

Economic empowerment

Status in employment



Key points

- Over the past 20 years, the percentage of employed as wage and salaried workers worldwide has increased more rapidly among women than men (standing, in 2019, at 53% for both women and men). This change has not been matched, however, by a significant decline in the gender pay gap, and women have continued to make up the majority of workers engaged in part-time employment.
- In 2019, women continued to be more engaged as contributing family workers (18%) than men (7%) both globally and regionally, and particularly in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), where data show that 44% of employed women were contributing to family businesses. Worldwide, however, the proportion of women employed in this category has decreased by more than a third since 2000.
- In contrast, in 2019, a higher proportion of men (38%) were engaged in own-account activities than women (28%) both globally and regionally, in particular in countries in sub-Saharan Africa (54%).
- Larger gender differences between the proportions of women and men classified as own-account workers and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, were observed in developing regions than in developed ones. In particular, a significant gender gap (17 percentage points) in these types of employment was reported in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

Background

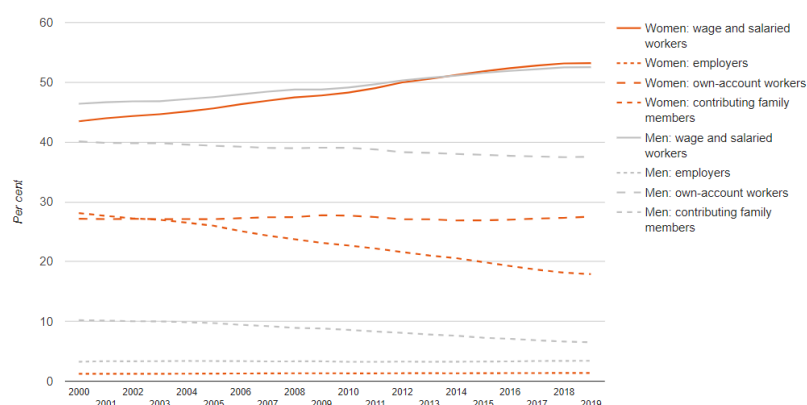
To understand the employment conditions and the position of women and men in the labour market, it is imperative to identify their status in employment, which entails classifying jobs with respect to the type of authority a worker exercises and the type of economic risk to which the worker is exposed.¹ This provides the statistical basis for analysing employment conditions in terms of level of security, protection and rights at work. Furthermore, the extent to which women are engaged in paid employment reflects their level of access to and integration into the monetary economy as well as their level of access to regular income and better working conditions.² This, in turn, could have a positive impact on their autonomy and financial independence within the household and enhance their personal development and [intra-household decision-making power](#).

Globally, around half of employed women and men are wage and salaried workers

Globally in 2019, wage and salaried workers constituted slightly more than half of all employed women and men (53%). Since 2000, the proportion of wage and salaried workers has increased at a higher rate among employed women, slightly surpassing the proportion observed among employed men in 2014 (see figure I). This faster growth has not been accompanied, however, by a significant decline in the [gender pay gap](#) and in 2019 the proportion of women engaged in [part-time employment](#) was higher than that of men.

During the period 2000–2019, the percentage of female and male employers remained very small and relatively constant, at around 3% for men and 1% for women, showing an increase of less than half a percentage point (0.5%). Data show that women remained more likely to be contributing family workers (18%) than men (7%), despite the downward trend by more than a third since 2000, while men remained consistently more engaged in own-account activities (38%) than women (28%) during the same time period (see figure I).

Data on status in employment and gender reveal different patterns in urban and rural areas. Globally in 2019, 71% of employed women and 70% of employed men were classified as wage and salaried workers in urban areas, compared with 31% of employed women and 33% of employed men in rural areas. Own-account workers accounted for the largest group in both women's and men's employment in rural areas, representing 38% of employed women and 53% of employed men in 2019.

Figure I: Distribution of employment by status in employment by sex: 2000-2019

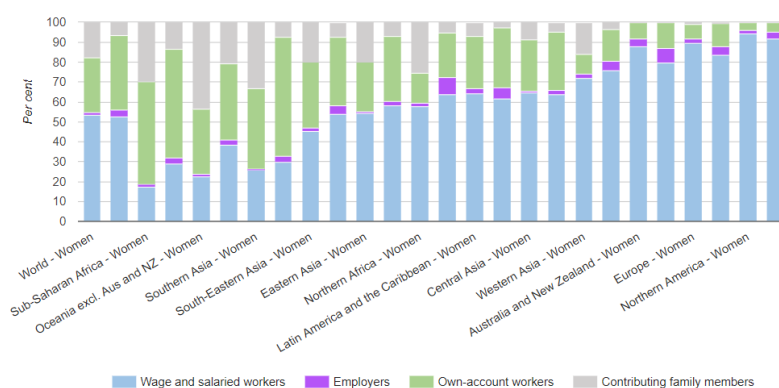
Source: ILO, Department of Statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modelled estimates, 2019 (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020)

Across regions, large variations are found in terms of status in employment and gender

In developed regions, including Australia and New Zealand, Europe and Northern America, the vast majority of women and men were engaged in wage and salaried employment in 2019 (above 80%), with women more likely than men to be involved in this type of employment. In contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Southern Asia, a smaller portion of both employed women and men (below 40%) were engaged in wage or salaried employment, with women less likely than men to be employed in this type of work, resulting in a gender gap of 16 percentage points in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), 11 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa and 4 percentage points in Southern Asia. The percentages of women and men classified as employers were far from being at parity across all regions; for example, in Northern Africa, men were 4.5 times more likely than women to be employers (see figure II).

