

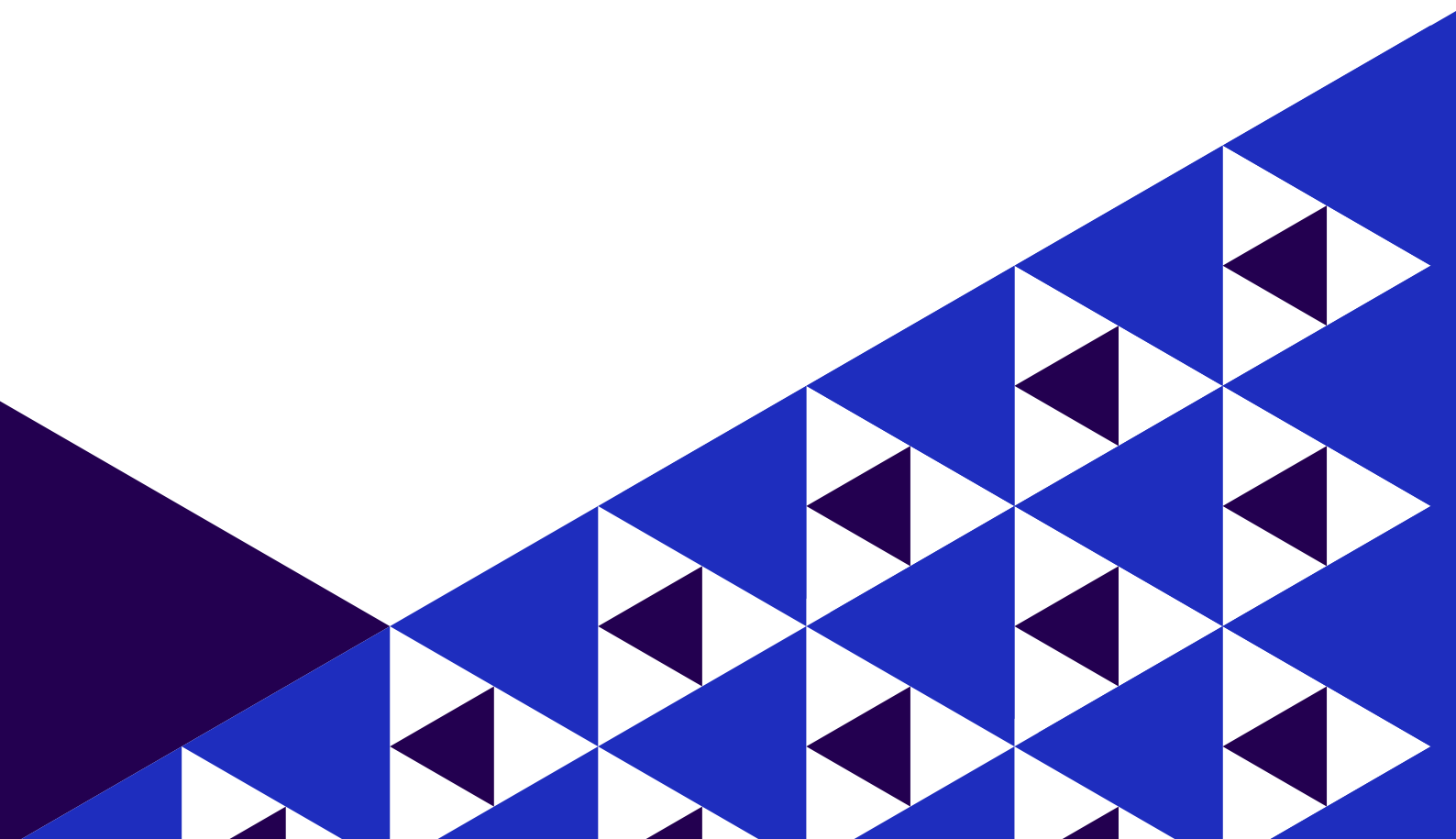


International
Labour
Organization

► ILC.114/Report VI

► Advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work

International Labour Conference
114th Session, 2026



Report VI

► **Advancing the transformative agenda
for gender equality in the world of
work**

General discussion

Sixth item on the agenda





Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. See: creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0. The user is allowed to reuse, share (copy and redistribute), adapt (remix, transform and build upon the original work) as detailed in the licence. The user must clearly credit the ILO as the source of the material and indicate if changes were made to the original content. Use of the emblem, name and logo of the ILO is not permitted in connection with translations, adaptations or other derivative works.

Attribution – The user must indicate if changes were made and must cite the work as follows: *Advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work – General discussion*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2026. © ILO.

Translations – In case of a translation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This is a translation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This translation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO translation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the translation.*

Adaptations – In case of an adaptation of this work, the following disclaimer must be added along with the attribution: *This is an adaptation of a copyrighted work of the International Labour Organization (ILO). This adaptation has not been prepared, reviewed or endorsed by the ILO and should not be considered an official ILO adaptation. The ILO disclaims all responsibility for its content and accuracy. Responsibility rests solely with the author(s) of the adaptation.*

Third-party materials – This Creative Commons licence does not apply to non-ILO copyright materials included in this publication. If the material is attributed to a third party, the user of such material is solely responsible for clearing the rights with the rights holder and for any claims of infringement.

Any dispute arising under this licence that cannot be settled amicably shall be referred to arbitration in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The parties shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of such a dispute.

For details on rights and licensing, contact: rights@ilo.org. For details on ILO publications and digital products, visit: www.ilo.org/publns.

ISBN 978-92-2-042535-0 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042536-7 (web PDF)

Also available in:

Arabic: ISBN 978-92-2-042545-9 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042546-6 (web PDF);
Chinese: ISBN 978-92-2-042547-3 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042548-0 (web PDF);
French: ISBN 978-92-2-042537-4 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042538-1 (web PDF);
German: ISBN 978-92-2-042541-1 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042542-8 (web PDF);
Russian: ISBN 978-92-2-042543-5 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042544-2 (web PDF);
Spanish: ISBN 978-92-2-042539-8 (print), ISBN 978-92-2-042540-4 (web PDF).

The designations employed in ILO publications and databases, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the ILO concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. See: www.ilo.org/disclaimer.

The opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions, views or policies of the ILO.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the ILO, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.



► Contents

	Page	
Introduction.....	5	
Chapter 1. Trends related to women and men in the world of work	9	
1.1. Advances in education, but digital literacy gaps widening	9	
1.2. Women's labour force participation presents a mixed picture	10	
1.3. Share of women in vulnerable forms of employment still high, but declining.....	14	
1.4. Gender gap remains in hours spent on paid and unpaid work	16	
1.5. Gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation persists in wage employment	17	
1.6. Incidence of low pay among women wage workers declining but gender pay gaps persist	20	
1.7. Women's representation in decision-making positions is crucial	22	
Chapter 2. What is slowing progress on gender equality in the world of work?	25	
2.1. Gaps persist in the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work	25	
2.2. Violence and harassment in the world of work remains a stubborn barrier to dignity, equality and inclusion	31	
2.3. Unequal care responsibilities limit women's rights to and at work	33	
2.4. Macroeconomic, sectoral and labour market policies, when not inclusive, can limit women's access to decent work.....	37	
2.5. Prevailing attitudes and stereotypes can undermine efforts to promote gender equality	42	
Chapter 3. Strategic approaches to deliver on gender equality in the world of work	45	
3.1. Rights for gender equality in the world of work.....	45	
3.2. Well-functioning and accountable institutions are key to delivering on gender equality	54	
3.3. Advancing a sustainable economy for the well-being of all	56	
Chapter 4. Accelerating action on the transformative agenda for gender equality	63	
4.1. Strengthened integration of, and increased attention to, gender equality and non-discrimination in international labour standards.....	63	
4.2. Greater efforts on gender-responsive employment, enterprise and wage policies	64	
4.3. More effective action to accelerate the Agenda's impact.....	65	
4.4. The role of the ILO in the way forward.....	65	

► Introduction

1. **Significant progress has been made in the first quarter of the twenty-first century on gender equality in the world of work.** Women everywhere are more educated than ever before, participate in the labour market in greater numbers and are increasingly accessing managerial and leadership roles. These gains reflect, in part, a recognition that gender equality is foundational to shared prosperity, well-being and equitable societies.
2. **Yet overall progress remains modest and uneven across countries and regions.** Gender gaps in employment and pay persist and women remain over-represented in roles that are typically undervalued and have less decent working conditions. In low- and lower-middle-income countries, where the share of informal employment predominates, women remain over-represented in the informal economy, with limited access to labour and social protection. Structural and systemic barriers, including discrimination, entrenched social norms and unequal care responsibilities, continue to drive gender inequalities in the world of work.
3. **At the same time, rapid advances in new technologies and digitalization, the impact of climate change and ongoing demographic shifts are rapidly reshaping how people live, work and relate to each other.** While these ongoing shifts offer significant potential for innovation, productivity and more inclusive growth, they also generate new risks and uncertainties for gender equality, not least because women and men experience these transformations differently. With deliberate gender-responsive policies, these changes can become powerful drivers to reduce existing inequalities, including gender inequality, in the world of work.
4. **Moreover, geopolitical fragmentation, ongoing conflicts and the erosion of democracy are adding to a growing sense of uncertainty and volatility.** Under such circumstances, there is a risk that hard-won human, social and labour rights, and gains for women and gender equality, might be slowed down or reversed. In times of crisis, women and girls are often disproportionately affected, facing increased economic insecurity, unpaid care burdens and exposure to discrimination, violence and harassment. Shrinking civic space and weakened institutions further undermine women's participation in decision-making and access to justice at crucial times.
5. **Acting now will help societies and economies secure significant long-term gains and avoid future setbacks.** Gender inequality will perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty, undermine economic growth, limit innovation and stifle productivity. It will also result in weakened governance, leaving societies less stable and less resilient to global challenges, including those posed by technological, environmental and demographic shifts.
6. **Accelerated action on gender equality is therefore needed to achieve a sustainable economy for the well-being of all.** Gender equality should be understood not only as a fundamental human right, but also as a precondition for shared prosperity and a powerful lever for addressing structural inequalities across labour markets, households and societies. Advancing gender equality in different economic contexts strengthens economic resilience, supports inclusive growth and contributes to a fairer distribution of opportunities, resources and outcomes, including by contributing to enterprise sustainability.
7. **The ILO's transformative agenda for gender equality ("the Agenda") provides a useful compass for seizing emerging opportunities and advancing gender equality.** In the ILO



Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 108th Session (2019), the Agenda comprised four pillars.¹ In 2021, these evolved into six under the Global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient (box 1).

► Box 1. The genesis and evolution of the Agenda

The ILO's transformative agenda for gender equality reflects a century-long evolution rooted in the Organization's founding principles. Anchored in the 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia – which affirmed that all people, regardless of sex, have the right to pursue well-being in conditions of freedom and dignity – the Agenda builds on decades of standard-setting, research, technical support and advocacy. These efforts laid the groundwork for a more integrated approach to gender equality that responds to changes in the world of work and recognizes women's critical contributions.

The Agenda emerged from the ILO [Women at Work Centenary Initiative](#), launched in 2014 ahead of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality and women's empowerment, and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Initiative focused on four key barriers: discrimination and stereotypes; low pay and the absence of equal pay; the undervaluation and unequal distribution of care work; and violence and harassment. It paved the way for major milestones, including the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the 2024 [resolution concerning decent work and the care economy](#).

In the 2021 Global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, the International Labour Conference recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected women disproportionately, with greater job and income losses due to their concentration in hard-hit sectors. It highlighted the need for a more comprehensive transformative agenda, which evolved from the basic four pillars to link gender equality, decent work outcomes, social protection, skills formation, the care economy and labour rights. An important addition is the need to prevent and address gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.

The adoption of the 2021 [resolution concerning inequalities in the world of work](#) and the 2024 resolution concerning decent work and the care economy furthered the Agenda by acknowledging that gender inequalities remain persistent and pervasive and a major barrier to reducing overall inequalities in the world of work, and that advancing decent work in the care economy – including quality jobs, social protection and gender-responsive care services – is critical for gender equality and the realization of fundamental rights at work and equitable access to care for all.



8. The Agenda's six pillars are interconnected and mutually reinforcing:

- (i) ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, supported inter alia by pay transparency;
- (ii) expanding policies providing adequate paid care leave and promoting a more balanced sharing of work and family responsibilities;
- (iii) promoting employment creation and lifelong learning policies that close gender skills gaps;

¹ ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019, para. II(A)(vii):

- ... achieving gender equality at work through a transformative agenda ... which:
- ensures equal opportunities, equal participation and equal treatment, including equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value;
 - enables a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities;
 - provides scope for achieving better work-life balance by enabling workers and employers to agree on solutions, including on working time, that consider their respective needs and benefits; and
 - promotes investment in the care economy.

- (iv) investing in education, healthcare, social work, the care economy and other sectors, addressing understaffing and improving working conditions;
- (v) removing legal and other types of barriers to entry to and advancement in education, training, employment and careers, including by combating gender stereotypes;
- (vi) preventing and protecting against gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.²

9. **The Agenda's transformative nature rests on two interrelated dimensions.** First, it seeks to address the root causes of gender inequalities by tackling structural drivers, such as discriminatory stereotypes, economic and labour market factors and legal and institutional barriers, while advancing social protection and rights at work. It takes a systemic approach, seeking to address multiple and intersecting grounds of discrimination, such as sex, race, ethnicity, age, disability and migration status. Second, it is transformative in its forward-looking ambition to prevent and mitigate the potentially adverse impacts on gender equality of technological, environmental and demographic transitions.
10. **Ultimately, the Agenda seeks to influence social norms, institutions and power relations to achieve greater equality and a fairer, more inclusive and productive world of work for all.** Central to this vision is empowering those most affected by discrimination and inequality to exercise their right to a collective voice and representation – not merely as beneficiaries, but as agents and leaders of change. In this respect, social dialogue, in all its forms, constitutes the backbone and principal enabler of the transformative change the Agenda seeks to achieve. The Agenda therefore aims to move beyond incremental improvements towards deep, structural change capable of delivering sustainable results.
11. **Recognizing the need to elevate the discourse on gender equality and the multidimensional aspects of equality by taking stock of progress and barriers as well as measures that have proven to be effective in advancing gender equality at work,** the Governing Body decided, at its 352nd Session (October–November 2024), to place on the agenda of the 114th Session (2026) of the International Labour Conference an item for a general discussion on advancing the transformative agenda for gender equality at work.³ This report has been prepared to inform the general discussion.
12. **Drawing on new evidence, promising practices and innovations from constituents,** it builds on the Organization's historic mandate and long-standing normative framework to assess progress and persistent challenges in achieving gender equality in the world of work. It examines what is needed to accelerate structural change and how the ILO and its constituents and partners can raise ambition at a time when the costs of inaction have seldom been higher.
13. **The report is organized in four chapters.** Chapter 1 explores key trends related to gender equality in the world of work. Chapter 2 examines the underlying barriers that continue to limit progress on gender equality in the world of work. Chapter 3 outlines strategic approaches to addressing gender equality, highlighting promising interventions and practices. Chapter 4 looks ahead by identifying key areas for constituents' consideration and discussion.



² ILO, *Global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient*, 2021, para. 11(B)(g).

³ ILO, *Minutes of the 352nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office*, para. 75(a); see also *Agenda of future sessions of the International Labour Conference*, Appendix I, section 4.

► Chapter 1

Trends related to women and men in the world of work ⁴

14. **In recent decades, women worldwide have made significant strides**, including in education, labour market participation and skills formation, and have a greater presence in occupations and sectors where they were historically less present. In addition, there has been an increase in their legal, political and institutional representation, accompanied by an overall positive change in how populations perceive women's rights and women's place in society. However, gender inequalities persist in several dimensions, and gains have been uneven across country-income groups.

1.1. Advances in education, but digital literacy gaps widening

15. **Across the first quarter of the twenty-first century, women have made significant advances in education, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.** In the early 2000s, 60 per cent of women in low-income countries had less than a primary education, compared to 40 per cent of men. In lower-middle-income countries, these proportions were 40 per cent for women and 25 per cent for men, and in upper-middle-income countries, they were 18 per cent for women and 12 per cent for men. By the mid-2020s, the proportion of women with less than a primary education had fallen to 42 per cent in low-income, 36 per cent in lower-middle-income and 10 per cent in upper-middle-income countries, while the proportion of women with a completed secondary education or higher had increased considerably in each of the country-income groups. In most cases, the improvement occurred primarily among younger cohorts of women. Thus, by the mid-2020s, in low-income countries, 29 per cent of women aged 16–19 had completed at least a secondary education, nearly matching the share of men (30 per cent), while in lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries, women aged 20–29 had reached similar or higher levels of education than men. However, women aged 50 and above remained far more likely than men to have only a primary education or less.
16. **However, gender gaps in digital literacy have widened, as many women and girls, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, continue to face barriers to accessing new technologies and digital skills.** Results from a 2018 international study on the information and communications technology (ICT) literacy of 15-year-old (eighth-grade) students in 21 countries, most of which high-income, showed that although girls outperformed boys in digital skills tests, they were less likely to pursue studies or careers in ICT-related fields. ⁵ Globally, the share of female students in technical and vocational education and training also declined, from 45 per cent in 1995 to 42 per cent in 2018. Correspondingly, women represent less than 25 per cent of tertiary students in engineering or ICT in over two thirds of countries. Worldwide, 327 million fewer women than men own a smartphone, and women and girls often face more restricted access to

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, the empirical evidence in Chapter 1 is drawn from an analysis of population-representative survey data covering more than 100 countries, which together represent all four country-income groups: ILO, *An empirical analysis of the evolution of women and men in the world of work through the twenty-first century*, forthcoming. These estimates are based on data covering 2000–06 (early 2000s) and 2021–24 (mid-2020s). The estimates in this report may vary from the final ones presented in the forthcoming publication. For more information on the country-income groups, see “Country, territory and area groupings” on the ILOSTAT website.

