

## Chapter 4

# Work

### Key findings

- Globally, women's participation in the labour market remained steady in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, whereas that for men declined steadily over the same period; the gender gap in labour force participation remains considerable at all ages except the early adult years.
- Women are predominantly and increasingly employed in the services sector.
- Vulnerable employment – own-account work and contributing family work – is prevalent in many countries in Africa and Asia, especially among women.
- The informal sector is an important source of employment for both women and men in the less developed regions but more so for women.
- Occupational segregation and gender wage gaps continue to persist in all regions.
- Part-time employment is common for women in most of the more developed regions and some less developed regions, and it is increasing almost everywhere for both women and men.
- Women spend at least twice as much time as men on domestic work, and when all work – paid and unpaid – is considered, women work longer hours than men do.
- Half of the countries worldwide meet the new international standard for minimum duration of maternity leave – and two out of five meet the minimum standard for cash benefits – but there is a gap between law and practice, and many groups of women are not covered by legislation.

### Introduction

Women constitute roughly half of the population of the world and thus potentially half of its work force. As a group they do as much work as men, if not more. However, the types of work they do – as well as the conditions under which they work and their access to opportunities for advancement – differ from men's. Women are often disadvantaged compared to men in access to employment opportunities and conditions of work; furthermore, many women forego or curtail employment because of family responsibilities. The removal of obstacles and inequalities that women face with respect to employment is a step towards realizing women's potential in the economy and enhancing their contribution to economic and social development.

The Beijing Declaration affirms nations' commitment to the inalienable rights of women and girls and their empowerment and equal participation

in all spheres of life, including in the economic domain.<sup>1</sup> The Beijing Platform for Action identifies women's role in the economy as a critical area of concern, and calls attention to the need to promote and facilitate women's equal access to employment and resources, as well as the harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people, as part of MDG 1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Some progress has been made towards these ends, but the gains are uneven. This chapter examines trends over the last 20 years and describes the current situation of women and men in the labour force, employment conditions, the reconciliation of work and family life, and child labour.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, 1995.

## A. Women and men in the labour force

### 1. Labour force participation of women and men

---

**Trends in women's labour force participation  
are mixed but for men there  
is a decrease virtually everywhere**

---

Globally, women's participation in the labour market remained steady in the two decades from 1990 to 2010, hovering around 52 per cent. In contrast, global labour force participation rates for men declined steadily over the same period from 81 to 77 per cent (figure 4.1). The gap between participation rates of women and men has narrowed slightly but remains at a consider-

able 25 percentage points in 2010. (For concepts related to the labour force, see box 4.1.)

Global trends, however, mask different sub-regional trends in the case of women and variations in the extent of decrease in the case of men. Between 1990 and 2010, certain sub-regions showed substantial increases in women's labour force participation rates while others showed declines. The most notable increases for women were in Northern Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, regions or sub-regions where participation rates were initially low – below 40 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa, the more developed regions (except Eastern Europe), Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and Southern

#### Box 4.1

##### Concepts related to the labour force

---

The "economically active population" comprises all persons of either sex who furnish, or are available to furnish, the supply of labour for the production of goods and services, during a specified time reference period. As defined by the System of National Accounts (SNA), the production of goods and services includes all production oriented to the market, some types of non-market production (including production and processing of primary products for own consumption), own-account construction and other production of fixed assets for own use. It excludes unpaid activities, such as unpaid domestic activities and volunteer community services.

Two useful measures of the economically active population are the "usually active population", measured in relation to a long reference period such as a year; and the "currently active population", measured in relation to a short reference period such as one week or one day. The currently active population, also called the "labour force", is the most widely used measure of the economically active population. The labour force comprises all persons above a specified minimum age who were either employed or unemployed during the specified reference period. The statistics on economic characteristics presented in this chapter refer to persons 15 years of age or over, unless otherwise stated.

"Employed" comprises all persons above a specified age who during the short reference period either worked for pay or profit, or contributed to a family business (farm) without receiving any remuneration (i.e., were unpaid).

"Unemployed" comprises all persons above a specified age who during a specified reference period:

- "did not have any work/job", i.e., were not employed;
- were "currently available for work", i.e., were available for paid employment or self-employment; and
- were "seeking work", i.e., had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment (this condition is relaxed in situations where the conventional means of seeking employment are not relevant).

"Persons not in the labour force" (or "population not currently active") comprises all persons not classified as employed or unemployed during the reference period, as well as those below the age specified for measuring the economically active population. A person may be inactive for the following reasons:

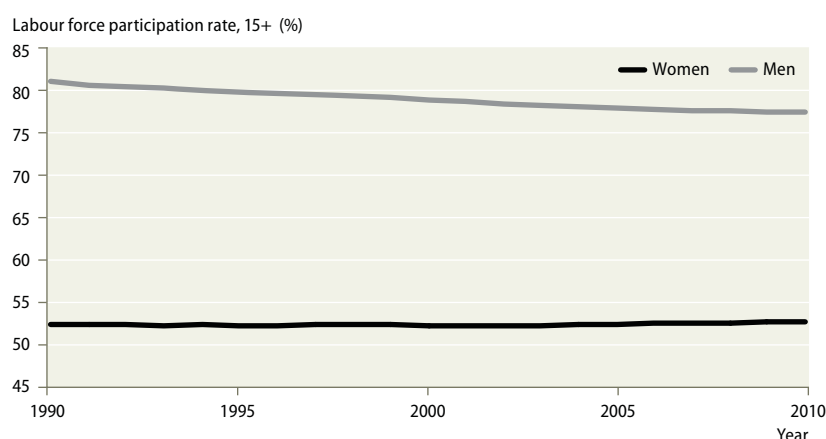
- attending an educational institution;
- engaging in household duties;
- retired or old age; or
- other reasons, such as infirmity, disability, etc.

Asia also registered some gains. In contrast, women's labour force participation decreased in the other sub-regions of Asia and in Eastern Europe; these are sub-regions where women's participation rate was above 50 per cent in 1990, with the exception of Western Asia (table 4.1).

Even with the recent increases for women, in 2010 their labour force participation rates still fall below 50 per cent in many sub-regions: less than 30 per cent in Northern Africa and Western Asia; below 40 per cent in Southern Asia; and under 50 per cent in the Caribbean and Central America. In the remaining sub-regions of the world, women's participation rates are between 50 and 70 per cent.

For men, labour force participation rates declined in all regions except South-Eastern Asia where they remained unchanged over the last two decades. The sharpest declines were in Eastern Europe, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) located in Asia, Eastern Asia and Western Asia, where participation rates fell by more than 5 percentage points (table 4.1). By 2010, men's labour force participation rates range from 66 per cent in Eastern Europe to 83 per cent in South-Eastern Asia. In general, men in the more developed regions have much lower participation

**Figure 4.1**  
Estimated and projected global labour force participation rate, persons aged 15 years or over, by sex, 1990–2010



Source: ILO, Economically Active Population Estimates and Projections 1980–2020 (accessed in June 2008).

rates than their counterparts in the less developed regions, mainly as a result of earlier withdrawal from the labour market (see section A.2, Labour force participation across age groups).

**The share of women in the labour force is still far from parity in many sub-regions**

**Table 4.1**

Estimated and projected labour force participation rate of persons aged 15 years or over by region and sex, 1990 and 2010

	Female labour force participation rate (%)			Male labour force participation rate (%)		
	1990	2010	Difference	1990	2010	Difference
<b>Africa</b>						
Northern Africa	23	29	6	76	74	-2
Sub-Saharan Africa	60	62	2	82	80	-2
<b>Asia</b>						
Eastern Asia	72	69	-3	85	79	-6
South-Eastern Asia	59	57	-2	83	83	0
Southern Asia	35	36	1	85	81	-4
Western Asia	26	23	-3	79	72	-7
CIS in Asia	68	60	-8	81	73	-8
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Caribbean	39	48	9	75	72	-3
Central America	35	43	8	84	79	-5
South America	38	59	21	81	80	-1
<b>Oceania</b>	62	64	2	77	75	-2
<b>More developed regions</b>						
Eastern Europe	58	54	-4	73	66	-7
Rest of more developed regions	50	53	3	74	69	-5

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Economically Active Population Estimates and Projections 1980–2020 (accessed in June 2009).

Note: Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The share of women in the labour force gives an indication of the extent of women's access to the labour market relative to men's, a value of 50 per cent indicating gender parity. Most regions of the world are still far from attaining this, but there has been progress, most notably in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this region, the increase in women's labour force participation, coupled with a corresponding decrease in men's participation (see table 4.1), led to a substantial rise in women's share of the labour force. While still far from attaining parity with men, women in Latin American and the Caribbean no longer lag far behind women in other regions. In South America, women now comprise 44 per cent of the labour force compared to only 33 per cent in 1990. Central American women are still somewhat behind, at 37 per cent (table 4.2).

Northern Africa, Southern Asia and Western Asia remain the regions where women comprise a small share of the labour force – 30 per cent or less. Women's share is highest in Eastern Europe and the CIS in Asia, where it is almost at par with men's. Not far behind are sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Asia, South America, the more developed regions except Eastern Europe, and Oceania; in these regions, women comprise about 45 per cent of the adult labour force.

Table 4.2  
**Estimated and projected share of women in the adult (15+) labour force by region, 1990 and 2010**

	Women's share of the adult labour force (%)	
	1990	2010
<b>Africa</b>		
Northern Africa	24	28
Sub-Saharan Africa	43	44
<b>Asia</b>		
Eastern Asia	44	45
South-Eastern Asia	42	41
Southern Asia	28	30
Western Asia	27	26
CIS in Asia	48	47
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>		
Caribbean	35	41
Central America	30	37
South America	33	44
<b>Oceania</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>More developed regions</b>		
Eastern Europe	48	49
Rest of more developed regions	42	45

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Economically Active Population Estimates and Projections 1980–2020 (accessed in June 2009).  
Note: Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

## 2. Labour force participation across age groups

### *Trends in labour force participation across age groups*

---

**There has been a sharp decline in labour force participation among young women and men but an increase in participation among women aged 25 and older in most regions**

---

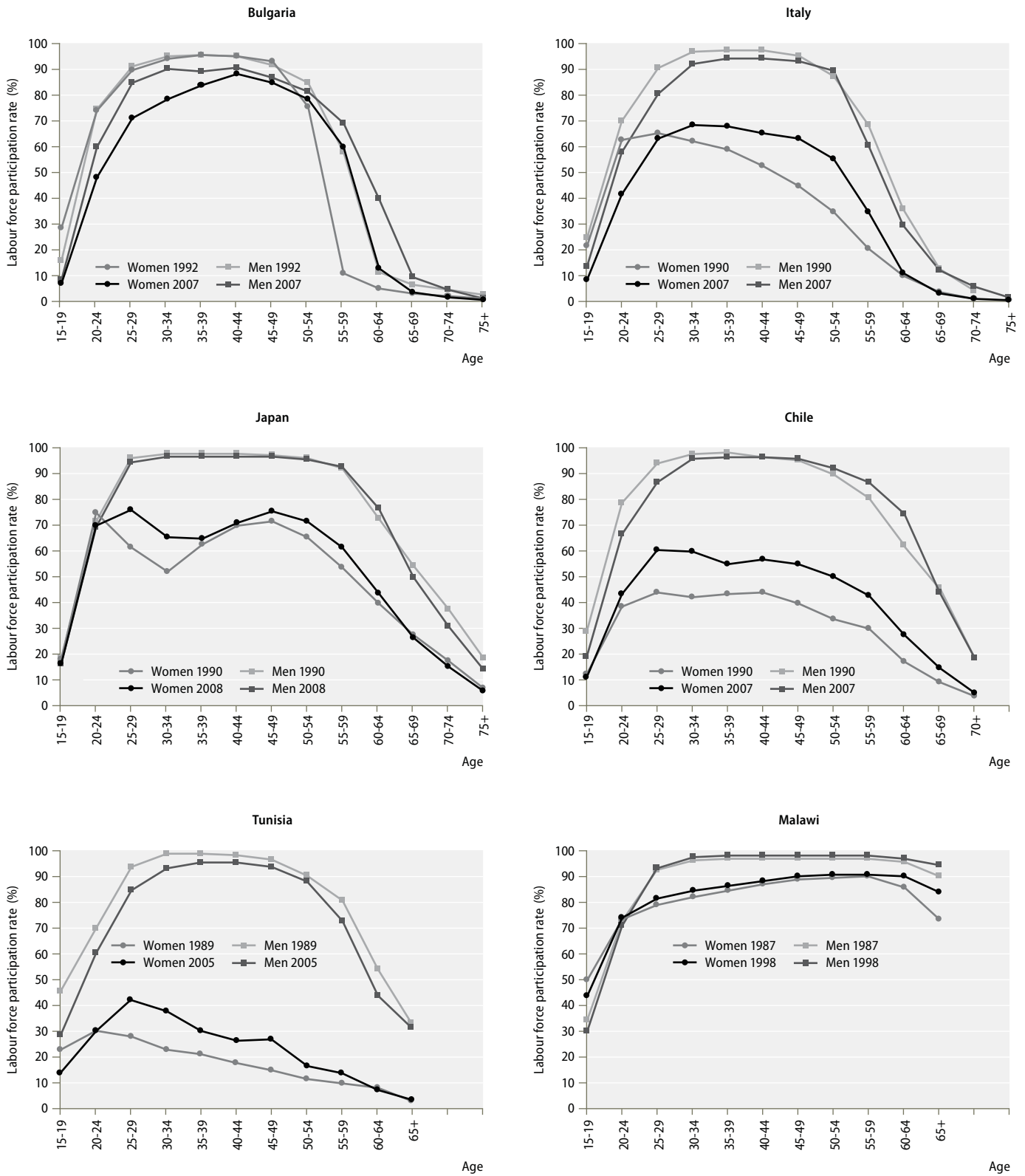
With increased opportunities for secondary and higher education, women and men are entering the labour force later than in the past. Compared to 1990, there has been a decrease in labour force participation rates among persons in the age groups 15–19 and 20–24 in all regions. This is illustrated in figure 4.2 by data from six countries: Bulgaria, Chile, Italy, Japan, Malawi and Tunisia.

Women in the middle adult ages (i.e., aged 25–54) have higher labour force participation rates now compared to 1990 in most regions, as illustrated by the examples of Chile, Italy, Tunisia and, to a lesser degree, Japan. The exception is Eastern Europe, where participation of women declined after 1990, as exemplified by the case of Bulgaria. One factor that might explain this is the loss or reduction of state-sponsored social services (for example, childcare) after the collapse of the centrally planned economies, resulting in women having to withdraw from the labour force to care for their children or other family members.

Beyond age 55, the increase in women's labour force participation was smaller, except for women around the age of retirement in some countries in Eastern Europe. In Bulgaria, for example, it can be seen that the labour force participation rate of women aged 55–59 skyrocketed from 11 per cent in 1992 to 60 per cent in 2007. The prolonged time in the labour market in more recent years can be attributed in part to the end of the era of state-controlled employment and changes in retirement policies.

For men, trends in labour force participation after age 25 were relatively consistent across regions—remaining the same or declining slightly over the last two decades, with the exception of men from age 55 in Bulgaria and Chile. In these two countries, participation increased among men aged 55–69. A very sharp increase in labour force participation was recorded for men aged 60–64 in Bulgaria, a phenomenon observed for women aged 55–59 and probably for similar reasons.

Figure 4.2  
Labour force participation rates by age group, by sex, for two years



Source: ILO, LABORSTA table 1A (accessed in July 2009).

---

**The gender gap in labour force participation  
is considerable at all ages  
except the early adult years**

---

In general, women's labour force participation is lower than men's at all stages of the life cycle. The narrowest gender gap is in the young adult years (ages 15–19), while the widest gap is generally from ages 30–34 through 50–54, as illustrated by the cases of Chile, Italy, Japan and Tunisia (figure 4.2). Of these four countries, Tunisia stands out for having the widest gender gap at all ages, as is typical of countries in Northern Africa and Western Asia. Chile, Italy and Japan also have wide gender gaps at all ages, very prominent in the ages between 30 and 54, narrowing slowly thereafter and tailing off at the older ages without totally disappearing. Eastern Europe, exemplified by Bulgaria, has relatively narrow gender gaps at all ages. Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa – where labour force participation of both women and men is high at all ages – the gender gap is relatively small, as for example in Malawi.

#### *Age patterns of labour force participation*

Examining the labour force participation of women and men over the life cycle, four distinct patterns can be observed: the first two apply to both women and men and the last two to women in certain sub-regions or countries.

For women and men alike, the most common pattern is one of low participation at ages 15–19, sharply higher participation at ages 20–24, then continued gradual increase with age, peaking somewhere between ages 25–35 for women (35–44 for men), maintaining the high participation rates until about age 50 and then beginning to decline. For women, this pattern indicates that those who are in the labour force remain in it during their reproductive years. The pattern described is typical for both women and men in most countries of the world (see the examples of Bulgaria, Chile and Italy), and for men in Japan and Tunisia (figure 4.2).

