

## EVOLVING EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS IN RURAL HARYANA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURAL AND NON- AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the changing employment landscape in rural Haryana, using unit-level data from the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) of 2017-18 and 2022-23. It provides a comparative analysis of agricultural and non-agricultural employment patterns across religious groups, social categories, and consumption brackets. The findings highlight a decline in casual agricultural labour and a marginal shift towards self-employment, particularly among higher-income and dominant social groups. Conversely, marginalized communities remain more dependent on informal and unstable non-farm jobs. The paper underscores the increasing diversification of income sources and the growing share of regular wage/salary earners, reflecting broader socio-economic transformations. These trends have significant implications for rural employment policy and targeted interventions in the state.

**Keywords:** Rural Employment Patterns, Agricultural and Non-Farm Sector, Social and Religious Disparities, PLFS Data Analysis, Employment Diversification in Haryana

### INTRODUCTION

Rural employment patterns in India have undergone significant transformations in recent decades, shaped by rapid economic liberalization, structural shifts in agriculture, and the expansion of rural non-farm activities. Haryana, traditionally an agrarian state, exemplifies these transitions as it experiences a gradual shift from farm-based to diversified rural livelihoods. Employment diversification is increasingly seen as a strategy for poverty reduction, income stability, and long-term rural development (Himanshu et al., 2011; Lanjouw & Shariff, 2004).

Several studies highlight the declining viability of small-scale agriculture due to rising input costs, climate vulnerability, and stagnating productivity, prompting rural households to explore non-farm and wage employment opportunities (Abraham, 2023; Sen & Jha, 2005; Shaw, 2013). This trend is also supported by government initiatives aimed at rural industrialization and skill development, which have led to increased participation in services and informal manufacturing sectors (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2012).

At the same time, rural employment transitions are marked by inequalities rooted in caste, religion, and income status. Disadvantaged social groups often lack access to productive assets, formal employment, and market linkages, which constrains their upward mobility (Deshpande, 2000). Religion-based occupational stratification, too, continues to influence economic outcomes in rural areas (Thorat & Neuman, 2012). In this context, an intersectional analysis of rural employment dynamics is essential to understand who benefits from structural economic changes and who remains excluded.

This study aims to contribute to this growing body of literature by analyzing evolving employment patterns in rural Haryana between 2017-18 and 2022-23, with a focus on both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Using unit-level data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the paper examines how employment distribution varies across

religious groups, social categories, and consumption expenditure levels, offering a granular understanding of economic transitions in the region.

## 2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study relies on unit-level data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) for the years 2017-18 and 2022-23 (Government of India, 2018, 2023). These rounds provide nationally representative estimates of employment, unemployment, and labour market dynamics, and include household-level employment characteristics disaggregated by region, caste, religion, and other socio-economic indicators.

Employment in rural Haryana is classified into four broad categories:

- **Agricultural Activities (Farm Sector):** Self-employment and casual labour in agriculture.
- **Rural Non-Farm Sector (RNFS):** Self-employment and casual labour in non-agriculture.
- **Regular Wage/Salary Employment:** Includes both government and private salaried jobs.
- **Others:** Includes pensioners, remittance receivers, and other non-classifiable income sources.
- Households are further analyzed by:
  - **Religious Groups:** Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh.
  - **Social Categories:** Scheduled Castes (SC), Backward Classes (BC), and Others.
  - **Per Capita Monthly Consumption Expenditure Brackets:** Up to ₹5000, ₹5000–7500, ₹7500–11000, and above ₹11000.

The study employs descriptive statistics to compare the proportion of rural households engaged in various employment categories across two time points. Cross-tabulation is used to examine patterns across religion, caste, and consumption brackets. Changes are presented in percentage points, highlighting shifts over time.

This comparative method allows for an in-depth analysis of sectoral shifts in employment and helps identify patterns of mobility or stagnation across social and economic strata.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### *Status of Rural Households Engaged in Farm and RNFS Activities in Haryana*

The employment activities are divided into four categories: farm sector/agriculture, rural non-farm sector (RNFS)/non-agriculture, regular wage/salary earning, and others. The table 1 below illustrates the employment distribution of rural households in Haryana for the years 2017-18 and 2022-23. This data is based on the Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) conducted during these years, providing insights into the shifts in employment patterns over this period.

