older adult	8.2	8.2
Total	98.7	94.6
Nuclear households (%)	56.5	56.0
Female-headed households (%)	3.4	3.7
Household composition (%)		
Single, no children	3.8	3.9
Single with children	6.7	6.9
Couple without children	4.7	4.5
Couple with 1–3 children, no others at home	29.4	30.2
Couple with 4+ children, no others at home	38.2	37.4
Couple with children and other family members at home	17.2	17.1

Note: Child dependency ratio refers to number of children ages 0–14 per adult ages 15–64. Older adult dependency ratio refers to number of seniors over 65 per adult ages 15–64. Total dependency ratio refers to children ages 0–14 and older adults over 65 per adult ages 15–64. Nuclear households refer to couples and children only. Households that consist of a single adult, a single adult with children, or a couple without children may have other relatives as well.

APPENDIX B: REGRESSION RESULTS

TABLE B.1. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS FROM PROBIT PARTICIPATION EQUATIONS								
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
Variable	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE
Dep. var: LFP = 1 at time of survey								
Age	0.024***	(0.005)	0.023***	(0.005)	0.020***	(0.006)	0.015***	(0.005)
Age-squared	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)
Afghan refugee = 1	0.120***	(0.026)	0.105***	(0.028)	0.008	(0.029)	0.007	(0.028)
Married = 1	−0.060***	(0.022)	−0.057**	(0.022)	−0.020	(0.025)	−0.006	(0.022)
Own education (completed grades) *Reference: below primary*								
Primary			−0.062**	(0.025)	−0.059**	(0.027)	−0.047*	(0.025)
Secondary			−0.055**	(0.026)	−0.044	(0.031)	−0.043	(0.027)
Tertiary or more			0.016	(0.028)	0.021	(0.039)	0.026	(0.035)
Education of household head (completed grades) *Reference: below primary*								
Primary					−0.064**	(0.030)	−0.078**	(0.030)
Secondary					−0.088***	(0.029)	−0.094***	(0.029)
Tertiary or more					−0.013	(0.046)	−0.033	(0.038)
Food adequacy = 1					−0.021	(0.025)	−0.025	(0.023)
Asset index					−0.027***	(0.006)	−0.025***	(0.006)
Access to cell phone = 1					0.020	(0.023)	0.024	(0.019)
Household composition (number of members in age/ sex group)								
0–5							0.010	(0.008)
6–14							−0.008	(0.006)
15–24							0.007	(0.006)
females 25–44							0.029	(0.022)
males 25–44							−0.039***	(0.014)
females 45–64							−0.008	(0.023)
males 45–64							−0.040*	(0.022)
65+							0.034	(0.023)
Feels safe outside own neighborhood							−0.003	(0.022)
Purdah = 1								
Own belief: in favor of female work								
Own decision: work inside								
Own decision: work outside								
Own decision: community activity								
Own decision: political activity								
Own decision: shopping								
Own decision: education								
Own decision: marriage								
Own decision: health								
Pseudo-R^2	0.0289		0.0351		0.0652		0.0804	
F statistic	11.50		8.533		6.307		4.420	
Observations	4,711		4,643		3,730		3,730	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The sample refers to working-age adults (15–64) able to work (not in school or ill/disabled). Survey weight applied. Food adequacy takes value of 1 if the male primary respondent considers the household's food consumption adequate or better. Asset index estimates follow a methodology similar to that of DHS. The minimum value is −4.78, and the maximum is 6.91. Access to cell phone includes both owning a phone and accessing one through a spouse, brother, or friend. The own-decision dummy takes the value of 1 if a woman is included in the decision-making, whether she makes the decision alone or with partner.

