



# How female friendly are workplaces in Urban Pakistan?

Alieha Shahid, Lala Rukh Khan, Tehneiat Amjad Butt, Elisabetta Gentile, Kate Vyborny

This is not an ADB material. The views expressed in this document are the views of the author/s and/or their organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank, or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy and/or completeness of the material's contents, and accepts no responsibility for any direct or indirect consequence of their use or reliance, whether wholly or partially. Please feel free to contact the authors directly should you have queries.



## Background & Context

- Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation in Asia with only 22% of women participating in the labour force in 2019.
- Cultural & social norms in a deeply patriarchal society prevent women from seeking employment
- Supply side reasons also play an important role in preventing women from accessing employment
  - Wage discrimination
  - Harassment
  - Lack of safe transport
  - Lack of opportunities for women
  - Lack of facilities at the workplace
- Using a representative sample from Lahore, Pakistan we explore the extent to which employers provide facilities at the workplace to encourage and retain female employees



## Sample of firms

- The data used in this brief comes from a representative sample of 813 firms, drawn from a metropolis of over 10 million people.
- Our sample generally includes firms that are **unlikely to advertise their posts on other job search platforms.**
- 70% of the employers are small firms with less than 6 employees.
- Most employers in our sample are quite small, with around 75% of them occupying just one room on their premises.
- Predominately, employers in our sample are from the service sector, particularly from wholesale and retail trade.



## Gender in our sample of firms

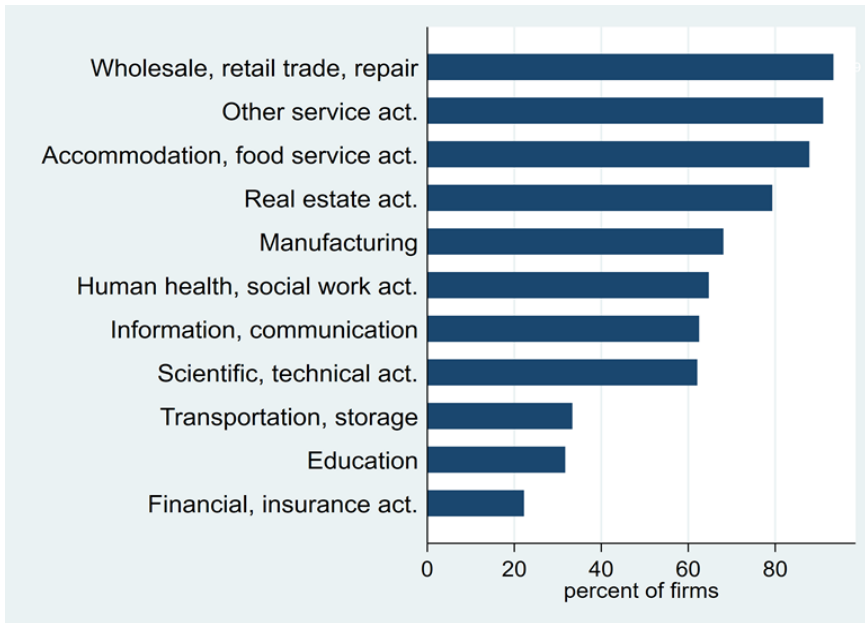
- Only 21% of the employers had any female employee in their organization.
- 70% of the firms had no female employees and they weren't interested in hiring women.
- Only 10% of the organizations were “female dominated”, i.e. more than half of their employees were female.
- Strong gender segregation by industry and occupation
  - Women employees are more likely to be found in sectors like education.
  - Less likely in male dominated industries like manufacturing
  - For jobs like teachers and parlour employees, we observe a preference for female candidates
  - Strong preference for male candidates for male dominated occupations like electricians and technicians



# Late working hours

- Defining late working hours
  - For the purpose of this brief, we have defined “late” working hours as hours outside of the 9 AM – 7 PM window
- Social norms make it difficult for women to travel at night when its dark.
- 82% of the employers have late working hours
  - 52% of them have working hours beyond 9 PM
  - 48% of them end their operations between 7 - 9 PM