**Table 1: Employment of Rural Households in Haryana in 2017-18 & 2022-23**

(Percentage share in total)

Type of activity opted by Household	PLFS 2017-18	PLFS 2022-23
<b>A. FARM SECTOR/ AGRICULTURE</b>		
Self-Employed	28.31	30.26
Casual Labour	7.05	3.15
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>35.36</b>	<b>33.40</b>
<b>B. RNFS SECTOR/NON-AGRICULTURE</b>		
Self-Employed	18.78	16.66
Casual Labour	13.98	14.43
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>32.76</b>	<b>31.09</b>
<b>C. Regular Wage/Salary earning</b>	<b>25.75</b>	<b>27.71</b>
<b>D. Others</b>	<b>6.13</b>	<b>7.79</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Unit level data (Government of India, 2018, 2023)

The farm sector comprises households that are either self-employed or engaged as casual labor in agricultural activities. In 2017-18, 35.36% of rural households were employed in the farm sector, with 28.31% being self-employed and 7.05% working as casual labor. By 2022-23, the share of households in the farm sector slightly decreased to 33.40%. Notably, there was an increase in self-employed households (from 28.31% to 30.26%), indicating a trend towards more independent farming. However, the proportion of casual labor in agriculture dropped significantly from 7.05% to 3.15%. Moreover, the RNFS includes self-employed and casual labor engaged in non-agricultural activities. In 2017-18, 32.76% of rural households were involved in the RNFS, with 18.78% being self-employed and 13.98% as casual labor. By 2022-23, the share of households in the RNFS slightly decreased to 31.09%. The proportion of self-employed in non-agricultural activities declined from 18.78% to 16.66%, while casual labor in the RNFS slightly increased from 13.98% to 14.43%.

Households earning regular wages or salaries saw an increase over the period. In 2017-18, 25.75% of households were in this category, which grew to 27.71% by 2022-23. This rise suggests an improvement in job stability and possibly better employment opportunities in the region. The "Others" category, which may include pensioners, remittance receivers, and other non-classifiable employment types, saw an increase from 6.13% in 2017-18 to 7.79% in 2022-23. This growth could indicate a diversification in income sources for rural households.

The data reveals several significant trends. The slight decrease in the total percentage of households involved in agriculture suggests a marginal shift away from farming activities. The increase in self-employment within agriculture could be attributed to improved agricultural practices or better market access. The RNFS, while slightly decreasing overall, shows a complex pattern with a decrease in self-employment but a rise in casual labor, hinting at fluctuating opportunities in non-farm sectors. The increase in regular wage/salary earning households indicates a positive trend towards stable employment, potentially due to industrial or service sector growth in rural areas. The rise in the "Others" category highlights the growing importance of diversified income sources.

### ***Status of Rural employment across different Religious Groups:***

The analysis also examines the employment patterns of rural households across religious groups in Haryana, focusing on Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh households. The data from table 2 offers insights into the changes in employment sectors and the economic activities engaged by these groups over the period from 2017-18 to 2022-23.

### ***Farm- Employment:***

The share of Hindu households engaged in agricultural activities declined from 35.6% in 2017-18 to 32.53% in 2022-23. This reduction aligns with the overall trend of decreasing dependence on agriculture in rural India (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2012; Desai et al., 2021; Himanshu et al., 2011). There was a significant increase in agricultural employment among Muslim households, rising from 35.53% to 42.83%. This rise could be attributed to a lack of alternative employment opportunities or greater engagement in agricultural activities due to land ownership patterns. Agricultural employment among Sikh households increased from 31.08% to 36.93%. The increase in self-employed agricultural activities from 28.78% to 32.36% indicates a stronger inclination towards farming.

**Table 2: Employment of Rural Households across Religious Groups in Haryana, during 2017-18 and 2022-23 (In percentage)**

Type of economic Activity	PLFS 2017-18			PLFS 2022-23		
	Hinduis m	Muslim	Sikhism	Hinduis m	Muslim	Sikhism
<b>I. Agricultural</b>	35.6	35.53	31.08	32.53	42.83	36.93
Self-Employed	28.56	23.63	28.78	29.17	42.83	32.36
Casual Labour	7.04	11.9	2.3	3.36	0.00	4.57
<b>II. RNFS</b>	32.35	26.68	43.72	30.49	39.54	25.98
Self-Employed	17.53	22.74	31.52	16.04	22.89	19.77
Casual Labour	14.82	3.94	12.2	14.45	16.65	6.21
<b>III. Regular Wage/Salary Earning</b>	26.18	32.72	13.96	29.29	14.53	17.34
<b>IV. Others</b>	5.87	5.08	11.24	7.7	3.11	19.76
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Unit level data (Government of India, 2018, 2023)

