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FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE URBAN LABOR FORCE:
A CASE STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA

by

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Abstract: Based on 1971 census data, this paper addresses the question of variation in the level of female labor participation in the urban population of districts of Madhya Pradesh, India. Areas in which large numbers of high caste women work also are areas of high labor force participation by females of scheduled castes and tribes. Conversely, areas recording low rates of labor force participation by females are characterized by low proportions for both the groups. These women, irrespective of their hierarchial position in the traditional social order, seem to follow broad regional norms which may have (or may not have) constrained their access to public activities. I contend, then, that regional culture plays an important part in influencing the level of female participation in the urban labor force, and leaves open the question of the possible origin of the regional culture in the ecological circumstances that have customarily been proposed by scholars like Boserup.

About the Author: Saraswati Raju is an Assistant Professor in Social Geography. As a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Geography at Syracuse University, she became interested in the question of female participation in economic activities with special reference to India. She has published papers in international journals and also is interested in the ideology of prevailing social order in spatial organization of residences in Indian cities.

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FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE URBAN LABOR FORCE: A CASE STUDY OF
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In predominantly agricultural societies, variations in the level of female participation in the labor force are often explained in terms of agricultural ecology (Boserup 1970). For example, regions of dry-field plough agriculture are expected to have relatively low inputs by females and the major activity, ploughing, is considered a prerogative of men (Bagchi 1982: 11). In contrast, one finds in wet-rice cultivation, water-control, transplanting, and weeding essentially carried out by women.

Although one may agree with this line of argument, modifications are necessary.² The relationship, it can be pointed out, is obscured in the contemporary situation in India. In Kerala and Tamilnadu, areas of intensive rice cultivation, women form an important part of the labor force (Mencher 1978) and are relatively unrestricted socially. But in some wet-rice areas, such as West Bengal and Bihar, women are segregated. Here one point can briefly be made which is pertinent to the context of this paper. If it is the agricultural economy, and if the participation of females in gainful activities is simply a matter of ecological need and demand, what makes levels of female employment in cities conform to their rural counterparts in a given area?

It has been argued that in India females belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes³ are not as inhibited about engaging in public activities as are women of higher castes. This lack of reticence is due in part to the significant participation of these women in gainful economic activities and in part to the relative degree to which social taboos are relaxed for them. These women, however, do not function in isolation, but are part of a larger social realm. Similarly, women of high castes also follow broad regional norms. It appears, then, that the variation in level of female employment can be viewed as representing the social feature of a given region that may have (or may not have) constrained an Indian woman's access to public activity. This is not to deny the decisive role of economic need but, everything being equal, social context remains vitally important.

Based on 1971 census data,⁴ this paper addresses the question of variation in the level of female labor participation in the urban population of districts of Madhya Pradesh, India (see Appendix A for district reference map). I contend that regional culture plays an important part in influencing the level of female participation in the urban labor force, and leave open the question as to the possible origin of the regional culture in the ecological circumstances that have been hypothesized.

Such region-specific social contexts rarely are given enough attention when dealing with developmental issues. As a result, when a monistic

planning strategy is attempted, some women respond with virtual inertia to the innovation while others readily accept it.⁵ Women's labor force participation is subject to region-specific social taboos that are relative to their status as women and not as members of high or low castes. This social fact needs to be carefully incorporated into any development planning conducted at women in India. In addition, the question of women who work should not be treated as existing independent of the male condition as has been done in an otherwise pioneer study on women by the Government of India in 1974 where women are portrayed as a separate homogeneous body rather than as an integral part of a larger societal structure. My research design combines male and female components of the labor force in an attempt to understand the issue at hand in a broader perspective.⁶

Background Information

Occupational data for females in urban Madhya Pradesh show quite distinctly the range of variation in women's level of labor force participation. By contrast, male participation varies little (Table 1). In urban areas, the participation rates for both males and females are lower than for their counterparts in the rural area (46 percent and 7 percent, and 55 percent and 21 percent, respectively). In terms of levels of female labor participation, location in central India gives Madhya Pradesh a transitional character. Its southern districts, with a relatively high proportion of women classed as workers, fall more in line with the southern India pattern whereas the northern districts, with some of the lowest proportions of female workers recorded, correspond more closely with northern India (Raju 1982). A breakdown into "privileged-class workers" and "depressed-class workers" does not alter the situation.⁷ Areas of high level of participation by the first group remain areas of high participation for the second group as well. Conversely, areas where few women work are characterized by the lowest proportions of workers in both class groups (Figures 1 and 2). With the exception of a few cases, urban districts with higher participation rates for both classes of women also happen to be areas of predominant tribal culture. In contrast, areas with the lowest participation rates for both classes of women are located within the confines of what, for our purpose, may be termed as a non-tribal or "brahmanical" area,⁸ an observation which, in a later section, provides us with a potential explanation for variation in the level of female workers. Since the purpose of this paper is to suggest that women's participation in the labor force is a reflection of prevalent social attitudes toward them, I will now discuss their relevant attributes.

The Scheduled Population

As pointed out earlier, the depressed class of female workers in urban centers enjoy greater autonomy than women of the privileged class because of their active contribution to economic activities and relatively relaxed social environment. As a result of this social reality, the varying presence of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes has been accepted as an explanation for the variation in female employment by some writers (Gulati

1975: 41). In the present study, however, the distribution of scheduled caste women in the female population does not seem to have any bearing upon their level of employment (Figures 2 and 3). Further, no correlation exists at the aggregate level between the proportion of scheduled caste female population and the proportion of female workers in urban Madhya Pradesh ($r = 0.0$). In fact, when the proportion of the scheduled caste female population is correlated with the proportion of scheduled caste female workers, the relationship becomes slightly negative ($r = -.23$).

It is true that the participation rate among scheduled females is everywhere higher than the participation rate of non-scheduled females, but the rates of both the groups are themselves highly correlated ($r = .77$), indicating a close spatial covariation between the two although the actual level involved varies from place to place. Compared to this, the covariation between the levels of non-scheduled female workers and their male counterparts is moderate ($r = .35$). In contrast, the scheduled female workers exhibit almost no spatial covariation with their male workers ($r = .10$). This is somewhat puzzling. The attainment of education and skill among scheduled caste male workers is not very much different from their female counterparts. Therefore, the latter relationship was expected to be stronger than the former. But a scanning of the proportions of scheduled males and females classed as workers in the respective populations revealed that in the districts of Bhind, Gwalior, Morena, and Bhopal⁹ the level of participation by depressed class women is unusually low. When these districts were excluded from the analysis, the correlation of coefficient becomes moderately positive ($r = .39$), as expected. The corresponding "r" value for non-scheduled workers, on the other hand, remains almost the same ($r = .37$). What the high positive correlation between the two groups of female workers suggests is that, in a favorable social context, women, irrespective of their hierarchical position in the traditional social order, behave as a homogeneous body and respond to the demand for female labor, degree of demand being a function of region-specific social acceptance of women working outside their familial domain. Trivedi (1976: 22) brings out the importance of social ethos at the expense of class ethos.

The conditions of existence and overall situation of scheduled castes also vary according to the general characteristics of the dominant castes in each region. And the treatment that the scheduled caste women receive from the Muslim, Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees or other minority groups is not likely to be the same in different zones and ways of life. Moreover, the status of scheduled caste women in rural or urban areas is likely to be, directly or indirectly, related to the status of women in other castes and communities of the society.

Class Disparity and Sex Disparity

The foregoing analysis, based on participation rates of privileged and depressed-class females provides a general framework of reference. Within themselves, however, the high spatial covariation between the two rates is

not accompanied by identical rates of increase in the level of participation for both the classes. As we can see in the scatter diagram (Figure 4) there is a divergence from the parity line as the level of employment increases.¹⁰ This relationship is also reflected in the high negative correlation between privileged-class/depressed-class disparity in female employment, i.e., class disparity and the rate of depressed-class female participation in the labor force ($r = -.65$).¹¹ That is to say, with the increase in level of employment for both the classes, the disparity becomes increasingly negative. The way disparity is computed, negative values denote low relative participation by privileged-class females in contrast to depressed-class female workers. Such a gap becomes wider with the increase in the absolute rates of female participation. In simple terms, when conditions become favorable for women to work, those in the depressed class respond more readily to the demand.¹² This is not to be taken as contrasting with my earlier statement that both privileged and depressed-class women operate as a homogeneous body. Compared to their male counterparts, they do. This internal structure is related to economic reality. Within the limitations imposed by society, depressed-class women are definitely more in need to work.