⁵ Hannelore Faulstich-Wieland, “Case Study on School Counselling and Vocational or Career Orientation to Improve Girls' Access in Secondary TVET and Women's access in STEM”, UNESCO, 2020, 12, 34 and 39.



household digital resources.⁶ The digital divide is greater among rural women, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where women are 7 per cent less likely than men to own a mobile phone, 16 per cent less likely to use a smartphone and half as likely to use the internet.⁷ Globally, about two thirds of illiterate adults are women, with literacy gaps concentrated in low-income countries.⁸

1.2. Women's labour force participation presents a mixed picture

17. **Globally, the number of women in the labour force** – defined as those of working age who are employed or are available and looking for work – **rose from 1.1 billion in 2000 to 1.5 billion in 2025**. Over the same period, however, **the number of women outside the labour force also rose substantially, largely reflecting growing female participation in education**. As a result, women's labour force participation rate – the share of working-age women who are in the labour force – declined from 51 per cent in 2000 to 48 per cent in 2025.⁹ This mirrors the overall trend in the global labour force participation rate, which fell from 64 per cent to 61 per cent over the same period. Figure 1 shows significant variations by country-income group, however: between 2005 and 2025, women's labour force participation declined in low-income countries (from 57 to 53 per cent) and in upper-middle-income countries (from 57 to 54 per cent), while it remained relatively stable in lower-middle-income countries (at around 41 per cent) and increased by 2 percentage points in high-income countries (from 52 to 54 per cent).¹⁰



⁶ UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Gender Report. A New Generation: 25 Years of Efforts for Gender Equality in Education*, 20.

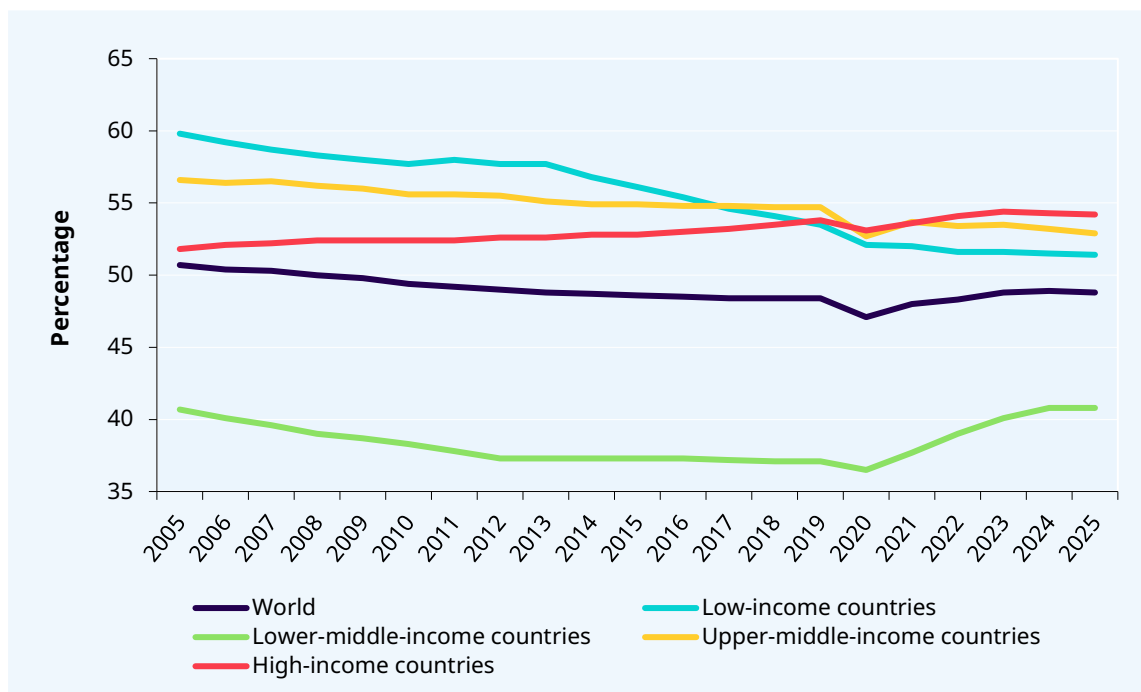
⁷ IFAD, "A digital divide is holding rural women back. Here is what we can do to change this", 2023.

⁸ UNESCO, "International Literacy Day 2025: Promoting Literacy in the Digital Era", factsheet, 2025, 1.

⁹ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 84.

¹⁰ The change in the participation rate of women in high-income countries is relatively mixed. Some large high-income countries show a decline between 2005 and 2025 (for example, of 0.6 percentage points in Canada, and 1.76 percentage points in the United States of America). Thus, the weighted average among high-income countries shadows the dynamics in other high-income countries where female participation rates increased substantially over the 20-year period (for example, by 6 percentage points in Germany, and as much as 10 percentage points in Chile and 12 percentage points in Hungary). Source: [ILOSTAT database](#).

► **Figure 1. Trends in female labour force participation (%) 2005–25, world and by country-income group**



Source: Sher Verick, “Female Labor Force Participation and Development”, *IZA World of Labour*, art. 87 (2025). Original data from ILOSTAT database.

18. The above-mentioned decline in women’s labour force participation did not result in a substantial change in women’s employment rates, which remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2025, decreasing slightly from 48 to 46 per cent. Over the same period, the unemployment rate among women also declined, from 6.3 to 5.0 per cent. Although women’s global unemployment rate increased from 5.6 to 6.5 per cent between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate has since recovered to pre-pandemic levels in most regions. The exceptions are the Arab States (currently at 27.5 per cent in countries that are not members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and 10.5 per cent in those that are GCC members, 1 percentage point above the level in 2000).¹¹ These increases in unemployment are due to multiple factors – women’s rising participation in the labour force, slow job creation, public sector lay-offs, sectoral restructuring and persistent constraints on women’s access to wage employment – and are exacerbated by economic shocks and instability. In Asia, slowing economic growth and shifts from labour-intensive manufacturing to high-tech sectors have further reduced labour market demand for women, particularly in labour-intensive light manufacturing sectors such as textiles and apparel, where female employment dominates.¹²
19. **Overall, women continue to face more barriers to entering the labour market and fewer opportunities to find employment, particularly wage employment.** In 2025, the global jobs gap rate – the people of working age who want a job but cannot find one – remained higher for women (13.7 per cent) than for men (9.3 per cent).¹³ The gender gap in weekly working hours has shown little change in the last 15 years: in 2024, estimates indicate that women worked around

¹¹ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 96–99.

¹² See, for example, World Bank, “[East Asia and Pacific Country Economic Updates](#)”.

¹³ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 84.

37 hours a week, compared with 44 hours for men.¹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these disparities: between 2019 and 2020, women's employment fell by 4.2 per cent compared with a 3.0 per cent drop among men.¹⁵ This reflects women's concentration in sectors most affected by lockdowns and reduced hours or temporary inactivity. Women in informal employment were hit harder, particularly in countries with a large informal economy. For example, in Viet Nam, the demand for domestic workers, most of whom are women in the informal economy, fell by 17 per cent between the last quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020; in the Philippines, it dropped by as much as 45 per cent.¹⁶ Overall, the global rate of informal employment among women decreased from 57 per cent in 2010 to 54.6 per cent in 2020, while men's informal employment remained stable at around 61 per cent.¹⁷

20. **In 2025, the global gender gap in labour force participation stood at 25 percentage points, with women's participation at 48 per cent, compared with 73 per cent among men.** Between 2000 and 2025, the global gender gap in labour force participation fell by 2.4 percentage points, largely because men's participation declined more sharply (5 percentage points) than women's (2.6 percentage points).¹⁸ Estimates for 2024 and 2025 show wide regional variations. High-income regions have comparatively small gaps: around 9 percentage points in the Pacific countries, 10.8 percentage points in Northern, Southern and Western Europe and 10.6 percentage points in North America. This is a result of greater access to wage employment and policies that ease women's unpaid care burdens. Gaps are also relatively small in low-income regions with limited wage employment, such as sub-Saharan Africa (11 percentage points). Regions with fewer wage jobs and strong gender barriers face much larger gaps, including South-East Asia (47.5 percentage points) and North Africa (48.9 percentage points).
21. **The gender gap in labour force participation varies by age, widening most among women in their mid-20s to late 30s as they start or expand their families.** Figure 2 illustrates that the gender gap in labour force participation widens during the reproductive years and persists even among older age groups. In upper-middle-income countries, data from the mid-2020s shows that women's labour force participation rises from about 29 per cent at ages 16–19 to around 62 per cent at ages 30–39, while men's participation increases from 39 per cent to about 89 per cent over the same age range. This widening is more pronounced in lower-middle-income countries, but less so in high-income countries.



¹⁴ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 85.

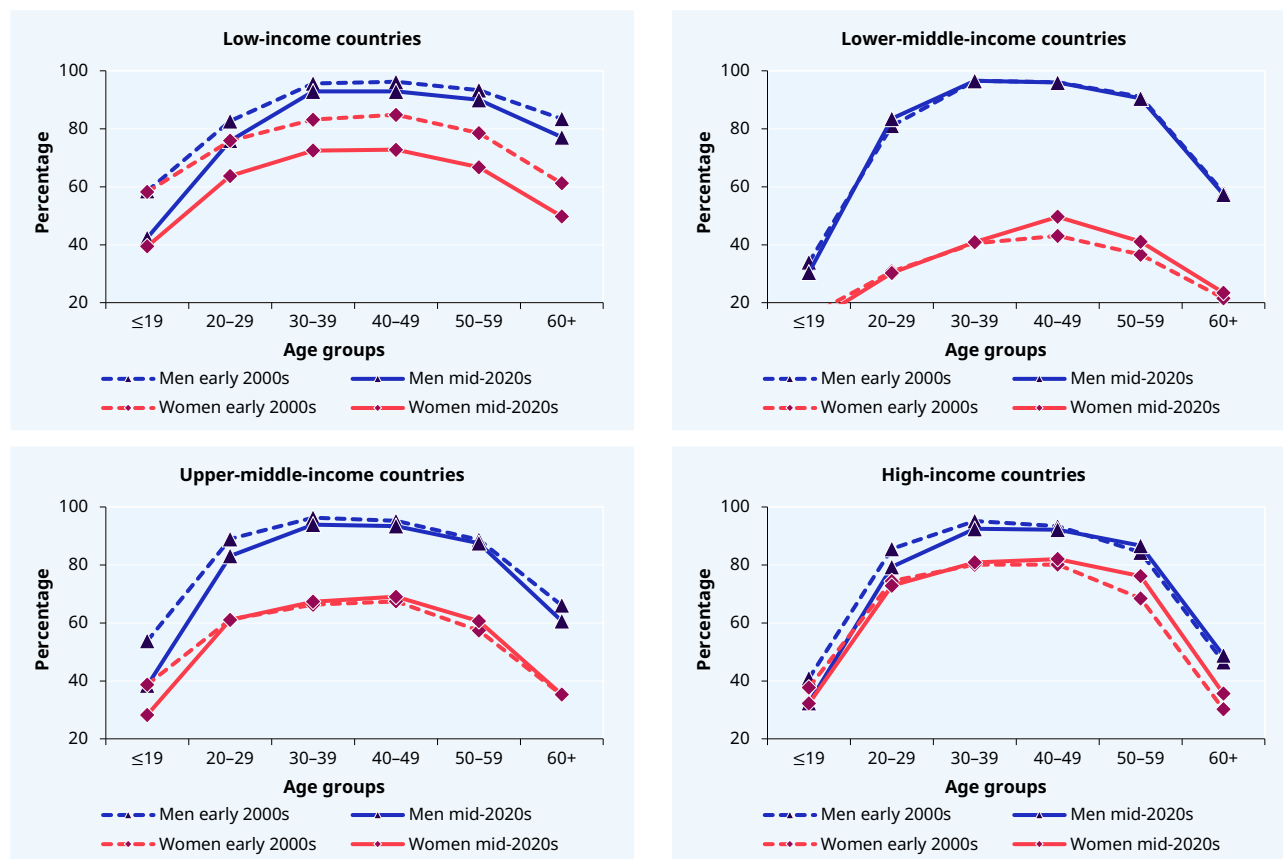
¹⁵ ILO, *An Uneven and Gender-Unequal COVID-19 Recovery: Update on Gender and Employment Trends 2021*, 2.

¹⁶ ILO, *Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects in Asia and the Pacific, Ten Years After the Adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)*, 2021, 43–44.

¹⁷ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 85.

¹⁸ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024*, 84.

► **Figure 2. Participation of women and men by age cohort and country-income group, early 2000s and mid-2020s**



Note: As a percentage of the working population aged 16–75. Source: ILO estimates.

22. **Worldwide, one in four people aged 15–24 is not in employment, education or training,¹⁹ with young women disproportionately affected.** Globally, 26.7 per cent of young women are not in employment, education or training, compared with around 7.9 per cent of young men.²⁰ The rate for women in sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 27 per cent, 10.1 percentage points higher than that of young men (16.9 per cent).²¹ Whereas the rate among young persons with disabilities is higher than that in the overall youth population, the rate for young women with disabilities is even higher than that of young men with disabilities.

¹⁹ ILO, “Measuring What Matters: NEET vs Youth Unemployment”, 2025.

²⁰ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent Work, Brighter Futures*, 10.

²¹ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024*, 90–91.

► **Box 2. Intersecting factors that shape gender equality in the world of work**

Women from marginalized or minority groups often experience wider employment and wage gaps, higher rates of precarious or informal work, and fewer opportunities for advancement compared with women who do not face intersecting forms of discrimination. For example, in Brazil, 40 per cent of employed white women are wage workers with a formal contract, compared with 33 per cent of employed black women in wage employment. Conversely, about 17 per cent of white women wage workers are in informal employment, whereas this figure rises to 26 per cent among employed black women.¹ Brazil has taken steps to address these inequalities through legislative measures requiring employers to collect self-identified data on race and ethnicity;² and requiring employers with 100 or more employees to publish pay transparency reports disaggregated by race and gender, accompanied by corrective action plans.³

Geographic inequalities also matter. Women in rural areas are less likely to hold wage jobs (32 per cent) than women in urban areas (36 per cent), and even in similar types of work – such as agriculture – rural women tend to earn less than rural men.⁴ In rural settings, about 27 per cent of women are contributing family workers, reflecting their concentration in unpaid family activities, particularly in agriculture, while in urban areas this share drops to 9 per cent, indicating greater access to wage employment.⁵

Age, migration status and disability status further shape women's labour market experiences, creating distinct barriers that differ from those faced by other women. Recognizing these differences is essential, as aggregate comparisons between women and men can obscure the diverse and unequal realities within the broader group of women.

¹ Bernardo Cabral et al., *From Invisible Door to Glass Ceiling: Barriers to Women Obtaining Decent Work in Brazil*, PEP Working Paper Series, 2024, table 1. ² Law No. 14,553/2023, amending the Statute of Racial Equality. ³ Law No. 14,611/2023 on Equal Pay. ⁴ Sévane Ananian and Giulia Dellaferrera, *Employment and Wage Disparities Between Rural and Urban Areas*, ILO Working Paper 107, 2024, 27. ⁵ ILO, "How the Latest Statistical Standards Improve Knowledge About Rural Women's Work", 2024.

1.3. Share of women in vulnerable forms of employment still high, but declining

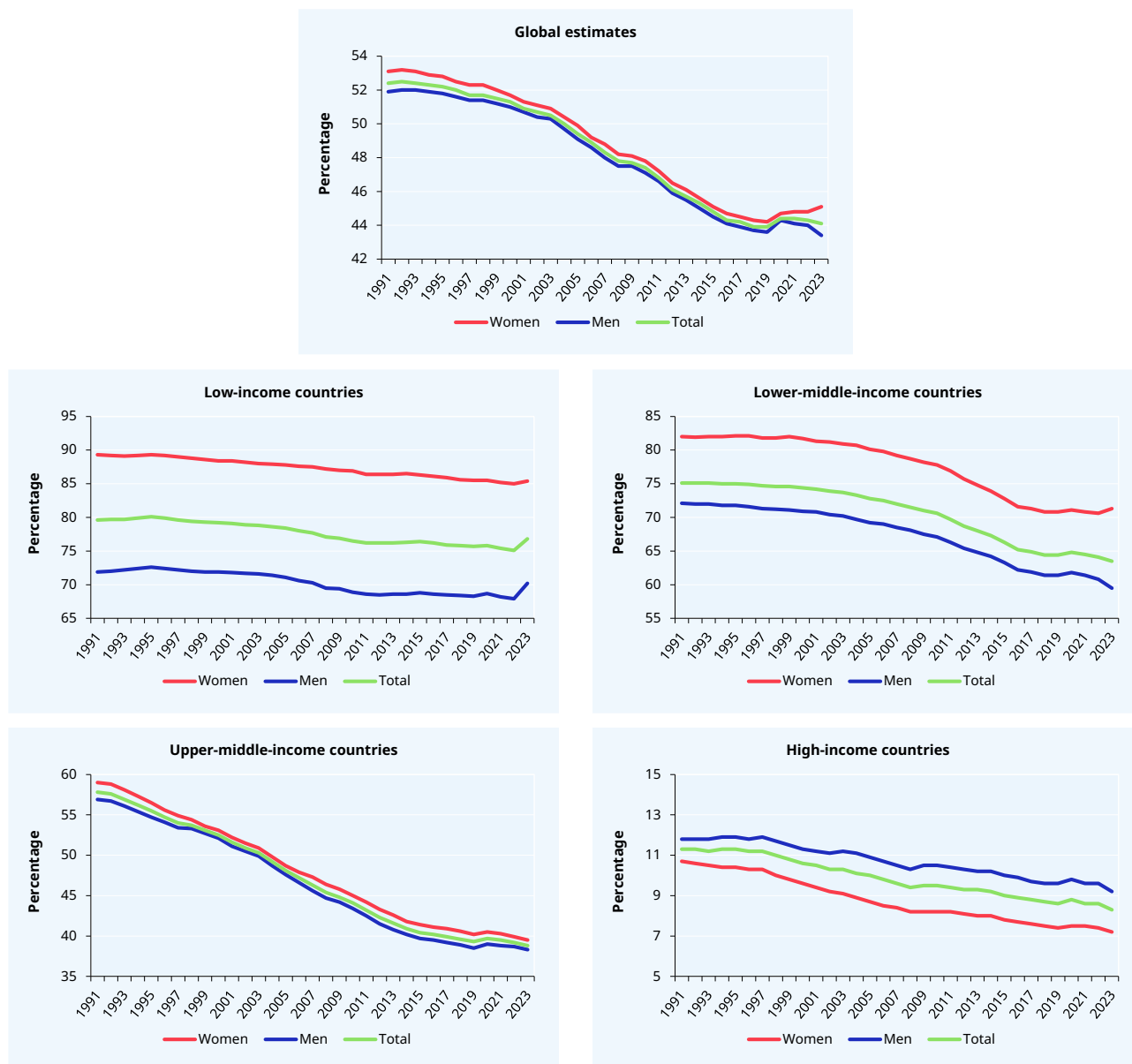
23. **The proportion of women in vulnerable employment²² has declined since the start of the twenty-first century, but the share remains high in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.** Figure 3 shows that the share of women in vulnerable employment declined by an estimated 7 percentage points between 1999 and 2023. The decline was noticeable in lower-middle-income countries (11 percentage points) and upper-middle-income countries (13 percentage points). However, in most country-income groups, the share of women in vulnerable employment in 2023 remained high, at 85 per cent in low-income countries, 71 per cent in lower-middle-income countries and 40 per cent in upper-middle-income countries.²³ This reflects a lack of sufficient wage employment in these country-income groups, as well as the over-representation of women in sectors and geographic locations most susceptible to vulnerable employment.