While the general pattern may be the same, the peak ages of labour force participation vary across countries and between the sexes, as does the pace of exit from the labour force after age 50. For women, the decline in labour force participation after age 50 can be very sharp (as in Bulgaria, Italy and, to a lesser degree, Japan) or gradual (as in Chile and Tunisia). The sharp decline of participation seen in Bulgaria, Italy and Japan is typical of coun-

tries with relatively comprehensive pension systems in place to support workers after retirement.

A second pattern is the one seen for both women and men in many sub-Saharan African countries where subsistence agriculture is a substantial sector of the economy. In such economies, private or state-sponsored pension systems such as those found in the more developed regions to support older people are not common, thus the concept of retirement is generally not present. In this pattern, labour force participation tends to be high from the early ages, peaks early, stays on a high plateau until about age 60 and then declines very slowly. This is illustrated for both women and men by the example of Malawi, where labour force participation at ages 65 and beyond remained at a high of 84 per cent for women and 94 per cent for men (figure 4.2).

A third pattern is the one seen among women in Northern Africa and Western Asia. Typified by the case of Tunisia in 2005, women's labour force participation starts at a low level at ages 15–19, peaks at ages 25–29 and drops immediately and continuously thereafter. Women in these regions have the lowest overall labour force participation rates in the world, dropping out of the labour force much earlier than women elsewhere and not returning. For some countries in the region, the age at which participation rates peak is now a little higher than in the past, as illustrated by the case of the Tunisia where the peak participation rate for women was at ages 20–24 in 1989 but rose to ages 25–29 in 2005. This is most likely the result of later marriage and childbearing.<sup>2</sup>

A fourth pattern, featuring a double peak, reflects the situation where it is common for women to leave the labour force to bear and raise children and re-enter it later in life. Countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea continue to have this pattern, although the initial peak in participation rate now occurs at a later age. In Japan, for example, that peak is now at ages 25–29 as opposed to ages 20–24 in 1990. The dip in participation rates has shifted to five years older and is not as sharp as before, indicating later childbearing and childrearing as well as more women opting to continue working through those ages. A few other countries – specifically Australia, Egypt (in recent years), Indonesia, Ireland and the Philippines – have this double-peak pattern, although the dips are less pronounced and vary in location (age) and width (duration).

<sup>2</sup> Fertility among young women has dropped in the last two decades in Tunisia, as shown in United Nations, *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision* (2009).

### 3. Unemployment

It is difficult to compare reported unemployment rates across countries, sometimes even within countries, because of different data sources and definitions. Even when definitions are the same, unemployment has different meanings in countries that have unemployment insurance as compared to those that do not. In the latter, most people cannot afford to be unemployed. This is the case for the majority of countries in the less developed regions, where visible unemployment may be low but is often disguised as underemployment. In addition, discouraged workers may no longer seek work and are therefore excluded from the count of unemployed. Interpretations of unemployment rates in the less developed regions should be made with these factors in mind.

#### Adult unemployment

---

**Unemployment is higher among  
women than men**

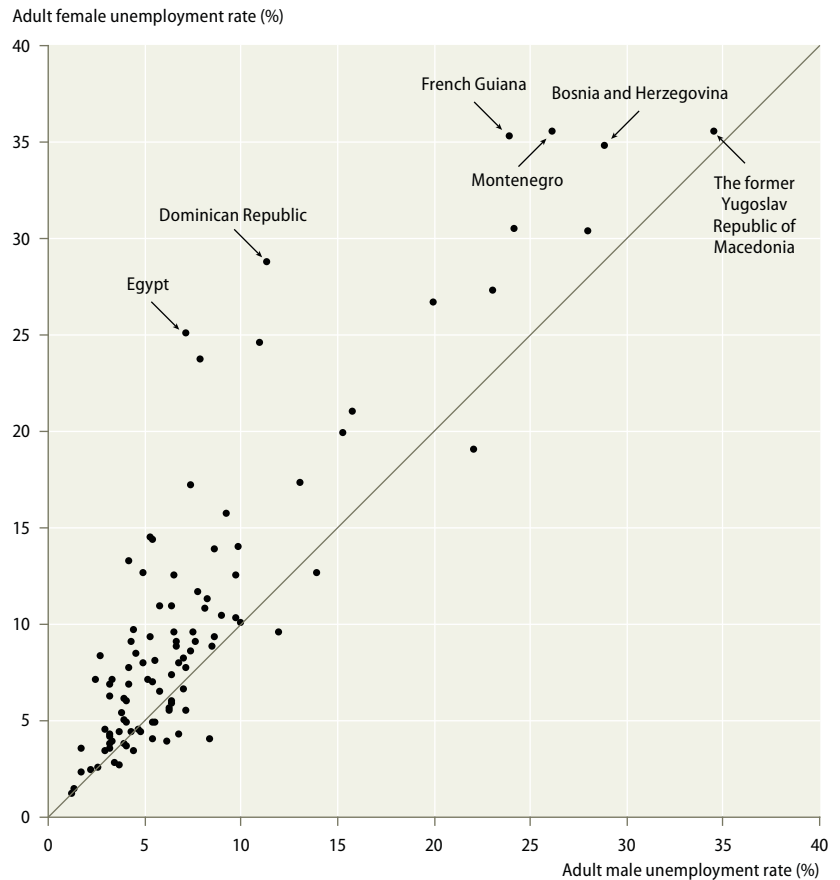
---

In the vast majority of countries, adult unemployment was higher among women compared to men (figure 4.3). Reported unemployment rates for women in 2007 ranged from 1.1 per cent (Thailand) to 36 per cent (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and for men from 1.3 per cent to 35 per cent (also Thailand and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Unemployment rates in countries around the world clustered in the range of 1–10 per cent for both women and men.

The available data suggest a consistently high female unemployment rate in at least three sub-regions: Northern Africa, the Caribbean and Southern Europe (table 4.3). Unemployment rates for women in all the three sub-regions showed notable declines but were still among the highest in 2007: 17 per cent in Northern Africa, 14 per cent in the Caribbean and 10 per cent in Southern Europe. The corresponding average unemployment rates for men in these sub-regions were 10, 8 and 6 per cent, respectively. These three sub-regions also had the highest gender gap in unemployment rate and a female-male differential of more than 5 percentage points in at least two of the three years shown.

At the other end of the spectrum, countries in Eastern Asia (China not included) had the lowest adult unemployment rates for women (averaging 3 per cent in 2007). Other sub-regions with low unemployment rates for women in 2007 include the more

Figure 4.3  
Unemployment rates of women and men aged 15 or over, 2007



Source: ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 8a (accessed in July 2009).

Note: Points above and left of the diagonal line represent countries where women's unemployment rate is higher than men's.

developed regions outside Europe (4 per cent) and Northern Europe (5 per cent). The corresponding unemployment rates for men are close, averaging 4 per cent in all these three sub-regions, and there is no significant gender gap in adult unemployment.

#### Youth unemployment

---

**Unemployment is more prevalent among  
the young, especially young women**

---

For young people aged 15–24, unemployment is an even more acute problem. Young women and men alike are typically three times as likely as adult women and men to be unemployed. In 2007, for half of the countries of the world, young women's unemployment rates were 16 per cent or more, reaching as high as 66 per cent in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other countries where this rate exceeded

Table 4.3  
Adult (15+) unemployment rate by region and sex, for 1990, 2000 and 2007

	Adult female unemployment rate (%)			Adult male unemployment rate (%)			Female-male differential (percentage points)		
	1990	2000	2007	1990	2000	2007	1990	2000	2007
<b>Africa</b>									
Northern Africa (3)	20	17	17	11	11	10	9	6	7
<b>Asia</b>									
Eastern Asia (3)	2	4	3	2	6	4	0	-2	-1
South-Eastern Asia (4)	4	6	6	4	6	5	0	0	1
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>									
Caribbean (8)	20	16	14	13	10	8	7	6	6
Central America (6)	9	10	7	7	7	5	2	3	2
South America (7)	9	14	10	7	10	6	2	4	4
<b>More developed regions</b>									
Eastern Europe (9)	..	12	8	..	12	7	..	0	1
Northern Europe (8)	6	5	5	6	5	4	0	0	1
Southern Europe (4)	15	14	10	7	7	6	8	7	4
Western Europe (7)	7	6	6	4	4	5	3	2	1
Other more developed regions (5)	6	5	4	6	6	4	0	-1	0

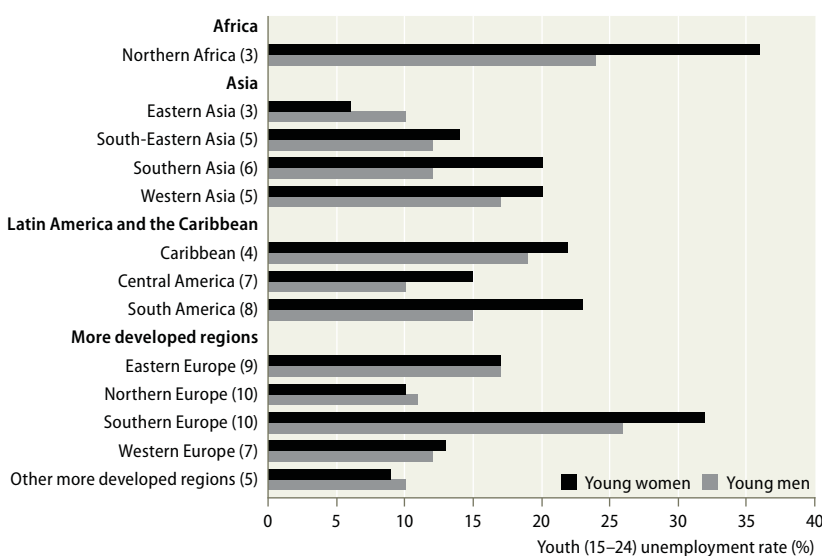
Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 8a (accessed in June 2009). Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China.

50 per cent in 2007 include Egypt, South Africa and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. For young men, the situation was not much better. Half of the countries had unemployment rates of at least 14 per cent, and young men's unemployment rates exceeded 50 per cent in two countries: Bos-

nia and Herzegovina (60 per cent) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (57 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

Much like their adult counterparts, young women in Northern Africa and Southern Europe are the worst off, with average unemployment rates exceeding 30 per cent. In contrast, and again similar to the situation for the adult population, countries in Eastern Asia, Northern Europe and the more developed regions outside Europe were those where young women had the lowest average unemployment rates, at 10 per cent or lower. These are also the regions where young women are not disadvantaged compared to young men when it comes to unemployment (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4  
Youth (aged 15–24) unemployment rate by region and sex, 2007



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 9 (accessed in July 2009). Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

## B. Employment conditions of women and men

### 1. Economic sector of employment

#### Employment in the services sector continues to grow for both women and men

For both women and men, the services sector as a source of employment continues to grow relative to the agricultural sector (see box 4.2 for the major economic sectors). This reflects the movement of the labour force globally from agriculture

<sup>3</sup> ILO, 2007, table 9.

Table 4.4  
Direction of change in the sectoral share of employment between 1990 and 2007, by region and sex

	Women			Men		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
<b>Asia</b>						
Eastern Asia (3)	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑
South-Eastern Asia (5)	↓	↓	↑	↓	=	↑
Southern Asia (3)	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑
Western Asia (3)	↓	↓	↑	↓	=	↑
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Central America (3)	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑
South America (3)	=	↓	↑	↓	=	↑
Caribbean (3)	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	=
<b>More developed regions</b>						
Northern Europe (8)	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑
Southern Europe (4)	↓	↓	↑	↓	=	↑
Western Europe (5)	↓	↓	↑	=	↓	↑
Other more developed regions (5)	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↑

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 4a (accessed in July 2009).

Note: Based on unweighted averages calculated for the two years; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. A down arrow indicates a decrease of at least 2 percentage points in the proportion employed in the given economic sector between 1990 and 2007, while an up arrow indicates an increase of at least 2 percentage points; an = sign indicates that the change in either direction is less than 2 percentage points. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

to industry and increasingly to services. The relative importance of the industrial sector as a source of employment for women continued to decline in the last two decades in all regions, whereas for men it varied from a decline in most of the more developed regions to an increase or no change in most sub-regions of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (table 4.4).<sup>4</sup>

#### In most regions, women work predominantly in the services sector

In more developed economies the labour force – especially the female labour force – is employed predominantly in services. This sector accounts for at least three quarters of women's employment in the more developed regions, with the exception of Eastern Europe (with 66 per cent), and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Agriculture is the least important source of women's employment in these regions, accounting for a 3–12 per cent share (table 4.5).

In Africa, the relative distribution of women's employment among the three sectors varies sharply. For the more economically advanced countries that constitute the Southern African region, the pattern is similar to that of the more

<sup>4</sup> No analysis was made for Africa, Eastern Europe, and the CIS in Asia as data were not available for both 1990 and 2007.

#### Box 4.2 Major economic sectors

The classification of employment by economic sector is done in accordance with the main economic activity carried out where the work is performed. The three major economic sectors – agriculture, industry and services – are defined as follows:

- Agriculture covers farming, animal husbandry, hunting, forestry and fishing.
- Industry comprises mining and quarrying; manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; water supply, sewerage and waste management and remediation activities; and construction.
- Services covers wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles; transportation and storage; accommodation and food service activities; information and communication; financial and insurance activities; real estate activities; professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support service activities; public administration and defence; compulsory social security; education; human health and social work activities; arts, entertainment and recreation; and other service categories.

Source: United Nations, 2009a.

Table 4.5  
Sectoral distribution of employed persons, by region and sex, 2004–2007 (latest available)

	Women			Men		
	Agriculture (%)	Industry (%)	Services (%)	Agriculture (%)	Industry (%)	Services (%)
<b>Africa</b>						
Northern Africa (3)	42	16	41	28	25	47
Southern Africa (3)	19	11	70	26	25	49
Eastern, Middle and Western Africa (5)	68	6	26	71	9	20
<b>Asia</b>						
Eastern Asia (4)	11	13	76	13	25	62
South-Eastern Asia (6)	30	17	54	34	23	43
Southern Asia (5)	55	17	28	32	24	43
Western Asia (8)	15	8	77	8	32	59
CIS in Asia (6)	48	7	45	41	23	36
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Caribbean (7)	4	10	85	15	29	56
Central America (7)	6	16	78	30	24	46
South America (6)	10	12	78	21	27	51
<b>More developed regions</b>						
Eastern Europe (8)	12	22	66	14	41	45
Northern Europe (10)	3	13	84	7	37	56
Southern Europe (10)	10	17	73	11	36	53
Western Europe (6)	3	12	85	4	36	60
Other more developed regions (5)	3	11	86	5	32	63

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 4a (accessed in July 2009). Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. Due to rounding, the sum of categories might not equal 100. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

developed regions, with the service sector accounting for 70 per cent of women's employment. However, unlike in the more developed regions and Latin America, agriculture (19 per cent) is still a more important source of employment than industry (11 per cent). A very different picture emerges for the countries of Northern Africa: here agriculture and services are both important sectors, each accounting for about 40 per cent of women's employment. In the rest of Africa, agriculture is still by far the sector where both women and men are concentrated – accounting for 68 per cent of all female employment and 71 per cent of all male employment.

There are also sharp differences among countries in Asia. A high proportion of women (54–77 per cent) are employed in the services sector in Eastern, South-Eastern and Western Asia, whereas among the CIS in Asia equally high proportions of employed women are in agriculture and services (more than 40 per cent each). In contrast, women are predominantly in agriculture (55 per cent) in Southern Asia. In this sub-region, the service sector accounts for only 28 per cent of female employment.

Compared to women, men tend to be more spread out across the three economic sectors. For example, in the more developed regions, Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern and Western Asia, the service sector also predominates for men's employment but it accounts for about half to two thirds, which is substantially less than for women. In all regions, men are found in the industrial sector much more than women are. In 2007, more than 20 per cent of male employment (and as high as 41 per cent in Eastern Europe) was in the industrial sector in virtually all regions of the world. For women, the share of industry was above 20 per cent only in Eastern Europe.

## 2. Status in employment

To understand women's and men's situation and position in the labour market, it is essential to identify their status in employment. This entails classifying jobs on the basis of the type of explicit or implicit contract of employment an individual has with her or his employer or other persons (see box 4.3). A worker's type of contract, or status in employment, often determines the job's level of security, protection and rights.

## Box 4.3

## Status in employment

Employment, as defined by the 13th Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1992), is comprised of two broad categories: “paid employment” and “self-employment”.