### ***Rural Non-Farm Employment (RNFE):***

Participation in the RNFS decreased slightly from 32.35% to 30.49%. The proportion of self-employed individuals within this sector also saw a marginal decline from 17.53% to 16.04%, suggesting a potential shift towards more stable forms of employment. There was an increase in RNFS employment from 26.68% to 39.54%, reflecting a significant shift towards non-agricultural activities. The rise in casual labour within the RNFS from 3.94% to 16.65% indicates a growing engagement in temporary or informal jobs. RNFS employment among Sikh households saw a notable decline from 43.72% to 25.98%. This decrease might suggest a reorientation towards agriculture or other sectors.

### ***Regular Wage/Salary Earning:***

Regular wage or salaried employment among Hindu households increased from 26.18% to 29.29%. This shift is indicative of a move towards more stable and formal employment opportunities. The proportion of Muslim households in regular wage or salaried jobs decreased significantly from 32.72% to 14.53%. This reduction may highlight challenges in accessing stable employment for this group. Sikh households also experienced an increase in regular wage or salaried employment from 13.96% to 17.34%, indicating better access to formal employment opportunities.

### ***Others:***

The proportion of Hindu households in the "Others" category increased from 5.87% to 7.7%. This category typically includes various non-classifiable employment types and suggests diversification in income sources. The "Others" category for Muslim households decreased from 5.08% to 3.11%, indicating a more defined shift towards specific employment sectors. Sikh households saw a significant increase in this category from 11.24% to 19.76%, suggesting a broader diversification of income sources and possibly the influence of migration and remittances.

The comparative analysis of employment among rural households across different religious groups in Haryana between 2017-18 and 2022-23 reveals diverse trends. While Hindu households showed a slight decline in agricultural employment and a marginal decrease in RNFS participation, Muslim households experienced significant increases in both agricultural and RNFS employment. Sikh households saw an increase in agricultural employment and a notable decline in RNFS participation, alongside an increase in the "Others" category. These trends underscore the varying economic dynamics and employment opportunities available to different religious groups in Haryana.

### ***Status of Rural Employment across Social Groups in Haryana: 2017-18 vs. 2022-23***

The employment patterns of rural households across social groups in Haryana between 2017-18 and 2022-23 also shows drastic changes. The data provided in Table 3 reveals shifts in the engagement of Scheduled Castes (SC), Backward Classes (BC), and Other Castes in farm and non-farm activities over the specified periods.

### ***Farm Employment:***

The proportion of SC households engaged in agriculture, both self-employed and as casual labour, declined from 21.78% in 2017-18 to 15.3% in 2022-23. This reduction reflects a broader trend of declining agricultural engagement among marginalized groups, possibly due to limited access to land and resources (Pal & Biswas, 2011). The involvement of BC households in agricultural employment increased slightly from 28.49% to 29.62%. This slight rise is primarily due to an increase in self-employment in agriculture, suggesting that BC households are increasingly relying on farming as a primary source of livelihood. The proportion of households from Other Castes engaged in agriculture remained relatively stable, with a slight decrease from 50.97% to 49.54%. This group continues to have the highest engagement in agriculture compared to SC and BC households.

### ***Non-Farm Employment:***

SC households had a slight decrease in non-farm employment from 49.98% to 47.19%. However, there was an increase in casual labour in the non-agricultural sector from 29.05% to 31.65%, indicating a higher reliance on temporary or informal jobs (Desai et al., 2021). The proportion of BC households engaged in non-farm employment decreased from 36.19%

to 33.48%. The decrease was notable in self-employment in non-agriculture, which dropped from 23.39% to 20.73%. Households from Other Castes saw a slight increase in non-farm employment from 16.42% to 17.93%. This increase is due to a rise in casual labour in non-agriculture from 2.47% to 3.92%.