²² The ILO defines workers in vulnerable employment as contributing family workers and own-account workers.

²³ ILOSTAT database.



► **Figure 3. Proportion of women and men in vulnerable employment, global and by country-income group, 1991–2023**



Note: The figures show proportions relative to the working-age population. Source: ILOSTAT database.

24. Informality underlies vulnerable employment across all regions, with women disproportionately concentrated in occupations, sectors and workplaces where informal arrangements dominate. Estimates from 2025 show that women continue to be more exposed to informality in countries where the share of informal employment is at or above 50 per cent. That is the case in 88 per cent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 85 per cent of countries in South Asia and 52 per cent of countries in Latin American and the Caribbean. Globally, 28.1 per cent of women in informal employment are contributing family workers, significantly higher than the 8.7 per cent among men.²⁴ Contributing family workers are in one of the most vulnerable forms of employment and are often unpaid and exposed to significant decent work deficits. Informal

²⁴ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, third edition, 2018, 21–22.

employment is often higher in highly feminized sectors: global estimates show that women account for 76 per cent of domestic workers and 56 per cent of home-based workers.²⁵

1.4. Gender gap remains in hours spent on paid and unpaid work

- 25. Time constraints faced by women due to unequal care responsibilities are among the main factors limiting women's engagement in paid employment.** According to the latest estimates,²⁶ globally women spend on average 40.5 hours per week in paid work, 5.7 hours fewer than the global average among all men in paid work. This reflects the higher incidence of part-time paid work among women: around 31 per cent of women (compared to 17 per cent of men) work fewer than 35 hours per week in paid employment.²⁷ Regional differences are pronounced: 39 per cent of women in high-income countries work part-time, 21 per cent in middle-income countries, and 55 per cent in low-income countries, reaching 81 per cent in countries in Asia and the Pacific.²⁸ Reduced-hours work can support work-life balance, labour market attachment and stable productive employment outcomes for both workers and employers. However, the implications for job quality vary significantly across institutional and regulatory contexts. In many settings, part-time and reduced-hours arrangements are associated with underused skills, lower earnings, fewer benefits and unstable schedules,²⁹ including zero-hours contracts or schemes in many countries.³⁰ Globally, 24 per cent of women, compared with 41 per cent of men, work more than 48 hours per week for pay, at a time when many countries are placing limits on excessive working time to protect workers' occupational safety and health.
- 26. While women's participation in paid work has risen substantially over the past two to three decades, men's participation in unpaid care work has not.**³¹ When unpaid and paid work are combined, women work longer hours than men in all regions of the world. With a much larger share of women's working time remaining unpaid, the imbalance contributes to time poverty³² and income poverty. Work-life balance is a fundamental condition for gender equality. Achieving it requires a reform of the current model of production, which fails to address the structural problem of the unequal gender division of labour, particularly with respect to unpaid care and domestic work.

²⁵ ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Update*, 2023, 51.

²⁶ ILO, *Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World*, 2022, 11.

²⁷ ILO, *Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World*, 58.

²⁸ ILO, *Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World*, 23.

²⁹ Abi Adams and Jeremias Prassl, *Zero-Hours Work in the United Kingdom*, ILO Conditions of Work and Employment Series No. 101, 2018.

³⁰ Sangheon Lee, Deirdre McCann and Jon C. Messenger, *Working Time Around the World: Trends in Working Hours, Laws and Policies in a Global Comparative Perspective*, Routledge and ILO, 2007, 118.

³¹ Estimates from the United States show that between 1965 and 2003, men's total market work (paid work) declined by about 12 hours per week, while total non-market work (caring, shopping and doing chores for the house) increased by about 4 hours. The result is that among men leisure time increased by about 8 hours. Over the same period, women's paid work rose by about 2.5 hours, and whereas total non-market work declined by about 10 hours per week, total non-market work among women approximated 23 hours per week, compared to 13 hours among men. This means that despite the larger decline in non-market work time per week among women, the relative increase in leisure time among women has been smaller than that among men. Mark Aguiar and Erik Hurst, *Measuring Trends in Leisure: The Allocation of Time Over Five Decades*, NBER Working Paper 12082, 2006.

³² Time poverty is when individuals do not have enough time for rest and leisure because of excessively long hours of paid work or unpaid care and domestic work. Liangshu Qi and Xiao-yuan Dong, "Gender, Low-Paid Status, and Time Poverty in Urban China", *Feminist Economics* 24, No. 2 (2018), 171–193.



1.5. Gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation persists in wage employment

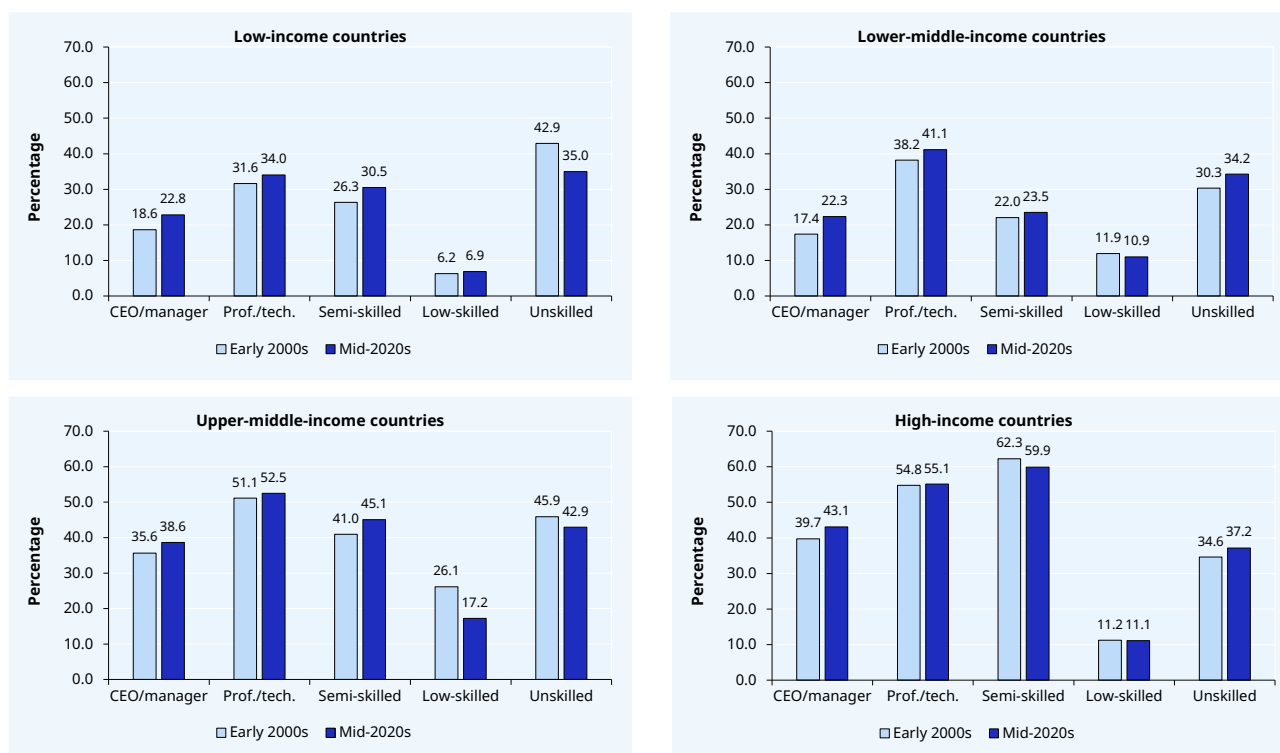
27. **Patterns of gendered sectoral and occupational segregation persist globally, reflecting a combination of labour market structures, skills pathways and historical employment patterns.** This contributes to the persistence of feminized or highly feminized sectors and the over-representation of women in lower occupational categories. Across all regions, sectors such as construction, energy, transport, storage and communications remain male-dominated, while care sectors and other social and personal services are female-dominated. The manufacturing industry is largely male-dominated and highly skill-intensive in high-income countries but is reaching gender parity or is female-dominated in some lower-middle-income countries, where it also tends to be less skill-intensive. Empirically, gender-based segregation manifests itself in the form of horizontal (sector-based) segregation or vertical (occupation-based) segregation. For example, even in highly feminized sectors, men hold a disproportionately higher share of senior or managerial positions, whereas women tend to hold positions with lesser pay and decision-making.
28. **Across country-income groups, women remain under-represented in occupations associated with decision-making roles.**³³ Across all country-income groups, the share of women in chief executive officer (CEO) and managerial positions increased modestly between the early 2000s and the mid-2020s, by 3–5 percentage points across country-income groups. However, the share of women has remained below that of men and far from achieving parity in decision-making roles (figure 4).³⁴



³³ “Decision-making roles” refers to senior positions, including senior managerial positions, where the actions of the jobholder involve taking decisions with a significant degree of responsibility with an impact on increasing productivity.

³⁴ The comparison between periods takes into consideration that the classification of occupations changed between 1988 (ISCO-88) and 2008 (ISCO-08). The change affects mostly the disaggregation of unskilled occupations in group 9 of the ISCO classification.

► **Figure 4. Distribution of women and men in occupational groups, by country-income group, early 2000s and mid-2020s**

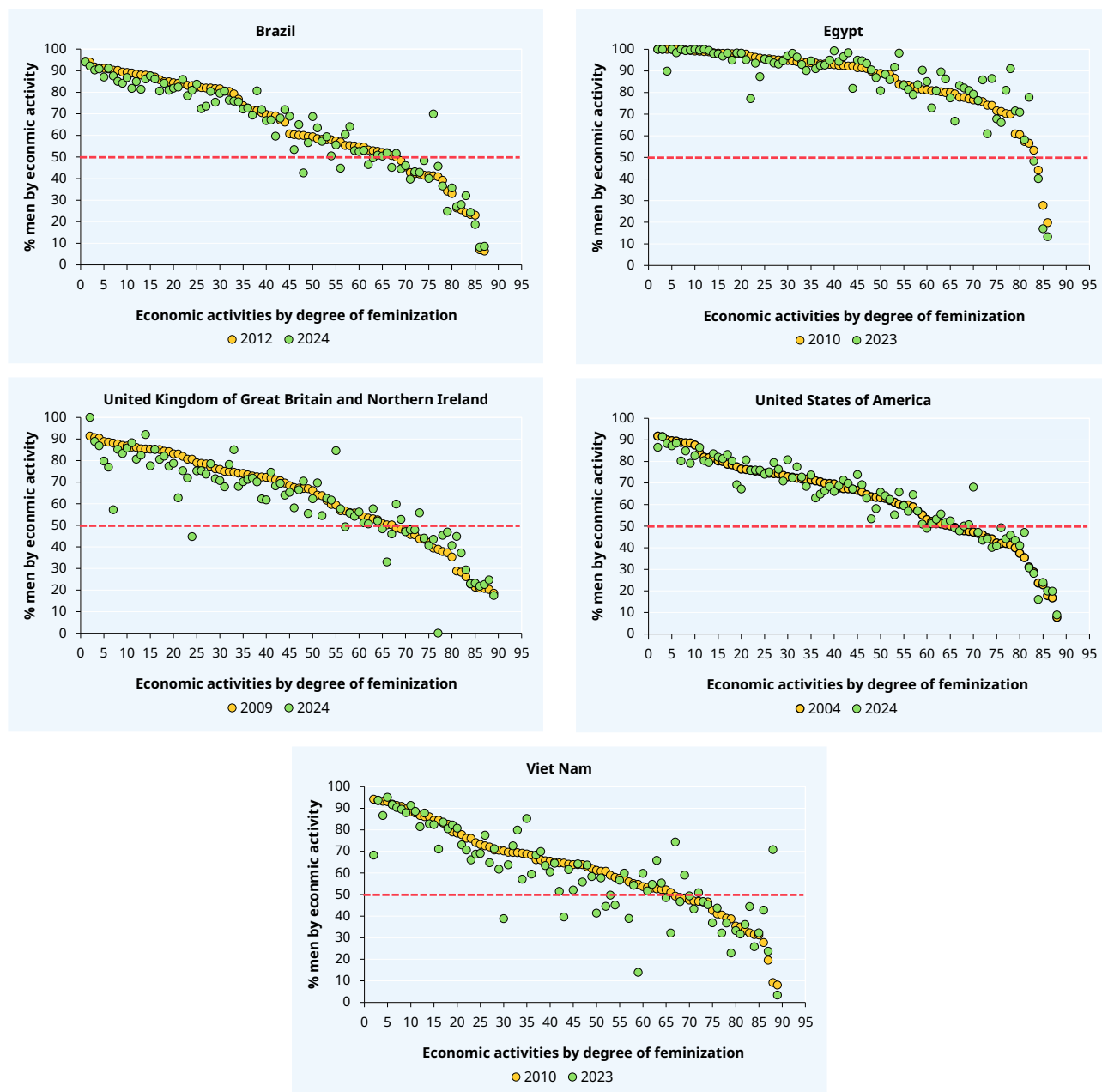


Note: Occupational categories for early 2000s and mid-2020s based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations 88 (ISCO-88) and 08 (ISCO-08), respectively. Source: ILO estimates.

- 29. Country-based estimates representing different regions in the world show a high degree of sector-based segregation that has remained mostly unchanged over the past two decades.** Survey data from multiple countries reveals a common pattern: women wage workers are heavily concentrated in a small number of economic activities – including in education, healthcare, and social work (figure 5).³⁵ Thus, in most activities, men dominate: for example, they account for at least 50 per cent of wage workers in 64 of 88 activities in Brazil, 81 per cent in Egypt and about two thirds in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States and Viet Nam. By contrast, women are clustered in a few highly feminized activities (those in which 70 per cent or more workers are women). In the mid-2020s, 48.5 per cent of women wage workers were employed in such activities in Brazil, 43 per cent in the United Kingdom, 26.8 per cent in the United States and 29.3 per cent in Viet Nam. The same survey data shows that horizontal segregation has increased slightly, or remained unchanged, over the past two decades. The concentration of women in highly feminized activities rose from 46.4 to 48.5 per cent in Brazil, from 42.2 to 43.0 per cent in the United Kingdom, and from 23.8 to 26.8 per cent in the United States.

³⁵ Economic activities are classified using the two-digit level of the International Standard of Industrial Classification (ISIC Rev. 4). As the data indicates that the composition of wage employment within economic activities changes only gradually over time, a long-time horizon is necessary to identify meaningful shifts – if any – in the gender distribution across sectors (for example, in health and care). However, only a limited number of countries provide both recent data (2023 or later) and historically comparable data from roughly a decade earlier (2015 or earlier). The estimates presented in figure 5 therefore draw on this small subset of countries, using the longest comparable time series available while illustrating different regions.

► **Figure 5. Ordering of economic activities by increasing degree of feminization (proportion of women), selected countries (early 2000s and mid-2020s)**



Note: The 88 economic activities are identified by the International Standard of Industrial Classification, Rev4. Source: ILO estimates.

30. **The same country-based estimates show that in the last 20 years approximately, there has been a rise in the share of the workforce employed in highly feminized economic activities, alongside a notable increase in the share of men within these activities,** primarily in the health and care sectors. The data shows that in two thirds of highly feminized economic activities, the share of the overall workforce increased, reflecting growth in the demand for workers in these highly feminized sectors. The same data shows that in about 76 per cent of highly feminized economic activities, the share of women wage workers declined, highlighting the growing participation of men in these sectors over the past two decades – even though these sectors and economic activities remain highly feminized. For example, the share of men wage workers in activities associated with social work increased by 2.2. per cent in Brazil, 1.2 per cent in the United

Kingdom and 1.1 per cent in the United States. These findings are consistent with other studies. In the United States the percentage of nurses who are men increased by 59 per cent between 2012 and 2022, and they currently represent nearly 12 per cent of the sector's workforce.³⁶ In the European Union, the long-term care workforce is estimated to have grown by about 33 per cent between 2009 and 2019, with men accounting for 19 per cent of the sector's workforce among the then 28 Member States in 2019.³⁷

- 31. Despite the persistence of horizontal segregation, in highly feminized economic activities men occupy a disproportionately large share of top occupational positions.** For almost all economic activities and across countries, the proportion of men in CEO and managerial positions among all men working in those activities is higher than the proportion of women in CEO/managerial positions among all women in those activities. For example, in social work, where women account for about 80 to 94 per cent of the workforce, 24.3 per cent of men and 15.8 per cent of women are in CEO/management positions in the United Kingdom; in the United States, 15.4 per cent of men and 11.4 per cent of women hold such positions.

1.6. Incidence of low pay among women wage workers declining but gender pay gaps persist

- 32. Over the past 25 years, there has been a decline in the proportion of low-paid wage workers in all country-income groups, which has benefited both women and men.** The decline is more pronounced in low- and middle-income countries, and is probably due to a mixed set of drivers, including: sectoral shifts (for example, more women moving from agriculture to higher-productivity sectors);³⁸ the overall increase in wage employment and a decline in extreme working poverty, particularly in low- and middle-income countries;³⁹ and the increasing role played by minimum wage systems in setting minimum wage floors.⁴⁰ These estimates are in line with findings that in about two thirds of countries, within-country wage inequality declined in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.⁴¹
- 33. Despite the above-mentioned decline, women continue to be concentrated at the lower end of the wage distribution.** Survey-based estimates show that in all four country-income groups the proportion of women declines when moving from the lowest to the highest regions of the hourly wage distribution. Thus, in terms of hourly wages, women make up between 40 and 52 per cent of the lowest-paid 1 per cent of workers; however, of the highest-paid 1 per cent of wage workers, women represent only 22 per cent in low-income and 29 per cent in lower-middle-income countries, and a slightly higher share in upper-middle- and high-income countries (36 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively). Data from the early 2000s to the mid-2020s shows that the pattern remains largely unchanged: women continue to be over-represented at the lower end and under-represented at the higher end of the hourly wage distribution.

³⁶ Rebecca Munday, "Male Nurse Statistics: A Look at the Numbers", in *Nurse Journal*, 2024.

³⁷ Eurofound, *Long-Term Care Workforce: Employment and Working Conditions*, 2020, 4 and 10.

³⁸ Mario Macis, "Gender Differences in Wages and Leadership", *IZA World of Labour*, art. 323 (2017).

³⁹ Globally, wage employment increased from 46 to 52 per cent between 2000 and 2022, while extreme working poverty had declined globally from 27.6 to 6.9 per cent by 2023. ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook; Trends 2024*, 84.