Persons in paid employment include those who during the reference period were either (a) “at work” – i.e., performed some work for wage or salary, in cash or in kind, or (b) “with a job but did not work” – i.e., were temporarily not at work but had a formal attachment to their job, having already worked in their present job.

Persons in self-employment include those who during the reference period were: (a) “at work” – i.e., performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind, or (b) had an enterprise, such as a business or commercial enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, but were temporarily not at work for any specific reason.

The International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), adopted in 1993, provides guidelines for classifying jobs in the labour market on the basis of the type of explicit or implicit contract of employment an individual has with his or her employer or other persons. Five major groups and a residual category are presented in ICSE-93: employees, employers, own-account workers, members of producer cooperatives and contributing family workers.

*Employees* hold paid employment jobs and are typically remunerated by wages and salaries, but may also be paid by commission from sales, or by piece-rates, bonuses or in-kind payments, such as food, housing or training.

*Employers*, working on their own account or with one or several partners, hold self-employment jobs and have engaged on a continuous basis one or more persons to work for them in their businesses as employees.

*Own-account workers*, working on their own account or with one or several partners, hold self-employment jobs and have not engaged any employees on a continuous basis.

*Members of producers’ cooperatives* hold self-employment jobs in a cooperative producing goods and services, in which each member takes part on an equal footing with other members in all decisions relating to production, sales, investments and distribution of proceeds.

*Contributing family workers* (referred to in previous classifications as unpaid family workers) hold a self-employment job in a market-oriented establishment (i.e., business or farm) operated by a relative living in the same household, who cannot be regarded as a partner because their degree of commitment to the operation of the establishment is not at a level comparable to that of the head of the establishment.

For analytical purposes, employers and own-account workers are sometimes combined and referred to as “self-employed”. Workers in paid employment are referred to as “wage and salaried workers”. Contributing family workers, although considered part of the group “self-employed”, are usually analysed separately since their jobs, unlike other self-employment jobs, are unpaid.

Source: ILO, 2003a; see also ILO, 1993a.

---

**Wage employment is the most common form of employment, but own-account work and contributing family work are more prevalent in parts of Africa and Asia**

---

Wage and salaried employees constitute the majority of employed women and men in most parts of the world. In the more developed regions, Eastern Asia, Western Asia and the Caribbean, at least 80 per cent of employed women are wage and salaried workers; furthermore, in these regions or sub-regions employed women are more likely than employed men to be in wage employment. Wage employment is also prevalent in Southern Africa for both women and men. However, wage and salaried workers are uncommon in Eastern

and Western Africa and in Southern Asia, where they constitute a minority (less than 50 per cent) among both women and men who are employed. In these sub-regions, women and men are more likely to be own-account or contributing family workers (table 4.6)

Persons working on their own account contribute income to the family when secure paid jobs are not available, generating employment not just for themselves but also for their family members, who are often not paid but work as “contributing family workers”. Own-account employment allows more flexibility for women, who often have to combine family responsibilities with income-earning activities. However, unlike wage and salaried workers, own-account workers face high economic risks.

Table 4.6

Distribution of employed persons by status in employment, by region and sex, 2004–2007 (latest available)

	Women				Men			
	Wage and salaried workers (%)	Employers (%)	Own-account workers (%)	Contributing family workers (%)	Wage and salaried workers (%)	Employers (%)	Own-account workers (%)	Contributing family workers (%)
<b>Africa</b>								
Northern Africa (3)	46	2	19	34	58	8	22	11
Southern Africa (3)	76	3	17	4	82	7	9	2
Eastern and Western Africa (6)	20	1	47	32	24	1	56	18
<b>Asia</b>								
Eastern Asia (3)	86	2	7	5	80	7	13	<1
South-Eastern Asia (6)	52	2	23	23	52	4	34	9
Southern Asia (5)	30	1	22	46	44	3	40	12
Western Asia (6)	80	1	6	12	79	5	13	2
CIS in Asia (4)	45	1	39	15	50	3	39	7
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>								
Caribbean (5)	80	2	16	2	67	3	27	1
Central America (6)	64	3	25	7	64	6	24	6
South America (9)	62	3	28	6	62	6	28	3
<b>More developed regions</b>								
Eastern Europe (8)	84	2	10	4	78	4	16	1
Northern Europe (5)	93	2	4	1	84	5	10	<1
Southern Europe (9)	81	3	10	6	74	6	17	2
Western Europe (4)	89	3	6	3	84	7	8	1
Other more developed regions (4)	88	2	7	2	83	5	11	1

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 3 (accessed in July 2009).

Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. Due to rounding, the sum of categories might not equal 100. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In Eastern and Western Africa, own-account workers make up 47 per cent of female employment and 56 per cent of male employment. Other sub-regions where own-account workers exceed 20 per cent of the female employed are South-Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, the CIS in Asia, Central America and South America. In the last three of these sub-regions, women are as likely as men to be own-account workers, but in virtually all other sub-regions of the world, the likelihood to be own-account workers is higher for men than women.

All over the world, women are more likely than men to be contributing family workers – more than twice as likely in most regions. In certain sub-regions, contributing family workers account for a third or more of all female workers – for example, in Southern Asia (46 per cent), Northern Africa (34 per cent) and Eastern and Western Africa (32 per cent) (table 4.6).

The distribution of workers by status in employment is closely related to the distribution of workers

by economic sector of employment. Where labour is concentrated in the industry and services sectors, as in the more developed regions and the relatively more advanced economies within the less developed regions, wage employment is the prevalent form of employment. However, in regions where large numbers of workers are engaged in agriculture, own-account work and contributing family work are the prevalent forms of employment for women.

#### Vulnerable employment is prevalent – especially among women – in parts of Africa and Asia

An indicator for monitoring progress in achieving the new MDG target of full and productive employment and decent work for all looks at the proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment (see box 4.4).<sup>5</sup> Workers in these two categories are also referred

<sup>5</sup> See official list of MDG Indicators, available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

## Box 4.4

## The importance of the status in employment classification

The key dimensions underlying the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) are: (1) the economic risk involved in the job and (2) the type of authority over establishments and other workers. Reflecting these dimensions, the classification provides an important basis for understanding the structure of labour markets and the effects of this structure on poverty and gender equality. Two recent developments underscore the importance of ICSE.

First, the statistical definition of informal employment was approved by the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2003.<sup>a</sup> Informal employment as defined is a job-based concept, and an important criterion for identifying workers in informal employment is their status in employment (see also box 4.5).

Second, at least two indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) rely on the status of employment classification. In Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), a specific indicator is the proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment; and in Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women), a new supplementary indicator was recommended that would cover all status in employment categories cross-classified by formal/informal and agricultural/non-agricultural employment.<sup>b</sup>

The importance of an up-to-date classification of status in employment can not be over-emphasized. As conditions of employment are changing globally, there is increasing recognition that the current classification, ICSE-93, is no longer adequate. Many employment arrangements in both developed and developing countries do not fit easily into one or the other of the current status in employment categories. Thus, in 2008, the 18<sup>th</sup> ICLS recommended that the ILO Bureau of Statistics undertake methodological work for a revision of the ICSE that would better reflect contemporary realities of the labour market and the associated economic and social concerns.<sup>c</sup>

a ILO, 2003b.

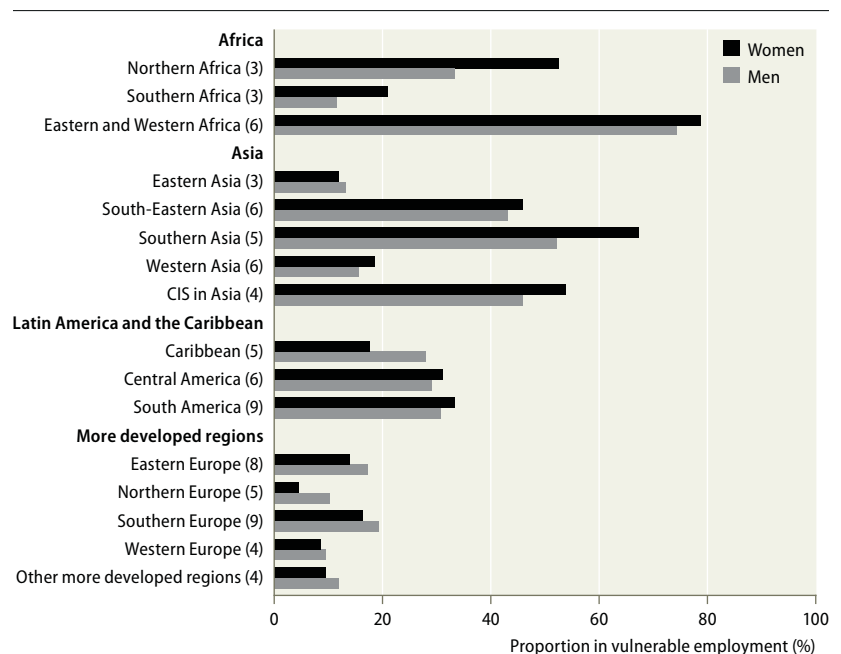
b This indicator was recommended by the Sub-Group on Gender Indicators of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG Indicators to address problems with the current indicator, namely the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment, which reflects only one aspect of women's situation in the labour market.

c ILO, 2008c.

to as being in “vulnerable employment” because, unlike most employees, they are subject to a high level of job insecurity and do not have safety nets to cover them during periods when they are out of work or unable to work (due to sickness, for example). For own-account workers the returns from work are often very low and their work situation is generally more sensitive to economic fluctuations and cycles, while for contributing family workers there are no cash returns. Informality of work characterizes these types of employment (see the discussion below on the informal sector and informal employment).<sup>6</sup>

Employment in the two categories considered as vulnerable employment is most prevalent among women and men in Eastern and Western Africa (figure 4.5). In Northern Africa and certain sub-regions of Asia, namely South-Eastern Asia, Southern Asia and the CIS in Asia, vulnerable employment is also prevalent among employed women, exceeding 40 per cent. In these sub-regions, higher proportions of women are in vulnerable employment compared to men, mainly due to large numbers of contributing family workers among the former. Vulnerable employment is not as common (less than 20

Figure 4.5

Employed persons in vulnerable employment by region and sex, 2004-2007  
(latest available)

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 3 (accessed in July 2009).

Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>6</sup> See also United Nations, 2009c.

per cent) for both women and men in the more developed regions, Eastern Asia, Western Asia and Southern Africa. As noted earlier, wage employment is the dominant form of work in those regions.

Compared to employees, own-account workers and contributing family workers, employers constitute a very small proportion of those employed. In no region in the world did employers constitute more than 3 per cent of employed women in 2007. From the available data, only three countries topped 5 per cent in the proportion of employers among the female employed: Finland, Germany and Sweden. The regional figures for men are typically twice as high as for women and range from 1 per cent to 8 per cent (table 4.6).

### 3. The informal sector and informal employment

In most developing countries, women who are not engaged in farming as own-account workers or contributing family workers are often employed as street vendors, independent home-based workers, industrial outworkers, contributing family workers

in non-agricultural family businesses or domestic workers in the homes of others. Many women are also engaged in waste collecting or small-scale mining and construction and a few others as employers in small-scale enterprises. Although these jobs are very different in the activities performed, modes of operations and earnings, all are part of informal employment and provide the main source of work for women outside agriculture. (See box 4.5 for categories of workers included in the definition of informal sector and informal employment.)

---

**Informal employment is the main source of jobs for women – as well as men – in most developing countries**

---

While informal employment is also an important source of employment for men in developing countries, it is more so for women. In the late 1990s, 84 per cent of women non-agricultural workers in sub-Saharan Africa were informally employed compared to 63 per cent of men; in Latin America it was 58 per cent of women compared to 48 per cent of men. In Asia the proportion of women and

#### Box 4.5

##### Defining informal sector and informal employment

---

The concepts of the informal sector and informal employment are relatively new in labour statistics, developed to better measure employment in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises (informal sector) and employment that is not covered by legal and social protection (informal employment).

In 1993 the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted a resolution setting out the statistical definition of the informal sector to refer to employment and production that takes place in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises.<sup>a</sup> Ten years later, the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS adopted the definition for the related and broader concept of informal employment.<sup>b</sup> Informal employment refers to all informal jobs, whether carried out in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises or households. It comprises:

Persons employed in the informal sector (except those rare persons who are in the sector who may have formal employment) including:

- Own-account (self-employed) workers in their own informal enterprises;
- Employers in informal enterprises;
- Employees of informal enterprises;
- Contributing family workers working in informal sector enterprises; and
- Members of informal producers' cooperatives.

Persons in informal employment outside the informal sector, specifically:

- Employees in formal enterprises not covered by national labour legislation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits such as paid annual or sick leave;
- Contributing family workers working in formal sector enterprises;
- Paid domestic workers not covered by national labour legislation, social protection or entitlement to certain employment benefits such as paid annual or sick leave; and
- Own-account workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household (e.g., subsistence farming, do-it-yourself construction of own dwelling).

a For the full definition see Resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector in ILO, 1993b.

b For the full definition see ILO, 2003b.

men non-agricultural workers in informal employment was roughly equal, at 65 per cent.<sup>7</sup> These statistics, prepared in 2001, are based on what is called a “residual estimation method”. Until recently only a few countries directly measured informal employment and employment in informal enterprises, so an indirect approach based on existing published statistical data available in many developing countries was used.<sup>8</sup>

With the establishment of the definitions of informal sector and informal employment and the recognition of the importance of informal employment, an increasing number of countries are now collecting data on informal employment and informal sector directly through household surveys, in some cases supplemented by enterprise surveys. Not many countries have fully analysed their data, but data for seven countries in different regions are shown in table 4.7 to illustrate the importance of informal employment among women as well as men in these countries – and not just in the informal sector but also outside of it.

The proportion of women’s non-agricultural employment that is informal in the seven countries ranges from a low of 18 per cent in the Republic of Moldova to a high of 89 per cent in Mali. In most of the countries, informal employment comprises more than half of women’s non-agricultural employment. Further, in all of them except the Republic of Moldova informal employment is a greater source of employment for women than for men. It is noteworthy that in India and Mali nearly 90 per cent of women employed in non-agriculture are in informal employment with over 70 per cent in the informal sector. In India, these women are in jobs such as street vendors, garment makers in informal enterprises in the home and construction workers. (See also box 4.6, Improving statistics on informal employment in India.)

The relatively low rates of informal employment in the Republic of Moldova reflect the legacy of a centrally planned economy where informal activities were considered illegal and even forbidden. Now in countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS such activities have an important role in creating jobs, in providing income and in the production of goods and services. For example, if agriculture were included, the proportion of women’s employment that is informal in the Republic of Moldova would rise to 38 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

7 ILO, 2002.

8 For details on the residual estimation method, see ILO, 2002.

9 ILO, 2004a.

**Table 4.7**  
Informal employment as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment, by sex, 2003–2004 (latest available)

	Year	Informal employment		Employment in the informal sector		Informal employment outside the informal sector	
		As percentage of total non-agricultural employment					
		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Brazil (urban)	2003	52 <sup>a</sup>	50 <sup>a</sup>	32	42	24	12
Ecuador (urban)	2004	77	73	44	36	33	37
India <sup>b</sup>	2004/05	88	84	73	71	15	13
Mali	2004	89 <sup>a</sup>	74 <sup>a</sup>	80	63	10	13
Republic of Moldova	2004	18	25	5	11	14	14
South Africa	2004	65	51	16	15	49	36
Turkey	2004	36	35	..	..	..	..

Sources: For all countries except India, ILO Department of Statistics; for Brazil, ILO estimates based on official data from various sources; for Mali and South Africa, ILO estimates computed from labour force survey micro data; for the rest, ILO estimates based on labour force survey data. For India, estimates provided by Jeemol Unni based on the Survey of Employment and Unemployment.

Notes

a The sum of the components “employment in the informal sector” and “informal employment outside the informal sector” exceeds total informal employment due to the presence of formal employment in the component “employment in the informal sector”.

b Data refer to persons aged 5 or over.

Generally, women’s informal jobs are more likely to be in the informal sector than outside of it. The exception again is the Republic of Moldova and, in addition, South Africa. Employment in the informal sector often is in own-account self-employment, in activities such as street vending or in small-scale production in one’s home. The low rates in South Africa in part reflect the history of apartheid with its prohibition of black-owned businesses.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Occupational segregation

##### Types of occupations vary considerably across regions and between the sexes

Women and men are segregated in different types of occupations. The occupation groups in which they are employed vary widely across regions. Looking at the top two occupation groups that women and men engage in, it is immediately apparent, however, that these are similar in sub-regions with a significant agricultural sector, where they tend to include either or both of the major

<sup>10</sup> Under apartheid, most informal selling in urban centres and even would-be formal black-owned businesses were defined as illegal. Restrictions on black-owned businesses have been loosened since the formal ending of apartheid (ILO, 2002).