So far the discussion has essentially been confined to female workers independent of their respective male counterparts. It may be helpful to consider the level of female labor participation in relation to male labor participation.

Although the proportions of privileged and depressed-class workers in the respective female populations are not significantly correlated with the proportions of privileged and depressed-class workers in the respective male populations, the male-female disparity, i.e., sex disparity, within these two groups covary very strongly ($r = .78$). This is not surprising, because what is being demonstrated is the same strong class relations among female workers. As the level of male participation in the labor force does not vary much, the main contributing factor in the sex disparity among classes is the female components of the matrix, i.e., privileged and depressed-class female work-rates. These work-rates have to be fairly closely related in order to result in a highly associated pattern of variation as suggested by the high positive correlation between female workers which, as pointed out earlier, is the case. Sex disparity, then, actually involves class relationship of female workers. Figure 5, showing another scatter diagram of privileged and depressed sex disparity, substantiates the finding that depressed-class females are susceptible to the "demand" of the labor market. It can be seen that, as the privileged-class sex disparity decreases--that is, more and more privileged females work relative to a given level of privileged-class male workers--there is a tendency for the two sex disparities, privileged-class and depressed-class, to diverge from the parity line involving at the other end of the spectrum, a more rapidly declining sex disparity among depressed-class workers compared to privileged-class sex differentiation. What we have here, then, are two contrasting situations. On one hand, sex disparities for both groups are high, that is, the participation levels for females of both classes are low

compared to their male counterparts; on the other hand, the participation levels of females of both the classes are high in contrast to respective male participation rates. In the former case, when the participation levels for women as a whole are low, the sex disparities tend to attain comparable levels, whereas in the latter situation, the privileged-class sex disparity in labor participation is wider than sex disparity among the depressed-class workers.

In Figure 6 the class and sex disparities for both groups are shown. Note several interesting observations there. First, as one would expect, the male class disparity is low and fairly even across urban Madhya Pradesh. Second, there is a very high disparity between male and female privileged-class workers. Between these two quite distinct bands, we have female class disparity and depressed-class sex disparity intermixed, indicating a moderate range of disparity index. Even with this gross simplification of observation, it is heartening to note that what these patterns suggest is not, in any way, a statistical artifact, a consequence of the way in which disparity has been calculated, but a social one. But what follows by way of interpretation, admittedly suggests a more intensive probe of the issue than the one offered here.

Not only are both the privileged and depressed-class female workers more or less governed by the same set of societal norms with regard to labor force participation, but the level of depressed female labor participation is also more compatible with their male counterparts than is the case with the privileged-class female workers. Das (1976: 130) observes:

Among high caste Hindus, the social universe is sharply segregated between the world of women and that of men. Similarly, among Muslims belonging to the upper strata of society in India, men and women lead segregated lives with very few contacts between their respective social worlds. Both Hindus and Muslims belonging to lower strata segregate the women and men less sharply.

To summarize, the situation is such that depressed class male and female workers form a more homogeneous group together with "privileged" female workers. They coalesce more with the depressed class female workers than their male counterparts. This appears to be a far-fetched argument, but once we consider the attainments in education and skill of women in general and that of depressed class male workers in particular, the levels do not vary much. The social restrictions are, moreover, less severe for depressed class women so that their occupational structure is governed more by job availability than by sex discrimination. On the other hand, for privileged class women, we see that their engagement in manual labor outside their homes is indicative of social hierarchy. Furthermore, we see that the exclusion of these women from the labor force outside the familial context is a symbol of high status (D'Souza 1959; Gadgil 1964; Boserup 1970; ICSSR 1975). We do not have to speculate very much to ascertain that, with few exceptions, within the social constraints, those women who are in the labor force are working because of dire economic need. Under such circumstances

it is not difficult to understand that these women neither are highly educated nor in possession of any particular technological skill. The fact that roughly 80 percent of the female workers in urban Madhya Pradesh have been reported as illiterate in the 1971 census helps us to envisage the types of work in which women are primarily engaged. Mitra et al. (1979) in a study of the economic status of women report that the proportion of females to males is very low in non-household industry, where some kind of professional skill is usually required. In her study of the employment of women in Indian cities, Joshi (1976) makes a similar observation.

Translated into social terms, what these observations suggest is that women, irrespective of their positions in the traditional hierarchy, are subjugated to a certain kind of treatment as women and, as Sopher (1980a: 168) phrases it in regard to literacy, "are indeed a 'depressed class.'"

Residual Sex Disparity: Additional Observation

As pointed out earlier, the sex disparities among the two classes exhibit a high positive correlation ($r = .78$). It is useful, therefore, to scan the deviant cases in this respect and discover if there is a consistent pattern. Accordingly, the map of residual sex disparities from the regression is presented in Figure 7. Given the manner in which the sex disparity indexes are computed, positive residuals mean that the sex disparity of depressed-class workers is greater than expected for a given level of the same disparity among privileged-class workers. Two such distinct bands can be identified on the map. But the factors contributing to this distribution are different in each region.

The pattern displayed in the northern belt has resulted from relatively low work participation by depressed-class females compared to privileged-class females. The level of work participation by depressed-class males, however, is comparable with the level of privileged-class male workers. Although the sex disparity among privileged-class workers is also high because of relatively high participation of privileged-class male workers, the sex disparity among depressed-class workers is higher compared to the sex disparity of privileged-class. On the other hand, the districts situated in the southeastern and southern parts of the state record high proportions of privileged-class female workers relative to depressed-class female workers of the region. This high participation by female workers is not associated with a corresponding high rate for males which is not much at variation with depressed-class male workers. Consequently, the disparity index for privileged-class workers as a whole in this region is lower than the disparity index for depressed-class workers. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of larger numbers of privileged-class females returning as workers in this region is not as great as the unusually low return of depressed-class females as workers in the northern districts. Hence we find the smaller positive values of residual sex disparity for this region on the map.

At this point, let me deviate from the main discussion in order to explore the processes responsible for these relationships.

Sanskritization and Tribalization: Some Plausible Explanations¹³

The picture which emerges from the distribution of residual sex disparities (Figure 7) is one where the northern districts are characterized by especially low levels of work participation by depressed-class women while in the southeastern and southern districts we find that a great many women of the privileged class work. It is perhaps possible, then, to discern a few parallel processes which might be operating to produce this distribution. In northern Madhya Pradesh a tendency among the depressed classes to emulate high caste practices in order to upgrade themselves seems to dominate, a process Srinivas (1956) calls "sanskritization." In this process, a significant phenomena is a gradual exclusion of depressed-class women from work.

It comes then as no surprise that the high castes should emerge as a reference group and that their norms, taboos, and social biases should filter down to the lower strata of society in this region. This region is near the North Indian Plain, which is considered the 'core region', the Aryavrata with its related attributes of the complicated "pure" Hindu order (Sopher 1980b). One of the very important features of such an order is its conservative outlook toward women and their exclusion from the public domain.

But, in the tribal zone, another parallel tradition, the so-called "non-brahmanical" one, might have been able to attract the depressed-class population toward the greater freedom and equalitarianism of the tribal ways of organizing life as Sinha (1959) and Omvedt (1980) suggest, though in a different context. One of the positive attributes of this tradition is its more egalitarian approach toward women. At the same time, a similar process may occur, that is, the process of "tribalization," whereby members of high castes emulate the ways of life, the values, and the norms of lower castes. In this connection, Kalia's (1961) observations in the Bastar region (covering the southern districts of Madhya Pradesh) need special attention. He concludes that the high caste Hindus residing with the tribal people have accepted the "morals, rituals, and beliefs" which, in many respects, are antithetical to their own.