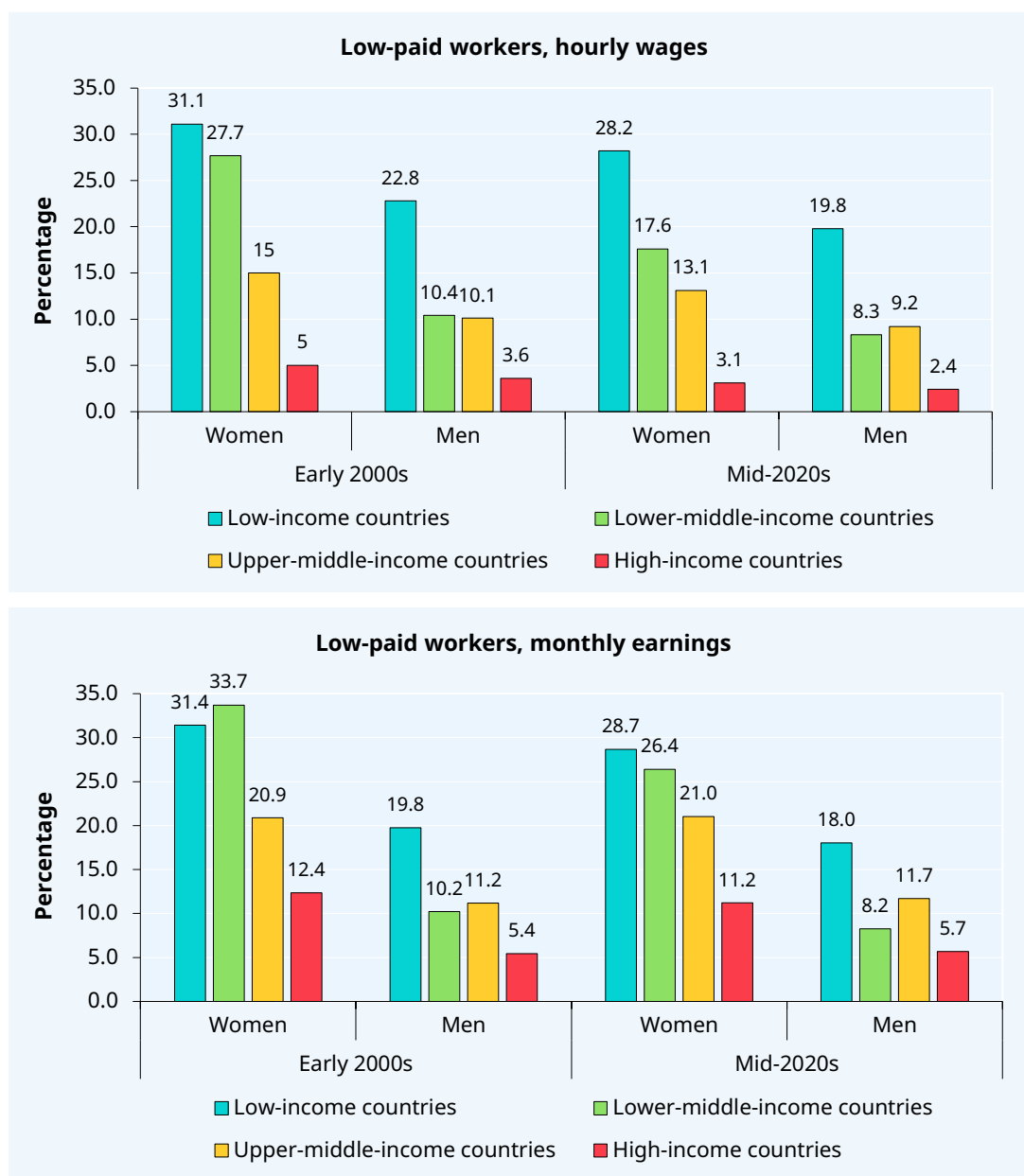
⁴⁰ The *ILO Global Wage Report 2020–21* shows that 90 per cent of ILO Member States have minimum wage systems in place. In relation to the minimum wage, the light house effect implies that minimum wages impact when setting wages among workers in the informal economy (see, for example, Tito Boeri, Pietro Garibaldi and Marta Ribeiro, "Behind the Lighthouse Effect", IZA Discussion Paper No. 4890).

⁴¹ ILO, *ILO Global Wage Report 2024–25: Is Wage Inequality Decreasing Globally?*, xv.



34. **Women's over-representation among low-paid wage workers is evident, whether measured by hourly wages or monthly earnings.** Data from the mid-2020s shows that a substantially higher share of women are classified as low-paid than men across all country-income groups: in low-income countries, 28.2 per cent of women compared with 19.8 per cent of men are low-paid; in lower-middle-income countries, 17.6 per cent of women and 8.3 per cent of men; in upper-middle-income countries, 13.1 per cent of women and 9.2 per cent of men; and in high-income countries, 3.1 per cent of women and 2.4 per cent of men. When monthly earnings are considered instead of hourly wages, the proportion of low-paid women increases in all country-income groups, reflecting the higher incidence of part-time employment among women in all regions of the world (figure 6).

► **Figure 6. Proportion of low-paid workers, using hourly wages and monthly earnings, comparing men and women by country-income group (early 2000s and mid-2020s)**



Note: Low-paid are wage workers with earning below 50 per cent of the median earning estimated in their respective gender-based populations. Source: ILO estimates.

35. **A comparison of women in low pay to other groups of wage workers reveals that low-paid women are less educated, are at the extremes of the age distribution and are concentrated in highly feminized sectors.** Low-paid women are more likely to be: concentrated in the younger and older cohorts; among those with less than secondary education; in occupations with lower and intermediary skills; in temporary employment; and among wage workers in the informal economy. Low-paid women are also over-represented among those who work 46 or more hours per week in all income groups, except among high-income countries, where low-paid women wage workers are over-represented among those working fewer than 30 hours per week. The survey-based estimates also show that the incidence of low pay increases with the degree of feminization: 37 per cent of low-paid women wage workers in high-income countries and 68 per cent in low-income countries are concentrated in economic activities in highly feminized sectors (where women make up more than 60 per cent of the workforce), where average earnings tend to be lower.
36. **The over-representation of low-paid women among women workers contributes to the persistence of the gender pay gap, a phenomenon that affects all countries and is one of the most stubborn drivers and manifestations of gender inequalities.** The global gender pay gap has been estimated to be around 20 per cent.⁴² A breakdown shows that roughly one third of this gap can be attributed to direct or indirect discrimination. More recent evidence from the G20 countries – which together employ about 60 per cent of the global workforce – indicates that almost no progress was made in narrowing the gap during the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Between 2006 and 2020, the wage gap in the G20 countries remained close to 22 per cent; there are significant differences across countries, and only 7 out of the 20 countries show a narrowing of the gap.⁴³
37. **In labour markets across all country-income groups, a pay gap for mothers is observed compared with women of a similar age who are not mothers.** In 19 out of 23 countries with available data, this ranged from 0.22 per cent in Mongolia to 29.6 per cent in Türkiye; in other words, in Türkiye, mothers earned nearly one third less per hour than women of similar age who were not mothers. By contrast, estimates of pay gaps for fathers show mixed results across countries, underscoring that parenthood impacts men and women differently in terms of labour market outcomes.



1.7. Women's representation in decision-making positions is crucial

38. **Women's participation in decision-making (for example, in managerial positions, on corporate boards, in politics and in the judiciary) is essential to ensure that policies reflect diverse experiences and promote inclusive social and economic outcomes.** Between 2016 and 2024, the global share of women in senior leadership roles rose slightly, from 30.4 to 31.7 per cent.⁴⁴ Women hold the highest shares of leadership positions in highly feminized sectors, such as healthcare (44 per cent), education (43 per cent) and government administration (42 per cent); however, these shares still do not reflect the fact that in these sectors women are in a majority. In contrast, the lowest representation of women in leadership roles is seen in sectors with strong future employment potential, such as infrastructure (15 per cent) and technology, information

⁴² ILO, *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What Lies Behind Gender Pay Gaps*, 2018, 23.

⁴³ ILO and OECD, *Equality Between Men and Women in the Workforce*, 2025, figure 1.

⁴⁴ Study based on data from LinkedIn covering 166 countries from 2016 to 2024. The proportion of women in senior leadership positions covers women in senior management across economic sectors. World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap 2024: Insight Report*, 39.

and media (22 per cent). Having more women in senior leadership roles is important not only from a gender-equality perspective, but also from the perspective of strengthening the path towards labour market equality in general. ⁴⁵

39. **An increase in women entrepreneurs helps challenge gender stereotypes, normalize women's presence in decision-making roles, and expand innovation in products and services to cater equally for women and men.** Women who own and run a business serve as role models for other women, including younger women. Women's startup activity rose from 6.1 per cent in the early 2000s to 10.4 per cent on average in 2021–23, though men still participate at higher rates (13.8 per cent). The share of women establishing businesses also increased, from 4.2 to 5.9 per cent over the same period. ⁴⁶ Entrepreneurial activity among women is notably higher in low- and middle-income countries (22 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 17 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean), largely because wage employment opportunities are scarcer. However, women tend to be concentrated in lower-productivity sectors: only 2.3 per cent of women entrepreneurs work in ICT, compared with 6.1 per cent of men, while over half operate in trade or social services. Women entrepreneurs are also less likely to adopt digital tools: 8–11 per cent fewer women than men consider artificial intelligence (AI) to be important for their business. ⁴⁷
40. **Although women's progress in entrepreneurship and other labour market leadership roles is vital for gender equality, gains in other spheres – particularly in the public arena, such as in national parliaments and among judges and prosecutors – are equally important.** The representation of women in national parliaments has been increasing, rising globally from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 27.2 per cent in 2025. ⁴⁸ It increased in all regions: from 13 to 35 per cent in the Americas, from 13 to 32 per cent in Europe, from 10 to 27 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, from 6 to 23 per cent in the Pacific, and from 9 to 22 per cent in Asia. Parity among parliamentarians has been achieved in as many as six countries. Representation has increased in particular among younger cohorts of women in national parliaments. ⁴⁹ Likewise, data across regions shows that between 2012 and 2022, the proportion of women among professional judges in the EU, Eastern Europe and Central Asia rose from 49 to 57 per cent on average, while the share of women prosecutors increased from 49 to 54 per cent. ⁵⁰ Similar trends are observed in countries in Asia and the Pacific, where women's presence has expanded in the lower and higher courts alike. Despite these advances, women remain under-represented at senior judicial levels, such as in court presidencies and as heads of prosecution.



⁴⁵ World Economic Forum, 44–45.

⁴⁶ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, *2023/24 Women's Entrepreneurship Report: Reshaping Economies and Communities*, 19–20 and 25.

⁴⁷ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, *GEM 2024/2025 Women's Entrepreneurship Report: Navigating Challenges, Driving Change*, 56–57.

⁴⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament: 1995–2025*, 2.

⁴⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Youth Participation in National Parliaments 2025 Infographic".

⁵⁰ Council of Europe, *European Judicial Systems: CEPEJ Evaluation Report – 2024 Evaluation cycle (2022 data)*.

► Chapter 2

What is slowing progress on gender equality in the world of work?

41. While progress has been made in some areas of gender equality, structural and systemic factors continue to shape the rights, choices and labour market outcomes of women and individuals experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. **Persistent gaps in the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work, social norms regarding women's and men's roles in societies and the economy, unequal opportunities for decent employment for women, inequalities in unpaid care work, and violence and harassment remain major barriers to equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work.** In addition, women's access to opportunities for decent work is limited by insufficient creation of quality wage employment. This is reflected in slow growth in labour-intensive sectors, declining public sector employment, insufficient absorption of labour into productive private sector employment, and entrenched barriers to women's entry into high-productivity sectors in many regions. Together, these supply- and demand-side constraints generate significant social and economic costs by reducing productivity, distorting labour market efficiency and undermining sustainable development and poverty eradication.
42. These constraints are often compounded by **macroeconomic, sectoral and labour market policies** that do not sufficiently address these underlying factors. As a result, gains from economic growth do not translate into more equitable access to decent work. This is particularly consequential in the context of **ongoing digital, environmental and demographic transitions**. These transitions have the potential to expand opportunities for decent work, but may deepen existing gender inequalities when structural barriers remain unaddressed.

2.1. Gaps persist in the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work

43. **Progress towards gender equality in the world of work is closely linked to the realization of all of the fundamental principles and rights at work.**⁵¹ As universal and inalienable human rights, they have an essential role to play in creating a fair, inclusive and equitable society. When fully and meaningfully realized in practice, they can effectively contribute to ensuring that all workers, without discrimination, can participate in and benefit from decent work and productive employment.⁵²
44. **However, significant gaps remain in the realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work.** Women and individuals experiencing intersecting and systemic forms of discrimination are often disproportionately prevented from enjoying the full protection they offer. Weakening of the rule of law, shrinking of democratic space, and lack of respect for fundamental rights and civil

⁵¹ As set out in the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) (1998), as amended in 2022: (1) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (2) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (3) the effective abolition of child labour; (4) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and (5) a safe and healthy working environment.

⁵² ILO, *Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work at a Critical Crossroads*, ILC.112/Report V (Rev.), 2024, para. 4.



liberties undermine progress on all fundamental principles and rights at work, further intensifying patterns of inequality and discrimination.⁵³

45. **The rights and principles enshrined in the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), are fundamental for promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for all.** They are essential for addressing the discrimination that undermines equal pay for work of equal value, drives occupational segregation and reinforces the undervaluation of women's work. Both direct and indirect discrimination in employment and occupation – including in recruitment, promotion, access to vocational education and training opportunities, and based on pregnancy or parenthood – remains persistent and pervasive, constituting a key impediment to decent work and social justice. Discrimination is complex, as various grounds often intersect, such as disability, ethnicity, sex and social origin.
46. **Discrimination is increasingly understood as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon.** It may be expressed both directly, such as in unequal pay for the same work or in violence and harassment, and indirectly, through less visible mechanisms that reinforce systemic exclusion.⁵⁴ New manifestations of discrimination may arise, including those related to technological developments such as the use of genetic information in hiring and employment decisions.⁵⁵ When left unchecked, discrimination may accumulate over the life course and may exacerbate poverty by perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.⁵⁶
47. **Legislation on equality and non-discrimination remains incomplete, fragmented and uneven across countries, leaving large groups of workers without adequate protection.** Of the 193 Member States of the United Nations, 89 per cent prohibit work-related discrimination based on sex, 77 per cent on religion and 76 per cent on ethnicity or race. The extent to which legislation addresses different stages of the employment cycle – such as hiring, pay, promotion and termination – is limited, though differing considerably across national contexts, with legislation in 23 per cent of countries providing comprehensive protections for discrimination based on sex.⁵⁷ Moreover, in some countries, legal restrictions continue to limit women's occupational choices, including through lists of prohibited jobs, which limit women's entry into higher-paying sectors such as mining, construction and energy.⁵⁸ Even where reforms have been adopted to lift such bans, implementation challenges often remain, slowing progress towards substantive equality in practice.⁵⁹ In many countries, legal frameworks focus primarily on direct forms of discrimination, while provisions addressing indirect discrimination, procedural safeguards or remedies are lacking. Access to justice also varies: complainants may face high



⁵³ ILC.112/Report V (Rev.), para. 5.

⁵⁴ The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) considered that “[i]ndirect discrimination refers to apparently neutral situations, regulations or practices which in fact result in unequal treatment of persons with certain characteristics. It occurs when the same condition, treatment or criterion is applied to everyone, but results in a disproportionately harsh impact on some persons on the basis of characteristics such as race, colour, sex or religion, and is not closely related to the inherent requirements of the job” (ILO, *Giving Globalization a Human Face: General Survey on the Fundamental Conventions Concerning Rights at Work in Light of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, 2008*, ILC.101/III/1B, 2012, para. 745).

⁵⁵ ILO, *Identifying Challenges and Possible Policy Responses Regarding the Application of the Principle of Non-Discrimination in the World of Work*, GB.355/POL/2, 2025, para. 21.

⁵⁶ GB.355/POL/2, paras 41 and 5.

⁵⁷ Jody Heymann et al., “Legislative approaches to non-discrimination at work: A comparative analysis across 13 groups in 193 countries”, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 40, No. 3 (2021).

⁵⁸ World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2023*, 27.

⁵⁹ World Bank Group, *Women, Business and the Law 2024*, 74.

costs, stigmatization and the risk of retaliation, and only 50 Member States of the ILO have legal provisions that shift the burden of proof in employment discrimination cases.⁶⁰ Even where legal protections are strong, many governments struggle to translate them into substantive equality in practice. This represents a significant cost to societies and economies (box 3).

► **Box 3. The heavy toll of discrimination on social and economic development**

By restricting freedom, undermining dignity and preventing individuals from realizing their full potential in the world of work, discrimination reduces productivity, distorts labour market efficiency and acts as a drag on sustainable development and poverty eradication. Empirical evidence substantiates these losses. An analysis of data from sub-Saharan Africa found that income and gender inequalities are negatively associated with growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP).¹ Another study covering eight Latin American countries indicates that removing barriers to women's participation in the labour market and ensuring equal access to occupations would reduce poverty and raise household incomes.²

¹ Dalia Hakura et al., *Inequality, Gender Gaps and Economic Growth: Comparative Evidence for Sub-Saharan Africa*, IMF Working Paper No. 2016/111, 2016. ² Joana Costa, Elydia Silva and Fabio Vaz, *The Role of Gender Inequalities in Explaining Income Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Evidences from Latin American Countries*, UNDP, 2009.

