

## **WOMEN & PAID WORK: KEY FACTS**

Here is an overview of key facts regarding women's paid work based on available data from national labour force surveys compiled by the International Labour Organization (ILO). These data provide a general picture of women's paid work and the differences between women and men in regard to paid employment. As the availability of these data show, there has been progress in the development of statistics on women's paid work but further improvements are needed.

### *Labor Force Participation & Unemployment Rates*

- Globally, half of women (compared to three-quarters of men) participate in the labour force; the gender gap in participation has narrowed in only some regions and remains widest in the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia.
- Both young women and men (aged 15 to 24) have experienced a large decline in labour force participation since 1995. Women aged 25 or older, however, recorded an increase of participation in most regions.
- Women's unemployment rate remains higher than men's in most countries, and the differences remain substantial.

### *Branches of Economic Activity*

- Globally, around 30% of women workers (and men workers) are employed in agriculture. But agriculture remains the largest sector for women's employment (around 60%) in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the two most populous regions, and in Oceania.
- Over half (52%) of women workers (and 43% of men workers) globally are employed in the services sector: among women, especially in education, health and social work, and as domestic workers in private households.
- Around 18% of women workers (and 27% of men workers) globally are engaged in manufacturing

### *Wage Employment & Self-Employment*

- Globally, half of women (and men) workers are wage or salaried workers but there is significant variation across regions from 90% of both women and men workers in most developed countries to less than 20% of women workers (and 30% of men workers) in the two most populous regions, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa
  - 90% in developed countries and Eastern Europe with little difference by sex
  - 60-70% in Southern Europe and Latin American and the Caribbean with women slightly more likely than men, especially in Southern Europe, to be wage or salaried workers
  - 60% in the Caucasus and Central Asia with little difference by sex
  - half of women workers (and 60-70% of men workers) in East Asia, Middle East and North Africa
  - 37% of women workers (and 41% of men workers) in South East Asia
  - below 20% of women workers (and below 30% of men workers) in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania
- The other half of women (and men) workers are self-employed and within this general

category there are sub-categories which show important differences between women and men: with, globally, fewer women (1%) than men (3%) as employers; fewer women (29%) than men (39%) as own account operators; and more women (19%) than men (7%) as contributing family workers.

- only 1% of women workers (and 3% of men workers) are employers
- 29% of women workers (and 39% of men workers) are own account workers who do not hire others
- 19% of women workers (and 7% of men workers) are contributing family workers
- There is also significant variation within self-employment across regions: compared to developed regions, all of the developing regions have a higher prevalence of own account workers and contributing family workers; and a lower prevalence of employers.
  - In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, less than 1.5% of women workers are employers, over 45% are own account workers and over 34% are contributing family workers. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of women workers who are contributing family workers is particularly high (37%). These are also the two regions where three-quarters or more of women workers outside agriculture are informally employed (see below).
  - In the Middle East and North Africa, women workers are less likely than women workers in other developing regions to be own account workers (15%) although a significant share (23%) are contributing family workers. This is the one developing region where women workers outside agriculture are less likely than men workers to be informally employed (see below).

### *Informal Employment in Developing Regions*

The term “informal employment” includes wage or sub-contracted workers in informal jobs (i.e. without social protection contributions) as well as the self-employed in informal enterprises (i.e. unincorporated, unregistered or micro enterprises). The wage and sub-contracted workers may be employed by formal firms, informal enterprises or households. The self-employed include employers, own account workers (who do not hire others), and contributing family workers.

- In most developing countries, more than half of women and men workers outside agriculture are informally employed. But there is significant variation across regions: from 82% in South Asia to 45% in the Middle East and North Africa. And there is significant variation within regions by country: within South Asia from 62% in Sri Lanka to 84% in India; and within the Middle East and North Africa from 32% in Turkey to 57% in the West Bank and Gaza.
  - 82% in South Asia (from 62% in Sri Lanka to 84% in India)
  - 66% in Sub-Saharan Africa (33% in South Africa to 82% in Mali)
  - 65% in East and South East Asia (42% in Thailand to 73% in Indonesia)
  - 51% in Latin America (from 40% in Uruguay to 75% in Bolivia)
  - 45% in Middle East and North Africa (31% in Turkey to 57% in the West Bank and Gaza)
- When agriculture is included, the share of the workforce that is informally employed increases: for example, to 93% in India (95% for women, 91% for men)
- Informal employment is a greater source of non-agricultural employment for women than for men in Latin America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.
  - 83% of women workers (and 82% of men workers) in South Asia

- 74% of women workers (and 61% of men workers) in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 54% of women workers (and 48% of men workers) in Latin America and the Caribbean
- In East and Southeast Asia the percentage is roughly the same (64% of women workers and 65 65% of men workers).
- Only in the Middle East and North Africa is informal employment a greater source of employment for men than for women (47% of men workers and 35% of women workers).

### *Non-Standard Work in Developed Regions*

The term “non-standard work” includes *own account self-employed* workers without employees, *temporary* (or fixed-term) workers, including fixed-term direct hires, temporary help agency, on-call and contract company workers; and some *part-time* workers. The significance of non-standard employment arrangements in developed countries is shown in 2008 data for 28 or 29 OECD countries, depending on the indicator. Due to limitations of published data, these three categories cannot be added because they come from different sources and different employment bases (total vs. wage/salary employees). Also, part-time employment may include workers from the previous two categories.

- Own account self-employment represent around 20% of *total employment* in Greece and Turkey; from 10 to 19% in 11 countries; and from 4 to 9% in 15 countries.
- Temporary or fixed term work ranges from a high of 29% of *wage and salary employment* in Spain to a low of about 4% in Slovakia and the United States; of the 28 countries with data, temporary employment is over 20% of *wage and salary work* in 4 countries, from 10 to 18% in 12 countries and from 4 to 9% in 12 countries.
- Part-time employment, which often entails reduced benefits and social protection, is over 20% of *total employment* in 8 countries, reaching a high of 36% in the Netherlands; between 11 and 19% in 13 countries, and under 10% in 8 countries.
- Women are more likely than men to be temporary and part-time workers but less likely than men to be own account workers in all OECD countries with data.

Sources: The data for the first three sections are from *The World’s Women 2015: Trends and Statistics*, United Nations, 2015. The regional estimates of informal employment are weighted averages which combine direct estimates from survey data 2004-2010 with indirect estimates for those countries lacking direct data on informal employment were prepared by James Heintz and published in WIEGO Working Paper No. 2, *Statistics on the Informal Economy: Definitions, Regional Estimates & Challenges*, 2014; the data on non-standard work were prepared by Francoise Carre and also published in WIEGO Working Paper No.2. These sources are available at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/chapter4/chapter4.html>

<http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Vanek-Statistics-WIEGO-WP2.pdf>