To relate these processes to the level of participation by women in the labor force (which is seen as a product of the guiding beliefs of a certain society), the low level of privileged-class as well as depressed-class women in the north of Madhya Pradesh can be explained within the context of the process of sanskritization whereas the high levels for the same classes in the south of the state can be understood in terms of tribalization. I would argue that both these traditions function in a dialectic manner. Which of the two will provide a firmer basis for the regional ethos I have observed will very much depend upon the prevalence of one over the other, or will require something like a compromise, as Singer indicates (Singer 1959). In this case, however, the weakening of several social taboos restricting

women's participation in the public domain from north to south within the state is accounted for in terms of a distance-decay model. In this connection it is to be remembered that the processes of sanskritization and tribalization are subtle elements to quantify. Moreover, the numerical strength of absence of the scheduled (depressed-caste) population is not causally related to a presence or absence of the tribal ethos. Further, the contemporary situation is not always a true picture of historical realities. The once stronger bases of tribal population may become numerically less conspicuous as time passes.

Evidently, the present pattern of female employment in urban Madhya Pradesh is not expected to follow the proposed model very neatly, and the distribution shows several areas of discordance. Chhindwara and Sagar are urban districts where a great many more women of the privileged class work than women of the depressed class. The high level of privileged-class female workers in Sagar may be explained if we examine the bidi industry. Bidies are country cigarettes with tobacco rolled in dry leaves. For the most part women and children roll these at home. It is entirely a cottage industry. In 1971, roughly 60 percent of privileged-class female workers in Sagar were employed in this work, and as the bidi industry is the most important industry there, we can safely assume that a large proportion of these privileged-class female workers do this job.¹⁴ Chhindwara, interestingly enough, records a very high proportion of its privileged-class female workers as agricultural laborers (38 percent), the second highest after Betul (42 percent), its neighboring district. Chhindwara is one of the top five districts where women of the depressed class can find little work. Although highly speculative, it may be that the relatively high level of privileged-class female participation in Chhindwara is a result of a situation where not many depressed-class women return as workers in spite of considerable coal mining in the cities. But the proportion of depressed-class female workers in mining, quarrying, and construction is largest in the state. A sizable proportion of the depressed-class female population in Chhindwara is composed of tribes (43 percent) out of which roughly 60 percent are designated as Gonds. As Dev (1961) has observed, a continually higher degree of acculturation of Gonds in comparison to their brethren in the Chhatisgarh tract has occurred. It was, therefore, thought that during the process of acculturation, when their women were excluded from public activity, they could not work. But when the participation rates among Gond women in Chhindwara and neighboring districts were examined separately from scheduled caste women workers, no such discrepancy occurred. On the other hand, the scheduled caste female participation level in Chhindwara and Betul is unusually low compared with neighboring districts (Table 2). This may suggest some kind of social movement among the scheduled castes of this region, or it may show a lack of reporting. In the absence of relevant information at this point, nothing definite can be said.

Other Considerations

If indeed we are to view the extent of female participation in gainful activities as a function of social ethos (as I have argued here), then the

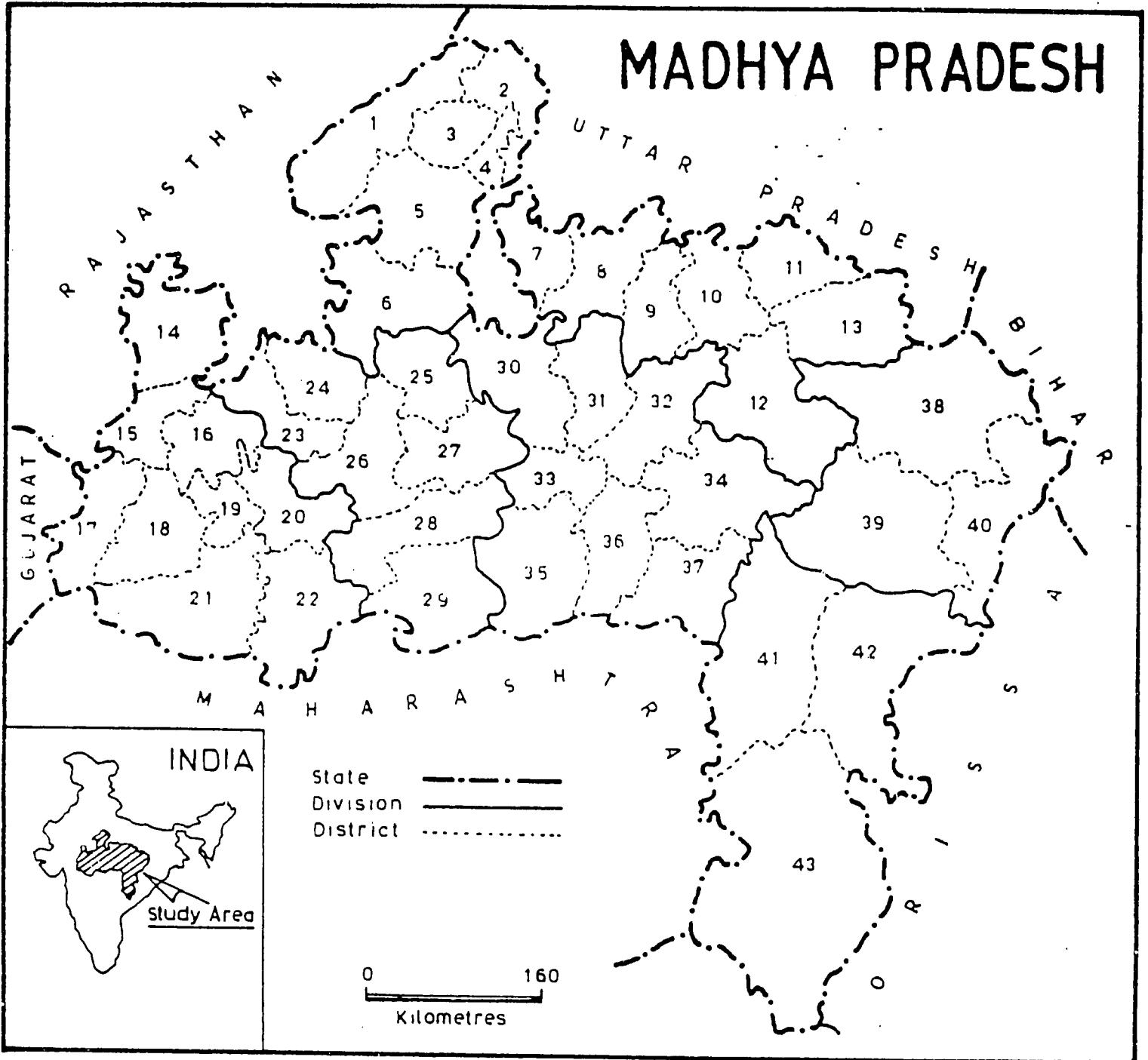
existing social behavior toward women should be shared by both urban and rural communities of a given region. That is to say, whatever social and cultural factors are operating to create a favorable environment for female participation in gainful economic activities in the urban areas are apt to extend to rural areas or vice versa.¹⁵ In such a situation one may expect both the urban and the rural levels of female labor participation to covary spatially, indicating conformation to broad regional culture. In fact, despite the large differences between rural and urban conditions in the present study, a common geographic pattern of variance does exist as implied by the high degree of correlation between the two sets ($r = .73$).¹⁶ Given the social reality where behavioral norms are stricter for women of high castes, the urban-rural correspondence is expected to be stronger for privileged-class female workers than for depressed-class women workers (which actually is the case). The r value in the former case is .79 compared to .67 in the latter.

Conclusion

To summarize, what this limited analysis brings forth is this. Both privileged-class females and depressed-class females respond similarly to the social environment. That is, if the given social context is tolerant of women's work outside the domestic sphere, class barriers in terms of labor participation are generally weakened. This is reflected in the high degree of spatial covariation between the levels of labor participation of the two classes of women compared to covariation between their male counterparts and also between the two groups: privileged and depressed-class male workers.