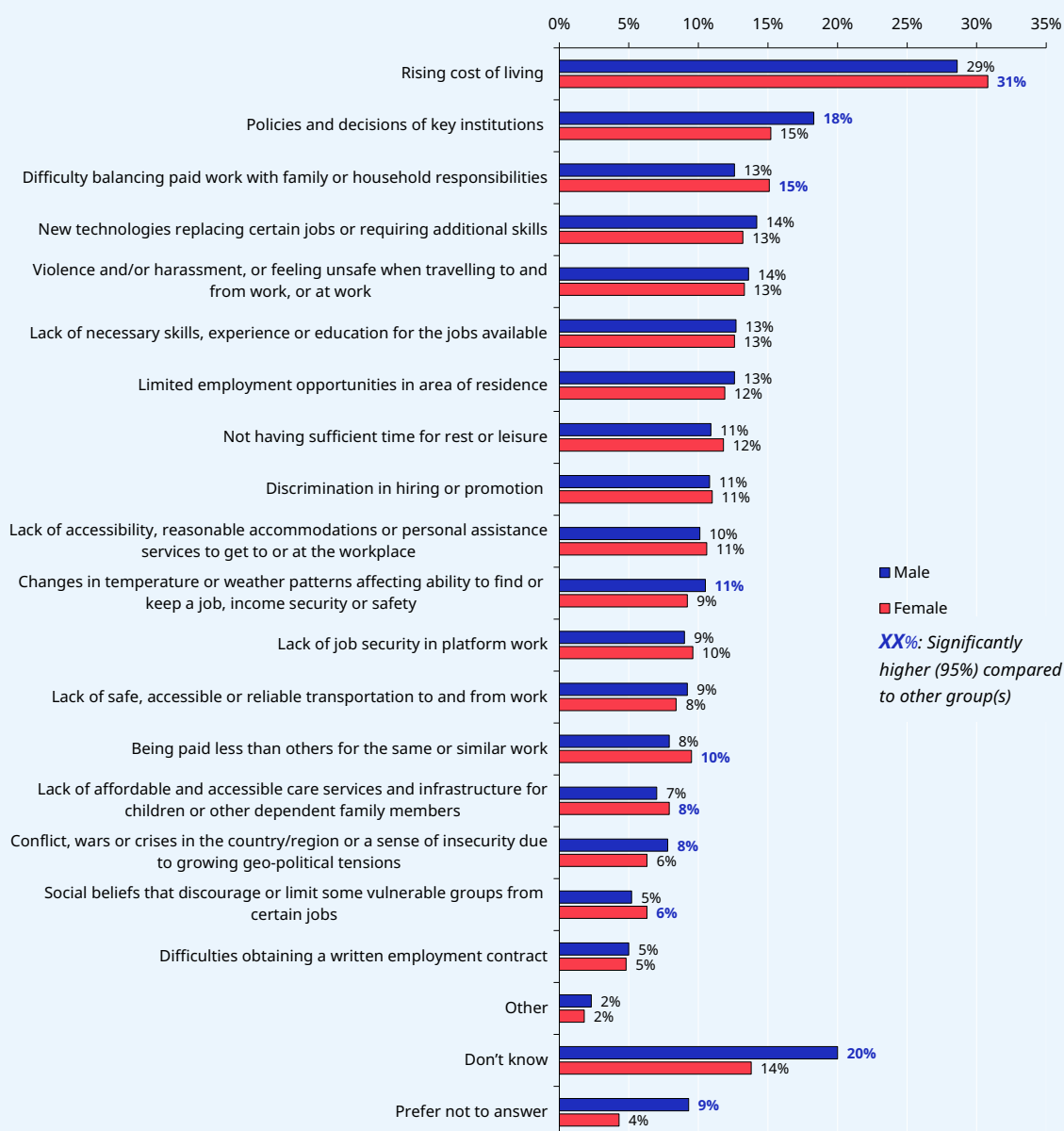
- 48. While legal progress has been significant, persistent discrimination and unequal treatment continue to be cited as one of the key barriers to decent work.** Findings from an ILO–Ipsos 2025 global survey show that one in ten adults identify discrimination in hiring or promotion based on gender, disability, age and other characteristics as the biggest challenge to decent work, while 6 per cent reported challenges related to being paid less than others for the same work. Women face this challenge disproportionately, though patterns vary across the life course. Young women (aged 18–24) report higher than average levels of unequal treatment than men; the unequal treatment peaks among women aged 45–54, reflecting cumulative disadvantages and persistent barriers to advancement during the prime working years. While these concerns rank below other more frequently cited challenges, such as job availability and income adequacy, they nevertheless highlight experiences of unequal treatment that affect specific group of workers (box 4).



⁶⁰ GB.355/POL/2, para. 26.

► **Box 4. Public perceptions of barriers to decent work: Insights from an ILO–Ipsos global survey**

A recent 31-country survey conducted by Ipsos in collaboration with the ILO covering over 21,000 adults provides unique insights into public perceptions of the biggest challenges to accessing and maintaining a job with decent working conditions. The responses to the question **“What are the biggest challenges that you, your friends, family and neighbours face now or in the near future in accessing or maintaining a job with decent working conditions?”** reflect respondents’ experiences, expectations and concerns in the context of ongoing transitions. They highlight that concerns about decent work vary across regions and countries and are shaped by factors including structural inequalities, recent economic shocks and labour market conditions.



Note: The score is a global country average. Source: Ipsos Global Advisor. For details, see Anam Butt, “What people see as the biggest barriers to decent work: Evidence from 31 countries”, *ILOSTAT Blog*, forthcoming.

49. **Persistent gaps in data and evidence hinder the effectiveness of policies, programmes and awareness-raising campaigns that aim to address discrimination.** While sex- and age-disaggregated data is increasingly available, statistics broken down by other characteristics, such as disability, ethnicity, indigeneity or migrant status, and by geographical location remain limited or uneven. Without comprehensive and comparable data disaggregated across relevant dimensions, the full extent of discrimination and inequality – and the situation of those most likely to be left behind – remains obscured, weakening accountability and evidence-based policymaking.⁶¹
50. **Preventing and eliminating discrimination relies on the realization of all of the fundamental principles and rights at work and the effective implementation of relevant international labour standards.**⁶² The strength of these rights lies in their interdependent and mutually reinforcing nature, which underscores the need for comprehensive frameworks.⁶³ Forced and child labour, including in the context of forced marriage, are an inherent denial of equal opportunities, and trap victims and their families in poverty. Women and girls and others vulnerable to discrimination are disproportionately represented in certain forms of forced labour, such as domestic work,⁶⁴ and in hidden forms of child labour, particularly in contexts characterized by informality, weak governance and limited access to protection.⁶⁵
51. **There has been some recent progress in combating child labour, but it remains pervasive, shaped by gender norms, unequal power relations and intersecting vulnerabilities.**⁶⁶ Nearly 138 million children – 78 million boys and 59 million girls – are engaged in child labour, including 54 million in hazardous work. When household chores and domestic work are accounted for, girls are disproportionately affected. Younger boys and girls engaged in child labour are largely found in agriculture, but as they grow older, boys tend to move into industry while girls shift towards services and domestic work, reflecting gendered labour market structures and prevailing social norms. Rising poverty, climate change and other crises further increase households' reliance on children's labour – both paid and unpaid – undermining their education and future access to decent work.⁶⁷
52. **An estimated 50 million people were in forms of modern slavery in 2021, of whom 28 million in forced labour and 22 million in forced marriage.** Women and girls account for 11.8 million of those in forced labour, including the vast majority of those in forced commercial sexual exploitation, and over two thirds of those in forced marriage. Men and boys are disproportionately represented in certain forms of forced labour, particularly in high-risk sectors and State-imposed forced labour. Forced labour occurs overwhelmingly in the private economy (86 per cent), predominantly in informal, unregulated or illicit settings. Migrant workers and workers in the informal economy face especially high risks due to limited protections and restricted access to rights and remedies. Across both child labour and modern slavery, weak governance and informality together with poverty, conflict, climate impacts and unsafe migration



⁶¹ GB.355/POL/2, para. 31.

⁶² Including the fundamental and governance Conventions, and also the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), among others.

⁶³ ILC.112/Report V (Rev.), para. 7.

⁶⁴ ILO, Walk Free and IOM, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*, 2022, 32.

⁶⁵ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward*, 2021, 37.

⁶⁶ ILO, "2024 Global Estimates of Child Labour in Figures", 2025.

⁶⁷ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024, Trends and the Road Forward*, 2025, 48.

heighten exposure to coercion, restrict agency and limit pathways to education and decent work.⁶⁸

- 53. Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are enabling rights crucial for the realization of equality and non-discrimination.** However, the extent to which these rights are realized varies widely across countries and sectors, depending not only on formal legal commitments but also on implementation, enforcement and workplace-level practice. Approximately half of the world's working population is not covered by the two key international labour instruments that protect their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).⁶⁹ Restrictions on these universal rights persist in law or practice across most regions.⁷⁰
- 54. Greater participation and leadership of women in employers' and workers' organizations is important for the realization of these rights.** In employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs), women are well represented in secretariats, comprising at least 40 per cent of all staff in three quarters of EBMOs. In recent years, there is a positive trend at the executive management level, where 30 per cent of EBMOs have a female CEO. However, at the boardroom level, just 13 per cent of EBMOs have women constituting at least 30 per cent of their members and only 9 per cent have gender-balanced boards.⁷¹ Women's participation in trade unions has also increased in recent years; globally, 18 per cent of women are unionized, compared to 16 per cent of men.⁷² However, women remain over-represented in sectors such as domestic work where they may be legally restricted from forming or joining trade unions.⁷³ Moreover, women continue to be under-represented in leadership positions, with only 34 per cent of unions worldwide including women on executive committees. The extent to which collective bargaining delivers gender-inclusive outcomes depends not only on women's representation within workers' and employers' organizations but also on the integration of gender equality into bargaining mandates and the existence of institutional and legal frameworks that effectively support freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- 55. Occupational safety and health (OSH) deficits remain a widespread challenge across sectors and regions.** This reflects broader systemic factors, such as underinvestment in OSH systems, limited inspection capacity, weak enforcement and high levels of informality. Workers across all sectors are exposed to unsafe working environments, although women and men tend to experience different types of risks shaped by sectoral distribution, work organization and power relations.⁷⁴ Women are disproportionately concentrated in work that is more repetitive in manufacturing and office-based occupations as well as in roles that require lifting or moving people, exposing them to specific musculoskeletal disorder and psychosocial risks in both forms of work.⁷⁵ At the same time, men continue to face disproportionately high exposure to occupational hazards, particularly in construction, mining, agriculture, transport and other



⁶⁸ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2024*, 19 and 48.

⁶⁹ ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024: Peak-Level Social Dialogue for Economic Development and Social Progress*, 2024, 16.

⁷⁰ ILO, *Integrated Strategy on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2017–2023*, 2019, 3.

⁷¹ ILO, *Women in Business: How Employer and Business Membership Organizations Drive Gender Equality*, 2024, 19.

⁷² ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2024*, 32.

⁷³ ILO, *Achieving Decent Work for Domestic Workers: An Organizer's Manual to Promote ILO Convention No. 189 and Build Domestic Workers' Power*, 2012, 3.

⁷⁴ ILO, *10 Keys for Gender Sensitive OSH Practice – Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Occupational Safety and Health*, 2013.

⁷⁵ ILO, *10 Keys for Gender Sensitive OSH Practice*, 2013.

physically hazardous sectors. Systemic weaknesses in OSH governance exacerbate these risks for all workers, but particularly for those in informal employment and rural areas.

- 56. Women can face heightened exposure to violence and harassment**, particularly in male-dominated industries and occupations and in contexts such as working alone or at night.⁷⁶ Violence and harassment are closely linked to psychosocial risks at work: the nature of work, poor work organization and unequal power relations can increase the likelihood of violence and harassment, while exposure to violence and harassment can contribute to stress.⁷⁷ These risks may be further compounded by unequal unpaid care responsibilities, which can drive occupational segregation, intensify work–family pressures and contribute to overall psychosocial strain.⁷⁸ Digital, environmental and demographic transitions are reshaping work organization in ways that can address or intensify psychosocial risks and exposure to violence and harassment.⁷⁹ In spite of this, gender-specific psychosocial and physical risks are not systematically recognized in OSH strategies and legal frameworks.⁸⁰
- 57. The fundamental principles and rights at work are particularly critical in periods of change, and integrated approaches to realizing them are increasingly important.** Digitalization and responses to climate change both present opportunities for employers and workers, but also introduce new risks and challenges for the application, interpretation and enforcement of their rights.⁸¹ Ensuring that the fundamental principles and rights at work remain relevant and effective in these contexts requires appropriate legal frameworks, institutional capacity and inclusive social dialogue.

2.2. Violence and harassment in the world of work remains a stubborn barrier to dignity, equality and inclusion

- 58. The adoption of ILO Convention No. 190 has galvanized action to address violence and harassment in the world of work.** Violence and harassment remains a widespread and persistent phenomenon worldwide, affecting more than one in five workers over their working lives. Over three in five of those who have experienced violence and harassment report that it has happened more than once, with the latest incident often occurring within the past five years.⁸² Globally, men are more likely to report experiencing physical violence and harassment (9 per cent compared to 7.7 per cent of women), whereas women are 1.6 times more likely than men to experience sexual violence and harassment in the world of work. The risks are even greater for those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Young women are twice as likely

⁷⁶ Rachel Cox, *Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in a Work Health and Safety Framework*, ILO Working Paper 116, 2024.

⁷⁷ Cox, 2024.

⁷⁸ Silvia Bertocco, “The Impacts of Psychosocial Risks in Relation to Gender: How to Address Them in the Workplace”, *Italian Labour Law e-Journal* 18, No. 2 (2025): 118; Alice Spann et al., “Challenges of Combining Work and Unpaid Care, and Solutions: A Scoping Review”, *Health & Social Care in the Community* 28, No. 3 (2020): 706.

⁷⁹ ILO, *Safe and Healthy Working Environments for All: Realizing the Fundamental Right to a Safe and Healthy Working Environment Worldwide*, Introductory Report, 23rd World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, Sydney, 27–30 November 2023, 5; ILO, *Preparing Future Generations of Women for New Job Demands: Skilling, Re-Skilling, Digitalization and Automation*, Observer paper for UN Women Expert Group Meeting, 2022, 5.

⁸⁰ ILO, *A Systemic Approach to Integrating Gender Equality into the ILO Methodology*, Vision Zero Fund thematic brief No. 3, 2022; ILO, *Seguridad y salud en el trabajo con perspectiva de género: Desafíos y avances en Iberoamérica*, 2025; ILO, *10 Keys for Gender Sensitive OSH Practice*, 2013, 3.

⁸¹ ILC.112/Report V (Rev.), para. 129.

⁸² ILO, Lloyd’s Register Foundation and Gallup, *Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey*, 2022, 14.



as young men to experience sexual violence and harassment. Migrant women are almost twice as likely as non-migrant women to report such incidents. Sex-disaggregated data shows that for women, violence and harassment is more likely to occur when they also experience discrimination based on skin colour, race, ethnicity or nationality, whereas for men, the association is stronger with disability status.⁸³

59. **Evidence also suggests that violence and harassment in the world of work remains significantly under-reported.** Just over half (54.4 per cent) of those who have been subjected to it have shared their experience with anyone, and often only after multiple incidents. Disclosures are more commonly made to friends or family than through formal workplace channels.⁸⁴ A range of factors can explain under-reporting, including low confidence that reporting will lead to action, concerns about retaliation or reputational harm, and workplace cultures that normalize such behaviours. These barriers underscore the influence of social norms and the importance of ensuring that reporting and complaint mechanisms are accessible, trusted and responsive. At the same time, growing awareness of the economic, legal and human costs of violence and harassment has led many employers to strengthen workplace prevention frameworks, including through codes of conduct, confidential reporting mechanisms and training.
60. **According to the 2025 ILO-Ipsos global survey, violence and harassment and feeling unsafe at work or when travelling to and from work are cited as a key barrier to decent work by over one in ten adults.**⁸⁵ Reported concerns are particularly high in Latin America (including 33 per cent of adults in Mexico and 25 per cent in Brazil). Significant shares of adults also report this barrier in South Africa (22 per cent), Thailand (21 per cent) and in several European countries, including France (18 per cent) and Germany (17 per cent). In Mexico, across all age groups, a larger share of women consistently reports this to be a major barrier, compared to men.
61. **The impacts are far-reaching, as violence and harassment and associated psychosocial risks undermine workers' mental and physical health, dignity, employment and productivity.** Evidence from selected studies shows that violence and harassment can influence workers' decisions about job retention and occupational choice, particularly in contexts where preventive measures and effective remedies are weak. In some settings, this has been associated with higher exit rates among women from certain occupations, especially higher-paid, male-dominated ones, reinforcing employment segregation and persistent gender pay gaps.⁸⁶ At the enterprise and economy-wide levels, violence and harassment are also associated with significant productivity losses, increased absenteeism and turnover, and reduced labour force participation, with long-term implications for economic growth.⁸⁷ Estimates suggest that workplace violence may cost up to US\$56 billion annually, likely an understatement of its true economic impact.⁸⁸
62. **Violence and harassment in the world of work and its associated psychosocial risks is increasingly recognized as an occupational safety and health concern.** Evidence highlights that the likelihood and severity of violence and harassment are shaped by work organization and



⁸³ ILO, Lloyd's Register Foundation and Gallup, 37.

⁸⁴ ILO, Lloyd's Register Foundation and Gallup, 38–45.

⁸⁵ ILO-Ipsos global survey (see box 4 above).

⁸⁶ Olle Folke and Johanna Rickne, "Sexual Harassment and Gender Inequality in the Labor Market", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137, No. 4 (2022).

⁸⁷ ILO, *Making the Invisible Visible: Understanding and Addressing Violence and Harassment in the World of Work in Three Western African Countries*, forthcoming (2026).

⁸⁸ Juliet Hassard, Kevin R. H. Teoh and Tom Cox, "Estimating the economic burden posed by work-related violence to society: A systematic review of cost-of-illness studies", *Safety Science* 116 (2019).

conditions, including a stressful environment, and vice versa. Integrating violence and harassment within OSH management systems is therefore important.⁸⁹

63. **Digitalization has expanded the world of work into virtual and technology-mediated spaces, making online communication, remote work and digital platforms integral to how work is organized and performed.** These developments create important opportunities to strengthen the prevention of and response to violence and harassment, including through safer reporting channels, improved evidence collection, digital training and awareness-raising, and enhanced monitoring and prevention measures.
64. **At the same time, technology-facilitated violence and harassment – including digital harassment, cyberbullying and online stalking – has emerged as a growing concern,** particularly for women and girls, with documented impacts on job retention, career progression and participation in public and professional life.⁹⁰ Recent studies estimate that the prevalence of technology-facilitated violence ranges between 16 and 58 per cent globally,⁹¹ with women increasingly reporting having experienced this in their public and professional life.⁹² Convention No. 190 explicitly recognizes information and communication technologies as part of the world of work, affirming that violence and harassment can occur through them and underscoring the need for protections that cover remote, online and technology-mediated work. As digital work and the use of technology become more widespread, the absence of effective prevention, reporting and investigation mechanisms leaves workers – especially those in vulnerable forms of employment – exposed to new forms of harm, reinforcing existing inequalities and creating barriers to equal participation in the world of work.

2.3. Unequal care responsibilities limit women's rights to and at work

65. **Unpaid care work** is a vital contribution to households, communities and economies, makes all other work possible and, when shared more equally between men and women, and families and the State, contributes to improved well-being across the life course. Yet it **remains largely invisible in measures of economic progress, undervalued and underinvested in, with substantive deficits** in care policies, services and infrastructure across the world, and with care responsibilities associated primarily with women. Within this context, the current social organization of care places a disproportionate share of unpaid care work on women, particularly those in vulnerable situations. This not only constrains women's rights to and at work but also limits the effective utilization of skills and labour supply, reduces productivity and narrows the pool of available talent for enterprises.
66. **Globally, women account for over three quarters of the 16.4 billion hours devoted daily to unpaid care work, and spend on average 3.2 times more time on such work than men.** In some countries, they spend as much as seven times more time on unpaid care than men.⁹³ While women's participation in paid work has risen substantially over the past two decades, men's

⁸⁹ ILO, *Preventing and Addressing Violence and Harassment in the World of Work through Occupational Safety and Health Measures*, 2024.