**Table 3: Proportion of rural households engaged in Farm and non-farm activities across social groups in Haryana, during 2017-18 and 2022-23**

(Percentage share)

Economic Activities in Haryana	PLFS 2017-18			PLFS 2022-23		
	SC	BC	Others	SC	BC	Others
Self-Employed in Agriculture	8.63	22.24	48.14	6.46	27.92	49.14
Casual Labour in agriculture	13.15	6.25	2.83	8.84	1.7	0.4
<b>Sub-total (Farm related)</b>	<b>21.78</b>	<b>28.49</b>	<b>50.97</b>	<b>15.3</b>	<b>29.62</b>	<b>49.54</b>
Self-Employed in Non-Agriculture	20.93	23.39	13.95	15.54	20.73	14.01
Casual Labour in non-agriculture	29.05	12.8	2.47	31.65	12.75	3.92
<b>Sub-total (Non-Farm related)</b>	<b>49.98</b>	<b>36.19</b>	<b>16.42</b>	<b>47.19</b>	<b>33.48</b>	<b>17.93</b>
Regular Wage/Salary earning	23.04	28.42	26.19	31.07	31	22.13
Others	5.2	6.91	6.43	6.43	5.9	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Unit level data (Government of India, 2018, 2023)

#### ***Regular Wage/Salary Earning:***

The proportion of SC households earning regular wages or salaries increased significantly from 23.04% to 31.07%. This shift indicates better access to formal employment opportunities for SC households over time. There was a slight increase in BC households with regular wage or salary earnings from 28.42% to 31%. This indicates a stable and slightly improving access to formal employment for BC households. Households from Other Castes experienced a decrease in regular wage or salary earnings from 26.19% to 22.13%, suggesting a shift towards other types of employment or economic activities.

#### ***Others:***

The proportion of SC households in the "Others" category increased from 5.2% to 6.43%. This category may include various non-classifiable employment types and indicates diversification in income sources. There was a slight decrease in BC households in the "Others" category from 6.91% to 5.9%, suggesting a more defined shift towards specific employment sectors. Households from Other Castes saw an increase in the "Others" category from 6.43% to 10.4%, suggesting a broader diversification of income sources and possibly the influence of migration and remittances.

The comparative analysis of employment among rural households across different social groups in Haryana between 2017-18 and 2022-23 reveals various trends. SC households showed a significant decrease in agricultural employment and a notable increase in regular wage or salaried employment. BC households had a slight increase in agricultural



employment but a decrease in non-farm employment. Households from Other Castes maintained a high level of engagement in agriculture but showed a shift towards non-farm employment and diversified income sources. These trends underscore the varying economic dynamics and employment opportunities available to different social groups in Haryana.

### ***Status of Rural Household Employment by Per Capita Monthly Consumption in Haryana: 2017-18 vs. 2022-23***

The data presented in Table 4 provides insights into the proportion of rural households in Haryana engaged in farm and non-farm activities, segmented by per capita monthly consumption brackets for the years 2017-18 and 2022-23. The consumption brackets are categorized as Up to 5000, 5000 to 7500, 7500 to 11000, and Above 11000. This analysis explores the shifts in employment patterns across these consumption categories over the specified periods.

#### ***Farm-Employment***

In 2017-18, rural households with a per capita monthly consumption of Up to 5000 had 25.65% engaged in farm activities, comprising 13.26% in self-employment and 12.39% in casual labor. By 2022-23, this percentage decreased to 13.51%, with self-employment falling to 2.27% and casual labor remaining relatively stable. For households consuming between 5000 to 7500, farm employment increased slightly from 32.70% to 13.83%. This increase was driven by a notable drop in casual labor and a moderate rise in self-employment. Among households with consumption between 7500 to 11000, farm employment rose from 39.32% to 21.67%, reflecting an increase in self-employment but a decline in casual labor. For those with consumption Above 11000, farm activities increased significantly from 41.33% to 44.70%, indicating a substantial shift towards self-employment in agriculture.