Whether the societal norms will be relaxed for privileged-class women or whether they will be tightened further for depressed-class women seems to be affected by the region in which they live, even though this is not always clearly well-demonstrated. For example, in southern Madhya Pradesh more privileged-class women are recorded as workers than depressed-class women workers in the northern Madhya Pradesh. It may be argued that the higher percentages of privileged-class females in the districts of southern Madhya Pradesh are a part of overall high participation rates for women there, which in turn, can be related to the agricultural ecology of the region. Though the importance of this line of thought cannot be denied, there are instances in India, as pointed out earlier, where wet-rice cultivation is not always associated with high numbers of women working. Characteristically in the northern and the northwestern districts of Madhya Pradesh few women work in the labor force compared to the number in other districts, but one is especially struck by the unusually low participation rates for depressed-class females in the districts of Bind, Gwalior, and Morena. They represent what we may call the "northernness of attitudes."¹⁷ What we must note is that the females as a whole conform to the regional ethos, and class differences tend to submerge under regional differences. The resulting ethos may be a product of interaction with a localized tribal culture or predominantly brahmanical one, or a synthesis of the two. Social context thus remains vitally important and warrants a careful integration in prospective planning strategies directed toward women.

APPENDIX - A



District reference map. For key to district identification, see table

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Morena | 2. Bhind | 3. Gwalior |
| 4. Datia | 5. Shivpuri | 6. Guna |
| 7. Tikamgarh | 8. Chhatarpur | 9. Panna |
| 10. Satna | 11. Rewa | 12. Shahdol |
| 13. Sidhi | 14. Mandsaur | 15. Ratlam |
| 16. Ujjain | 17. Jabua | 18. Dhar |
| 19. Indore | 20. Dewas | 21. Khargone (W. Nimar) |
| 22. Khandwa (E. Nimar) | 23. Shajapur | 24. Rajgarh |
| 25. Vidisha | 26. Sehore (Bhopal) | 27. Raisen |
| 28. Hoshangabad | 29. Betul | 30. Sagar |
| 31. Damoh | 32. Jabalpur | 33. Narsimhapur |
| 34. Mandla | 35. Chhindwara | 36. Seoni |
| 37. Balaghat | 38. Ambikapur | 39. Bilaspur |
| 40. Raigarh | 41. Durg | 42. Raipur |
| 43. Bastar | | |

NOTES

1. I acknowledge with thanks Mr. Zohair Anwar of the Centre for the Study of Regional Development for his cartographic work.
2. Some writers have argued that the income from agricultural activities in dry cultivation is so inadequate, that women must supplement the family income by engaging in the labor force (e.g., Reddy 1975).
3. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, collectively labelled as "scheduled population" in this analysis, are essentially those who are very low in the traditional caste hierarchy in Indian society. Under a special constitution, the Indian government is required to provide them with special favors vis-a-vis other castes. The list remains substantially the same as originally prepared by the British in 1935. Workers belonging to this segment of population are designated as "depressed-class workers" in contrast to other workers who are termed "privileged-class workers" though the term "non-scheduled" also has been used to refer to them. (See Note 7 for further clarification.)
4. The data used here represent the urban population of districts. Since each district usually has only one large urban center, district data can be safely used to represent such centers of individual districts. Census data from 1971 are used because the class-specific occupational data for 1981 censuses were not available at the time of computation for the disaggregated subsets of the population; e.g., scheduled castes and scheduled tribes that are of interest here.
5. Though in a different context, the cases of planned cities of Chandigarh and Bhubaneswar are classic examples of planning fallacies. The literature on Chandigarh is undoubtedly well enough known to obviate the need for detailed references. For Bhubaneswar, see Turner and Fichter (1972).
6. In a paper entitled "Geographic Research on Women: Speculations on the Use of Data about Women" presented at the American Association of Geographers' meeting in April 1977, Libbee asserts that "Spatial trends in male-female comparisons may be an important indicator of cultural influences having variable impact on men and women."
7. The term "class," used here to distinguish between scheduled castes (and tribes) and the rest of the population, was chosen largely for convenience. Because of their low caste position, the former group has remained, on the whole, illiterate, poor, and socially deprived compared to the members of the latter group. But the differences in the level of labor participation of females within the two groups are more a product of caste ethos than simple economics. This necessitates, under the Indian situation, a modification of the Western concept of class. Further, the non-scheduled castes, the

- "privileged-class" as defined here, consists of various groups living under a wide range of social and economic conditions, but the data available in the census do not allow such distinctions to be made.
8. See Sopher 1980b.
 9. Whereas the relatively low level of labor participation by depressed-class females in Bhind, Morena, and Gwalior is a feature of a situation where the overall level of female employment is low and may be because of their proximity to the northern plain, as suggested later on in the discussion (also, see D'Souza 1969), the case of Bhopal is different. Bhopal has a sizable proportion of Muslim people and their women participate in labor force at par with women belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. This reduces the actual level of depressed-class women workers (see Raju 1981).
 10. Disparity between two groups, of which different proportions possess a particular property (in this case urban employment) is here measured by computing the differences in the logits of the proportions, that is, the difference in the logarithm of the odds ratio (Sopher 1974; 1979). With axes representing the two proportions drawn on the logit scale, lines of equal disparity appear as straight lines.
 11. Privileged-class/depressed-class disparity is calculated by converting the participation rates of depressed-class and privileged-class male and female workers into logits and subtracting the depressed-class logit values from the privileged-class logit values; subtracting the logit of female participation from the logit of male participation yields the male/female disparity in labor participation (Sopher 1979). The presumption is that the behavior of the privileged-class and the males, as the case may be, is more representative of a normal situation than the behavior of the depressed-class and the females, or at least, that is what one expects the situation to be. Therefore, the first group is taken first in the disparity pair.
 12. See Sengupta (1960) where he observes that in the industrial town of Jamshepur, northern India, employers had to turn to tribal girls because educated women there were reluctant to accept jobs. A similar feature has been observed by I. Bhatta and Z. Bhatta (1971). Also see Madhya Pradesh Directorate of Economics and Statistics 1967.
 13. Some writers prefer the term "acculturation" to "sanskritization." They feel the term sanskritization somehow connotes one way process where only vertical mobility is suggested; the term "acculturation" is free from this limitation. See Kalia (1961).
 14. Other than household industries, several other occupations traditionally regarded in India as family occupations, such as construction, mining, and associated activities are considered appropriate for women. In addition, teaching, medicine, and high level

white collar jobs are also considered as "respectable" for women. But within these occupational avenues several components may not be regarded as suitable for them (ICSSR 1975; de Souza 1975; Phadnis and Malani 1978; Sopher 1980a: Footnotes 107 and 108). It is not difficult, therefore, to speculate that cities which have occupational avenues considered appropriate for women will register a higher proportion of female workers. Within restrictions imposed by social structure, the occupational set-up of a given city thus becomes important in influencing levels of urban female employment. See Raju 1981.

15. There has been much discussion as to whether the rural or the urban dimensions of Indian culture should be viewed as isolated wholes in themselves or whether they should be seen as in continuous interaction and the line of interaction as a continuum from rural to urban or from urban to rural (Redfield and Singer 1954; Marriott 1955; Singer 1959; Sinha 1959).
16. Such a correspondence between urban and rural females is found even in variables such as literacy, which is generally seen as a primarily urban attribute. David Sopher in his study of sex disparity in Indian literacy found the levels of rural and urban literacy to be highly correlated ($r = .73$). See Sopher 1980a.
17. In the South there is greater acceptance of female participation in the public domain. In other respects also the South displays a more tolerant view towards women, as reflected in sex-ratios (Miller 1978), literacy (Sopher 1980a), and female autonomy.

