

By Sex

Globally, men have higher rates of informal employment than women. However, in 56% of countries, rates of informal employment for women are higher. Women's rates of informal employment are higher than men's in the lower-income countries. Lower rates of employment and/or informal employment for women in many emerging countries contribute to the higher global average for men.

Informal employment as a per cent of total, women's and men's employment

Countries by income level	Total	Women	Men
World	61	58	63
Developing	90	92	87
Emerging	67	64	69
Developed	18	18	19

By Status in Employment

Globally, 56% of all workers are wage employed, while 44% are self-employed. However, among the world's informal workers, 64% are self-employed.

Composition of informal employment by status in employment (per cent)

Countries by income level	Wage employment	Self-employment
World	36	64
Developing	21	79
Emerging	37	63
Developed	51	49



Counting the World's Informal Workers: A Global Snapshot

61%
of the world's workers
are informally employed—
representing 2 billion people.

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The first-ever global estimates on the size of informal employment (ILO 2018¹) show 61% of all workers are informally employed – that's 2 billion workers worldwide.

Global

The estimates reveal a clear relationship between low levels of GDP and high levels of informal employment in countries.

Informal employment as a per cent of total, rural and urban employment

Countries by income level*	Total	Rural	Urban
World	61	80	44
Developing	90	90**	79
Emerging	67	83	51
Developed	18	22	17

*2018 World Bank definitions based on country levels of gross income per capita.

**The “rural” and “urban” estimates are computed on a smaller set of countries than the “total” estimates.

By Region

Informal employment as a per cent of total employment by region (excluding developed countries)

Region	
Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding Southern Africa)	92
Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole	89
Southern Asia	88
East and South-eastern Asia (excluding China)	77
Middle East and North Africa	68
Latin America and the Caribbean	54
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	37

¹ For the estimates, published in *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture, 3rd Edition* (2018), the International Labour Organization (ILO) applied a harmonized definition of informality to micro-data from 100+ countries comprising more than 90% of the world’s population.

By Status in Employment

Among informal workers, women are much more likely than men to be contributing family workers, the most vulnerable category of self-employment. Conversely, men are more likely than women to be employers, the best-off category, though few men or women are employers. Men are more likely than women to be own account workers, another vulnerable category of self-employment. These differences are seen across all country income levels as well as in total employment.

Composition of informal employment by status in employment and by sex (per cent)

Countries by income level	Employers			Employees			Own Account Workers			Contributing Family Workers		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
World	3	1	3	36	34	37	45	36	50	16	28	9
Developing	2	1	3	21	17	25	54	51	57	22	31	14
Emerging	3	1	3	37	36	38	44	34	50	16	29	8
Developed	6	4	8	51	57	47	36	28	42	6	10	3

By Branch of Industry

In developing countries, informal employment is predominantly in agriculture; in emerging and developed countries, it is predominantly in services. In all regions, the lowest percentage of informal employment is in manufacturing. The percentage distribution of total employment is the same as of informal employment.

Composition of informal employment by branch of industry (per cent)

Countries by income level	Agriculture	Services	Manufacturing
World	38	44	18
Developing	69	21	10
Emerging	36	46	19
Developed	10	71	19

By Age Group

Globally, the share of informal employment in total employment is higher among young workers (age 15-24) and older workers (age 65+) than among other adult workers (age 25-64). In developing countries, almost everyone who is working in the younger and older age groups is informally employed.

Informal employment as per cent of total employment by age, sex and country income level 2016

Countries by income level	Age 15-24			Age 25-64			Age 65 and over		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
World	77	73	79	58	54	60	77	75	78
Developing	97	97	97	90	93	87	96	98	95
Emerging	83	79	85	66	62	67	88	88	88
Developed	19	19	19	17	16	17	38	37	39