## Late working hours by industry

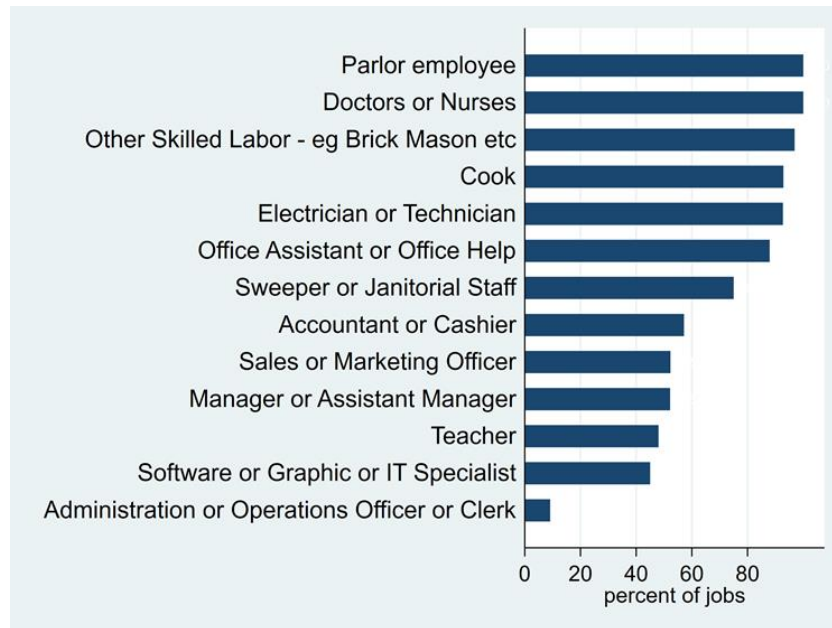


General stores, workshops, salons and tailors are more likely to have late working hours.

Note: Based on a sample of 813 firms that signed up to Job Talash.

Source: Authors

## Late working hours by occupation

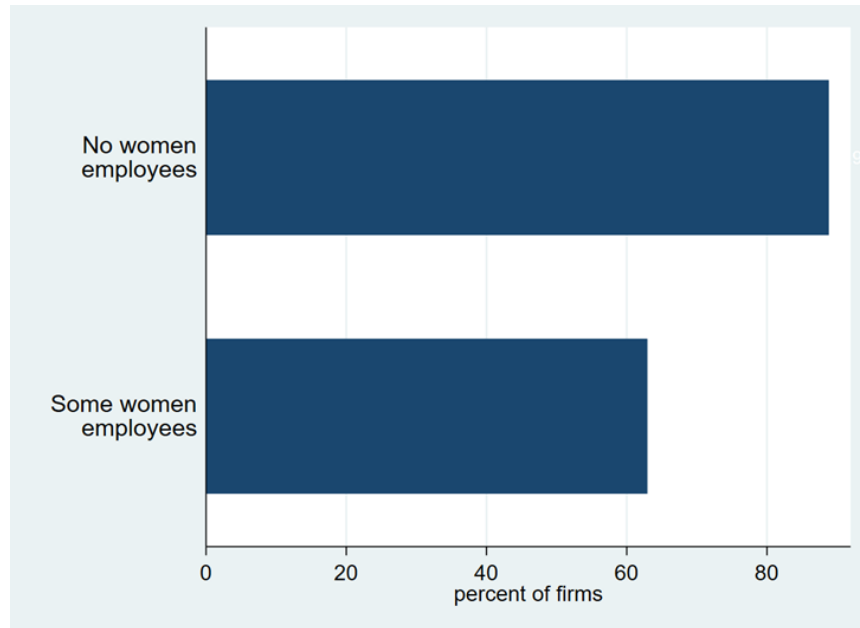


Occupations like lab assistants, doctors and nurses, cooks and electricians are more likely to have late working hours compared to jobs like teachers or administrative office jobs that are more likely to have regular working hours

Notes: 1. Based on 507 vacancies posted by 268 firms that signed up to Job Talash.  
2. Firms that operate beyond 7pm and/or start their operations after 5pm are considered to have late working hours.