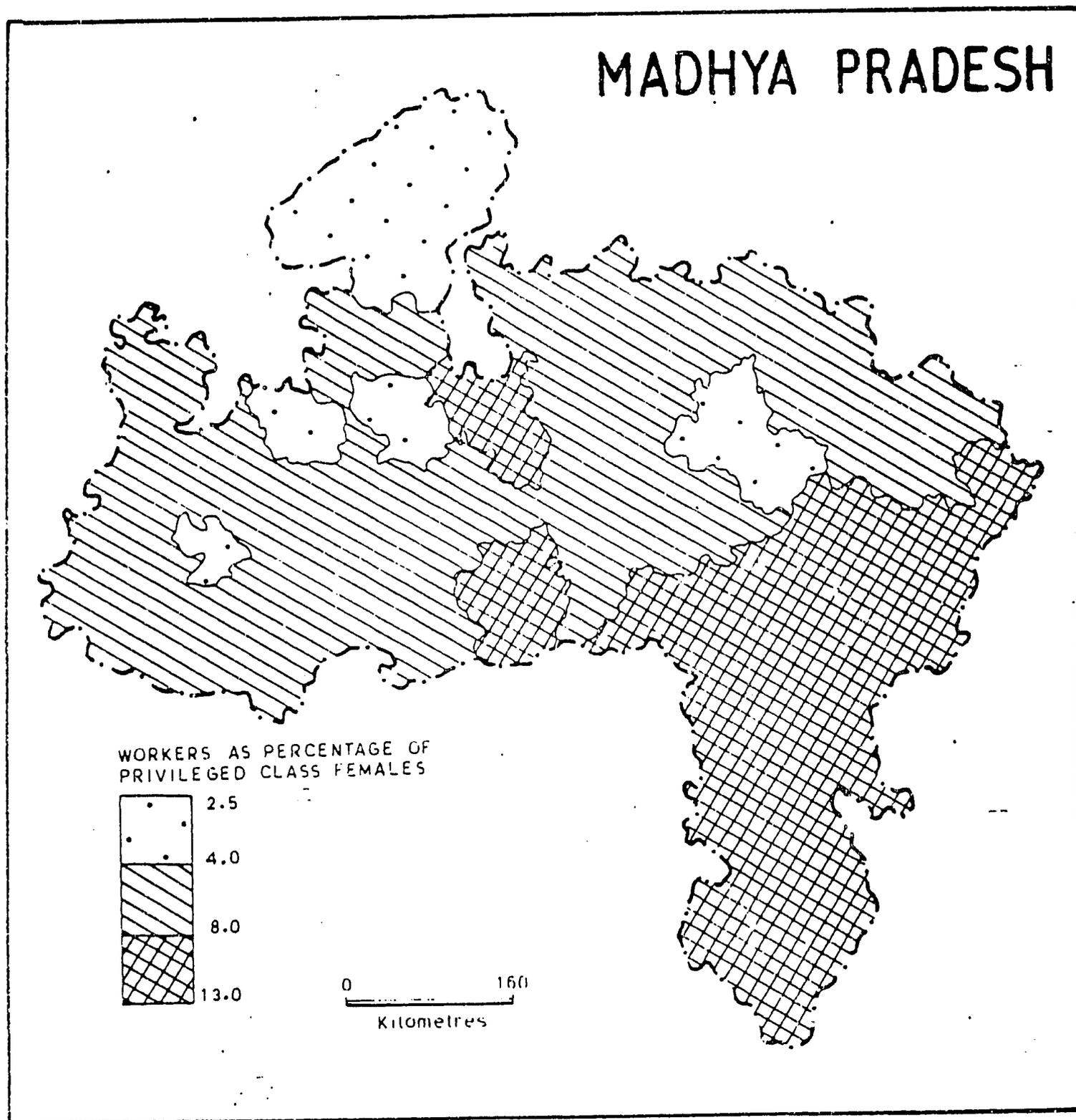


FIGURE 1: Privileged class urban female labor participation, 1971.