⁹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/73/294, 2018.

⁹¹ UN Women, *Global Trends to Prevent and Respond to Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Emerging Practices*, 2025, 8.

⁹² European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender-Based Violence Enabled by Digital Technology: A New Occupational Hazard?*, Gender Equality Index 2020 report, 2020.

⁹³ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 2018, 53.



participation in unpaid care has not increased in a similar manner. This reflects the continued influence of social norms, limited availability of care services, and policy arrangements that shape how care responsibilities are shared.⁹⁴ When unpaid and paid work are combined, women work longer hours in total than men in all regions of the world. With a much larger share of their working time remaining unpaid, this imbalance contributes to their time poverty and income poverty.

67. **Disparities in the nature of unpaid care work and the time spent on it are largely shaped by household composition, and also age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic conditions and place of residence.**⁹⁵ This work is particularly time-intensive and strenuous for women and girls living in poverty, those in contexts with scarce public services, limited basic infrastructure or inadequate social protection, and for those in rural areas, single-parent households, or caring for young children or grandchildren not yet of school age or for older persons with severe mental or physical impairments. For example, evidence from Ethiopia shows how women from lower-income households spend 3.6 hours more per day on unpaid care work than women from higher-income households; in Peru, the difference is 1.8 hours.⁹⁶ Women in rural areas spend significantly more time on domestic drudgery (such as fetching water and collecting firewood) than those in urban settings – approximately six times more in Ethiopia, five times more in Benin and three times more in Madagascar.⁹⁷
68. **The recent ILO–Ipsos survey highlights that difficulties in managing family responsibilities and maintaining work–life balance are perceived as major barriers to decent work, particularly for women.**⁹⁸ Globally, 28 per cent of adults surveyed reported difficulty balancing paid work with family or household responsibilities, not having sufficient time for rest and leisure, and a lack of affordable and accessible care services as key challenges to decent work. This is more acute for women than men, especially among those aged 25–34, larger households, those with two or more children and married individuals. Regionally, this concern is most prominent in the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa. In Asia and Africa in particular, respondents point to the lack of affordable, accessible care services and infrastructure for children and other dependants as a key barrier to decent work.
69. **Care responsibilities are the most common reason for women to be outside of the labour force.** In 2023, 748 million people (708 million women and 40 million men) cited care responsibilities as the reason for being outside of the labour force, representing one in three working-age persons not in employment.⁹⁹ Care responsibilities account for 45 per cent of all women outside the labour force, compared to 5 per cent of men. This gap is especially pronounced in the Arab States and in Asia and the Pacific. When looking only at women aged 25–54 years, the share reporting care as the reason for being outside of the labour force increases from 45 to 66 per cent. Education also plays an important role: globally, 11 per cent of women with an advanced education cite care as the reason for being outside the labour force, compared with 66 per cent with less than an intermediate education.
70. **Beyond labour force participation, care responsibilities also influence the type and quality of jobs women do.** Across 85 countries, data shows that women with care responsibilities are



⁹⁴ ILO, *Women and the economy: 30 years after the Beijing Declaration*, 2025, 9–11.

⁹⁵ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 2018, 37.

⁹⁶ Young Lives, *Lightening the Load: New Evidence on the Impacts of Unpaid Care Work on Women and Girls*, 2025, 3.

⁹⁷ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 59.

⁹⁸ See box 4 above.

⁹⁹ ILO, *The Impact of Care Responsibilities on Women's Labour Force Participation*, Statistical brief, 2024, 3.

more likely to be engaged as contributing family workers or own-account workers, by 3.9 and 1.8 percentage points, respectively, compared with women without such responsibilities. Moreover, unpaid carers, both women and men, are more likely to work in informal employment than those not living with care recipients, with a gap that is wider for women.¹⁰⁰

71. **Beyond time spent on physical care tasks, unpaid care responsibilities often involve a “mental load” – the cognitive and emotional work of planning, anticipating and coordinating household and childcare needs.** This mental load tends to fall more on women in many contexts,¹⁰¹ reflecting their unequal responsibility for unpaid care. Where individuals are primarily responsible for performing care, regardless of gender, this can affect their ability to enter, remain and advance in paid work, reflecting the unpaid care and paid work continuum. Company-based experience from a multinational enterprise, however, illustrates that when mothers and fathers are supported through adequate maternity and paternity leave and family-friendly workplace measures, companies experience measurable growth, benefiting from strengthened skills such as prioritization, decision-making and managing complexity.¹⁰²
72. **While there has been modest progress in extending maternity leave provisions, significant gaps persist.** An estimated 649 million women still live in countries with inadequate maternity protection.¹⁰³ Between 1994 and 2023, the share of countries with paid maternity leave legislation increased marginally – from 95.7 to 97.8 per cent – while the global average duration of such leave rose from 12.8 to 17.6 weeks. Beyond duration, the adequacy of paid maternity leave and benefits remains essential to ensuring women’s economic security during and after childbirth.¹⁰⁴ In accordance with the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), 80 out of 193 countries provide paid maternity leave of at least 14 weeks, with cash benefits equal to at least two thirds of previous earnings. Among these, 54 countries guarantee full pay, covering 100 per cent of previous earnings.¹⁰⁵
73. **Care responsibilities are also of growing relevance for men, many of whom wish to take on a greater share of unpaid care work but face persistent barriers to balancing care with paid work.** According to the 2025 ILO–Ipsos survey, 13 per cent of men cited difficulty balancing paid work with care responsibilities as a barrier to accessing and maintaining a decent job. Men’s engagement in caregiving is shaped by a combination of factors, including prevailing social expectations, economic incentives within households, work organization and the design of care-related policies. Encouragingly, over the past three decades, the share of countries offering paid paternity leave has more than doubled – from 24.8 per cent in 1994 to 57.2 per cent in 2023. Nevertheless, average durations remain very low, increasing only from six days to nearly ten days globally over the same period.¹⁰⁶ In many countries, the absence of paternity leave – or very short entitlements – remains a key barrier to supporting fathers in parenthood and recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work.
74. **The care workforce is highly heterogeneous, yet persistent vertical and horizontal gender-based occupational segregation and significant decent work deficits persist.** Women account for over 70 per cent of the global care workforce and are over-represented in occupations



¹⁰⁰ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 95.

¹⁰¹ Francesca Barigozzi et al., *Beyond Time: Unveiling the Invisible Burden of Mental Load*, 2025.

¹⁰² Lifeed, “Danone: Why Caregiving Matters”, 2020.

¹⁰³ ILO, *Care at Work: Investing in Care Leave and Services for a More Gender-Equal World of Work*, 2022, 25.

¹⁰⁴ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*, 2024, 109.

¹⁰⁵ ILO, *ILO Global Care Policy Portal*.

¹⁰⁶ ILO, *ILO Global Care Policy Portal*.

characterized by low pay, long and unpredictable working hours, inadequate social protection coverage and heightened exposure to occupational safety and health risks. These deficits are most acute among care workers in the informal economy.¹⁰⁷ Globally, around 20 per cent of workers in health and social work are informally employed, rising to approximately 30 per cent in low- and middle-income countries. Informality is particularly widespread among domestic workers, where it reaches 81 per cent – more than twice the rate observed among other employees – leaving large numbers of workers without access to social security, collective bargaining rights or effective occupational safety and health protection. Emerging technologies, including AI, are increasingly being integrated into care sectors, creating both opportunities and risks for decent work and quality of care (box 5).

► Box 5. AI and nursing

In India, a mixed-methods study in Delhi and Kerala revealed that AI and digital tools are unevenly distributed: advanced applications are concentrated in large private hospitals, while public hospitals rely on basic record-keeping tools. Nurses report that some technologies reduce repetitive tasks, but limited training and exclusion from the design process hinder effective use. Digital work is often assigned to younger nurses because of their higher digital literacy, which often creates unequal workloads and risk, reinforcing power hierarchies. No evidence of technological displacement is found. AI currently functions as an adjunct tool that can augment nursing work if accompanied by investment in digital literacy, infrastructure and workers' voice, wages and working conditions.

In the Republic of Korea, a participatory study in a high-tech tertiary hospital shows that some AI-enabled tools – such as robotic cabinets, AI dictation systems and AI interviewers – reduce physical strain, unpaid preparation time and coordination work. Nurses see clear potential for AI to relieve “invisible” workload and support safer care. At the same time, they express concerns about opaque algorithms, data quality, new safety risks and the possibility of deskilling or further entrenching hierarchical power relations. Participatory design processes reveal that nurses are not resistant to technology; rather, they seek human-centred AI that responds to their priorities of reducing workload, strengthening clinical judgement and easing the interpersonal and administrative pressures that shape everyday nursing work.

Source: ILO, *AI, Nursing and Decent Work: Country-Level Insights from India, Brazil, the Republic of Korea and Germany*, forthcoming.



75. **Intersecting inequalities typically associated with race, colour, sex, national extraction or social origin also influence the distribution of paid care work and access to decent work.** Within care occupations, women, migrant workers and racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately concentrated in lower-paid and lower-status roles, while higher-paid positions – such as medical doctors – continue to be dominated by men, notwithstanding some recent diversification of entry into these occupations. These patterns are further shaped by global care chains, whereby care needs in higher-income countries and households are often met through the recruitment of migrant care workers, who then have to rely on unpaid care work by other women and girls to manage the care responsibilities they leave behind, which can reproduce gender inequalities.¹⁰⁸
76. **Demographic transitions and climate change are increasing pressures on care systems worldwide.** Rising life expectancy and increases in the number of both older persons and children are expanding care needs, with the number of people requiring care projected to grow – from

¹⁰⁷ ILO, *Decent Work and the Care Economy*, 2024, 25.

¹⁰⁸ ILO, *Migrant Workers in the Care Economy*, 2024, 4.

2.1 billion in 2015 to an estimated 2.3 billion by 2030.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, the impacts of climate change, including more frequent extreme weather events, droughts and climate-related health conditions, are expected to increase the need for both paid and unpaid care. Climate-induced impacts place additional burdens on households, with women in particular undertaking more time-consuming and intensive care work, while rural women, older persons, children and indigenous and tribal peoples are especially affected.¹¹⁰ Where care policies, services and infrastructure are insufficient, and where care responsibilities are not more equitably distributed, these pressures are likely to constrain labour market participation, reduce productivity and undermine household and community resilience. Analysis of countries' policy responses to climate change through their nationally determined contributions, however, reveals that less than 10 per cent of countries recognize the importance of unpaid and paid care and community work.¹¹¹ This highlights the urgent need for policies in line with the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work (recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and reward and representation of care workers).¹¹²

2.4. Macroeconomic, sectoral and labour market policies, when not inclusive, can limit women's access to decent work

77. **Macroeconomic policies influence the quantity and quality of employment, incomes and the availability of public services, thereby influencing labour market outcomes.**¹¹³ Fiscal, monetary, trade and financial policies affect women and men differently, reflecting their distinct positions in the labour markets, sectoral and occupational concentration, and roles in household production and care. At the same time, existing gender inequalities shape how effective these policies are, influencing their overall impact on employment and inclusive growth.¹¹⁴
78. Following the reversal of expansionary fiscal measures introduced during the COVID-19 crisis, **many countries have faced renewed pressure to consolidate public finances, reflecting elevated debt levels, tighter global financial conditions and concerns about fiscal sustainability.** A shift towards fiscal consolidation has occurred in a large number of economies, raising questions about the potential distributional and labour market effects of such adjustments. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how long-standing structural weaknesses in public service provision, particularly in how years of fiscal austerity – through cuts to public expenditure, wage and pension bill reforms, shifts towards more regressive or indirect forms of taxation, and the scaling back of labour and social protection systems – that had weakened health, education and care services, can limit resilience during economic shocks. Where fiscal adjustment measures rely heavily on cuts to public expenditure, wage and pension bill reforms, shifts towards more regressive or indirect forms of taxation, and the scaling back of labour and social protection systems, they may have disproportionate impacts, especially on women, those in informal work, those from minority racial or ethnic groups, people with disabilities and migrant workers.¹¹⁵ While

¹⁰⁹ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 21.

¹¹⁰ ILO, *Gender, Equality and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action: A Policy Guide*, 2024, 15.

¹¹¹ UN Women and Kaschak Institute, *The Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard: Advancing Accountability in Nationally Determined Contributions*, 2025, 10–11.

¹¹² For more information on the 5R Framework see ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, xliii–xliv and Ch. 6.

¹¹³ Diane Elson and Nilufer Cagatay, "The Social Content of Macroeconomic Policies", *World Development* 28, No. 7 (2000).

¹¹⁴ Stephanie Seguino, "Engendering Macroeconomic Theory and Policy", *Feminist Economics* 26, No. 2 (2019).

¹¹⁵ UN Women and ILO, *How to Assess Fiscal Stimulus Packages from a Gender Equality Perspective*, 2021; Women's Budget Group and Runnymede Trust, *Intersecting Inequalities: The Impact of Austerity on Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK*, 2017; Karen A. Horridge et al., "Austerity and Families with Disabled Children: A European Survey", *Dev Med Child Neurol.* 61, No. 3 (2019).



initial crisis responses were expansionary, more than half of countries have since adopted contractionary fiscal policies, reinforced by debt-related loan conditionalities: 85 per cent of the 107 loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) negotiated during the pandemic included plans for fiscal consolidation.¹¹⁶

79. **These fiscal pressures are compounded by rising debt levels**, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, shaping governments' capacity to support employment creation and invest in gender equality. Debt-servicing burdens have risen sharply due to tighter monetary conditions in advanced economies, heightened exchange rate pressures and additional borrowing in response to successive global shocks. Around 60 per cent of low-income countries are now in, or are at high risk of, debt distress, a proportion that doubled between 2015 and 2022.¹¹⁷ Recent estimates show that 48 developing countries spend more on interest payments than on health or education,¹¹⁸ while ILO analysis indicates that debt-distressed countries face jobs gaps more than twice as high as other developing economies.¹¹⁹ These constraints have different impacts across population groups, as women are often more concentrated in sectors and forms of employment that are sensitive to changes in public spending and service provision.
80. **Evidence from a range of country experiences suggests that the labour market and distributional effects of fiscal adjustment measures depend critically on their design, sequencing and composition.** In some contexts, fiscal consolidation strategies that heavily rely on reductions in public sector employment and public expenditure have had differentiated impacts across population groups. These policies have often reduced public sector employment – an important source of quality jobs for women – while constraining public expenditure on health, education and care services, deepening women's time and income poverty.¹²⁰ Conversely, evidence also suggests that sustained public investment in health, education and care services can have positive employment effects for women, both by generating quality jobs in female-dominated sectors and by reducing unpaid care workloads that constrain women's labour force participation.¹²¹ At the same time, increased reliance on indirect taxation has raised living costs for low-income households and low-income women, who spend a greater share of their income on basic goods and care-related expenses, while often overlooking women in informal and self-employment, who face higher production costs without access to tax credits or refunds.¹²²
81. **Earlier waves of structural adjustment revealed these differentiated impacts:** in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Jamaica and Uganda, women often compensated for cuts to public services through longer working hours, increased unpaid care responsibilities, lower household consumption and greater reliance on migration or entry into low-paid and insecure forms of work.¹²³ In Europe, fiscal consolidation measures implemented in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis halted the expansion of care policies and resulted in



¹¹⁶ ILO, *Global Employment Policy Review 2023: Macroeconomic Policies for Recovery and Structural Transformation*, 2023; Oxfam, *The Assault of Austerity: How Prevailing Economic Choices Are a Form of Gender-Based Violence*, 2022.

¹¹⁷ UN, "Debt, Affordable Finance, and a Future for the Least Developed Countries", 2023.

¹¹⁸ Talal Rafi, "What Measures can Developing Countries Take to Curb Rising Debt Levels?", *IMF Public Financial Management Blog*, 2025.

¹¹⁹ ILO, *ILO Monitor on the World of Work*, 11th edition, 2023, 6.

¹²⁰ Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubery, eds, *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality*, 2014.

¹²¹ ILO, *Employment-Intensive Investments for Advancing Decent Work in the Care Economy*, 2025.

¹²² UN Women and ILO, 2021; Michael Rogan, *Gender, Taxation and the Informal Sector*, expert paper prepared for the Expert Group Meeting, Sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2024.

¹²³ Lourdes Benería and Shelley Feldman (eds), *Unequal Burden: Economic Crises, Persistent Poverty, and Women's Work*, Westview Press, 1992.

increases in working hours and wage freezes in public sector occupations dominated by women.¹²⁴ Recent evidence from six African countries shows that IMF-influenced wage-bill constraints and public sector cuts have halted the recruitment of over 3 million frontline public sector jobs such as in teaching and healthcare, where women make up around 70 per cent of the workforce, alongside declining real wages and rising unpaid care workloads.¹²⁵

82. **Monetary policy has significant and gender-differentiated effects, particularly when focused narrowly on inflation targeting rather than employment generation.** Periods of monetary tightening, often implemented in response to inflationary pressures, can slow down economic activity and reduce labour demand in the short term, while increasing borrowing costs for households and firms. Where women are concentrated in sectors with higher employment volatility, weaker job security or greater informality, such adjustments may be associated with differentiated employment effects. Evidence from low- and middle-income countries shows that employment losses have, in some contexts, been larger for women.¹²⁶ Higher interest rates can also deepen women's financial vulnerability due to their lower incomes, greater likelihood of being net borrowers and higher debt.¹²⁷ Evidence further shows that contractionary monetary policy can widen gender discrimination in credit markets, with women-owned and -managed firms more likely to face reduced access to finance than those owned and managed by men.¹²⁸
83. **Gendered sectoral and occupational segregation shapes how structural transformation unfolds, with different implications for women and men.** Patterns of gendered sectoral and occupational segregation are shaped by multiple factors, including differences in education and training pathways, occupational requirements, job design and working time arrangements as well as by direct and indirect discrimination. These patterns also shape how structural transformation and shifts in value added and in employment from low- to high-productivity sectors unfolds, including in times of transition (box 6), with different implications for women and men due to persistent segregation.¹²⁹ Recent empirical evidence suggests that the employment gains associated with the green and digital transitions are likely to be distributed unevenly, with women gaining 7 million fewer jobs than men in the digital scenario, 17 million fewer in the energy transition, and 23 million fewer in the combined transitions.¹³⁰

► Box 6. Generative artificial intelligence, occupational segregation and gender equality

The rapid diffusion of automation, digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping employment structures, the organization of work and skill requirements across sectors. While it creates opportunities for productive and decent work, its impacts are not gender-neutral and reflect existing inequalities and patterns of gendered sectoral and occupational segregation in labour markets. ILO research reveals that women are disproportionately concentrated in occupations, such as business administration and clerical support, that involve routine and codifiable tasks and are therefore more exposed to automation and GenAI. Female-dominated occupations, such as business administration and clerical support, are almost twice as likely to be exposed to GenAI as male-dominated occupations, such as construction, manufacturing and trade (29 versus 16 per cent). Around 16 per cent of female-

¹²⁴ Jill Rubery, "Austerity and the Future for Gender Equality in Europe", *ILR Review* 68, No. 4 (2015).