## Box 4.6

## Improving statistics on informal employment in India: the role of users

The importance of dialogue and collaboration between statisticians and users of statistics in producing timely statistics that inform policy has been illustrated time and again in the field of gender statistics. An exceptional example of this is the active role played by the Self-Employed Women's Association of India (SEWA) over the course of more than 20 years. SEWA has worked with national research organizations, government commissions and the national statistical system to develop statistics on the working poor women in the informal economy that it represents. In doing so, SEWA furthered not only the development of statistics on these women workers but also the improvement of labour force data in India.

Since its beginning in the 1970's SEWA has made the development of statistics on informal workers a priority. It began to develop these statistics with research institutions and then gradually with the official statistical system. In the last 10 years, SEWA collaborated closely with the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in the planning and design of the 1999-2000 and the 2004-5 Survey of Employment and Unemployment. This was the first official survey in India that included questions that provided for the identification of the informal economy in both urban and rural areas. In addition, the survey allowed for the classification of home-based workers, both self-employed and industrial outworkers (called home-workers), and of street vendors.

SEWA is a member of the Independent Group on Home-based Workers in India. Organized in 2007, the Independent Group has brought together statisticians, researchers and advocates to address: 1) concepts and definitions of home-based workers and their categories for data collection purposes; 2) a plan for tabulation and analysis of data from various official sources; and 3) identification of data needs and recommendations for filling the gaps.<sup>a</sup>

The collaboration of statisticians and the various data-user groups in India to improve statistics on informal workers has been very fruitful. With national labour force surveys showing over 90 percent of the labour force in informal employment, there is now greater recognition of these workers and their situation, and new programmes have been developed to improve the livelihood of women and men in informal employment. In addition, steps are being taken to further develop data on these workers in India. As a result, the statistical services of the Government of India have been leaders worldwide in the development of statistics on informal employment. This includes responsibility for the standing expert group of the United Nations Statistical Commission on informal sector statistics, known as the Delhi Group.

a Report of the Independent Group on Home-based Workers (New Delhi, India, 2008), <http://www.unifem.org.in/PDF/IG%20HBW%20Report.pdf>.

occupation groups associated with the sector, namely "skilled agricultural and fishery workers" and "elementary occupations".<sup>11</sup> This is the case in Eastern Africa, South-Eastern Asia, Southern Asia and the CIS in Asia, and to some extent in Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Central America and South America (table 4.8).

In the other regions of the world, the difference between the sexes is more distinct. In these regions, certain types of occupations are taken up by a significant proportion of women while others are taken up by a significant proportion of men. For women, the occupation group "service workers and shop and market sales workers" is the biggest source of employment in 7 out of the 12

11 Elementary occupations consist of tasks connected with street or door-to-door sales or services, cleaning, property watching and caretaking, delivering goods and messages or carrying luggage, as well as agricultural, fishery, mining, construction, manufacturing and transport labourers (International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) major group 9).

sub-regions where agricultural and elementary occupations are not the top two occupation groups and the second biggest in 4 sub-regions. In these 11 sub-regions, service and sales engage at least 18 per cent of all employed women. A slightly smaller proportion of women works as "technicians and associate professionals" (in all four sub-regions of Europe and in Northern Africa) or as clerks (Eastern Asia, the Caribbean and the more developed regions outside Europe). For men in all sub-regions (excluding those where agricultural and elementary occupations make up the two biggest groups), "craft and related trade workers" is an important occupation group. This group employs the largest proportion of men in the more developed regions, the Caribbean and South America – 20 per cent or more – and the second largest proportion of men in the remaining sub-regions.

Over the years women have entered various traditionally male-dominated occupations. However, they are still rarely employed in jobs with

Table 4.8  
Two largest occupation groups by region and sex, 2004–2008 (latest available)

	Two largest occupation groups (and their percentage share of total employment)	
	Women	Men
<b>Africa</b>		
Northern Africa (3)	Agric (41), Tech (13)	Agric (26), Craft (17)
Southern Africa (3)	Elem (29), Svce&Sales (18)	Elem (24), Craft (18)
Eastern Africa (5)	Agric (51), Elem (20)	Agric (53), Elem (15)
<b>Asia</b>		
Eastern Asia (4)	Svce&Sales (22), Clerk (20)	Svce&Sales (14), Craft (14)
South-Eastern Asia (8)	Elem (24), Agric (20)	Agric (24), Elem (20)
Southern Asia (5)	Agric (47), Elem (15)	Agric (34), Elem (17)
Western Asia (12)	Svce&Sales (21), Prof (18)	Svce&Sales (18), Craft (15)
CIS in Asia (4)	Agric (30), Elem (20)	Agric (32), Craft (14)
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>		
Caribbean (7)	Svce&Sales (24), Clerk (23)	Craft (22), Elem (16)
Central America (6)	Svce&Sales (27), Elem (25)	Elem (25), Craft (17)
South America (9)	Elem (26), Svce&Sales (23)	Craft (20), Elem (19)
<b>More developed regions</b>		
Eastern Europe (9)	Svce&Sales (19), Tech (18)	Craft (24), Oper (18)
Northern Europe (9)	Svce&Sales (25), Tech (21)	Craft (23), Prof (14)
Southern Europe (9)	Svce&Sales (20), Tech (16)	Craft (22), Oper (13)
Western Europe (6)	Tech (21), Svce&Sales (20)	Craft (21), Tech (16)
Other more developed regions (3)	Clerk (21), Svce&Sales (20)	Craft (19), Prof (15)

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, LABORSTA table 2C (accessed in January 2010).

Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. Agric=Skilled agricultural and fishery workers; Tech=Technicians and associate professionals; Craft=Craft and related trade workers; Elem=Elementary occupations; Svce&Sales=Service workers and shop and market sales workers; Clerk=Clerks; Oper=Plant and machine operators and assemblers; Prof=Professionals. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

status, power and authority and in traditionally male blue-collar occupations. Relative to their overall share of total employment, women are significantly underrepresented among “legislators, senior officials and managers”, “craft and related trade workers” and “plant and machine operators and assemblers”, and heavily overrepresented among “clerks”, “professionals”, and “service workers and shop and market sales workers” (figure 4.6).

However, to more fully understand the depth of occupational segregation, it is important to analyse each of the occupation groups in more detail. Major groups encompass a large number of occupations that are a mixture of male-dominated, female-dominated and neutral ones. For example, the group “professionals” includes both heavily male-dominated occupations (such as architects, engineers and related professionals) and heavily female-dominated occupations (such as pre-primary, primary and secondary education teachers). It has been observed that traditionally women are found in occupations with caring and nurturing functions or in jobs requiring household-related or low-level skills. Stereotypes, education and vocational training, the structure of the

labour market and discrimination at entry and in work are among the causes often cited for gender segregation of occupations.<sup>12</sup>

The extent to which women and men are found in different occupations, referred to as horizontal job segregation, has been the subject of extensive research in the last few decades. One such study, based on detailed occupational data from the International Labour Office (ILO) SEGREGAT database, showed Thailand and the United States of America to have the lowest occupational segregation of the 15 countries analysed.<sup>13</sup>

#### Few women are in positions of authority and decision-making

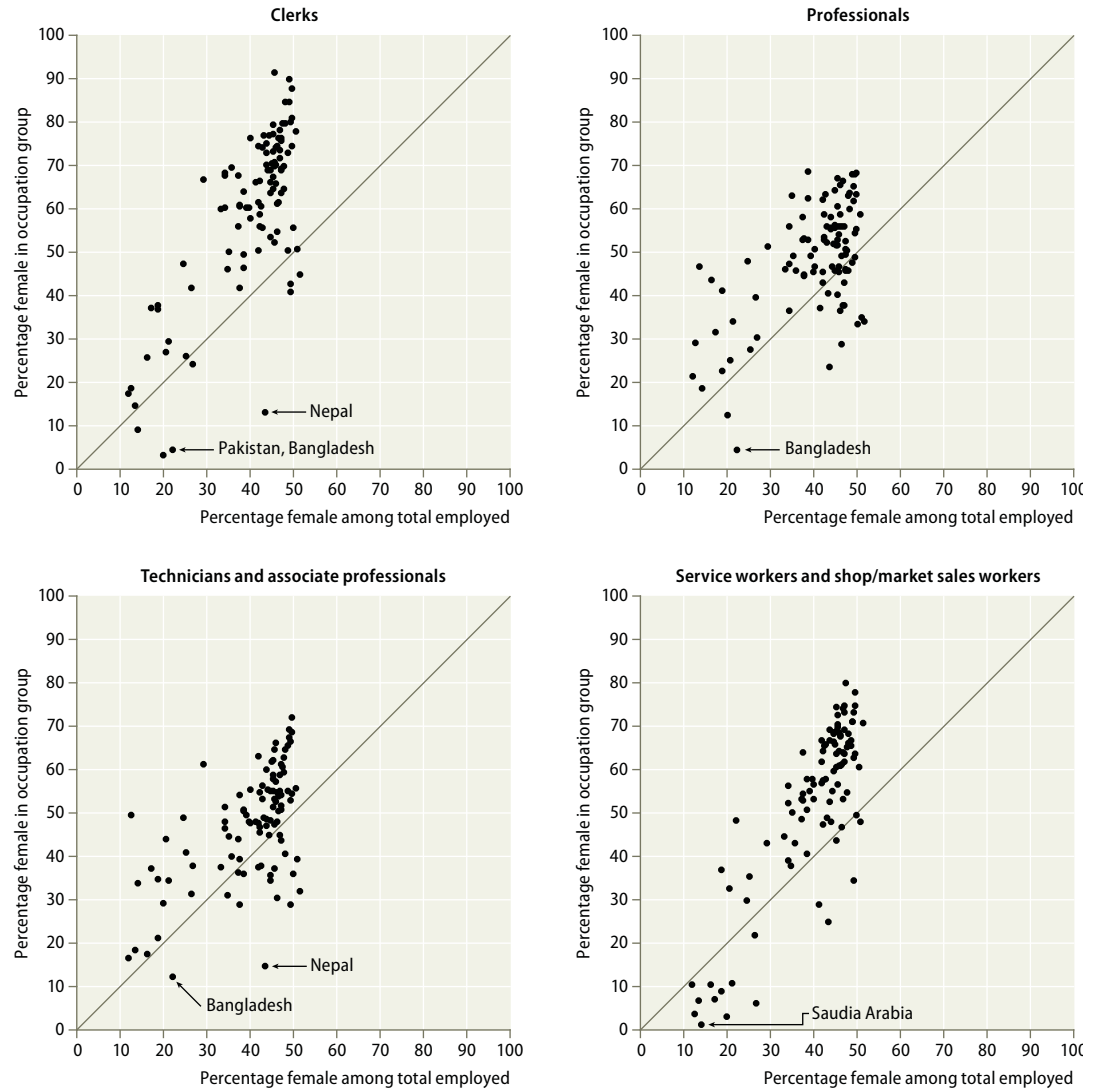
In all regions, the proportion of women among legislators, senior officials and managers is much less than their overall proportion in the employed population. The proportion female in this occupation group ranges from a low of 10 per cent in Northern Africa to 40 per cent in the Caribbean. It is between 30 and 40 per cent in all sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>12</sup> See discussion in Anker and others, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Anker and others, 2003.

Figure 4.6  
 Women's share of employment in eight occupation groups relative to their share of total employment, 2004–2008 (latest available)

(a) Four occupation groups in which women are overrepresented



Note: Women are also overrepresented in elementary occupations but to a lesser degree than the above four occupation groups.

and the more developed regions, but less than 30 per cent in Northern and Eastern Africa and Asia (figure 4.7). Studies based on detailed occupations within this group show that women are even rarer in occupations with the highest degree of power and influence (i.e., chief directors and chief executives), and that this phenomenon is true across all regions, all cultures and all levels of economic and social development.<sup>14</sup> For example, in 14 countries out of the European Union

14 Anker, 2005. See also Chapter 5 – Power and decision-making.

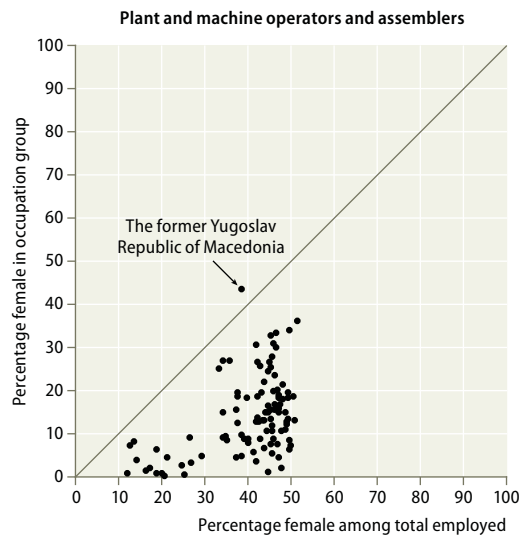
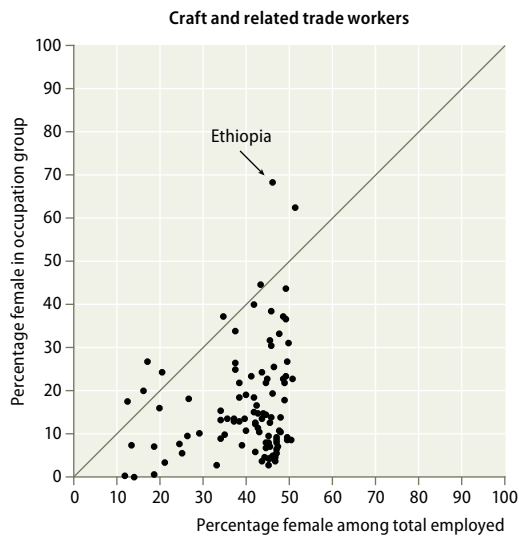
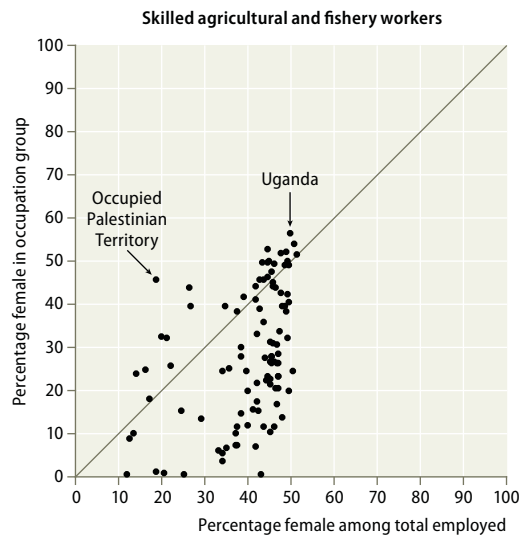
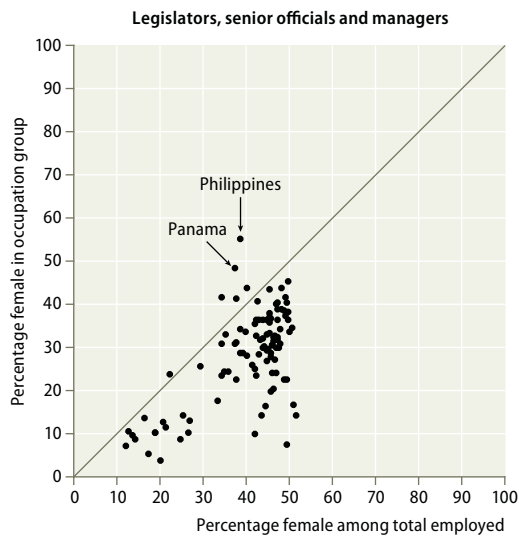
group of 27, there is no woman CEO in the top 50 publicly quoted companies.<sup>15</sup> (See also Chapter 5 – Power and decision-making)

Vertical job segregation (the situation where women and men are employed at different levels, grades or positions within the same occupation) exists in almost all occupations, with women often at the lower end of the spectrum.<sup>16</sup> In the teaching profession, for example, women consti-

15 Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009.

16 United Nations, 2000

**(b) Four occupation groups in which women are underrepresented**



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, LABORSTA table 2C (accessed in January 2010).  
 Note: Each point represents one country. If the proportion female in an occupation group is the same as the overall proportion of women among the total employed, the point will lie on the diagonal line. A point above and to the left of the diagonal line indicates that women are overrepresented in the occupation group relative to their overall share of total employment, while a point below and to the right of the diagonal line indicates that women are underrepresented in the occupation group relative to their overall share of total employment.

tute a high proportion of primary school teachers but a much lower proportion of university teaching staff (see Chapter 3 – Education).