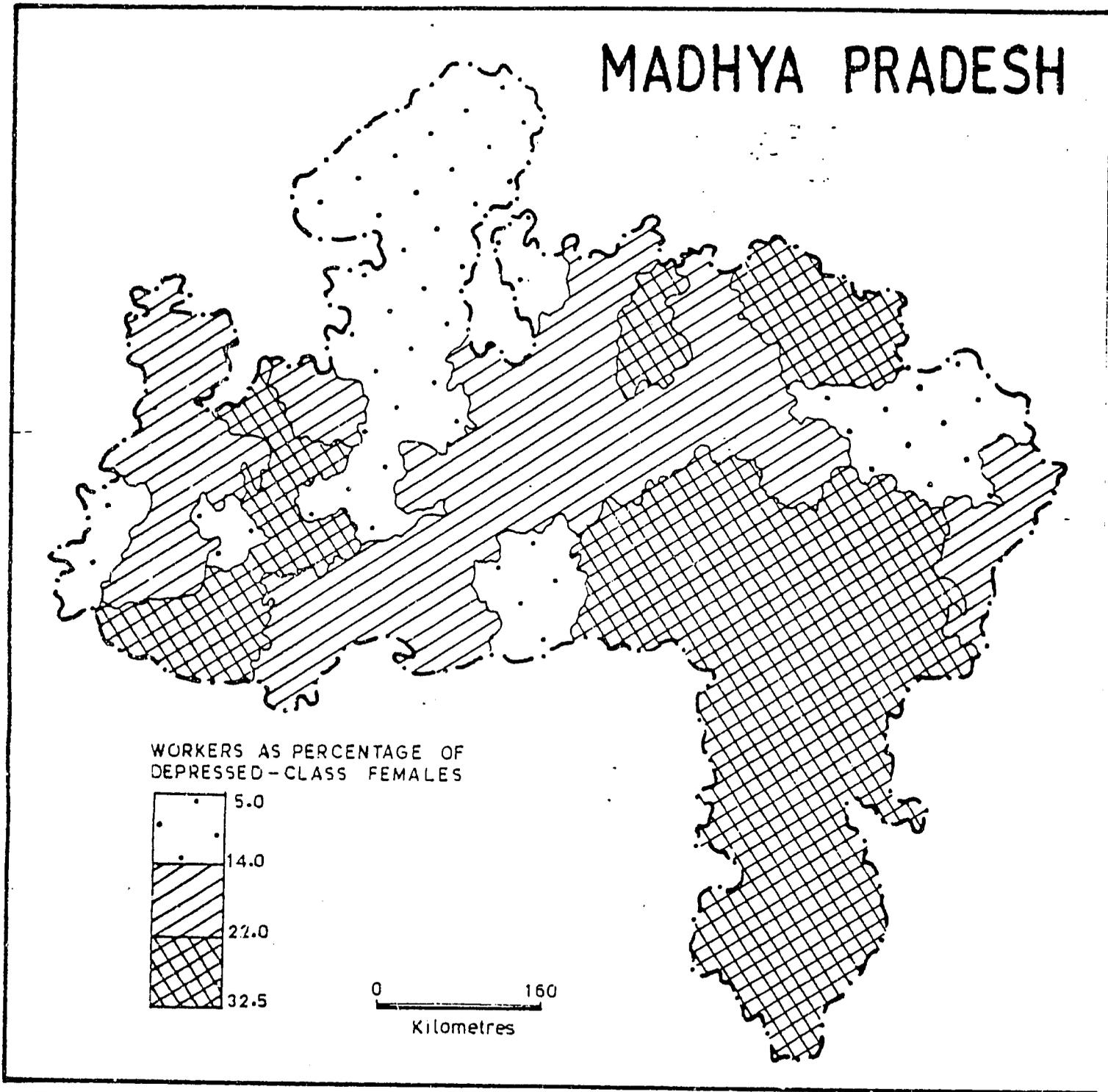


FIGURE 2: Depressed class urban female labor participation, 1971

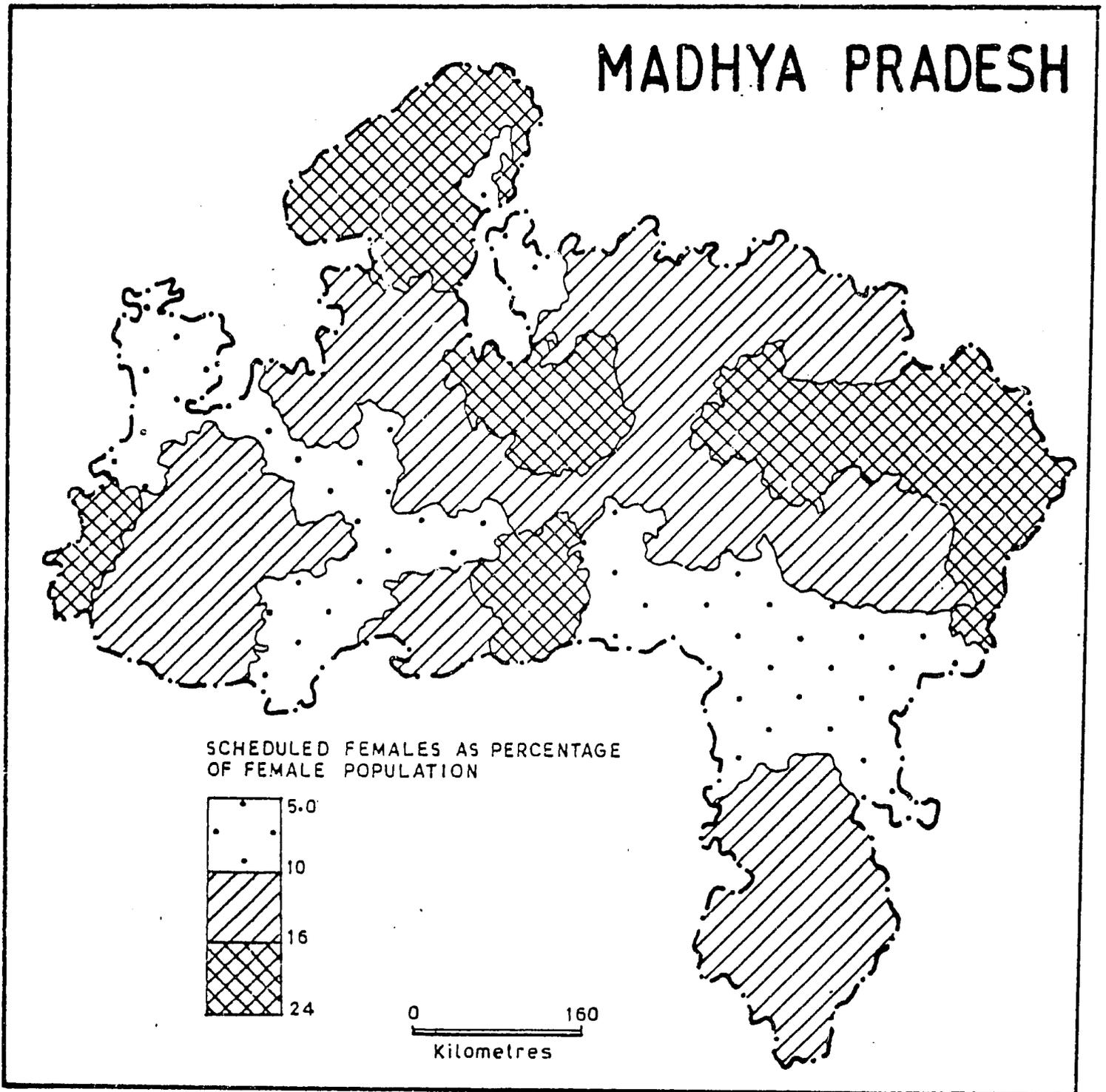


FIGURE 3 : Urban scheduled female population, 1971

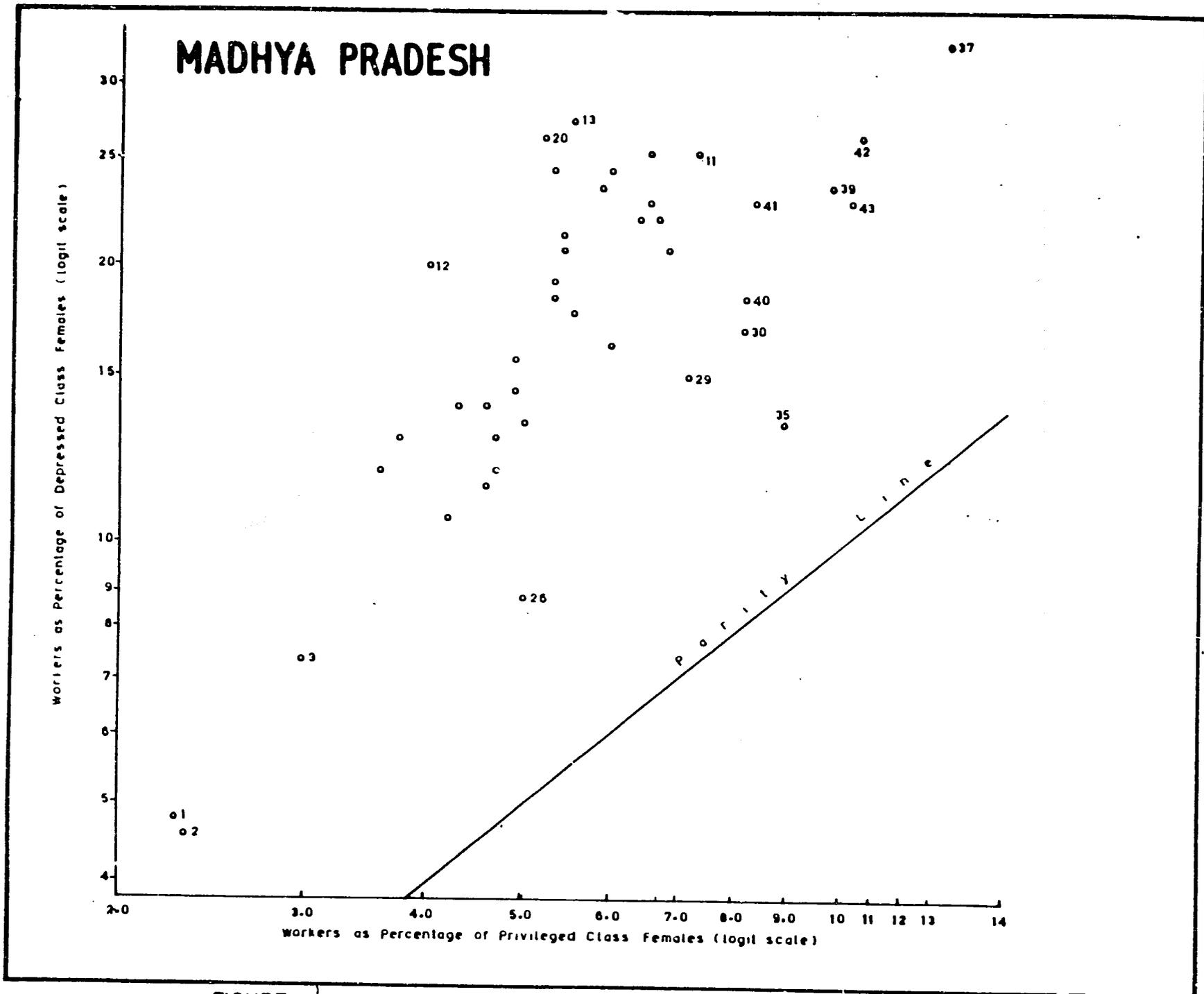


FIGURE 4: Class disparity in urban female labor participation, 1971

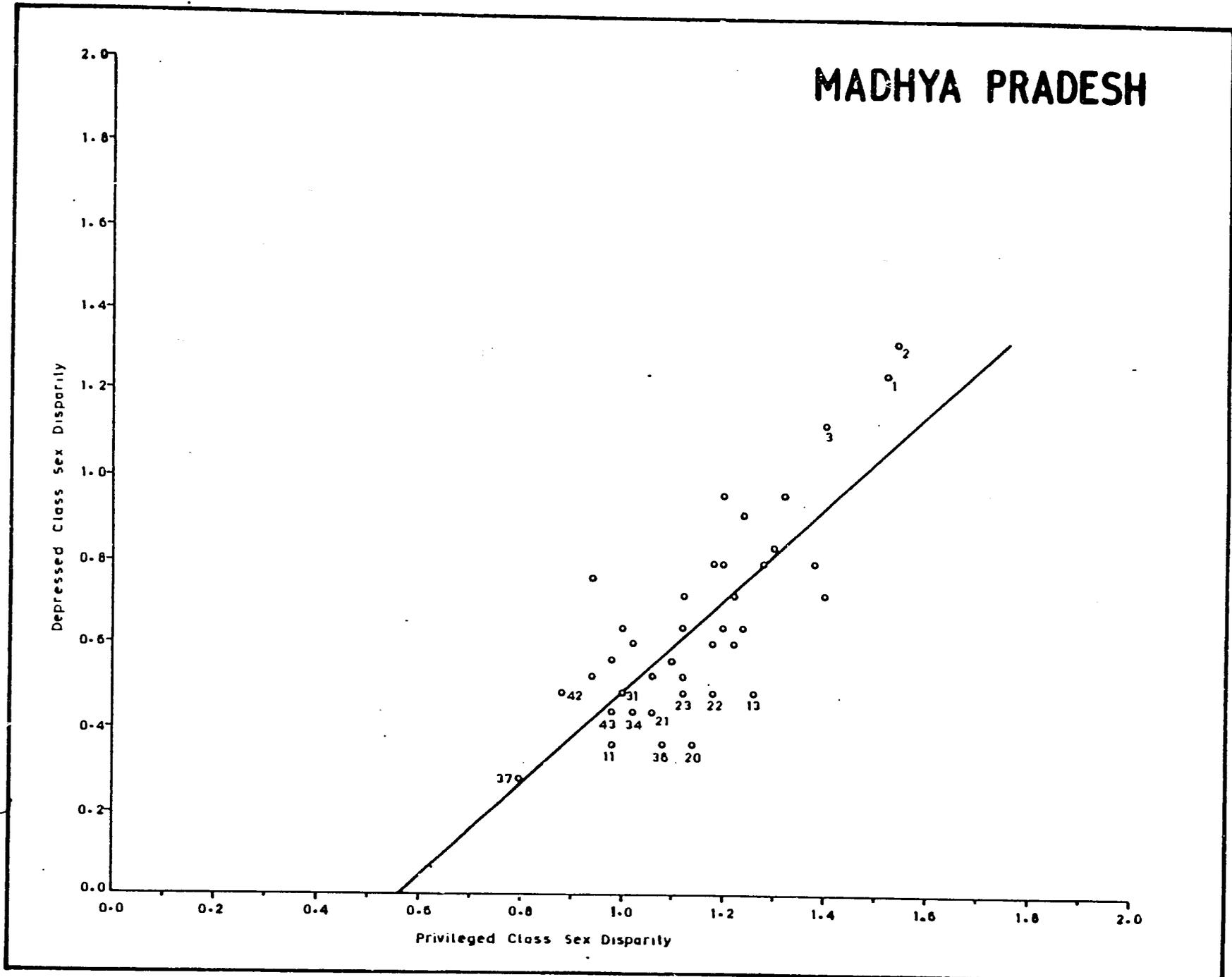