Source: Authors

## Late working hours by women employees



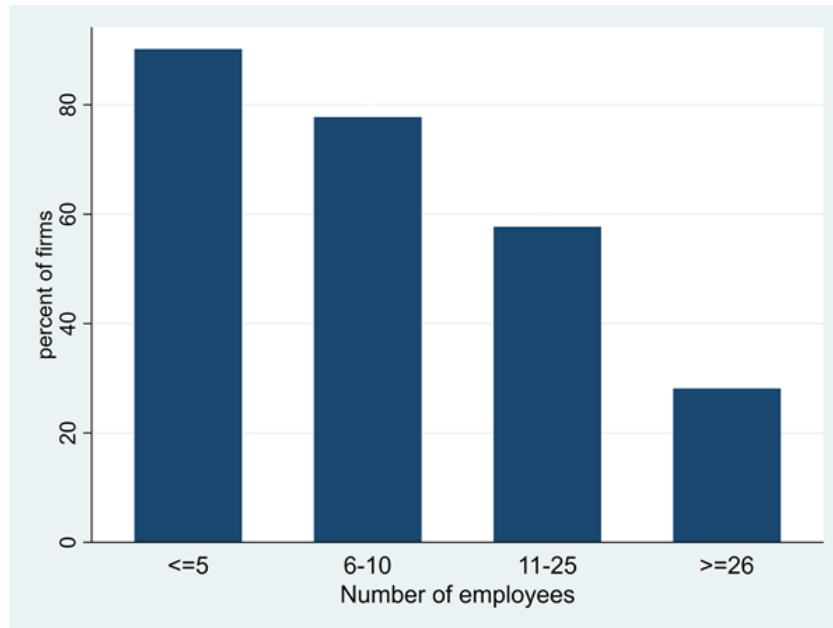
Firms with female employees are less likely to have late working hours

Note: Based on a sample of 813 firms that signed up to Job Talash, out of which 572 with no female employees and not interested in hiring any; 71 with no female employees but open to hiring them; and 170 with some female employees.

Source: Authors.  
appropriate permission.



## Late working hours by employee size



Larger firms are more likely to operate within regular working hours

Notes: 1. Based on a sample of 813 firms that signed up to Job Talash.

2. Firms that operate beyond 7pm and or start their operations after 5pm are considered to have late working hours.

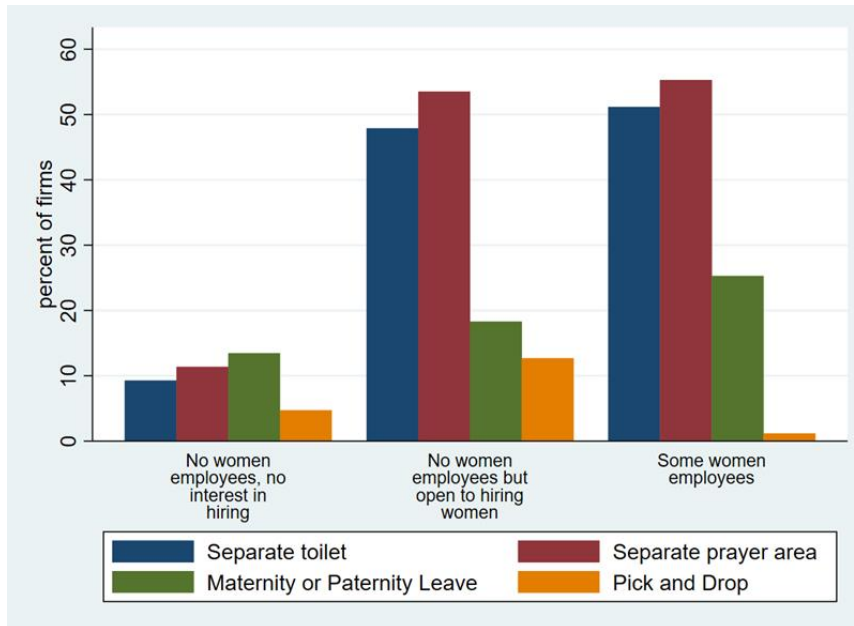
Source: Authors



## Facilities at the workplace for women

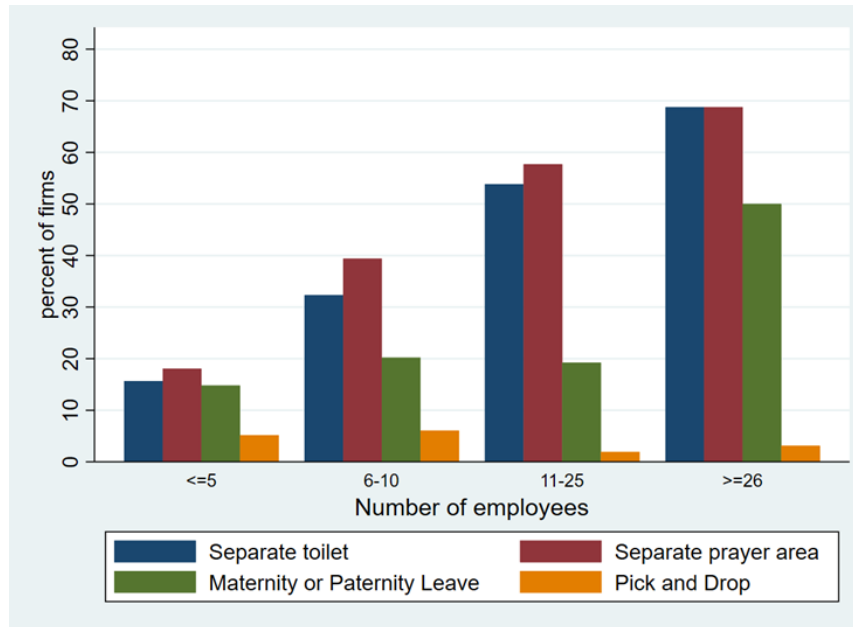
- We also asked the employers in our sample if they offered the following:
  - Separate toilet facility
  - Separate prayer area
  - Maternity or paternity leave
  - Pick and drop facility
- We did not ask about childcare facilities as it is almost non existent in the workplace culture of Pakistan, though we do think it plays an important role in enabling female workers in taking up and retaining employment.
- Overall, 62% of the firms in our sample offered none of these facilities.
  - Only 0.5% firms offered all 4 facilities
  - Only 5% of them offered at least 3 of these facilities

