

Women and men in part-time employment

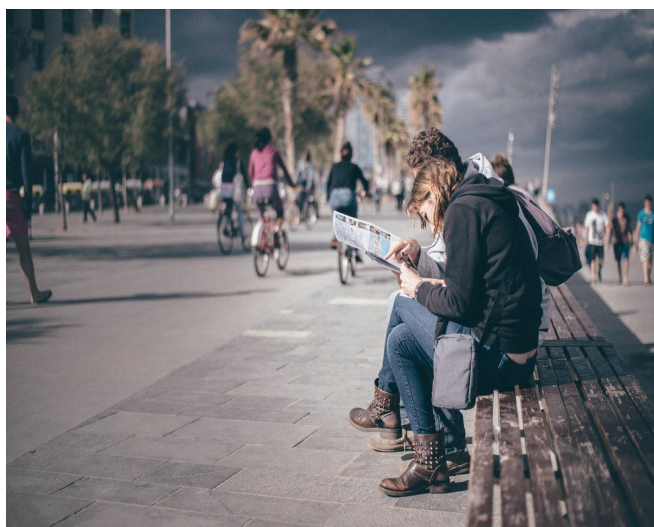


Key points

- In 2019, women were more likely than men to work in part-time employment in 95% of countries with available data, with the highest proportions of women working part-time recorded in Liberia (94%), the Netherlands (75%) and Rwanda (62%).
- The largest gender gaps in part-time employment were recorded in the Netherlands (36 percentage points), Pakistan (33 percentage points) and Austria (32 percentage points).
- As of 2019, overall, part-time employment was more common in developed regions than in developing ones, and particularly for women in Western Europe (57%), Australia and New Zealand (56%) and Northern Europe (46%).
- Among the 20 countries with available data since 1995, all of which are located in developed regions, trends for part-time employment have been mixed both for employed women and men.
- Young women and men aged 15–24 were twice as likely than adult women and men to indicate that they would like to work more hours. In Northern Africa, the rate of women's time-related underemployment stood at 26%, compared with 14% for men.

Part-time employment may offer an effective way to balance time spent on paid work, household responsibilities and childrearing, and being able to work for fewer hours is also seen as a means to increase employment levels, particularly among women.¹ In addition, part-time work facilitates the gradual entry into, participation in and exit from the labor market.²

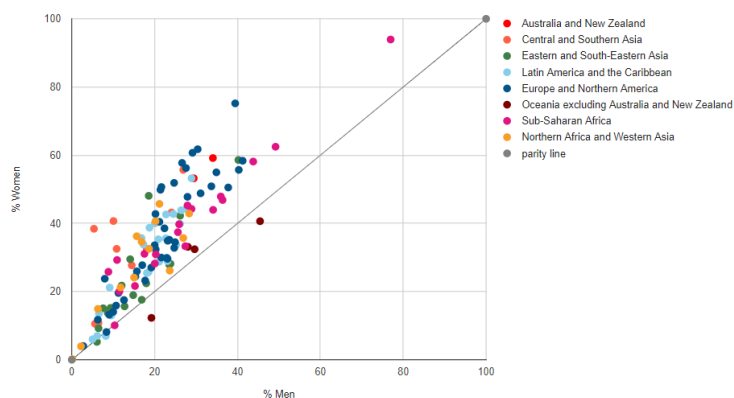
Part-time employment comes at a cost for workers, however, as they oftentimes face difficult working conditions, including lower hourly wages and little job security, and receive less training and promotion opportunities than their full-time counterparts. They are also at a higher risk of falling into poverty and are less likely to have access to social protections, including [unemployment benefits](#).³ In developed countries, some forms of part-time work are defined as non-standard work, with employment conditions similar to those described under [informal employment](#).⁴ The proportion of part-time employment in informal wage employment was almost twice as high among women than among men, resulting in their greater exposure to the compounded vulnerabilities of part-time and informal employment.



Globally, as of 2019, women are much more likely to be engaged in part-time employment

Among the 127 countries with latest available data for 2015–2019, the highest proportions of women working part-time were recorded in Liberia (94%), the Netherlands (75%) and Rwanda (62%). Part-time employment was common among men in Liberia (77%), Rwanda (49%) and Tuvalu (45%). There was a higher proportion of women than men working part-time in 121 countries (95%), with the largest gender gaps reported in the Netherlands (36 percentage points), Pakistan (33 percentage points) and Austria (32 percentage points) (see figure I).

Figure I: Proportion of employed persons in part-time employment by sex and region: 2015–2019 (latest available) (Percentage)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO microdata repository (last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat ilo.org/data/>).

Note: Data points represent country values and are colour-coded according to each country's respective regional grouping under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/regional-groups/>).

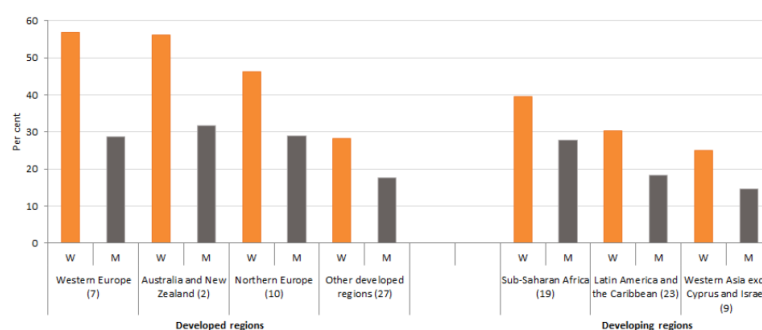
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Part-time employment is more prevalent in developed regions

As of 2019, in all regions with available data, part-time employment was more prevalent among women than among men, with prevalence rates for women almost double those of men. Part-time employment was more common in developed regions than in developing ones, particularly for women in Western Europe (57%), Australia and New Zealand (56%) and Northern Europe (46%). Sub-Saharan Africa also recorded high proportions of women (39%) and men (28%) in part-time employment (see figure II). Among countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, where the proportion of women in part-time employment was prevalent, at 30%, Argentina had the highest proportion (53%) and also the largest gender gap (24 percentage points).