FIGURE 5: Privileged and depressed class sex disparity in urban labor participation, 1971

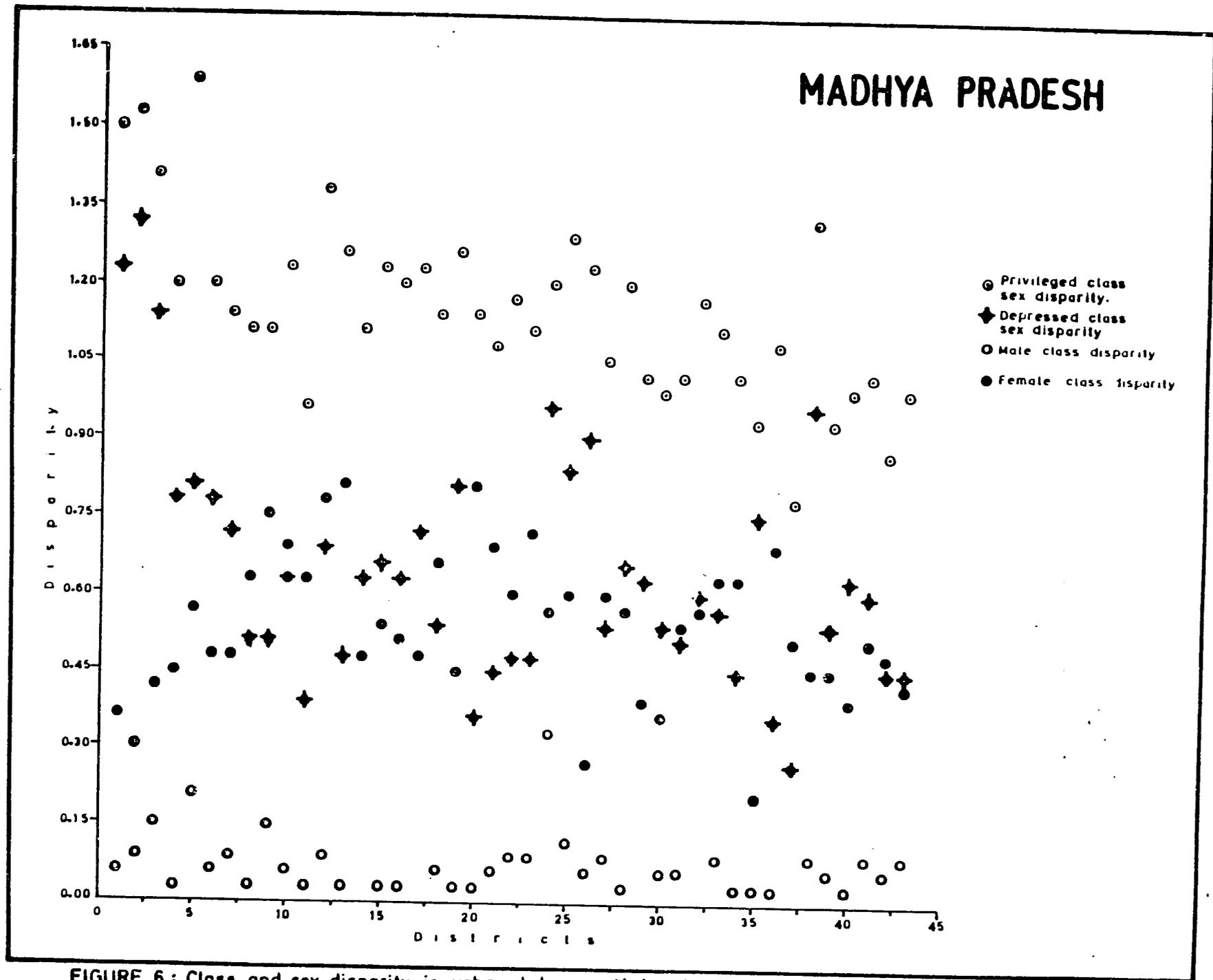


FIGURE 6 : Class and sex disparity in urban labor participation, 1971

NOTE : In case of male and female class disparities, the absolute values are plotted in order to make comparison easy.