## Facilities for women by interest in hiring

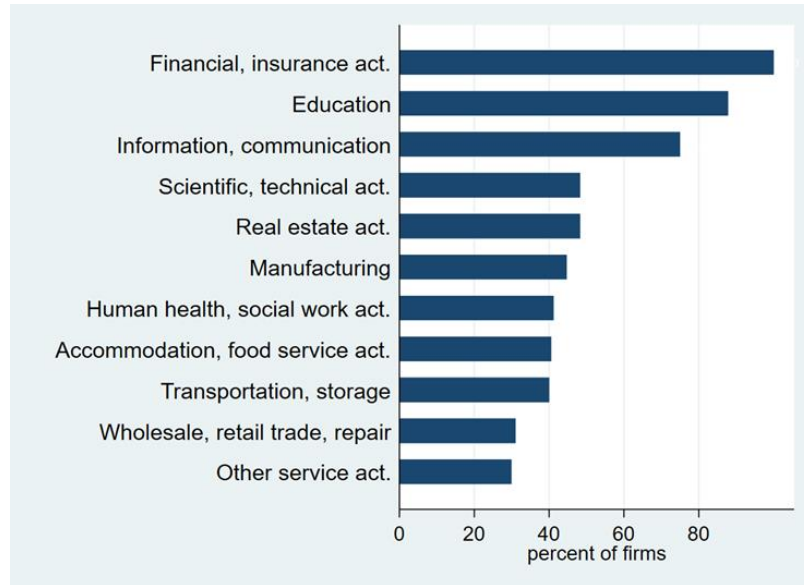


- ~50% of the workplaces who are interested in hiring women or have female employees offer separate toilet facilities.
  - Similar patterns for separate prayer areas
- Only 25% of the firms that had female employees offered maternity or paternity leave
- Less than 5% of the firms that had female employees offered pick & drop service

## Facilities for women increase with employee size



## Facilities for women by industry



- Industries like education and information & communication, which tend to be female dominated, are more likely to offer these facilities
- Male dominated industries, like transportation & storage, are less likely to offer these facilities

This graph represents firms offering at least one of these 4 services: separate toilet, separate prayer area, maternity and paternity leave, and pick and drop.



## Concluding points

- Only **30% of the firms in our sample were interested in hiring women**, which is an important supply side constraint.
- Many workplaces **don't offer basic facilities** like separate toilet facility at the workplace.
- Security concerns and social taboos regarding the intermingling of sexes prevent women from accessing public transport yet **very few firms offer pick & drop facility**.
- While firms with female employees are less likely to offer late working hours, **most workplaces with female employees have late working hours**.
- All these supply side constraints, combined with strong patriarchal cultural & social norms, are likely to act as strong deterrents for women from taking up employment.
- The ability to offer facilities is strong mediated by firm size & the nature of the job.
  - Larger firms much more able to include gender considerations.



## Policy recommendations & future research

- As smaller firms are less likely to offer these facilities, **providing financial incentives and support to smaller firms** can encourage them to invest in female friendly facilities
- **Stricter government regulations towards employer provision of maternity and paternity leave** can also assist women to return to the workforce after childbirth
- **Better implementation of existing legislation on daycare facilities** which makes it mandatory for employers with more than 50 female employees to offer daycare facilities
- Ongoing research on the Job Talash platform uses RCTs to further explore frictions in the labor market and how they differentially effect women over men.



# Question and Answer Session