### 5. Part-time work

The steady rise in women's employment in the last few decades is primarily due to the creation and growth of a part-time female work force, at least in developed economies.<sup>17</sup> For example, part-time work has been the source of the Dutch “employment miracle” – three quarters of the two million new jobs since 1983 have been part-time, the majority of them going to women.<sup>18</sup>

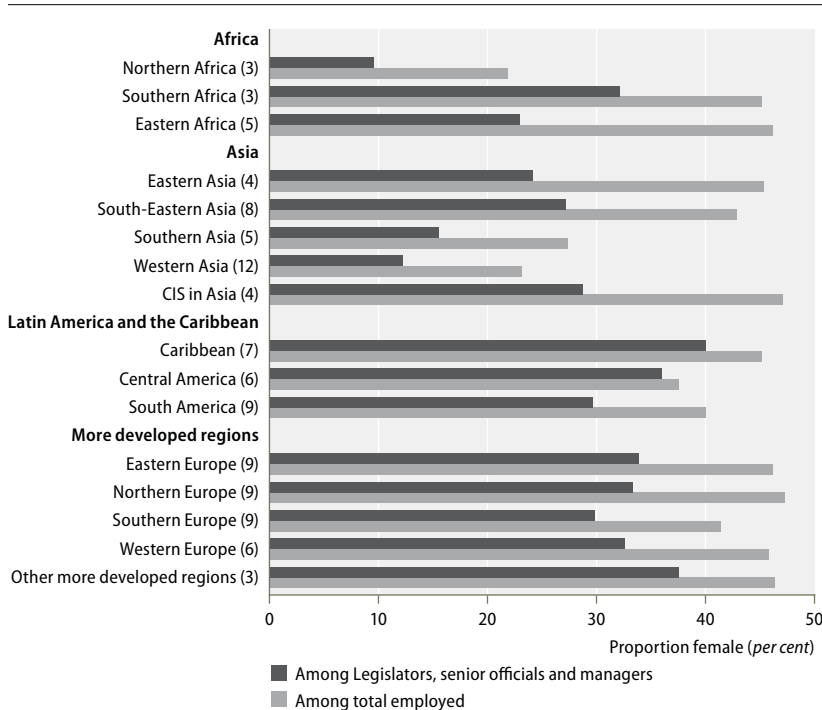
Part-time work facilitates the gradual entry of young persons into and the exit of older persons out of the labour market.<sup>19</sup> For example, women and men may take part-time jobs during their transition from full-time studies into the labour force or during the transition out of full-time employment into retirement. Part-time work also offers a solution for women and men trying to balance working life and family responsibilities. However, even when part-time work options are available to both women and men, they are taken up mostly by women because of stereotypical assumptions about women's roles as caregivers and the lower earnings of women. (See also section C. Reconciliation of work and family life.)

<sup>17</sup> Hakim, 2004, chapter 3; ILO, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Cousins and Tang, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, 2000; ILO, 2007.

Figure 4.7  
Women's share of legislators, senior officials and managers and of total employed, by region, 2004–2008 (latest available)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, LABORSTA table 2C (accessed in January 2010).

Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. The average for Eastern Asia does not include China. Western Asia excludes Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; CIS in Asia includes the aforementioned countries plus Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

### Part-time employment is increasing for both women and men

The costs of part-time employment can be great. Part-time employment is associated with lower income – with a long-term impact on pensions – and does not carry the same social benefits as full-time employment. Career advancement of part-time workers, who are predominantly women, is often jeopardized because the image persists that they are not serious about their jobs and careers. The types of part-time jobs available and the conditions of work are also a concern. Thus, although part-time work may be a solution for women reconciling work with family responsibilities, it reinforces the male breadwinner model, relegating women to a secondary role in the labour market.<sup>20</sup>

At present the part-time work force is increasing in many countries around the world, not just for women but also for men. Between 1990 and 2007, out of 35 countries with available data,

<sup>20</sup> ILO, 2004b.

part-time employment (defined here as employment of less than 30 hours per week) was seen to have increased for women in 21 countries and for men in 26. Particularly high increases during the period were observed for both women and men in Germany, Honduras and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (table 4.9), as well as for women in Ireland and Italy and for men in the Republic of Korea and Spain.<sup>21</sup>

There were only a few significant declines in part-time employment during the same period, all confined to Northern Europe and the Caribbean. The proportion of women working part-time decreased in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (by 5 percentage points or more) although that for men increased slightly. In the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago, declines of 4 and 5 percentage points, respectively, were registered for both women and men.

### Part-time employment is particularly prevalent among women in Northern and Western Europe

In 2007, 60 per cent of employed women in the Netherlands were working part-time, the most by far in the world.<sup>22</sup> Part-time employment among women is also common in several Northern and Western European countries, exceeding 35 per cent in Germany, Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In some of these countries, this reflects the lack of paid parental leave and affordable childcare services. Outside Europe, a part-time rate of 35 per cent or more was recorded for women in Argentina, Australia, Honduras and New Zealand. Most countries in Latin America (but not the Caribbean) also have significant proportions of part-time workers (at least 20 per cent) among women. Part-time employment of women is not as common in the United States of America and the countries of Eastern Europe (table 4.9).

Everywhere, part-time employment is much more common among women than among men, with the prevalence rate for women exceeding twice that for men in about three quarters of the coun-

<sup>21</sup> These are cases where the proportions employed part-time either increased by more than 10 percentage points or more than doubled between 1990 and 2007 (between 1990 and 2003 in the case of Honduras and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)).

<sup>22</sup> In the Netherlands, part-time jobs are highly protected and regulated. There is legislation providing all workers with a general right to change their working hours. In the United Kingdom, parents with a child younger than 6 years old have a right to request flexible work arrangements, which could be reduced hours of work.

Table 4.9  
Proportion of employed people working part-time by sex, 1990 and 2007

	Percentage of employed persons working part-time (less than 30 hours per week)					
	Women			Men		
	1990	2007	Difference	1990	2007	Difference
<b>Asia</b>						
Republic of Korea	7	13	6	3	6	3
Turkey	19	19	0	5	5	-1
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>						
Argentina	..	43	..	..	19	..
Bahamas	16	12	-4	14	10	-4
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	..	31	..	..	17	..
Costa Rica	21	25	5	7	10	3
Dominican Republic	..	23	..	..	12	..
Ecuador	18	23	6	7	12	5
El Salvador	20	20	0	11	15	4
Honduras	25	35	11	7	16	9
Mexico	19	28	9	8	8	1
Nicaragua	17	20	4	11	10	-1
Panama	15	22	7	11	16	5
Paraguay	16	25	9	8	14	5
Trinidad and Tobago	14	10	-5	12	7	-5
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	10	32	22	2	15	13
<b>Eastern Europe</b>						
Czech Republic	6	6	0	2	2	0
Hungary	..	4	..	..	2	..
Poland	..	15	..	..	6	..
Slovakia	4	4	0	1	1	0
<b>Rest of Europe</b>						
Austria	..	32	..	..	5	..
Belgium	29	33	4	4	6	2
Denmark	30	24	-6	10	12	2
Finland	11	16	5	5	8	3
France	23	23	1	5	5	1
Germany	25	39	14	2	8	6
Greece	12	14	2	4	4	0
Iceland	40	25	-14	8	8	1
Ireland	21	36	14	4	8	3
Italy	18	30	12	4	5	1
Luxembourg	19	29	10	2	2	0
Netherlands	53	60	8	13	16	3
Norway	40	32	-8	7	11	4
Portugal	13	14	2	4	6	2
Spain	12	21	9	1	4	2
Sweden	25	20	-5	5	10	4
Switzerland	43	46	3	7	9	2
United Kingdom	40	39	-1	5	10	5
<b>Other more developed regions</b>						
Australia	..	39	..	..	12	..
Canada	27	26	-1	9	11	2
Japan	..	33	..	..	9	..
New Zealand	35	35	0	8	11	3
United States of America	20	18	-2	9	8	-1

Source: ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 5th edition, table 5 (accessed in July 2009).

Note: For Latin America and the Caribbean, figures shown refer to 1990 and 2003. The cut-off for part-time work in the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago is 32 hours per week. Due to rounding, the numbers in the difference column may not coincide exactly with the difference between the figures for the two years.

tries. Part-time employment rates among men ranged from 1 to 19 per cent in 2007. Out of the 35 countries with available data, the 10 countries with the highest proportions of men working part-time include seven from Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)) and three from the more developed regions (Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands). In those countries, more than 12 per cent of employed men are part-time workers.

## 6. Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap reflects inequalities that affect mainly women, notably horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market, traditions and stereotypes that influence the choice of education, professions and career paths, and the difficulty of balancing work and private life that often leads to part-time work and career breaks for women.<sup>23</sup>

A simple indicator is used in this section to examine trends in gender pay gap – the ratio of women's average earnings to men's average earnings, expressed per 100. A ratio of 100 indicates that there is no gender pay gap: women are paid the same as men. A ratio below 100 indicates that women earn less than men and a ratio above 100 that they earn more than men – in other words, the closer the ratio is to 100, the smaller the gap.

### The gender pay gap is closing slowly in some countries but not in others

The analysis of trends in gender pay gap is limited to the manufacturing sector since wage statistics for this sector are more widely available than those for other industrial sectors. Furthermore, manufacturing is one of the industries where the gender pay gap is high. It should be noted that statistics of average wages from which the gender pay gap is derived cover only the “formal” sector of the economy. They do not shed light on earnings from self-employment or informal sector activities. Also, a simple indicator based on statistics of average earnings without controlling for occupation, qualifications, job grade or hours actually worked has been cited as causing misleading comparisons. Nevertheless, this “gross” measure reflects the realities of gender inequalities in the labour market, where higher proportions of women than men work part-time and are in the lower rungs of the occupation ladder (see the previous two sections).

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, 2007.

In some countries, there was a narrowing of the gender pay gap in manufacturing between 1990 and 2008. As reported earnings can for various reasons fluctuate considerably from year to year (see box 4.7), only sizeable changes in that period are highlighted. From the available data, presented in table 4.10, Japan, Mexico and Paraguay appear to have significantly reduced the gender pay gap (a decrease of at least 20 percentage points) in the manufacturing sector. Japan and Mexico were both coming from notably large gender gaps in the past. Two other countries with large gender gaps in 1990, Cyprus and the Republic of Korea, did not make significant progress. For the remaining countries, the evidence points to the gender pay gap closing slightly in most countries but remaining unchanged in others. This is consistent with recent reports by the ILO that the wage gap has been stable or is closing only very slowly.<sup>24</sup>

#### Box 4.7

#### Comparability issues in statistics of average earnings

Average reported earnings can fluctuate considerably from year to year. Depending on the source, earnings may be reported as average earnings per hour, per day, per week or per month. Workers covered also vary, from wage earners (i.e., manual or production workers) to salaried employees (i.e., non-manual workers) to all employees (i.e., wage earners plus salaried workers). Some countries limit the data to full-time employees or report data in terms of full-time equivalent employees. These variations have a bearing on the results. For example, based on a comparison made by the Statistics Division of the United Nations of multiple earnings types reported by the same country for the same year, it was found that the gender pay gap is generally greater for salaried employees than wage earners. Also, the gender pay gap tends to be higher for average earnings reported on a per month basis, compared to those reported on a per hour basis. With women on average working fewer hours than men, the difference in their earnings would be greater the longer the time period covered. Thus, trends and cross-country differences should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>24</sup> ILO, 2008a; ILO, 2009c.

**Table 4.10**  
**Ratio of female to male earnings**  
**in manufacturing, 1990–1992 and 2006–2008**  
*(latest available in each interval)*

	Female/male ratio of average earnings per month in manufacturing (per cent)	
	1990–1992	2006–2008
<b>Africa</b>		
Egypt <sup>a, b</sup>	68	66
<b>Asia</b>		
China, Hong Kong SAR <sup>b, c</sup>	69	60 <sup>d</sup>
Cyprus <sup>a, b</sup>	58	56
Jordan	57	69
Republic of Korea	50	57
Singapore	55	65
Sri Lanka <sup>b, e</sup>	88	77
Thailand <sup>f</sup>	64	75
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>		
Costa Rica	74	81 <sup>g</sup>
Mexico	50	72
Paraguay	66	86
<b>Europe</b>		
Czech Republic	68	65 <sup>b</sup>
Denmark <sup>g</sup>	85	87 <sup>h</sup>
France <sup>b, g</sup>	79	85
Hungary <sup>i</sup>	70	73
Ireland <sup>b, g</sup>	69	80
Latvia	84	81
Luxembourg <sup>b, g</sup>	62	73
Netherlands	74 <sup>a</sup>	83
Sweden <sup>b, g</sup>	89	91
Switzerland	71	77
United Kingdom <sup>i</sup>	61	75
<b>Other more developed regions</b>		
Australia <sup>g, i</sup>	82	90
Japan <sup>h</sup>	41	61
New Zealand <sup>g, i</sup>	75	81

Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, LABORSTA tables 5A and 5B (accessed in October 2009).  
 Notes

a Earnings per week.

b Wage earners.

c Wage rates per day.

d Including outworkers.

e Earnings per day.

f Wage rates per month.

g Earnings per hour.

h Data are for the private sector only.

i Full-time or full-time equivalent employees.

### A gender pay gap persists everywhere

While constraints in both data and methods make it difficult to present a comprehensive global analysis of gender pay gaps, the ILO recognizes that women's wages represent between 70 and 90 per cent of men's wages in a majority of countries.<sup>25</sup> For Europe, where data are more comparable and available than for other regions, recent estimates of the gender pay gap for 30 countries vary from 15 per cent<sup>26</sup> to 25 per cent.<sup>27</sup> Statistics from countries in the European Union show that the pay gap increases with age, level of educational attainment and years of service; for example, it exceeds 30 per cent in the 50–59 age group compared to only 7 per cent for those under 30.<sup>28</sup>

There are also significant variations in the gender pay gap from one occupation to another. This is illustrated for six countries in figure 4.8. In the Republic of Korea, there are no jobs that pay women more than men; on average, women earn between 46 and 90 per cent of what men earn, depending on their occupation. Averaged over all occupations, women in the Republic of Korea earn 68 per cent of what men earn.

In Brazil and the United Kingdom there are a few occupations in which women earn more than men: 5 out of 31 occupations in the former and 8 out of 116 in the latter. In most occupations in these two countries, women earn from 60 to 100 per cent of what men earn. Considering all occupations, the average earnings ratio is 81 in Brazil and 85 in the United Kingdom. In Australia, Russian Federation and Thailand, the earnings ratios for the various occupations vary widely, exceeding 125 for some occupations and even reaching as high as 150 in two cases, but also dipping well below 50 for one or two occupations in the Russian Federation and Thailand. Compared to the first three countries, the latter three have a relatively better gender balance in earnings: some occupations pay women more while others pay men more. Across all occupations, the average earnings ratio in Australia is 88, in the Russian Federation 89 and in Thailand 92. Although smaller than for the other countries, these gender pay gaps are still significant.

<sup>25</sup> ILO, 2008a.

<sup>26</sup> Based on official statistics and reported in European Commission, 2007; the same estimate, based on publicly available data of gross hourly earnings for 30 European countries, is reported in International Trade Union Confederation, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Based on a 2002 survey that covered only employees in the private sector, cited in Plantenga and Remery, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, 2007.

**Box 4.8**  
**Concept of work within the framework**  
**of the System of National Accounts**

The production boundary as defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA)<sup>a</sup> includes (1) the production of goods and services actually destined for the market, whether for sale or barter; (2) all goods and services provided free to individual households or collectively to the community by government units or non-profit institutions serving households; and (3) the production of goods for own use, in particular:

- a) The production of agricultural goods by households for own consumption;
- b) The production of other goods for own final use by households such as the construction of dwellings and the production of food-stuffs and clothing; and
- c) Own-account production of housing services for own final consumption by owner occupiers.

However, the SNA production boundary excludes all production of services for own final consumption within households; i.e., domestic and personal services produced and consumed by members of the same household.

Within the SNA framework, work may fall either within or outside the production boundary. Work that falls within the SNA production boundary is considered "economic" in labour force statistics, and persons engaged in such activities are recorded as being economically active. In the statistics of time use presented in the current chapter, such work is referred to as "paid work" (even if some may actually be unpaid, such as work falling within the SNA production boundary performed by contributing family workers). Work that falls outside the SNA production boundary is considered "non-economic" in labour force statistics. In this chapter such work is referred to as "unpaid work" and consists mainly of (a) domestic work and (b) community or volunteer work. Domestic work includes food preparation, dish washing, cleaning and upkeep of dwelling, laundry, ironing, handicraft, gardening, caring for pets, construction and repairs, shopping, installation, servicing and repair of personal and household goods, childcare, care of sick, elderly or disabled household members, etc. Community/volunteer work includes volunteer services for organizations, unpaid community work, informal help to other households, etc.

a For more detail on the SNA, see European Commission and others, 2009.