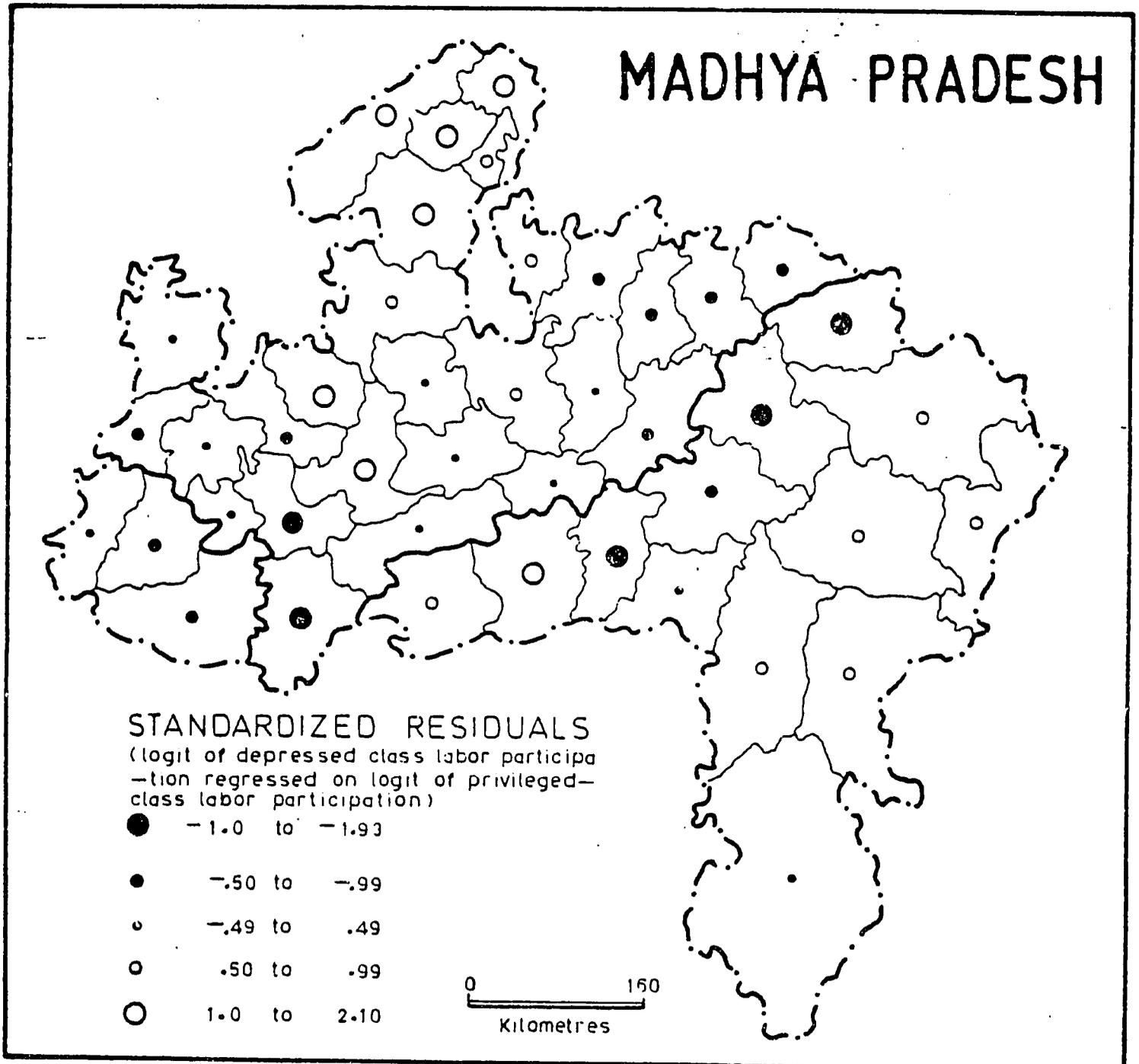


FIGURE 7: Residual sex disparity in urban labor participation, 1971

NOTE Thick line marks the approximate boundary of tribal areas of the state

Table 1. Male and Female Urban Labor Force Participation, Madhya Pradesh, 1971

Districts*	MMPW ^a	MFPW ^b	MMDWC ^c	MFDW ^d	DFP ^e	MSUFP ^f
1	42.70	2.24	46.75	4.83	16.40	15.37
2	44.63	2.31	49.57	4.56	17.02	10.57
3	43.67	2.99	51.75	7.43	16.28	9.04
4	42.26	4.52	44.08	11.48	9.52	11.79
5	46.86	3.59	59.03	12.28	16.95	14.70
6	43.50	4.68	47.29	12.93	15.07	16.44
7	41.29	4.97	46.00	13.68	7.98	20.04
8	47.01	6.42	48.04	22.34	10.88	15.06
9	42.15	5.34	50.94	24.63	11.80	16.07
10	49.22	5.41	53.44	21.76	14.69	11.70
11	43.09	7.43	45.17	25.59	10.69	17.77
12	50.41	3.97	55.27	19.72	23.95	8.87
13	51.20	5.55	53.70	27.45	12.16	6.53
14	45.83	6.11	45.86	16.67	9.94	22.23
15	45.05	4.58	43.12	14.44	8.59	26.76
16	45.13	4.89	42.72	14.61	13.16	21.28
17	44.81	4.67	45.13	13.20	22.38	17.43
18	43.57	5.46	47.49	20.91	15.47	21.85
19	44.86	4.19	43.24	10.66	12.09	13.50
20	42.95	5.23	45.48	26.51	12.99	21.21
21	44.97	6.55	48.44	25.44	12.06	23.70
22	45.80	5.37	41.47	18.54	5.35	34.78
23	44.57	5.87	49.79	24.27	9.15	27.36
24	41.16	4.24	59.92	14.48	11.36	24.69
25	43.26	3.73	50.96	13.21	13.44	19.68
26	47.99	5.02	43.78	8.74	7.02	30.24
27	45.26	6.79	49.95	22.38	12.58	37.63
28	44.58	4.92	46.88	16.30	8.23	11.95
29	44.00	7.14	43.63	15.52	13.01	10.55
30	46.44	8.15	42.69	17.27	18.54	11.43
31	42.89	6.86	45.45	20.87	17.55	11.97
32	46.86	5.52	46.33	18.26	10.87	10.74
33	41.45	5.31	47.37	19.22	15.07	8.81
34	43.33	6.67	45.34	23.13	14.66	7.67
35	45.53	8.92	46.94	13.72	19.00	12.99
36	43.40	6.10	42.45	24.74	7.81	19.48
37	47.40	12.73	47.45	32.38	6.67	9.44
38	50.23	4.69	54.78	12.05	19.24	7.47
39	48.71	9.84	51.96	23.89	14.25	6.73
40	47.49	8.24	49.85	18.47	20.76	4.60
41	49.43	8.43	54.40	23.08	9.13	6.12
42	46.96	10.43	51.01	26.47	8.28	8.53
43	52.03	10.21	46.40	23.16	13.96	5.83

- * For district names and identification, see appendix A.
a Males classed as workers as percentage of privileged class males.
b Females classed as workers as percentage of privileged class females.
c Males classed as workers as percentage of depressed class males.
d Females classed as workers as percentage of depressed class females.
e Schedule castes and tribes, the "depressed class" as percentage of total female population.
f Muslim population as percentage of total female population.

Table 2. Female Labor Force Participation, Selected Districts, Madhya Pradesh, 1971

District*	DFPA ^a	TFP ^b	GONDSC ^c	GFP ^d	CFW ^e	STFW ^f
28	8.22	14.74	76.72	83.97	15.93	18.39
29	15.50	20.50	75.29	73.84	13.60	22.94
33	15.07	30.05	71.05	67.50	16.77	24.89
34	14.66	59.15	48.37	35.08	14.34	29.19
35	13.70	43.00	67.45	67.00	12.32	15.57
36	7.81	38.98	47.56	49.69	24.34	25.35
37	6.67	--	--	--	32.38	--
39	23.90	24.17	56.24	54.56	23.20	26.05
41	23.10	27.00	64.22	56.99	20.10	30.95
42	26.10	17.00	77.99	81.00	25.29	32.12
43	23.20	68.50	58.78	63.21	30.41	19.82

- * For district names and identification, see Appendix A.
- a Schedule castes and tribes, the "depressed class" as percentage of total female population.
- b Tribal female population as percentage of depressed-class female population.
- c Gonds as percentage of tribal female population.
- d Gonds classed as workers as percentage of tribal female workers.
- e Schedule castes classed as workers as percentage of schedule caste female population.
- f Schedule tribes classed as workers as percentage of schedule tribe female population.

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