Women were more likely than men to work as contributing family workers in all regions. In 2019, the proportion of employed women who worked as contributing family workers was the lowest in Australia and New Zealand and Northern America (less than 1%) and the highest in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) (44%). Own-account workers made up a higher proportion of total men's employment than of total women's employment in all regions, with men most likely to be in this type of employment in sub-Saharan Africa (54%), where they were predominantly employed in the large **agriculture sector**, and least likely in Northern America (5%). Overall larger gender differences among individuals classified as own-account workers and contributing family workers, who often lack basic social protections and are subject to low income and difficult working conditions, were observed in developing regions than in developed ones, with these types of employment being more common among women than men by 17 percentage points in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), although, in a reverse trend, more common among men by 4 percentage points in Australia and New Zealand (see figure II).

The type of work done by individuals classified as employers and own-account workers is closely associated with that of entrepreneurs, who create employment for themselves and employment opportunities for others. Furthermore, the promotion of micro- and small-sized enterprises has also been identified as a strategy for advancing the economic empowerment of women, while reducing poverty and targeting gender equality. With these goals in mind, a methodology for measuring entrepreneurship from a gender perspective has been developed by the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality project.³

Figure II: Distribution of employment by status in employment by sex and region: 2019 (Percentage)

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, 2019 (correspondence with ILO on 5 May 2020).

Country in focus: Cambodia

In Cambodia, the percentages of wage and salaried workers have increased remarkably since 2000, reaching 42% among employed women (a 33 percentage point increase) and 57% among employed men (a 38 percentage point increase). While this has been offset by a decline in the proportion of own-account workers among employed men (down from 54% in 2000 to 38% in 2019), the proportion of own-account workers among employed women increased from 40% in 2000 to 53% in 2019, diverging from the global trend.

About the data

Definitions

Status in employment provides information about the type of work relationship an individual has in their (main) job, taking into account the kind of the economic risk and authority experienced in that job.⁴ In this narrative, the distribution of employment by categories of status in employment is based on the 1993 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93),⁵ under which: (a) wage and salaried workers are defined as all workers who hold paid employment jobs and whose remuneration does not directly depend on the revenue of the unit for which they work; (b) employers and own-account workers are defined as all workers who hold self-employment jobs and whose remuneration directly depends on the profits derived from the goods and services produced (i.e., while employers engage, on a continuous basis, one or multiple persons to work for them as employees, own-account workers do not engage any employees on a continuous basis to work for them); and (c) contributing family workers are defined as all workers holding self-employment jobs in market-oriented establishments operated by related persons living in the same household.⁶ (United Nations Minimum Set of Gender Indicators 4, 5 and 6).

Coverage

Employed women and men aged 15 and above.

Availability

187 United Nations Member States and territories.

Limitations

Classification by status in employment does not encompass more granular distinctions in working status, including those between casual or regular contracts, as well as contractual protections against dismissal.

In addition, results may be skewed owing to the fact that data on status in employment are usually derived from household surveys, which cannot possibly preclude respondents' bias, including the interpretation of the questions asked and the different perceptions of women and men, for example with regard to their role in a family business (i.e., as an own-account worker as opposed to a contributing family worker).

International Classification of Status in Employment

While available data reported for status in employment are still categorized using the 1993 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93), in 2018, at the twentieth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the **2018 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18)** was adopted.

The new international standard, shown below, classifies jobs in employment for pay or for profit into 10 detailed categories aggregated according to two alternative classification hierarchies: type of authority (ICSE-18-A) and type of economic risk (ICSE-18-R). The hierarchy of type of authority provides a dichotomy between independent workers and dependent workers, given the nature of control workers can exercise over the economic unit for which they work. The hierarchy of type of economic risk provides a dichotomy between employment for pay and employment for profit, analogous to the traditional distinction between paid employment and self-employment used in the System of National Accounts.

2018 International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18)

- Independent workers
 - A. Employers
 - B. Independent workers without employees
- Dependent workers
 - C. Dependent contractors
 - D. Employees
 - E. Contributing family workers

International Classification of Status in Employment according to type of economic risk (ICSE-18-R)

- Workers in employment for profit
 - F. Independent workers in household market enterprises
 - C. Dependent contractors
 - E. Contributing family workers
- Workers in employment for pay
 - G. Owner-operators of corporations
 - D. Employees

Footnotes

1. ILO, [Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment \(ICSE\)](#), Geneva, 1993.
2. ILO, [A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all](#), Geneva, 2019.
3. The [Evidence and Data for Gender Equality \(EDGE\) project](#) is a joint initiative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
4. International Labour Organization (ILO), [Quick Guide on Measuring Economic Characteristics in the Population Census](#), Geneva, 2019.
5. ILO, [Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment \(ICSE\)](#), Geneva, 1993.
6. International Labour Organization (ILO), [Key Indicators of the Labour Market](#), ninth edition, Geneva, 2016.