The six countries vary greatly in the occupations that have high or low gender pay gaps. For countries as diverse as these, commonalities are difficult to find. For example, only two occupations (electronic equipment assembler and sewing-machine operator) are common to three countries in having a wage ratio exceeding 100, and an additional 12 occupations<sup>29</sup> if the wage ratio cut-off is reduced to 90. On the other hand, it is not unusual for an occupation to have gender wage gaps in opposite directions in different countries. For example, first-level women education teachers in Brazil earned only 49 per cent of what their men colleagues earned, but in the Russian Federation they earned 121 per cent of what men earned; female journalists earned 57 per cent of what men journalists earned in Thailand, but 111 per cent of what men earned in the Russian Federation.

The gender pay gap tends to be wider in the highest-paid occupations, at least in Australia, Brazil, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, where the highest-paying two or three occupations have wage ratios of 75 or lower. In contrast, in the Russian Federation and Thailand the wage ratios for the highest-paying occupations are closer to 100 (figure 4.8).

## C. Reconciliation of work and family life

### 1. Sharing of domestic work

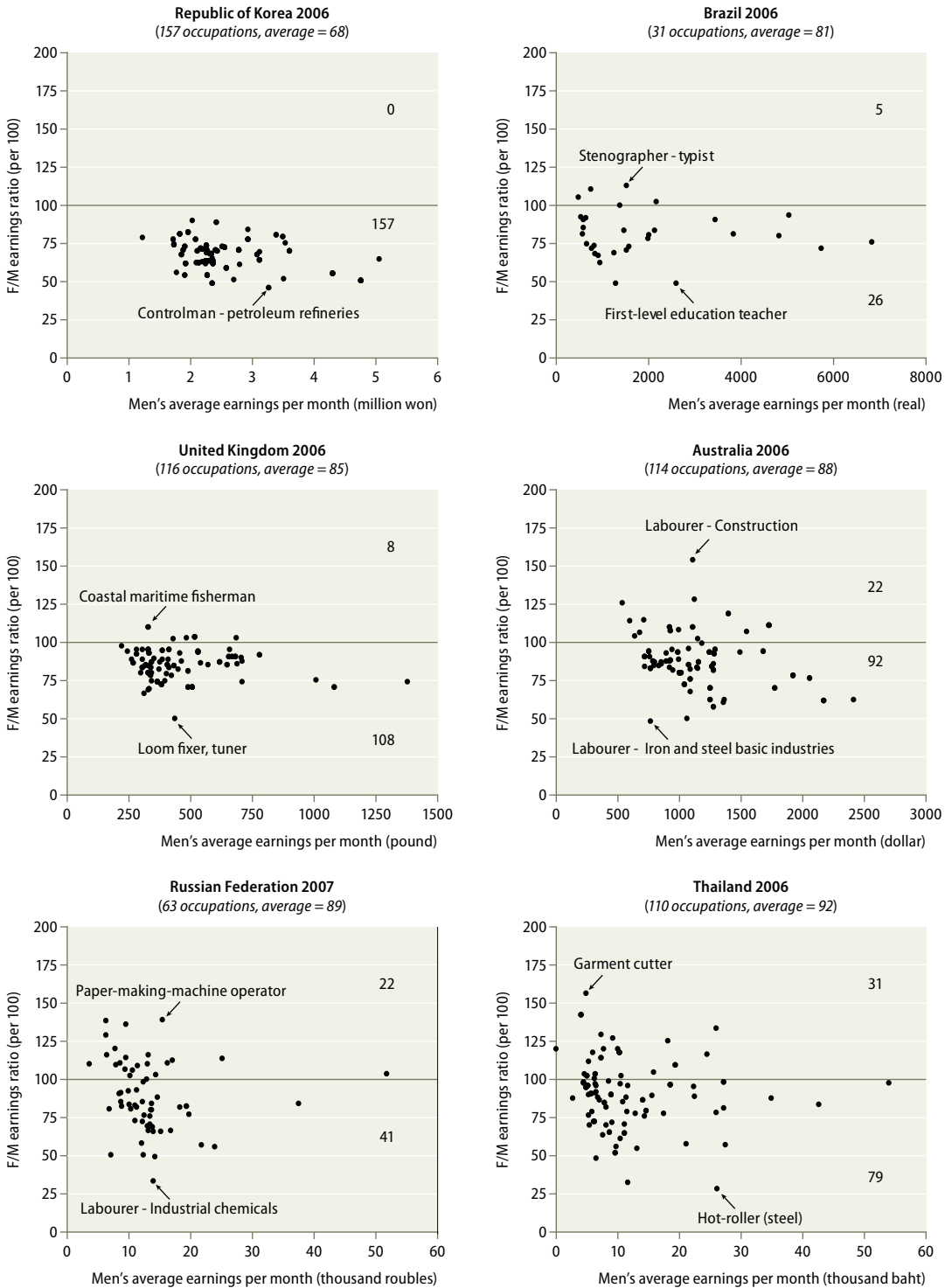
#### Women are the primary caretakers of the family

In spite of the changes that have occurred in women's participation in the labour market discussed above, women continue to bear most of the responsibilities for the home: caring for children and other dependent household members, preparing meals and doing other housework. This work, while productive, is outside the boundary of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and therefore not counted as economic activity (see box 4.8). Those who carry the burden of work for the home – mainly women – enter the labour market from a highly disadvantaged position, as the time they spend on domestic work restricts their access to full and productive employment and also leaves them with less time for education and training, leisure, self-care and social and political activities.<sup>30</sup>

29 Post office counter clerk, computer programmer, mathematics teacher (second and third levels), teacher in languages and literature (second and third levels), technical education teacher (second level), education teacher (first level), dentist (general), professional nurse (general), physiotherapist, medical X-ray technician, book-keeper and hotel receptionist.

30 Addati and Cassirer, 2008; Razavi and Staab, 2008.

Figure 4.8  
Average female/male earnings ratios in various occupations, six countries, 2006–2007



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO, LABORSTA table O1 (accessed in October 2009).

Note: The total number of occupations is shown in brackets below the country name, together with the unweighted average of female/male (F/M) earnings ratio. The number on the upper part of each graph refers to the number of occupations where the F/M earnings ratio exceeds 100; the number on the lower part of the graph refers to the number of occupations where the ratio is below 100.

In general, women's increased participation in paid employment has not been accompanied by an increase in men's participation in unpaid domestic work (comprised mainly of housework and

carrying for dependent household members). Time use statistics (see box 4.9 on interpreting the statistics) show that in all regions, women dedicate much more time to domestic work than men do

(figure 4.9). In the more developed regions, women spend an average of almost five hours a day on domestic work, whereas men spend on average less than two and a half hours a day on this, or half the amount of time spent by women. In some countries – for example, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – the difference is even greater, with women spending three- to four-fold the amount of time spent by men on domestic work.

Although still very far from equitable, the sharing of domestic tasks between the sexes is more favourable in the more developed regions compared to other regions. Men perform far less domestic work in Asia. For example, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan and Turkey, the time men spend on domestic work is not even a fifth of what women spend (see Statistical Annex).

Evidence from Latin America and Africa is weaker, as there are data for only a few countries. Nevertheless, from the available data it is apparent that in both of these regions, women spend far more than twice the time men spend on unpaid domestic work (figure 4.9).

#### Box 4.9

##### Interpreting statistics of time spent on activities

Data from time use surveys may be summarized and presented as either *participant averages* or *population averages*. In the participant average, the total time spent by all individuals who performed an activity is divided by the number of persons who performed it (participants). In the population average, the total time is divided by the total relevant population (or a sub-group thereof) regardless of whether people performed the activity or not. In this chapter, all statistics presented on time spent in various activities are population averages. Population averages can be used to compare groups and assess changes over time. Differences between groups or over time may be due to a difference (or change) in proportions participating in the specific activity or a difference (or change) in the amount of time spent by participants, or both.

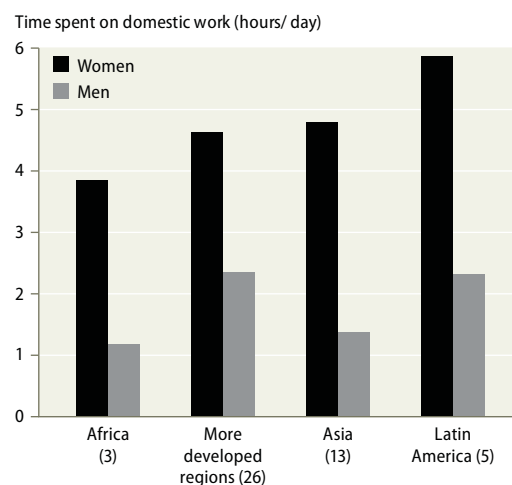
When time spent is expressed as an average per day, it is an average over seven days of the week, weekdays and weekends not differentiated. Thus, for paid work, a five-day work week averaging seven hours per day would show up as an average of five hours of paid work per day (35 hours divided by 7 days).

Finally, statistics presented refer to the “main activity”. Any “secondary activity” performed simultaneously with the main activity is not reflected in the average times shown. It should be noted that limiting analysis to the main activity results in a downward bias on the actual time spent on many activities, especially those that are often secondary to other activities. One such activity is childcare, a considerable portion of which is recorded as secondary activity (for example, parents may be looking after their children while cooking or cleaning the house).

Cultural conceptions of women’s and men’s roles no doubt play an important part in the unequal sharing of domestic work between the sexes. Change may be slow, but a trend towards a more equitable division of household work is evident in many European countries. In the Nordic countries and the United States of America, where time use studies over a number of years allow long-term comparisons, findings indicate that the number of hours spent by the average woman on household work has decreased while that spent by the average man has increased. In Norway, for example, the time women use for household work per day declined by about two hours in the 30 years between 1971 and 2000, whereas for men it increased by about half an hour, due mainly to more men taking part in household work than before.<sup>31</sup> In the United States of America, women’s and men’s hours spent in housework moved towards convergence over the 30-year period from 1965 to 1995, primarily due to the steep decline in women’s hours but also due to an increase in men’s hours.<sup>32</sup> Recent results<sup>33</sup> indicate a continuation of the trend, although the convergence has been much slower since 1985.

Figure 4.9

Time spent on domestic work by region and sex, 1999–2008 (latest available)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on country-level data from Statistics Sweden, UNECE, UNECLAC and national statistical offices (as of December 2009).

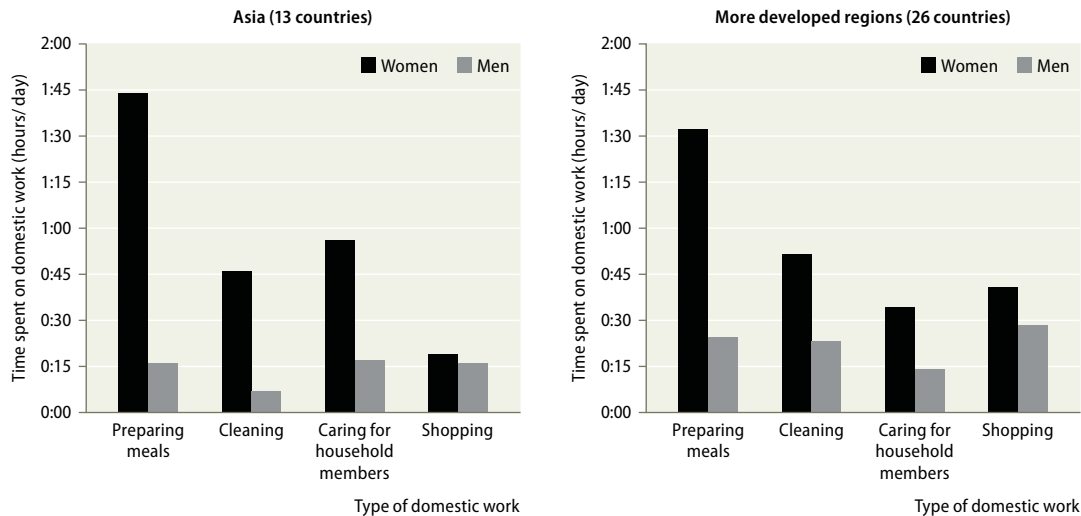
Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged.

31 Based on time use of women and men aged 16–74 years. Statistics Norway, 2002.

32 Bianchi, 2000.

33 United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009.

Figure 4.10  
Time spent on major household tasks by sex, 1999–2008 (latest available)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on country-level data from Statistics Sweden, UNECE and national statistical offices (as of December 2009).  
Note: Unweighted averages.

Of the various unpaid domestic tasks, the preparation of meals takes by far the most of women's time – on average an hour and 45 minutes per day in Asian countries and an hour and a half among countries in the more developed regions (figure 4.10). In contrast, men spend on average 15 minutes a day on this activity in Asian countries and 25 minutes in countries in the more developed regions. A large discrepancy also occurs in household cleaning tasks. In Asian countries, women spend 45 minutes per day to men's 6 minutes. The ratio is not as great in countries in the more developed regions, where women devote on average 50 minutes a day to cleaning to men's 23 minutes. In developing countries where there is less access to technologies that would reduce the time needed for meal preparation and house cleaning, these tasks can be particularly arduous.

Actively caring<sup>34</sup> for children and sick, elderly or disabled household members is a time-consuming task, especially in the less developed regions where public services for such care are few.<sup>35</sup> In Asia, caring takes up a large amount of women's time (55 minutes per day). While this work is done predominantly by women, men are seen to share relatively more (16 minutes) than in either

cooking or cleaning. In Europe, due in part to lower fertility rates and consequently fewer children to look after and in part to some availability of public or private care services, the average time spent on care of children and other household members is lower, about 35 minutes for women and 15 minutes for men. Shopping is an activity where men come closer to women in terms of time devoted. Doing repairs around the house as well as taking care of the dwelling premises are activities where men tend to spend more time than women.

## 2. Combining family responsibilities with employment

### Women work longer hours than men when unpaid work is factored in

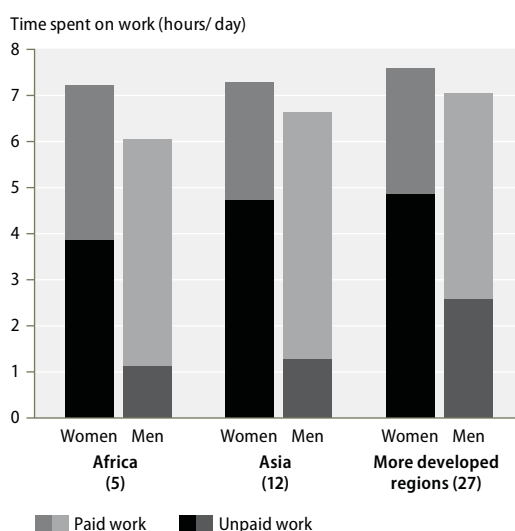
As shown earlier, women spend more time than men on domestic work, on average roughly twice as much or more (figure 4.9). Many women are also employed, although they tend to spend less time in paid work than men (figure 4.11). Nevertheless, the total work burden – considering both paid and unpaid work<sup>36</sup> – is higher for women

<sup>34</sup> Time spent caring for children and for sick, elderly or disabled household members relates only to time where no other activity is carried out, or where it is the main activity. Time spent cleaning the house, for example, while looking after children is not considered here.

<sup>35</sup> Antonopoulos and Hirway, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Unpaid work refers productive work that is outside the boundary of the System of National Accounts and comprises (a) domestic work (housework, caring for children and other household members such as the sick, elderly, disabled, etc.); and (b) unpaid help to other households and community and volunteer services. In most countries, the second category contributes only a small portion towards the total time spent on unpaid work.

Figure 4.11  
Time spent on paid and unpaid work by region and sex, 1999–2008 (latest available)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on country-level data from Statistics Sweden, UNECE and national statistical offices (as of December 2009).

Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged.

than men in all regions. From the available data, it is apparent that on average women work at least half an hour longer than men each day in Africa, Asia and the more developed regions.

Table 4.11  
Distribution of couples with young children by activity status, for 12 European countries, 2006

	Percentage distribution of couples aged 25–49 years with children less than 6 years old, by activity status, 2006			
	Both woman and man working full-time	Woman working part-time, man working full-time	Woman not working, man working full-time	Other combinations of activity status
Netherlands	7	49	31	13
Switzerland	8	45	38	10
Germany	13	31	43	14
Austria	19	38	32	11
Italy	31	20	42	8
Hungary	32	3	52	13
Belgium	35	33	20	12
Sweden	36	38	10	17
Spain	38	16	38	8
Finland	53	9	30	9
Romania	59	3	20	18
Portugal	69	5	21	6

Source: L'Office fédéral de la statistique de Suisse, Modèles d'activité dans les couples, partage des tâches et garde des enfants (2009).

Note: Arranged in ascending order of "Both woman and man working full-time". Due to rounding, row totals might not equal 100. For Germany and Sweden, data refer to 2005.