¹²⁵ Action Aid, *The Human Cost of Public Sector Cuts in Africa*, 2025, 8.

¹²⁶ UN Women and ILO, 2021, 3.

¹²⁷ Women's Budget Group, *Gender and Monetary Policy*, 2023, 8.

¹²⁸ Radeef Chundakkadan, "Monetary Policy and Gender Discrimination in the Credit Market", *Journal of Government and Economics* 12 (2023).

¹²⁹ ILO, *Gender Impacts of Structural Transformation*, ILO/Sida Technical Brief No. 2, 2019.

¹³⁰ ILO, *Workforce 2030, Skills for thriving in the green and digital transitions*, 2025.



dominated occupations fall into the highest exposure categories, compared with 3 per cent of male-dominated occupations. Women face higher GenAI exposure than men in nearly 90 per cent of countries in the sample. Exposure also varies across income groups, with 41 per cent of jobs in high-income countries exposed to GenAI, compared with 11 per cent in low-income countries.

At the same time, women remain under-represented in high-demand fields driving the digital transition. They account for around 40 per cent of professionals in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and only about 30 per cent of the AI workforce globally, limiting their access to emerging opportunities and influence over the design and governance of new technologies. Beyond employment levels, GenAI is also reshaping job quality, with risks of work intensification, increased surveillance and reduced autonomy, particularly in female-dominated sectors. These trends underscore the need to embed gender equality and social dialogue in the design, deployment and governance of new technologies to ensure that digital transitions promote decent work.

Source: ILO, *GenAI, occupational segregation and gender equality in the world of work*, forthcoming.

84. **Sectoral segregation in employment also shapes how macroeconomic shocks impact women's and men's employment outcomes.** Women's over-representation in sectors hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis, combined with higher levels of informality, contributed to their greater job losses compared to men.¹³¹ This illustrates that it is not only the pace of GDP growth but also the pattern of growth – which sectors expand or contract and how these shifts affect women and men as workers, consumers and caregivers – that determines gendered labour market outcomes.
85. **When sectoral policies are not intentionally designed to be gender-responsive, structural transformation can exclude women from higher-productivity sectors or confine them to informal, low-paid and insecure jobs within these sectors.** Evidence from ten countries shows that a decline in the share of agricultural employment has been accompanied by a feminization of agricultural employment, with women's share doubling in the past 30 years in Chile and Costa Rica, where working conditions are particularly poor. By contrast, in the manufacturing industry, a defeminization of employment has occurred in most countries, with women losing employment opportunities as the industry has expanded.¹³² While women have gained access to manufacturing jobs, such as in the garment sectors in the Asia and the Pacific region, which provide a critical source of income and autonomy, they remain over-represented in lower-paid positions and under-represented in positions of leadership.¹³³ These patterns show that women are at risk of both employment losses or lower-quality jobs when sectoral policies are not intentionally designed to generate decent and productive employment for both women and men.¹³⁴
86. **Employment and social protection policies have not sufficiently addressed the gender-specific risks and structural constraints that shape women's labour market outcomes, falling short of their potential.** As labour markets evolve, employment policies – which are often designed around standard, full-time and continuous employment models – need to better align



¹³¹ Valeria Esquivel, "Chapter 2: Gender-Responsive Macroeconomic Policies: Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond" in ILO, *Global Employment Policy Review 2023: Macroeconomic Policies for Recovery and Structural Transformation*, 2023; ILO, *General Survey on employment and decent work for peace and resilience*, forthcoming.

¹³² ILO, *Gender Impacts of Structural Transformation*, 4.

¹³³ UN Women and ILO, *Assessing the Employment Situation in Five Countries and Promoting a Gender-Responsive Structural Transformation*, 2024; Naila Kabeer and Simeen Mahmud, "Globalization, Gender and Poverty: Bangladeshi Women Workers in Export and Local Markets", *Journal of International Development* 16, No. 1 (2004); ILO, *Employment, Wages and Productivity Trends in the Asian Garment Sector: Data and Policy Insights for the Future of Work*, 2022.

¹³⁴ Elissa Braunstein, *Gender and the Future of Industrialization in a Post-Pandemic World*, UNIDO, 2021; Stephanie Seguino and Elissa Braunstein, "The Costs of Exclusion: Gender Job Segregation, Structural Change and the Labour Share of Income", *Development and Change* 50, No. 4 (2018); Valeria Esquivel and Marzia Fontana, *GENSEC: A Gender-Responsive Sectoral Policy Tool* (ILO, 2024).

with diverse work trajectories. These include women's life-course patterns marked by periods of intensified unpaid care, concentration in informal and part-time work, and unequal access to skills development and career progression. Social protection systems likewise need to be strengthened, as they often provide uneven coverage and inadequate benefits for women, particularly where contributory schemes reproduce labour market inequalities through overly restrictive eligibility criteria. Non-contributory schemes, when they rely on gender-stereotyped conditionalities, may increase women's time poverty and often do not meet adequacy standards.¹³⁵ Gender gaps in legal and effective social protection coverage persist in some parts of the world. Women's effective coverage, for at least one social protection benefit, lags behind men's (50.1 and 54.6 per cent, respectively).¹³⁶ The new political commitment to extend social protection coverage per year by at least 2 percentage points accelerates progress in closing these gaps.¹³⁷

87. **These policy gaps are in part reinforced by limitations in conventional economic frameworks and measurement approaches.** Conventional approaches often equate economic growth with societal progress and assume inherent benefits for gender equality. Economic growth is most commonly assessed through GDP growth, which provides limited insight into the composition, quality and distribution of growth. GDP primarily captures market-based production and activities that support labour supply, human capital formation and social reproduction, such as unpaid care, remain outside of the measurement framework, despite their importance for sustaining productive economies.¹³⁸ This narrow focus has been attributed, in part, to the systematic underinvestment in care infrastructure and services.¹³⁹
88. **Experience across countries suggests that economic growth will not automatically advance gender equality and that its effects depend on how growth interacts with labour demand and institutional frameworks.** In many contexts, policy responses have focused on **supply-side solutions** – such as skills development, education or entrepreneurship – which, though necessary, are insufficient to influence job quantity and quality without complementary demand-side policies and investments. Country experiences illustrate that growth in the absence of gender-responsive macroeconomic and labour market policies can reinforce gender inequalities. In Egypt, economic growth was accompanied by rising precarious employment, the contraction of public sector jobs where women had been concentrated, and deteriorating working conditions that led many educated women to withdraw from the labour force.¹⁴⁰ In India, sustained economic growth coincided with a decline in women's labour force participation, driven in large part by occupational segregation and their over-representation in occupations experiencing limited employment growth. While participation has increased since 2019, this rise has been mainly among self-employed women, likely in response to economic distress in the face of crises.¹⁴¹ By contrast, countries that have combined growth with active fiscal and labour market policies – such as Uruguay's expansion of care services through its national integrated care system – demonstrate



¹³⁵ Shahra Razavi et al., *Making Social Protection Work for Gender Equality: What Does It Look Like? How Do We Get There?* ILO Working Paper No. 132, 2024, 14.

¹³⁶ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*, 63.

¹³⁷ Commitment made at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and reaffirmed by the *Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development*, both in 2025.

¹³⁸ United Nations, *Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2021, 34.

¹³⁹ Oxfam, *Radical Pathways Beyond GDP*, 2023, 12; UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, 2015, 201.

¹⁴⁰ ILO, *Growth and Precariousness in Egypt*, ILO/Sida Partnership on Employment Working Paper No. 2, 2017.

¹⁴¹ ILO, *India Employment Report 2024: Youth Employment, Education and Skills*, 2024.

that growth accompanied by redistribution and institutional reforms can deliver more inclusive outcomes for women and men.¹⁴²

2.5. Prevailing attitudes and stereotypes can undermine efforts to promote gender equality

89. **Global attitudes on gender equality have shifted over time. However, discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes continue to impede progress towards equality, including gender equality in the world of work.**¹⁴³ Such attitudes and stereotypes, or social norms, contribute to unequal opportunities, gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation, gender pay gaps, women's unequal representation and voice, the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, and the prevalence of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. Data from the World Values Survey shows declining support for statements such as "men have more right to a job than women" over the past two decades¹⁴⁴ and studies show widespread support for women's right to work outside the home.¹⁴⁵ However, gender stereotypes persist in areas relating to women's caregiving roles and targeted support for increasing women's representation in leadership.¹⁴⁶
90. **Norms and attitudes around women's caring and men's breadwinning roles contribute to women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work,** constraining their agency and control over their time and participation in the labour market and public and professional life, as well as career choices and access to resources.¹⁴⁷ They drive many women to engage in part-time and informal jobs to reconcile paid work with care responsibilities, which has long-term implications for their earnings, career progression and economic security.¹⁴⁸
91. **Widely held opinions about the value and skill attached to different forms of work, also drive inequalities.** Research indicates that unpaid care work is consistently ranked as less skilled than income-generating activities such as planting, harvesting and construction, despite being indispensable to the functioning of households, labour markets and economies.¹⁴⁹ Paid care and domestic work is often inaccurately treated as "unskilled", including within migration and labour market systems, a narrative that contributes to underpayment and lack of decent working conditions, despite evidence that domestic workers routinely perform complex tasks requiring a broad range of skills.¹⁵⁰
92. **Social norms can be reflected in institutions, workplace cultures and practices in ways that, often unintentionally, reinforce gender and other forms of inequalities in the world of work.** They can influence recruitment, hiring, evaluation and promotion processes. For example, job



¹⁴² UN Women, *The National Integrated Care System in Uruguay: An Opportunity for the Economic Empowerment of Women*, 2019.

¹⁴³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *General Recommendation 41 on Gender Stereotypes*, para. 2; ILO, *General Observation on the Application of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, publication 2019, 2019, 5.

¹⁴⁴ ILO, *Empirical Analysis of the Global Evolution of Society's Perception of Women in the Social and Economic Sphere*, forthcoming.

¹⁴⁵ ILO and Gallup, *Towards a Better Future for Women and Work: Voices of Women and Men*, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ ILO, *Empirical Analysis of the Global Evolution of Society's Perception of Women in the Social and Economic Sphere*; Leonardo Bursztyn et al., "How Gender Norms Are Perceived Across the World", Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2023.

¹⁴⁷ Rachel Marcus and Aatif Somji, *Transforming Gender Norms for Women's Economic Rights and Empowerment*, ALIGN Report, 2024.

¹⁴⁸ ILO, *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*, 94.

¹⁴⁹ Leyla Karimli et al., *Factors and Norms Influencing Unpaid Care Work: Household Survey Evidence from Five Rural Communities in Colombia, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe*, Oxfam and WE-CARE, 2016, 21.

¹⁵⁰ ILO, *Skilled to Care, Forced to Work? Recognizing the Skills Profiles of Migrant Domestic Workers In ASEAN Amid Forced Labour and Exploitation*, 2023.

postings can reproduce gendered language that steers women towards certain roles, while selection processes may directly or indirectly lead to exclusion along racial and ethnic lines. Laws and policies are influential in shifting social attitudes, for example by prohibiting discrimination and ensuring effective remedy. Yet, entrenched stereotypes and perceptions of roles in society can also shape how laws are implemented in practice, contributing to persistent implementation gaps.¹⁵¹

93. While global attitudes overall have become more supportive of gender equality, attitudinal differences across age and gender groups have become more visible in recent years.¹⁵²

Young people, particularly those from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds and those without tertiary education have felt the effects of economic policies and shocks of the past decade – including the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and longer-term patterns of wealth concentration as well as globalization and automation.¹⁵³ This suggests that young men in particular may believe that they are being left behind in efforts to promote gender equality.

94. These beliefs are situated within a broader global context in which discourse on gender equality has become increasingly contested. In periods of economic uncertainty or social change, concerns related to stability and social cohesion become more pronounced, shaping public discourse and policy priorities. A growing body of literature suggests that this points to a backlash or pushback against gender equality.¹⁵⁴ In this context, gender equality initiatives may at times be framed as being in tension with other social or economic objectives.¹⁵⁵ A common feature is the spread of zero-sum narratives,¹⁵⁶ which frame progress for women as a loss for men, despite evidence that gender equality in the world of work positively contributes to economic performance and social resilience, benefiting societies and economies as a whole.¹⁵⁷ Reflecting these challenges, nearly a quarter of countries have identified the backlash against gender equality as a key factor hindering implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.¹⁵⁸

95. Against this backdrop, political commitment and financing for gender equality remain insufficient. Although overall official development assistance has increased, the share earmarked for gender equality objectives declined from 45 per cent in 2019–20 to 42 per cent in



¹⁵¹ ILO, *Care at Work*, 138.

¹⁵² Ipsos, *Progress and Polarisation: Global Attitudes Toward Gender Equality in 2025*, 2025. This trend is echoed in national studies from China, Germany, the Republic of Korea and the United States. *Financial Times*, “A New Global Gender Divide Is Emerging”, 2024.

¹⁵³ Saskia Brechenmacher, *The New Global Struggle Over Gender, Rights, and Family Values*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025.

¹⁵⁴ European Commission, *Anti-Gender Backlash in Europe*, 2023; UN General Assembly, Seventy-ninth session, *Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls: Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls*, Report of the Secretary-General, 2024; Elżbieta Korolczuk, Agnieszka Graff and Johanna Kantola, “Gender Danger: Mapping a Decade of Research on Anti-Gender Politics”, *Journal of Gender Studies* (2025); UNRISD, *Understanding Backlash Against Gender Equality: Evidence, Trends and Policy Responses*, 2025; AU-EU: “Joint Communiqué on the 20th Human Rights Dialogue”, 2025.

¹⁵⁵ Brechenmacher, 2025; Korolczuk, Graff and Kantola, 2025; UNRISD, 2025; ECLAC, *45 Years of the Regional Gender Agenda*, 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Claire Cullen et al., *Female Empowerment and Male Backlash: Experimental Evidence from India*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 17450, 2024.

¹⁵⁷ Satoshi Araki and Francisco Olivos, “Gender Inequality, Well-Being, and Ill-Being: A Macro Analysis of Human and Societal Flourishing”, *Soc Sci Med.* Feb. 2025; Joana Costa, Elydia Silva and Fábio Vaz, *The Role of Gender Inequalities in Explaining Income Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Evidences from Latin American Countries* (UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ UN Women, *Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing*, 2025, 6.

2021–22 – the first decline in a decade.¹⁵⁹ These trends undermine the capacity of unions, women’s movements and civil society to advance equality and social justice. Meanwhile, the global context for workers’ rights is deteriorating: the ITUC Global Rights Index 2025 reports that in 80 per cent of countries, the right to collective bargaining is restricted, in 87 per cent the right to strike is violated, and in 72 per cent access to justice is limited, representing the weakest global conditions for workers in a decade.¹⁶⁰

96. Taken together, the evidence outlined in this chapter shows that **lack of progress towards gender equality in the world of work is not the result of isolated gaps but of deeply entrenched structural barriers that operate across households, labour markets, institutions and macroeconomic systems.** Macroeconomic, sectoral, employment and social protection policies can interact with norms and stereotypes in ways that can limit women’s access to employment, job quality and career progression over the life course. Where policies do not sufficiently account for these interactions, inequalities may persist or widen, even in periods of economic growth. At the same time, shortfalls in the realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work further erode hard-won gains in gender equality. Achieving transformative change therefore requires deliberate, coordinated action across economic, social and labour market policy domains – supported by effective institutions, social dialogue, and robust financing – to remove structural barriers and ensure that all women and men can participate in and benefit from a more just, inclusive and resilient world of work.



¹⁵⁹ OECD, *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024*, 2024.

¹⁶⁰ ITUC, *2025 ITUC Global Rights Index: The World's Worst Countries for Workers*, 2025.

► Chapter 3

Strategic approaches to deliver on gender equality in the world of work

97. Achieving gender equality at work calls for a transformative agenda that addresses structural barriers and enables everyone to claim their rights, participate productively in labour markets and benefit from decent work. The success of the Agenda rests on the **effective recognition of rights that advance a sustainable economy for the well-being of all** ¹⁶¹ **alongside strong and accountable institutions**. Delivering on this demands an **emboldened commitment to gender equality by all labour market actors**.

3.1. Rights for gender equality in the world of work

98. **The Agenda is grounded in the fundamental principles and rights at work and relevant international labour standards**, including those specifically covering gender equality, employment policy, social protection and sectors where women are highly represented or more exposed to gender-based discrimination. ¹⁶² Equality and non-discrimination are universal rights, and are essential for the realization of all other rights. Their importance is particularly evident for workers in the informal economy and in crisis settings, where gaps in protection and enforcement are often most pronounced. Advancing equality and non-discrimination requires aligning national laws, policies and practices with international labour standards, using a life-course approach that meets the evolving needs of women and men while supporting productivity, sustainable enterprises and inclusive economic development.
99. **Gender inequalities need to be dismantled before women enter the labour market**. This means addressing child labour, forced labour and forced marriage, and dismantling barriers in access to nutritious food, health, education, vocational training and skills development, while actively challenging the deeply rooted social norms and stereotypes that restrict women's opportunities from an early age. Encouragingly, more than 1,531 legal reforms have been enacted across 189 countries and territories to advance women's rights in the last 30 years; yet, women globally still possess only 64 per cent of the legal rights afforded to men. ¹⁶³ In some contexts, restrictive measures have resurfaced, undermining women's basic rights, economic participation, voice and autonomy. Crucially, discriminatory restrictions such as laws authorizing a husband to object to his wife working outside the home or requiring his permission before she can accept

¹⁶¹ The concept of a sustainable economy for the well-being of all is introduced in the Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025.

¹⁶² Including Conventions Nos 100, 111, 156, 102, 183, 189, 190 and Recommendation No. 200, and also the Nursing Personnel Convention, 1977 (No. 149), the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177), the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), and the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205).