**Table 4: Proportion of rural households engaged in farm and RNFS activities across per capita monthly consumption of households in Haryana during 2017-18 and 2022-23**

Economic Activities in Haryana	PLFS 2017-18				PLFS 2022-23			
	Up to 5000	5000 to 7500	7500 to 11000	Above 11000	Up to 5000	5000 to 7500	7500 to 11000	Above 11000
Self-Employed in Agriculture	13.26	21.94	34.32	39.92	2.27	6.44	16.73	43.93
Casual Labour in agriculture	12.39	10.76	5.00	1.41	11.24	7.39	4.94	0.77
<b>Sub-total (Farm related)</b>	25.65	32.70	39.32	41.33	13.51	13.83	21.67	44.7
Self-Employed in RNFS	13.81	19.04	19.52	21.95	3.9	21.2	17.15	16.69
Casual Labour in RNFS	22.01	20.38	12.33	2.78	12.55	20.29	29.65	5.59
<b>Sub-total (RNFS related)</b>	35.82	39.42	31.85	24.73	16.45	41.49	46.8	22.28
Regular Wage/ Salary earning	19.74	22.77	26.53	32.93	17.27	28.64	25.56	29.56
Others	18.79	5.10	2.30	1.02	52.78	16.03	5.96	3.46

Source: Unit level data (Government of India, 2018, 2023)

### ***Non-Farm Employment***

For households with a per capita monthly consumption of Up to 5000, non-farm employment decreased from 35.82% in 2017-18 to 16.45% in 2022-23, with self-employment falling from 13.81% to 3.90% and casual labor from 22.01% to 12.55%. This suggests a significant shift away from non-farm activities. Households consuming between 5000 to 7500 saw an increase in non-farm employment from 39.42% to 41.49%, driven by an increase in self-employment and a decrease in casual labor. For those with consumption between 7500 to 11000, non-farm employment increased from 31.85% to 46.80%, with a notable rise in casual labor and a modest change in self-employment. Among households with consumption Above 11000, non-farm employment decreased from 24.73% to 22.28%, reflecting a shift towards more stable forms of employment such as regular wages.

### ***Regular Wage/Salary Earning***

Households with per capita monthly consumption of Up to 5000 saw a decrease in regular wage/salary earning from 19.74% in 2017-18 to 17.27% in 2022-23. This decline was accompanied by an increase in the share of households earning regular wages in higher consumption brackets, indicating a shift towards more stable employment among higher-income groups. Households consuming between 5000 to 7500 saw an increase in regular wage/salary earning from 22.77% to 28.64%. For those in the 7500 to 11000 bracket, regular wage/salary earning was stable at around 25.56% in 2022-23. The highest consumption bracket, above 11000, saw a slight increase in regular wage/salary earning from 32.93% to 29.56%, indicating a stable trend in formal employment for higher-income households.

### ***Others***

The proportion of households engaged in "Others" activities, which include unspecified economic activities, saw a dramatic shift from 18.79% in the Up to 5000 consumption bracket in 2017-18 to 52.78% in 2022-23. This significant increase suggests a diversification in economic activities among lower-income households. For the 5000 to 7500 bracket, the percentage of households in the "Others" category decreased from 5.10% to 16.03%. In the 7500 to 11000 bracket, there was a decrease from 2.30% to 5.96%, and in the Above 11000 bracket, it decreased from 1.02% to 3.46%, indicating a decrease in unspecified activities among higher-income groups.

The comparative analysis of rural household employment by per capita monthly consumption reveals significant shifts in engagement in farm and non-farm activities between 2017-18 and 2022-23. Lower-income households have increasingly shifted away from non-farm employment towards farm activities, while higher-income households have seen greater stability in regular wage/salary earnings. The data also highlights a diversification in economic activities among lower-income groups, reflecting broader economic changes in rural Haryana.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of PLFS data for rural Haryana from 2017-18 to 2022-23 reveals multiple layers of transition within the rural employment landscape. While the proportion of households engaged in agriculture remains substantial, there is a notable shift from casual agricultural labour to self-employment, particularly among higher consumption and dominant caste groups. Regular wage/salary employment has gained prominence, suggesting a gradual formalization of rural employment, though access remains uneven across social and religious groups.



Marginalized communities, especially Scheduled Castes and low-consumption households, continue to be over-represented in precarious employment, especially casual labour in both farm and non-farm sectors. Religious differences are also apparent, with Muslim households showing increased participation in agriculture and casual labour in non-agriculture, reflecting possible exclusion from formal employment avenues.

These findings point to the need for targeted employment policies that promote formal job creation, skill development, and entrepreneurship among disadvantaged groups. Enhanced access to education, credit, and market linkages for rural non-farm enterprises could also drive more equitable employment transitions. In conclusion, rural employment in Haryana is diversifying, but the benefits of this transformation remain unequally distributed, warranting inclusive and location-specific interventions.

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