Balancing paid work with family responsibilities is particularly difficult for women who are employed full-time. In many countries, employed women spend an inordinate amount of time on this "double burden", as they typically continue to assume most of the responsibility for domestic work. Employed men spend less time on paid and domestic work combined. In 9 out of 15 European countries with data, women employed full-time work about an hour more per day than men when both paid and domestic work are considered (figure 4.12). In only six out of the 15 countries do men's total number of hours worked approach that of women. In these countries (all in Northern or Western Europe) women enjoy the shortest hours of work, about seven to eight hours per day, and men only slightly less. Norway and Sweden stand out as countries where men spend more than two hours on domestic work per day and end up with a total work day that is as long as that of women.

#### Balancing work and family is particularly challenging for employed parents with young children

Balancing the dual demands of family and employment is particularly difficult for couples with young children. One solution to the challenge of the "double burden" in this situation is for one member of the couple to work part-time or not be in employment at all – in most instances the woman. This is evident from an examination of the economic activity status of couples with young children (table 4.11). In nine out of the 12 countries studied, the majority of couples with young children end up with the man in full-time employment and the woman either working part-time or not employed at all. In Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, less than 20 per cent of couples with young children both worked full-time and in another five countries, just 30–40 per cent of couples did. Other data show that in Australia, among couples with children under 15, the most common arrangement was for both parents to work, although in three fifths of families where both parents were employed, one worked full-time and the other worked part-time. In 95 per cent of those cases, it was the mother who was working part-time.<sup>37</sup>

However, the scenario where only one member of the couple works full-time is not always a feasible

<sup>37</sup> Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2009.

or practicable option. Many couples with young children find themselves working full-time. In Finland, Portugal and Romania, for example, more than half of all couples with children below six years old both work full-time (table 4.11).

Some countries and organizations help employed parents reconcile work and family life by instituting shorter work hours and family-friendly working arrangements such as flexible hours, part-time work, job-sharing and work from home (including telecommuting). Such measures, however, are often not available or adequate. Faced with the lack of collective measures and support for balancing paid work and family responsibilities, many families who can afford to do so turn to hiring private childcare, health providers to care for sick family members or domestic workers to free up time for paid work. For the poor, however, the need to resolve work-family conflict often requires difficult trade-offs between employment and family responsibilities in terms of quality of employment and/or quality of care.<sup>38</sup> Thus, while the decision about employment may be a lifestyle choice for some,<sup>39</sup> full-time work may represent the only viable choice for women faced with the financial needs of their family.

### 3. Maternity and paternity leave and related benefits

#### *Maternity leave and related benefits*

Maternity protection for employed women is an essential element in equality of opportunity, enabling women to successfully combine their productive and reproductive roles. Essentially, maternity protection has two aims: to preserve the health of (and the special relationship between) the mother and her newborn; and to provide a measure of job security. The latter aim includes access to jobs by women of childbearing age, maintenance of wages and benefits during maternity, and prevention of dismissal during pregnancy, maternity leave and a period of time after return to work.

---

**Maternity leave is widely recognized  
but still inadequate in many countries**

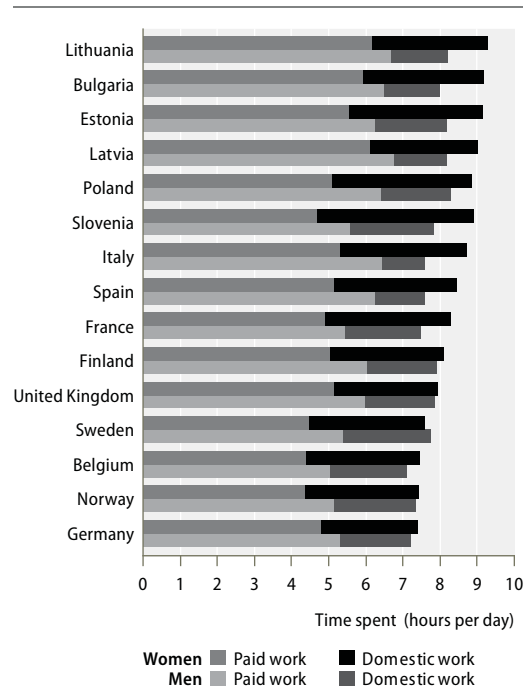
---

The current international standard for the duration of maternity leave as provided for in the Maternity Protection Convention 2000

<sup>38</sup> ILO, 2009b.

<sup>39</sup> Hakim, 2004; ILO, 2009c.

**Figure 4.12**  
Time spent on paid work and domestic work by persons employed full-time, by sex, for 15 European countries, 1999–2005 (latest available)



Source: Statistics Sweden, Harmonized European Time Use Survey online database (accessed in December 2009).

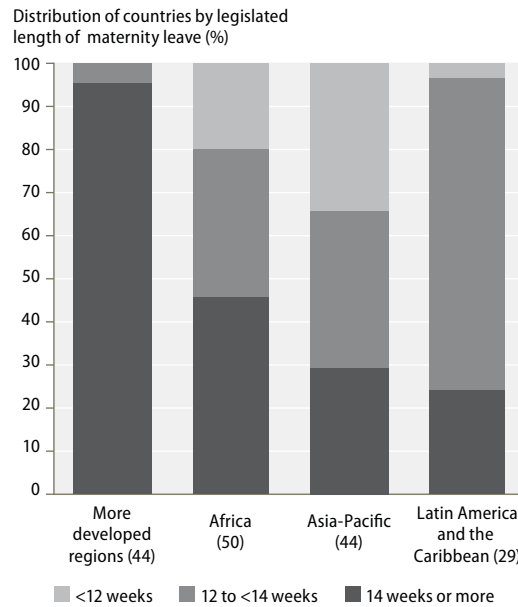
(No. 183)<sup>40</sup> is 14 weeks. This is an increase from the standard of 12 weeks specified in the previous Convention.<sup>41</sup>

Many countries in the less developed regions have not caught up to the new standard. In 2009, as many as 141 out of 167 countries, or 85 per cent, have durations of maternity leave that meet the 12-week standard stipulated in the earlier ILO Convention. However, only half of countries worldwide – specifically 85 countries – meet the new international standard of 14 weeks. The regions farthest from achieving the new standard are Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, where only 30 per cent and 24 per cent of countries, respectively, provide maternity leave of 14 weeks or more. In Africa, 46 per cent of countries provide the recommended coverage while in the more developed regions, 95 per cent do (figure 4.13). (For maternity leave information by country, see Statistical Annex.)

<sup>40</sup> Adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2000. The Maternity Protection Recommendation 2000 (No. 191) that accompanies the Convention proposes 18 weeks of maternity leave.

<sup>41</sup> Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) (No. 103), adopted in 1952.

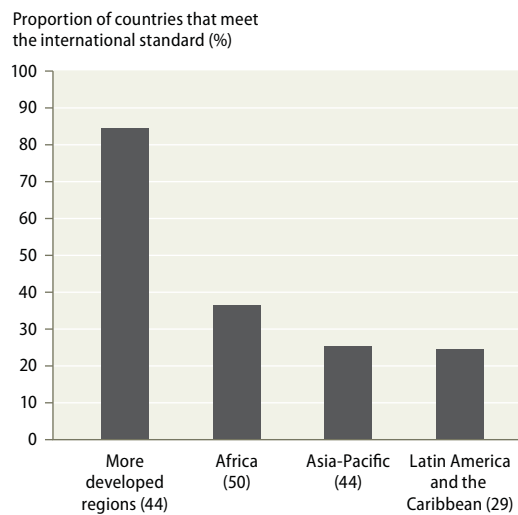
**Figure 4.13**  
Distribution of countries by legislated length of maternity leave, by region, 2009



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from United Nations, Statistics and Indicators on Women and Men, table 5g – Maternity leave benefits (accessed in February 2010).  
Note: The numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries with data.

The right to cash benefits during maternity leave is essential for maternity protection, and the vast majority of countries provide these benefits to a greater or lesser extent. Worldwide, only five countries<sup>42</sup> have not legislated for paid maternity leave

**Figure 4.14**  
Proportion of countries that meet the international standard for cash benefits during maternity leave, by region, 2009



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from United Nations, Statistics and Indicators on Women and Men, table 5g – Maternity leave benefits (accessed in February 2010).  
Note: The numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries with data. The international standard is cash benefits paid at the rate of at least two thirds of the woman's previous or insured earnings, for a minimum period of 14 weeks.

42 Australia, Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, Swaziland and the United States of America.

across the workforce.<sup>43</sup> Without paid benefits, or where paid benefits are insufficient, a woman may be pressured to return to work sooner than her health or that of her infant permits.

The new ILO Convention stipulates that cash benefits during maternity leave be paid at the rate of at least two thirds of the woman's previous or insured earnings for a minimum period of 14 weeks. Currently only 73 countries (44 per cent) meet this standard, more than half of them (37 countries) in the more developed regions. Overall in these regions, 84 per cent of countries provide 14 weeks or more of cash benefit at the rate of at least two thirds the woman's average earnings. In comparison, only 36 per cent of the countries in Africa, 25 per cent in Asia-Pacific and 24 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean are able to meet this standard (figure 4.14).

In certain cases women may not be eligible for cash benefits at all or may have reduced benefits. For example, eligibility or the amounts payable in some countries depend on the woman's length of employment, length of contribution into the insurance scheme, type of contract, or whether employed by government or by a private employer. In others, the benefits may be subject to a ceiling or are reduced after a given number of weeks. (For details by country, see Statistical Annex.)

The gap between law and practice is a problem confronting many women. Maternity continues to be a source of discrimination in employment and access to employment. Even with maternity legislation, many pregnant women still lose their jobs, and complaints of maternity-related dismissals are common in the courts.<sup>44</sup>

Where the funding of maternity benefits comes from presents an important source of discrimination against women. Payment through social insurance or public funds may reduce discrimination against women of childbearing age in the labour market, as employers are freed from bearing the direct costs of maternity. At present, however, many countries (26 per cent) continue to stipulate that payment during maternity leave be covered by the employer with no public or social security provision.<sup>45</sup> This is the case in many countries in Africa and Asia, and is particularly prevalent in the Arab States (see Statistical Annex).

43 Oun and Trujillo, 2005.

44 ILO, 2009a.

45 Oun and Trujillo, 2005.

The right to continue breastfeeding upon return to work is important for both the health of the mother and especially that of her child. At present, more than 90 countries provide legislation for nursing breaks of at least an hour a day. In most countries the duration is one hour in total, and the most frequent provision is until the child reaches the age of one year.<sup>46</sup>

Maternity protection continues to be unavailable to many groups of women such as domestic workers, those working in small enterprises, those with less than one year with the employer, agricultural workers, casual workers, as well as part-time, temporary, sub-contract and home-based workers. In many developing countries, these groups constitute a large majority of the female labour force but do not receive the protection available to women in formal full-time employment. A new provision of the Maternity Protection Convention 2000 expands the scope of coverage to include women employed in such atypical forms of work.

### *Paternity leave*

#### **Paternity leave is becoming more common**

Paternity leave is a short period of leave taken by a father around the time of the birth of his child. Although there is no international standard for this, paternity leave provisions are becoming more common around the world,<sup>47</sup> perhaps an indication of the increased awareness of men's parenting roles and their need to reconcile work and family life. Paternity leave benefits, when available, vary considerably in duration and compensation. Compared to maternity leave, they are much shorter and more often unpaid. Paid leave provisions other than paternity leave may also be used by a father at the time of the birth of his child. Some examples are shown in table 4.12.

Another option to further help working parents care for children is parental leave,<sup>48</sup> a relatively long-term leave offered mainly in countries in the more developed regions that is available to either parent to enable them to take care of an infant or young child over a period of time, usually following the maternity or paternity leave period. The duration, cash benefits, age of the child at which

Table 4.12

Examples of paid paternity leave and other paid leave provisions that may be used by fathers at the time of the birth of their child, 2005

Paid leave provision	
<b>Africa</b>	
Algeria	3 days paid paternity leave
Cameroon	Up to 10 days paid leave for family events concerning the worker's home
Côte d'Ivoire	Up to 10 days paid leave for family events concerning the worker's home
South Africa	3 days paid family responsibility leave
<b>Asia</b>	
Indonesia	2 days paid leave when wife gives birth
Philippines	7 days paid paternity leave for married workers
<b>Latin America</b>	
Argentina	2 days paid paternity leave
Brazil	7 days paid paternity leave
Chile	1 day paid paternity leave
Paraguay	2 days paid paternity leave
<b>More developed regions</b>	
Belgium	3 days paid paternity leave
Finland	14 days paid paternity leave
Romania	5 days paid paternity leave
Sweden	10 days paid paternity leave

Source: ILO, Examples of leave provisions for fathers (2005).

the right to such leave lapses, and transferability of leave vary widely across countries.

Because parental leave is available to either parent, it encourages the sharing of family responsibilities, recognizing that both mothers and fathers are responsible for raising their children. However, women are usually the ones who take parental leave once maternity leave is exhausted, and men's take-up rates are very low. Some countries have introduced a paternity quota that can only be taken by the father and is lost if he does not use it. This is the case, for example, in Norway and Sweden.<sup>49</sup>

## **D. Child labour**

### **1. Child employment and child labour**

#### *The magnitude of child employment and child labour*

In recent years, national and international attention paid to the measurement of child labour has led to many new surveys on the topic and to the addition of questions on child labour in national

<sup>46</sup> ILO, 2004c.

<sup>47</sup> ILO, 2009a.

<sup>48</sup> Not to be confused with maternity or paternity leave.

<sup>49</sup> Oun and Trujillo, 2005.

## Box 4.10

## Definition of child labour

The term child labour refers to the engagement of children in prohibited work and, more generally, in types of work to be eliminated as socially and morally undesirable, as guided by national legislation and international conventions.<sup>a</sup> Child labour may be measured in terms of the engagement of children in productive activities either on the basis of the general production boundary, or on the basis of the System of National Accounts (SNA) production boundary.

When measured in terms of the SNA production boundary, children in child labour encompass all persons aged 5 to 17 years who, during a specified time period, were engaged in one or more of the following categories of activities:

- a) Worst forms of child labour, which include:
  - i) Hazardous work – employment in industries and occupations designated as hazardous, or working for long hours and/or at night in tasks and duties that by themselves may or may not be hazardous for children;
  - ii) Worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work – consists of all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;
- b) Employment below the minimum age, as specified in national legislation – includes any work that is carried out by a child who is below the minimum age specified for the kind of work performed.

If national policies and circumstances determine that the measurement of productive activities by children use the general production boundary, child labour will include the following additional category:

- c) Hazardous unpaid household services – unpaid household services performed in the child's own household for long hours, in an unhealthy environment, involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads, etc.

Source: ILO, 2009d, pp. 56–66.

a Specifically the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (Convention No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) as well as their respective supplementing recommendations (Nos. 146 and 190).

household surveys. However, child labour is still a relatively new topic in national data collection activities. Establishing reliable data on many of the worst forms of child labour – such as forced labour, involvement in armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking – remains a challenge. Household surveys are ill suited to capture these worst forms of child labour; standardized statistical concepts and definitions are not fully developed and measurement methods are at an experimental stage.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the 2004 global estimates of child labour do not include the category “worst forms of child labour other than hazardous labour”. Furthermore, since the global estimates used the framework of the SNA production boundary, the category “hazardous unpaid household services” was also not included. (See box 4.10 for the definition of child labour)

---

**Globally, many children are engaged  
in employment and in child labour**

---

<sup>50</sup> Hagemann and others, 2006; and ILO, 2009d, pp. 56–66.

The latest global estimates of child labour refer to the year 2004. They indicate that 317 million children (149 million girls and 168 million boys) aged 5–17 were employed (i.e., were in the labour force) worldwide. More than half of all employed children were considered to be engaged in child labour: specifically, 218 million (101 million girls and 117 million boys). Furthermore, more than half of these child labourers (53 million girls and 73 million boys) were engaged in hazardous work (table 4.13).

