



Gender Equality and Work Fact Sheet

(Updated February 2022)

Decent work and full participation and realization of economic opportunity for all workers is impossible without gender equality. Meaningful integration of women and other marginalized groups into collective power building in unions and worker-controlled organizations, including leadership positions and decision-making spaces that promote stable democracy and steady civil society development, is necessary to ensure equal access to economic and democratic opportunities.

Gendered power hierarchies shape how work is organized, rewarded and experienced. Women and other workers with marginalized identities are often relegated to forms of employment that are more precarious, with little or no pay, limited or no opportunity for formalization or promotion, and few or no benefits. Women with multiple marginalized identities often face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination that further undermines their access to decent work.

Global Labor Force Participation By Gender

- The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 47.2 percent of women age 15 or older are part of the labor force,¹ compared with 74 percent of men.² For country-specific data on the ratio of female to male labor force participation, click [here](#).
- Regionally, labor force participation rates are the lowest for women in the Middle East and North Africa at 20.1 percent and highest in Sub-Saharan Africa at 62.7 percent.³
- Globally, women make up the majority of workers in precarious forms of employment, including part-time and temporary jobs. While women comprise less than 40 percent of total employment, the share of all women working part-time is 57 percent.⁴ For country specific data on the incidence of part-time employment

¹ The labor force is defined as the sum of the employed and the unemployed. According to *Resolution Concerning Statistics of Work, Employment and Labour Underutilization*, adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013, persons in unemployment are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity. This includes part-time, informal, temporary, seasonal or casual employment

² International Labour Organization, "Labour force participation rate by sex and age — ILO modelled estimates, July 2019," ILOSTAT, Accessed 10-06-2020, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

³ International Labour Organization, "Labour force participation rate by sex and age — ILO modelled estimates, July 2019," ILOSTAT, Accessed 10-06-2020, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/non-standard-employment/WCMS_534825/lang--en/index.htm. While part-time work is one of the traditional forms of non-standard employment, other forms of non-standard employment include: "temporary employment, temporary agency work and other multi-party employment relationships, disguised



by sex, click [here](#). For country-specific data on the share of employed in temporary employment, by sex and age group, click [here](#).

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, women have been more likely than men to be forced to drop out of the workforce or reduce their hours because of caregiving responsibilities at home, which increased due to school closures. In the last year, women workers globally have lost over \$800 billion in income, significantly more than men.⁵
- Women spend more than three times as much time on unpaid care work⁶ for family members as men, often due to social and cultural norms and stereotyping about the role and value of women in society,⁷ negatively impacting their ability to work for pay and the type of employment they can access.⁸
- Click [here](#) to access data on the percent of employment by sex and occupation for 121 countries.
- There are 75.6 million domestic workers 15 years and older in the world, representing 2.3 percent of total employment worldwide. Women comprise the majority of domestic workers at 76.2 percent, which accounts for 4.5 percent of female employment worldwide. Men comprise nearly one-quarter of domestic workers, which accounts for only 0.9 percent of overall employment worldwide.⁹ For country-specific data ratios on domestic work, click [here](#).
- In 2019, it was estimated that the percentage of female employment in services was 59.25 percent worldwide,¹⁰ compared to male employment in services at 45.07 percent.¹¹
- Women make up 70 percent of the health and social care workforce. Women are segregated into lower-status and lower-paid jobs in the sector, with men over-represented in positions with higher pay and decision-making authority.¹²

employment relationships and dependent self-employment. Non-standard forms of employment are a grouping of employment arrangements that deviate from standard employment.

⁵ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/covid-19-cost-women-globally-over-800-billion-lost-income-one-year>

⁶ Unpaid care work is care work provided without monetary compensation by unpaid carers. Unpaid care is considered work and is a crucial dimension of the world of work. Definition retrieved from:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633166.pdf

⁷ <https://odi.org/en/publications/womens-work-mothers-children-and-the-global-childcare-crisis/>

⁸ https://www.marketlinks.org/sites/default/files/resources/lpfm_ii-18-091_usaid_report_-_womens_wage_employment_in_developing_countries_final_june_2018.pdf

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_802551.pdf

¹⁰ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.SRV.EMPL.FE.ZS?end=2019&name_desc=false&start=1991&view=chart

¹¹ https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.SRV.EMPL.MA.ZS?end=2019&name_desc=false&start=1991&view=chart.

This data reflects that the services sector consists of wholesale and retail trade and restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; financing, insurance, real estate, and business services; and community, social, and personal services.

¹² https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/nursing/delivered-by-women-led-by-men.pdf?sfvrsn=94be9959_2

**Please note paid and unpaid care work and gender will be covered in a forthcoming separate factsheet.



- In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60 percent of all working women remain in agriculture, often concentrated in time and labor-intensive activities that are unpaid or poorly remunerated.¹³ For country-specific data on the share of male versus female employment in agriculture, click [here](#).
- Of the 1.36 billion women workers in the world, more than half (54.4 percent) are in informal work.¹⁴
- Women in the informal economy are more often found in the most vulnerable situations, for instance as food and market workers, domestic workers, home-based workers or contributing family workers.¹⁵
- In many countries, most women workers are in the informal economy. In sub-Saharan African countries, 90 percent of women are engaged in informal employment. This number is 89 percent for countries in Southern Asia and almost 75 percent for women workers in Latin American countries.¹⁶

Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

The concept of equal pay is that all workers deserve to be paid the same for work of the same value. ILO Convention 100 calls for equal remuneration¹⁷ for men and women workers for work of equal value.¹⁸ Despite it being one of the most highly ratified ILO Conventions,¹⁹ women continue to earn significantly less than men for work of equal value all over the world. The difference in pay between women and men for work of equal value is linked to discrimination, social norms and institutional and cultural barriers, including regarding reproduction and family caregiving.²⁰ Unequal pay is a critical barrier to achieving gender equality in employment.

- The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that women, on average, are paid 20 percent less than men across the world, with variation between countries.²¹
- For country-specific data on the gender wage gap by occupation, click [here](#).

¹³https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf

¹⁴ International Labour Organization, "Labour force by sex and age -- ILO modelled estimates, July 2019," ILOSTAT, Accessed 22-06-2020, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data>.

¹⁵ Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture, ILO 2018.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The term "remuneration" includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment

¹⁸ International Labour Organization, Equal Remuneration Convention, C100, 29 June 1951.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <https://betterwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BW-GenderStrategy-Highlights-v4-Web.pdf>

²¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_735949.pdf