Figure II: Proportion of employed persons in part-time employment, by region and sex: 2019 (Percentage)



Source: Calculated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, using data retrieved from the ILO microdata repository (last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>).

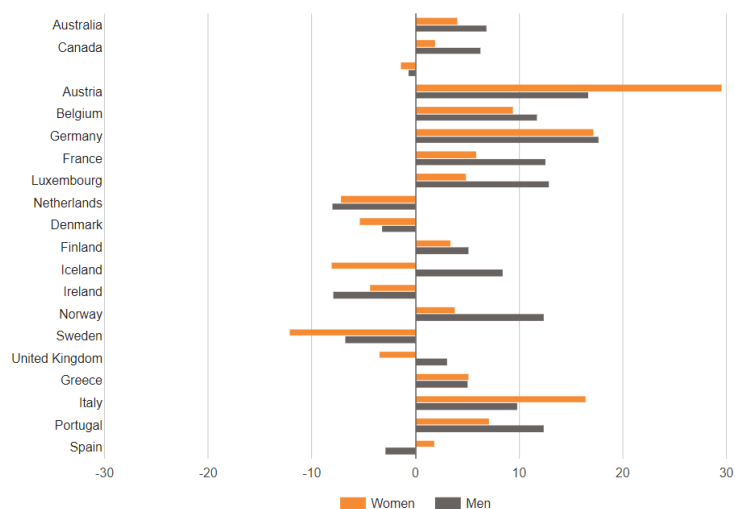
Note: Unweighted averages; data for the highlighted regions represent at least 50% of the regional population. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries with latest available data for the period 2015-2019. Data for other regions are not shown due to limited data availability. Other developed regions include countries in Northern America, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, as well as Cyprus, Israel and Japan.

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Part-time employment shows a mixed picture since 1995

Among the 20 countries with available data since 1995, all of which are located in developed regions, trends for part-time employment have been mixed both for employed women and men. In the majority of those countries, there has been an increase in the proportion of part-time employment in women's and men's total employment, notably by 30 percentage points for women in Austria and by 18 percentage points for men in Germany (see figure III). In general, the incidence of part-time work among employed women has decreased in Northern Europe, the Netherlands and the United States of America. As a point of reference, the proportion of part-time employment in women's total employment was 82% in the Netherlands in 1995.

Figure III: Percentage point change in the proportion of employed persons in part-time employment by sex: 1995-2019 (latest available)



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), 2020 (data last accessed on 18 August 2020) (<https://ilostat ilo.org/data/>).

Time-related underemployment is higher among young women and men

Part-time employment is not necessarily a choice, and a significant number of people in part-time employment would prefer to work full-time. This is measured by the time-related underemployment rate, which in 2019 was slightly higher at the global level among women (11%) than among men (10%). Young women and men aged 15–24 were twice as likely to want to work more hours (20%). In Northern Africa, where women's unemployment rate was the highest among all regions, women's time-related underemployment rate stood at 26%, compared with 14% for men.



Featured country: Switzerland

Similar to other countries in Western Europe, part-time employment is common for women in [Switzerland](#), and further analysis into couple households with or without children reveals differences in employment between female and male partners working full-time and/or part-time.



COVID-19

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, labour underutilization, in particular the combined rates of unemployment and time-related underemployment, was much higher, at 20%, among young women and young men than among adult women (9%) and adult men (8%), leaving youth more vulnerable to the shocks of the pandemic.⁷



About the data

Definition

- Proportion of employed women and men working part-time: **This indicator** provides information on the proportion of employed women and men whose working hours are fewer than those of comparable full-time workers. While the definition between part-time and full-time employment is decided by individual countries, for purposes of international comparability, throughout this narrative part-time employment refers to work involving less than 35 working hours per week.

Coverage

Employed women and men.

Availability

Data is presented for 127 United Nations Member States and territories with the latest available sex-disaggregated data for the period 2015–2019 and by regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.⁸

Limitations

Countries have different definitions for full-time and part-time work, which may result in difficulties for purposes of international comparability. These definitions may use different age limits (lower and upper age limits and/or no upper age limit) or varying cut-offs based on the number of hours worked per week.⁹



Footnotes

1. Hakim, C., Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Diversity and the Polarization of Women's Employment, second edition, Contemporary Issues in Public Policy, The Glass House Press, London, 2004; Thévenon, O., "Drivers of Labour Force Participation in the OECD", Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Social Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 145, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2013.
2. ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market 2015, chapter 6 (Part-time workers), Geneva, 2016.
3. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Employment Outlook 2010: Moving Beyond the Jobs Crisis, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2010.
4. Vanek, J. and others, Statistics on the Informal Economy: Definitions, Regional Estimates & Challenges, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) Working Paper (Statistics) No. 2, April 2014.
5. Three criteria are used to define time-related underemployment: the term refers to employed persons who, in a short reference period, (a) wanted to work additional hours, (b) worked less than a certain hourly threshold set at the national level and (c) in a subsequent reference period, were available to work additional hours.
6. ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates (last accessed on 18 August 2020).
7. Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILO Monitor: Covid-19 and the world of work, fourth edition, May 2020 (last accessed on 18 August 2020).
8. Regional groupings under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators framework.
9. International Labour Organization (ILO), Key Indicators of the Labour Market, ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.