The global estimates indicate that boys outnumber girls slightly among both the total numbers employed and those engaged in child labour and that they outnumber girls substantially in engagement in hazardous work. These estimates of employment, however, do not reflect the totality of work that children perform, as the definition of employment does not include household chores. From a gender perspective, this omission distorts the overall picture of children's total work burden since housework is disproportionately

Table 4.13  
Global estimates of child employment, child labour and children in hazardous labour, by sex, 2004

	Total		Girls		Boys	
	Number (millions)	As a percentage of the population aged 5–17	Number (millions)	As a percentage of the population aged 5–17	Number (millions)	As a percentage of the population aged 5–17
<b>Population aged 5–17</b>	1 566.3		762.3		804.0	
Of which in employment	317.4	20	149.0	20	168.4	21
Of which in child labour	217.7	14	100.5	13	117.2	15
Of which in hazardous labour	126.3	8	53.0	7	73.3	9

Source: Hagemann and others, *Global Child Labour Trends 2000–2004* (2006).

done by girls in most societies (see next section). In addition, girls comprise a large proportion of those working in the forms of child labour that the global estimates have not included (the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work and “hazardous unpaid household services”).<sup>51</sup>

#### *Economic sector of employment of girls and boys*

##### **Most employed children work in agriculture but girls in Latin America are mostly in services**

When they are employed, children work predominantly in the agricultural sector. In sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture is the predominant sector, at least three quarters of employed girls and boys work in this area (figure 4.15). The corresponding proportions are lower in Asia and still lower in Latin America. In all regions boys were more likely than girls to be in agriculture. Girls, on the other hand, were more likely than boys to be employed in services, and the phenomenon is particularly striking in Latin America. In the eight Latin American countries with available data, on average half of all employed girls were in the services sector. Girls’ employment in services involves mostly two activities: child domestic work (CDW)<sup>52</sup> and wholesale and retail trade, most of the latter performed within the informal sector of the economy.<sup>53</sup> Collecting fuel wood

and fetching water for the household, which are economic activities within the SNA production boundary, are also more likely to be performed by girls than boys.<sup>54</sup>

Studies by ILO-IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) confirm that CDW is pervasive in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>55</sup> In three<sup>56</sup> out of eight countries for which prevalence rates can be derived, more than 10 per cent of employed girls aged 5–14 were engaged in CDW; and for girls aged 15–17, the proportions exceeded 10 per cent in seven<sup>57</sup> of the eight countries and exceeded 20 per cent in three of them. The proportion in CDW among boys was 2 per cent or lower, except for Mali where it was 9 per cent for boys aged 5–14 and 6 per cent for boys aged 15–17. According to the ILO, more girls under age 16 are engaged in domestic service than in any other category of child labour. However, the low recognition of domestic labour as a form of economic activity and of CDW as a form of child labour, coupled with its hidden nature, has led to difficulty in obtaining reliable figures on the extent of this phenomenon. In many environments some elements of CDW – long working days, working with toxic chemicals, carrying heavy loads, handling dangerous items such as knives, axes, irons and hot pans – are such that it would be considered hazardous work.<sup>58</sup>

51 Blanco, 2009.

52 Child domestic work (CDW) is considered an economic activity under the SNA production boundary and should not be confused with household chores. The former is performed outside the child’s own household for an employer, while the latter is performed in the child’s own household.

53 Blanco, 2009.

54 See Chapter 7– Environment.

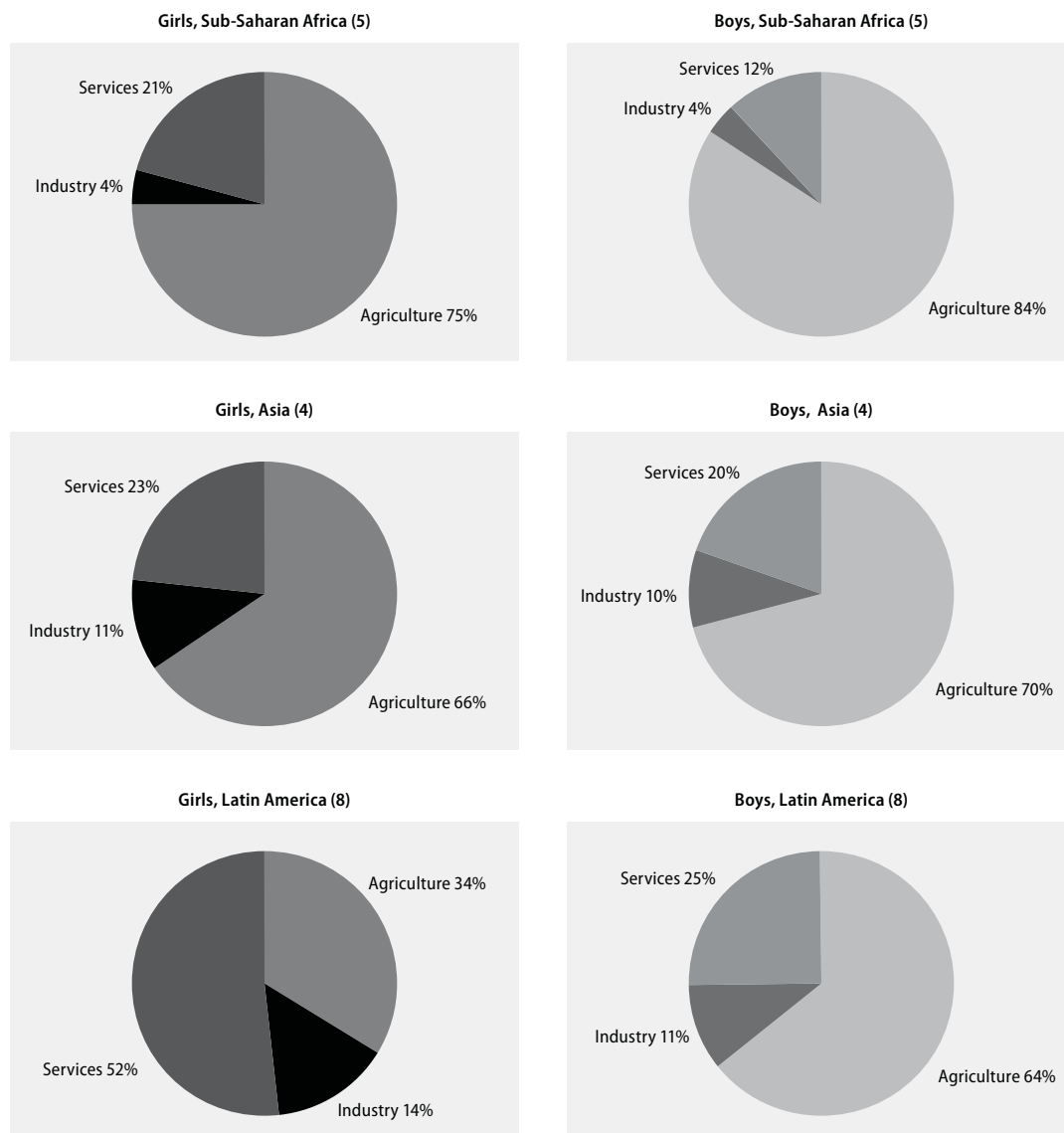
55 Blanco, 2009.

56 Colombia, Mali and Senegal.

57 Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mali, Senegal and the Philippines. The proportion exceeded 20 per cent in El Salvador, Mali and the Philippines.

58 ILO-IPEC, undated.

Figure 4.15  
Sectoral distribution of children's employment, by sex and region, 1999–2003 (latest available)



Source: Computed by the United Nations Statistics Division based on data from ILO-IPEC, Child labour data country briefs: data from SIMPOC surveys (2009).  
Note: Unweighted averages; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of countries averaged. Data refer to children aged 5–14.

## 2. Unpaid housework

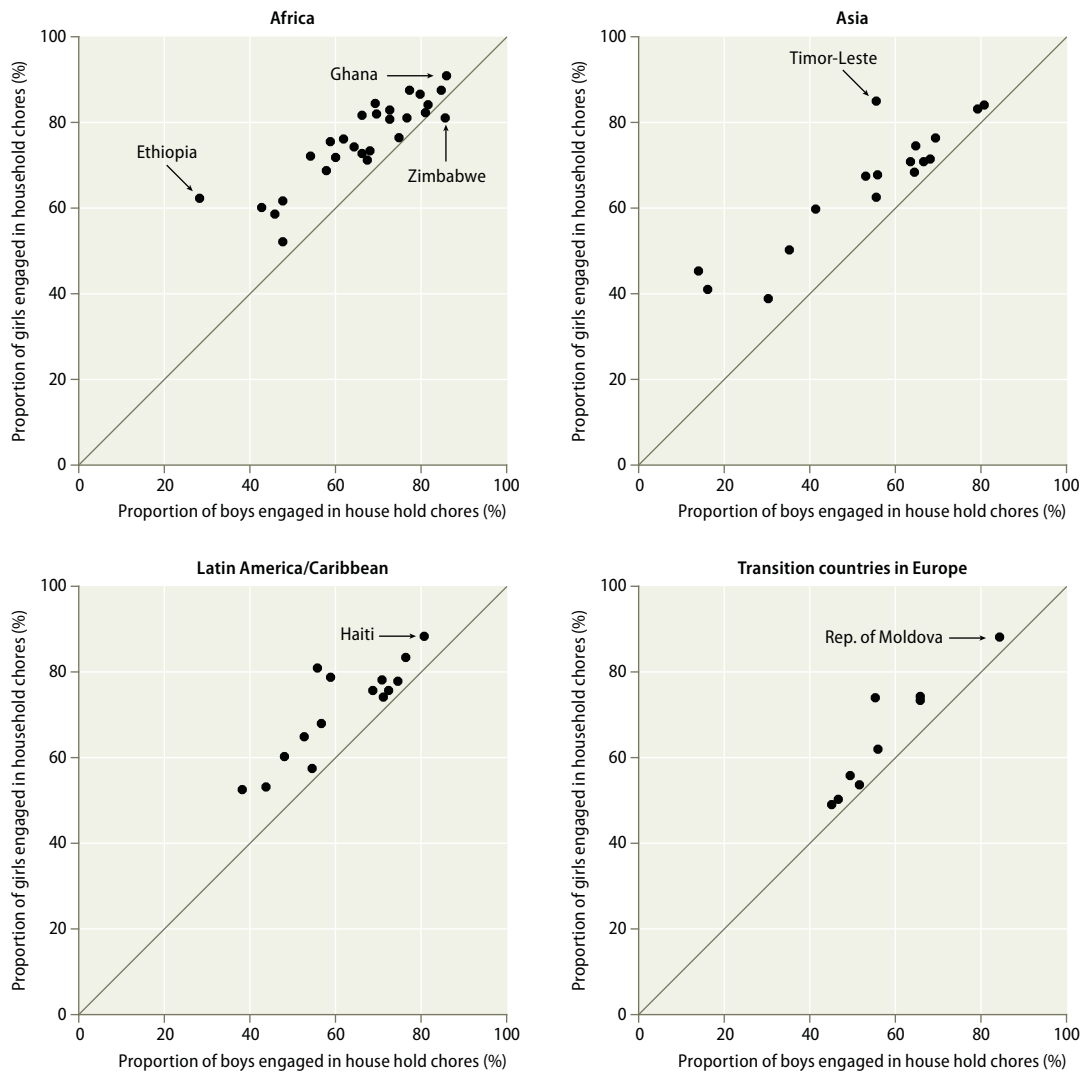
### Girls are more likely than boys to do unpaid housework

Like their adult counterparts, girls are more likely than boys to perform unpaid work within their own household. In many regions, girls start to take on a large amount of household chores at a young age (5 to 14), including care-giving, cooking and cleaning. Boys also participate in household chores but not as much. The extent of girls' and boys' participation varies considerably across countries,

but the proportions in the less developed regions and the transition countries of Eastern and Southern Europe range roughly from 40–90 per cent for girls aged 5–14 and from 15–90 per cent for boys of the same age (figure 4.16). In virtually all countries, girls' participation in household chores exceeds that of boys. On average, the proportion of girls aged 5–14 involved in household chores is about 10 percentage points more than the corresponding proportion for boys.

Older girls are even more likely than boys to be engaged in household chores. At ages 15–17, an average 90 per cent of girls and 67 per cent of

Figure 4.16  
Proportion of children aged 5–14 engaged in household chores, by region and sex, 1999–2006 (latest available)



Source: Compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division from ILO, UNICEF and World Bank, *Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Country Reports* (accessed in June 2009).

Note: Each point represents one country. Points above and left of the diagonal line represent countries where higher proportions of girls than boys are engaged in household chores.

boys are engaged in housework, a difference of 23 percentage points.<sup>59</sup>

---

**The total burden of work is higher for girls, especially older girls**

---

Girls generally work longer hours than boys, regardless of the type of work activity. Data from 16 sample countries from the less developed regions and transition economies indicate that girls aged 5–14 work about three hours longer per week than boys, whether they are engaged in housework exclusively (no employment) or engaged in both employment and housework.

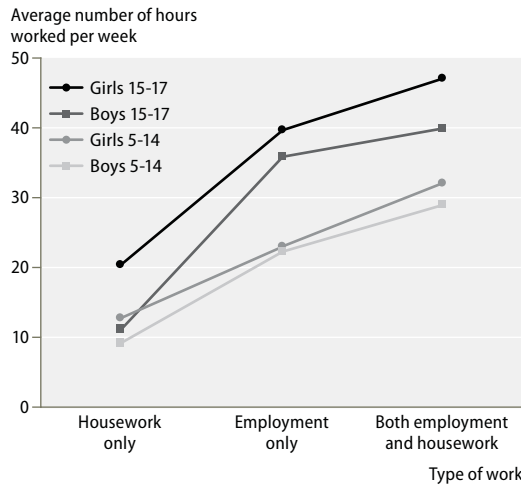
<sup>59</sup> Based on 16 sample countries from different regions of the world, in Blanco, 2009.

For children aged 5–14 whose work is limited to employment (no housework), boys work longer in some countries while girls work longer in others. Children's burden of work is highest when they are engaged in both employment and housework, consuming on average 32 hours per week of girls' time and 29 of boys'. The time spent by children in employment exclusively is much shorter and that by children working on housework only is shortest (figure 4.17).

Older children aged 15–17, having attained the legal age of employment,<sup>60</sup> spent more time than younger children in every working category. Girls

<sup>60</sup> The legal age of employment is 14 or 15 in most countries and 16 in others.

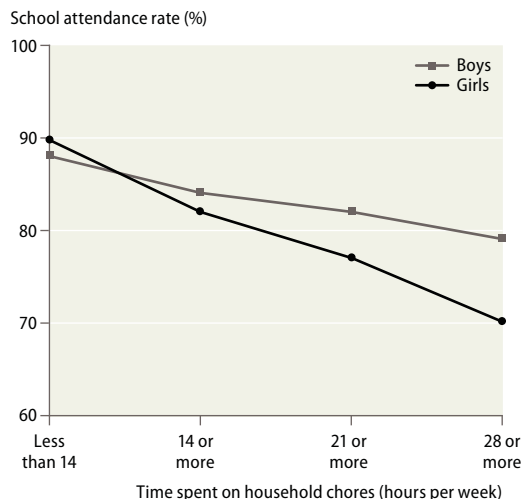
**Figure 4.17**  
**Time spent by children on work, by type of work engaged in, by sex and age group, 1999–2006**  
*(latest available)*



Source: Prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division from Blanco, *Assessing the gender gap: Evidence from SIMPOC surveys*, tables 4 and 5 (2009).

spent on average 47 hours per week and boys 40 hours if they were employed and at the same time helping with housework. Many girls and boys aged 15–17 find themselves in this situation – on average 29 and 28 per cent, respectively. For this group, as well as for those in employment only, the significant amount of time spent on work reduces their time for study, leisure and other activities essential to child social and human

**Figure 4.18**  
**School attendance rate of children aged 5–14 by amount of time spent on household chores, by sex, 1999–2006**



Source: ILO, *Gender equality at the heart of decent work* (2009), p. 62.

development. The same holds for the 14 per cent of younger children (aged 5–14) who find themselves similarly burdened with both employment and household chores.

### 3. Children's work and education

#### Long hours of work affect children's school attendance, especially girls'

Child labour constitutes a major hindrance to the education of girls and boys. It affects children's ability to participate fully in education. Analysis based on survey data for 23 countries shows that school attendance declines as the number of hours spent on household chores increases, and that the decline is steeper for girls compared to boys.<sup>61</sup> On average, 90 per cent of girls who spend less than 14 hours on household attend school, but only 70 per cent of those who spend 28 hours or more per week on household chores do so (figure 4.18). For boys the difference is smaller, about 10 percentage points. The lower school attendance rate of girls compared to that of boys among the group that performed 28 or more hours of housework may be explained in part by the higher proportion of girls, compared to boys, who work much longer than 28 hours.

A similar inverse relationship is evident between school attendance and hours spent on employment, with an even stronger effect than seen for girls engaged in household chores. In this case the impact on school attendance was the same for girls and boys.<sup>62</sup>

The effect of excessive work on children's education extends beyond school attendance. For example, research from Latin America and the Caribbean suggests that classroom performance of working children are among the poorest, and that performance declined with the hours worked.<sup>63</sup> The longer hours worked by girls, whether in employment, housework or both, translate to missed opportunities and an increased risk of ending up without the basic tools to escape marginalization and poverty.

61 ILO, 2009a.

62 See Blanco, 2009.

63 Guarcello and others, 2006.