*$p < 0.1$ **$p < 0.05$ ***$p < 0.01$

TABLE B.1. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS FROM PROBIT PARTICIPATION EQUATIONS (CONTINUED)								
	(5)		(6)		(7)		(8)	
Variable	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE	dy/dx	SE
Dep. var: LFP = 1 at time of survey								
Age	0.015***	(0.005)	0.015***	(0.005)	0.016***	(0.005)	0.015***	(0.005)
Age-squared	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)
Afghan refugee = 1	0.002	(0.028)	0.007	(0.027)	0.016	(0.028)	0.009	(0.028)
Married = 1	−0.012	(0.022)	−0.014	(0.022)	−0.012	(0.023)	−0.011	(0.024)
Own education (completed grades) *Reference: below primary*								
Primary	−0.046*	(0.025)	−0.047*	(0.025)	−0.058**	(0.026)	−0.052**	(0.026)
Secondary	−0.045*	(0.026)	−0.046*	(0.026)	−0.055**	(0.027)	−0.064**	(0.028)
Tertiary or more	0.026	(0.035)	0.025	(0.035)	0.014	(0.034)	0.017	(0.034)
Education of household head (completed grades) *Reference: below primary*								
Primary	−0.076**	(0.030)	−0.072**	(0.030)	−0.067**	(0.030)	−0.063**	(0.031)
Secondary	−0.096***	(0.030)	−0.094***	(0.030)	−0.092***	(0.030)	−0.100***	(0.031)
Tertiary or more	−0.030	(0.038)	−0.029	(0.038)	−0.029	(0.037)	−0.030	(0.038)
Food adequacy = 1	−0.030	(0.023)	−0.030	(0.022)	−0.023	(0.023)	−0.029	(0.023)
Asset index	−0.026***	(0.006)	−0.025***	(0.006)	−0.024***	(0.006)	−0.024***	(0.007)
Access to cell phone = 1	0.021	(0.019)	0.023	(0.020)	0.021	(0.020)	0.014	(0.021)
Household composition (number of members in age/ sex group)								
0–5	0.010	(0.008)	0.011	(0.008)	0.012	(0.008)	0.012	(0.008)
6–14	−0.007	(0.006)	−0.008	(0.006)	−0.007	(0.006)	−0.007	(0.006)
15–24	0.007	(0.006)	0.007	(0.006)	0.008	(0.006)	0.010	(0.006)
females 25–44	0.029	(0.023)	0.028	(0.023)	0.025	(0.022)	0.027	(0.022)
males 25–44	−0.039***	(0.015)	−0.039***	(0.015)	−0.040***	(0.015)	−0.038**	(0.015)
females 45–64	−0.007	(0.023)	−0.007	(0.023)	−0.006	(0.023)	−0.001	(0.024)
males 45–64	−0.043*	(0.023)	−0.041*	(0.022)	−0.044**	(0.022)	−0.039*	(0.022)
65+	0.033	(0.023)	0.034	(0.023)	0.031	(0.023)	0.027	(0.023)
Feels safe outside own neighborhood	−0.006	(0.022)	−0.006	(0.022)	−0.012	(0.022)		
Purdah = 1			−0.113**	(0.056)	−0.104*	(0.055)	−0.100*	(0.056)
Own belief: in favor of female work			0.157***	(0.043)	0.151***	(0.046)		
Own decision: work inside							0.023	(0.058)
Own decision: work outside							0.015	(0.070)
Own decision: community activity					0.051	(0.072)		
Own decision: political activity					−0.021	(0.052)		
Own decision: shopping							−0.014	(0.023)
Own decision: education							0.007	(0.028)
Own decision: marriage							−0.036	(0.043)
Own decision: health							−0.007	(0.028)
Pseudo-*R²*	0.0814		0.0834		0.0964		0.0971	
F statistic	4.163		3.986		4.996		3.589	
Observations	3,676		3,665		3,636		3,499	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. The sample refers to working-age adults (15–64) able to work (not in school or ill/disabled). Survey weight applied. Food adequacy takes value of 1 if the male primary respondent considers the household's food consumption adequate or better. Asset index estimates follow a methodology similar to that of DHS. The minimum value is –4.78, and the maximum is 6.91. Access to cell phone includes both owning a phone and accessing one through a spouse, brother, or friend. The own-decision dummy takes the value of 1 if a woman is included in the decision-making, whether she makes the decision alone or with partner.
*p < 0.1   **p < 0.05   ***p < 0.01

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