¹⁶³ UN Women, *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing*, 8.



certain jobs, or restricting women's access to land or credit ¹⁶⁴ impede women's ability to seek paid employment, control property or resources, or enter into contracts. ¹⁶⁵

- 100. Lifting restrictions in employment is crucial for equality.** Recent years have seen significant progress in removing legal barriers that limited women's participation in the workforce, thereby advancing on the implementation of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). For instance, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Malaysia, Oman, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have eased restrictions on women's employment in certain sectors and hazardous jobs. ¹⁶⁶ Egypt, India, Jordan, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates have lifted constraints on night work that targeted all women, rather than only pregnant and nursing women as stipulated by the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), thereby emphasizing safety and equal opportunity rather than exclusion. ¹⁶⁷ Jordan and Sierra Leone have introduced workplace equality legislation, while Rwanda and Togo have prohibited gender-based discrimination in financial services, expanding women's opportunities to start businesses and access credit. ¹⁶⁸
- 101. Lifting sectoral and night-work restrictions can open up opportunities for women in the green economy.** For instance, sectors traditionally closed to women – such as mining and extractive industries, transportation, energy, utilities, and high-risk chemical or nuclear occupations – can become more accessible, provided that occupational and health standards for both women and men are applied. ¹⁶⁹
- 102. The right to equal pay for work of equal value must be realized.** Strengthened data, policies and tools as well as global commitments and initiatives ¹⁷⁰ have contributed to highlighting the persistent gender pay gap and underscoring the need for comprehensive approaches, thus reinforcing the principle of equal remuneration under Convention No. 100. Improvements in measurement methods – such as the *factor-weighted* gender wage gap and the *gender labour income gap* – have helped to more accurately assess and monitor pay inequalities. Legal reforms

¹⁶⁴ ILO, *Achieving Gender Equality at Work*, General Survey, ILC111/III(B), 2023, paras 29, 143–145 and 836.

¹⁶⁵ Distinctions based on civil status, marital status, or more specifically family situation (particularly as regards responsibilities for dependent persons), are contrary to Convention No. 111 when they have the effect of imposing a requirement or condition on an individual of a particular sex that would not be imposed on an individual of the other sex (ILC.101/III/1B, para. 787).

¹⁶⁶ See CEACR observation on Convention No. 111 for Azerbaijan, 2024; ILC111/III(B), paras 83–86; and Gaia Bechara and Natália Mazoni Silva Martins, "Opening the Doors: Removing Job Restrictions to Fuel Women's Economic Empowerment", *World Bank Blog*, 2024.

¹⁶⁷ This move reflects the ILO's evolving position from prohibiting women's night work (under the Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4), the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934 (No. 41), and the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89) to regulating night work for all workers under the Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171), emphasizing occupational safety, health and equality for all women and men rather than exclusion.

¹⁶⁸ For example, India amended its Mines Act in 2019 to allow women to work night shifts with appropriate safeguards, Egypt lifted night-work restrictions in 2021 (except during pregnancy) while improving public transport safety for women (Ghada Barsoum, *A No Woman's Place: Employers' Discrimination and Hiring Challenges in Less Feminized Sectors in Egypt* (ILO, 2023), 7), Malaysia eliminated bans in 2023 (Bechara and Mazoni Silva Martins, 2024), and both Jordan and the United Arab Emirates repealed comparable restrictions as part of broader labour reforms (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, *Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia*, 2020).

¹⁶⁹ ILO, *Women in Mining: Towards Gender Equality*, 2021; Bechara and Mazoni Silva Martins, 2024.

¹⁷⁰ These include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for a reduction in the gender gap in average hourly earnings (Indicator 8.5.1); the *Equal Pay International Coalition*, launched in 2017 and coordinated by the ILO, the OECD and UN Women to accelerate efforts to close gender pay gaps; and the *ILO Global Coalition for Social Justice*, which supports progress towards the SDGs, including gender equality in pay. In addition, in July 2025, the G20 countries endorsed the new *Brisbane-eThekwinini Goal*, which reaffirms their commitment to reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent by 2030, and introduces a new target to reduce the gender wage gap by 15 per cent by 2035, with a review in 2030 to consider raising the target to 35 per cent by 2035.



to better align national legislation with Convention No. 100, as seen in Madagascar, Jordan, Mongolia and Pakistan,¹⁷¹ have also contributed to this progress. In addition, recent wage-transparency initiatives, including the EU Directive (2023/970) on pay transparency and legislation in Brazil and Zambia, have renewed global efforts to address the gender pay gap. Adequate wage policies – such as minimum and living wages – also play a key role in narrowing gender pay gaps, particularly in low-paid jobs.

- 103. With increased availability of user-friendly and objective job evaluation tools and training, governments and enterprises are more equipped to identify and address pay disparities** (such as in the public sector in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa).¹⁷² Efforts are under way to adapt tools for small businesses, such as in Switzerland, and to leverage technological innovations to make pay reporting and job evaluation more efficient, transparent and affordable – even for businesses with limited human resources capacity.¹⁷³
- 104. Advanced analytics can also reveal pay disparities across gender, ethnicity, disability and age.** Some countries are exploring or implementing measures to address multiple dimensions of pay gaps, including Australia, Brazil, Canada and the United Kingdom, as is the European Union. Meanwhile, evidence shows that collective agreements can help close gender pay gaps by preventing gender biases in wage structures, particularly with regard to payment of supplements,¹⁷⁴ through targeted wage adjustments in women-dominated sectors, gender-neutral occupational classification schemes, pay transparency and bias-free evaluation criteria.¹⁷⁵
- 105. Over recent decades, the understanding of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work in some legal and policy frameworks has gradually broadened but is still uneven.** While measures in many countries continue to focus primarily on violence and harassment against women, a growing number of national laws and practices are beginning to recognize additional forms of sex-based and gender-based harassment. These include harassment linked to pregnancy and maternity, as well as stigma associated with caregiving responsibilities, including for men. Such developments remain emergent, pointing to increased attention towards a broader conceptualization of the phenomenon, which is reflected in national law and practice in some countries.¹⁷⁶
- 106. The recognition in ILO Convention No. 190¹⁷⁷ of the need to integrate preventing and addressing violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment, in occupational safety and health frameworks was a major turning point.** This approach has prompted countries and enterprises to embed gender-responsive risk assessments, worker participation, social dialogue and clear allocations of responsibilities into their OSH management systems, reshaping regulatory practice and strengthening the link between equality and non-discrimination law and OSH regulation.¹⁷⁸ For instance, Chile, Italy and Spain require the inclusion of violence and harassment, and psychosocial and gender-based risks in mandatory workplace risk assessments, Peru has introduced legislation requiring employers to provide annual sexual



¹⁷¹ ILO, *Towards Pay Equity: A Comprehensive Response to the Gender Pay Gap*, 2026, 22 and 23.

¹⁷² ILO, *Towards Pay Equity*, 2026, 33.

¹⁷³ ILO, *Towards Pay Equity*, 2026, 33 and 34.

¹⁷⁴ ILO, *A Review of Wage Setting through Collective Bargaining*, 2023, 45.

¹⁷⁵ ITUC, *Trade Union Action to Promote Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value*, 2023, 8.

¹⁷⁶ See, for instance, ILC111/III(B), paras 118–120.

¹⁷⁷ As of February 2026, 54 countries had ratified Convention No. 190.

¹⁷⁸ Cox, 2024.

harassment risk assessments, and Australia designates sexual harassment and psychosocial risks as OSH hazards.¹⁷⁹

107. **Increasingly, countries have broadened the scope of labour protections on violence and harassment to all workers and other persons in the world of work**, irrespective of contractual status, including those in the informal economy, where women are often over-represented. They have also adopted context-specific tools, training and codes of conduct applicable to public and private spaces that constitute places of work, in close connection with Convention No. 190. For example, India and South Africa have extended protections to informal workers, while France and Mexico have enacted legislation covering informal work in public spaces. The Philippines has also strengthened access to remedies for informal workers.¹⁸⁰
108. **Technological developments and the expansion of digital and remote work have raised questions about how existing OSH and workplace conduct frameworks apply in virtual settings.** In response, an increasing number of countries have clarified or extended their legal or regulatory approaches to violence and harassment in the world of work to cover technology-mediated interactions. For example, recent legislation in Ecuador, the Philippines, South Africa and Thailand expands protections to cover online gender-based harassment in the workplace.¹⁸¹
109. **The effectiveness of equality and non-discrimination laws and sustained efforts to dismantle discriminatory social norms are interconnected.** Evidence from programmes such as Better Work in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lesotho and Viet Nam suggests that improved job quality, including adequate wages and safer workplaces in the garment sector, has been associated with shifts in household dynamics, including men's increased participation in unpaid care and domestic work.¹⁸²
110. **Countries have supported women in entering traditionally male-dominated occupations through a wide range of interventions.** These include the establishment of zero-tolerance approaches to violence and harassment, bias and bystander-intervention training, and the promotion of inclusive economic strategies that expand access to quality jobs for women in both feminized sectors and emerging green and STEM fields, as seen in Bangladesh, Morocco and Tunisia.¹⁸³ Across these contexts, employers and workers have adopted a variety of practical measures, such as gender-neutral job descriptions, anonymous recruitment procedures and family-friendly policies, to support access to jobs and career progression. In some cases, initiatives that engage men as allies and address gender stereotypes in workplace communication have been part of broader efforts to foster more inclusive organizational cultures.¹⁸⁴
111. **Countries are increasingly scaling up comprehensive national care strategies in response to demographic shifts, urbanization, economic pressures and changing social norms.** Guided by the 5R Framework for Decent Care Work, these strategies adopt rights- and life-course-based approaches to support intergenerational caregiving as traditional family-based systems weaken.



¹⁷⁹ ILO, *Violence and Harassment in the World of Work: A Guide on Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206*, 2021, 56 and 61.

¹⁸⁰ ILO, *Innovative Approaches to Addressing Informality and Promoting the Transition to Formality for Decent Work*, ILC.113/Report VI, 2025, para. 190.

¹⁸¹ Ecuador: *General Regulations of the Basic Act to Promote the Purple Economy*, adopted in 2023; Philippines: *Republic Act No. 11313*, 2018; Thailand: *Penal Code Amendment (No. 30)* of 2025; South Africa: *Code of Good Practice on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassment in the Workplace*, para. 2.3.

¹⁸² Marcus and Somji, 2024, 40.

¹⁸³ Stephan Klasen, "What Explains Uneven Female Labor Force Participation Levels and Trends in Developing Countries?", *World Bank Research Observer* 34, No. 2 (2019): 161–197.

¹⁸⁴ USAID Engendering Industries, *Engaging Men for Gender Equality in the Workplace*, 2023, 6.

Recent initiatives in Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya and Mexico emphasize accessible childcare and long-term care services, formalization of care work, and social and solidarity economy approaches to promote gender equality, decent work, equitable sharing of care responsibilities, and support for marginalized groups.¹⁸⁵ A recent example from Nigeria shows the complementarity between national policies on gender equality at the workplace and care strategies (box 7).

► **Box 7. Nigeria’s comprehensive approach to gender equality and care**

In 2025, Nigeria’s new National Gender Policy for the world of work was negotiated following extensive tripartite and multi-stakeholder consultations. The policy signals a major national commitment to gender equality at work. It is aligned with international labour standards, including Convention No. 190, and prohibits all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence, while affirming occupational safety and health as a fundamental right. The policy also promotes women’s agency and leadership by supporting their participation in decision-making and addressing systemic barriers. It introduces special measures to expand opportunities for women and vulnerable groups, including people living with HIV and persons with disabilities. To complement this effort, the Government is developing a National Care Policy and introducing its first dedicated budget line for care investments, laying the ground for a national care system in 2026.

Source: ILO, “[Nigeria Champions Gender Equality with Landmark Workplace Policy Revalidation](#)”, 2025.

112. More efforts are being expended on universal access to high-quality and affordable care services and infrastructure (box 8). These measures support women’s and men’s participation in the workforce, reduce time poverty and create pathways to decent jobs. This is particularly important to workers in the informal economy and those residing in rural or remote areas. In addition to childcare, healthcare and long-term care services, the measures include facilitating access to clean water, safe cooking fuel, electricity, secure transport, schools and health facilities, and digital access.¹⁸⁶ A clear case exists for such investments: universal childcare and long-term care could create up to 300 million jobs by 2035.¹⁸⁷

► **Box 8. Strong case for investment to close care policy gaps and drive social transformation and job creation**

Some countries are increasing investments in care: for instance, Australia is expanding childcare infrastructure in underserved regions and increasing subsidized access; Canada’s 2024 Early Learning and Child Care Act guarantees affordability, access, inclusion, quality and respect for indigenous rights with long-term funding.¹ Jordan, Sudan and Madagascar have linked infrastructure and care through employment-intensive investment programmes that rehabilitate roads while building nurseries, health posts and safe community spaces.² The initiatives generated over 155,000 paid work-days in Jordan alone, 34 per cent of which performed by women and 5 per cent by persons with disabilities. Argentina, Rwanda and South Africa have integrated care services into public employment programmes, making them more gender-responsive and better aligned with community needs.

¹ ILO and OECD, *Women at Work in G20 Countries, 2025*, 14. ² ILO, *Employment-Intensive Investments for Advancing Decent Work in the Care Economy*, 2025.

¹⁸⁵ ILO and OECD, *Women at Work in G20 Countries: Progress and Policy Action in 2024*, 2025, 14; ILO, *Providing Care through the Social and Solidarity Economy*, 2024; National Council for Children’s Services, *Summary of the National Care Reform Strategy for Children in Kenya*, 2025.

¹⁸⁶ ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality: For a Better Future of Work for All*, 2019, 77–79.

¹⁸⁷ ILO, *Care at Work*, 294.



- 113. A range of countries have introduced or expanded work–family policies aimed at supporting labour market participation and work–life balance.** These policies include: maternity, paternity, parental and other leave and income support during caregiving; balanced and flexible working time arrangements or work organization arrangements; and access to quality care services for children, older persons and persons with disabilities. The measures contribute significantly to achieving work–life balance and are in accordance with the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No.102), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156),¹⁸⁸ and the 2024 resolution concerning decent work and the care economy. Recent reforms include expanded maternity protection in Azerbaijan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Libya, Oman, Rwanda, Suriname and Zambia, and the introduction or extension of paternity leave in Angola, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Nepal, Senegal, Spain, South Africa and Zambia.¹⁸⁹ Innovative measures such as gender-neutral parental leave, non-transferable quotas for fathers (Portugal) and “use it or lose it” entitlements (Sweden) help shift attitudes and promote more equitable employment outcomes.¹⁹⁰ When well designed and adequately funded, such measures benefit both workers and employers by improving retention, engagement and talent attraction, including for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).¹⁹¹ However, significant gaps persist, particularly for informal, self-employed and migrant workers, and adoptive parents. Moreover, legal protections remain limited, including in collective agreements containing protections against discrimination or dismissal related to parental leave, meaning that many parents still lack adequate rights.¹⁹²
- 114. The use of digital technologies has expanded the range of work organization arrangements to include forms such as telework and hybrid work, which are now widely available in many sectors.** These measures have been used by enterprises to support operational continuity and flexibility while offering workers greater autonomy over their time and working location. However, experience across countries indicates that the effects of remote work vary depending on job characteristics, skills levels and household circumstances. While often promoted as a means to increase work–life balance, digital work arrangements have also been associated with blurred boundaries between work and non-work time, and intensified workloads. This may, at times, reinforce gender roles, especially for women who already shoulder most unpaid care work and face higher risks of work–life conflict, burnout and health problems.¹⁹³ These patterns have prompted policy responses aimed at clarifying expectations, managing workloads and addressing OSH risks. For instance, a number of countries have introduced or strengthened provisions related to working time, such as the “right to disconnect”, and have updated OSH guidance to reflect digital and remote work environments. Collective agreements in some sectors and enterprises are also being negotiated to regulate telework and protect workers’ mental health. These developments illustrate how governments, employers and workers, through social dialogue at the national, sectoral and workplace levels, are adapting work organization



¹⁸⁸ As of January 2026, 68 countries had ratified Convention No.102, 45 countries had ratified Convention No. 183 and 49 countries had ratified Convention No. 156.

¹⁸⁹ ILO, *Closing the Gender Gap in Paid Parental Leaves: Better Parental Leaves for a More Caring World of Work*, 2025, 10; ILO, *Care at Work*.

¹⁹⁰ Marga Zambrana, “Use It or Lose It”: Why Men’s Care Leave Still Lags, and How to Fix It”, *Equal Times*, 2025; Libertad González et al., “Well Designed Paternity Leave Makes Spain a Model of Success”, *LSE Blogs*, 2025.

¹⁹¹ ILO, *Closing the Gender Gap in Paid Parental Leaves*.

¹⁹² ILO, *Care at Work*.

¹⁹³ Eurofound and ILO, *Working Anytime, Anywhere: The Effects on the World of Work*, 2017, 33–34.

frameworks to balance flexibility, productivity and worker well-being in evolving labour markets.¹⁹⁴

- 115. Social protection systems vary in their coverage and ability to accommodate diverse employment patterns and care responsibilities.** A number of governments have expanded or adapted social protection arrangements to improve income security across the life course, including during periods of caregiving, unemployment, disability, old age and ill health. These reforms have included adjustments to maternity, paternity and parental leave schemes. Some countries have taken steps to broaden access to both contributory and non-contributory schemes to reach workers in temporary, part-time and self-employment, including those in the informal economy.¹⁹⁵ Design features such as simplified eligibility criteria, portability of entitlements, an appropriate financing mix from contributions and taxes, and coordination with labour market formalization and care policies have been used to improve accessibility and continuity of protection (box 9). For example, in Costa Rica, Denmark and the Seychelles, contributory and non-contributory social protection schemes are combined to finance care leave provisions.¹⁹⁶ Recent legislation in Uzbekistan includes the replacement of the employer liability mechanism by maternity benefits financed through social insurance, which facilitates compliance, especially for small enterprises, and reduces the risks for women of discrimination in hiring.¹⁹⁷

► **Box 9. Overcoming informality through innovative social protection solutions**

Innovative solutions can successfully extend social insurance coverage to workers in the informal economy. For example, Mongolia has extended maternity protection by combining contributory social insurance with non-contributory schemes, reaching self-employed workers, herders, nomads and rural informal workers. Mongolia also established “one-stop shops”, namely delivery points where remote communities can access diverse services, including social protection benefits, employment services, land management, civil registration, bank and notary services. This has supported comprehensive and inclusive coverage, despite the country’s sparse population.

Source: ILO, *Closing the Gender Gap in Paid Parental Leaves*, 14.

- 116. Social protection systems are adapting to demographic change, conflicts and climate-related shocks.** In ageing societies, social protection is particularly important to ensure income security and access to healthcare and long-term care. Good practices for gender-responsive pension schemes within universal systems include avoiding different pensionable ages for women and men, using unisex mortality tables to ensure fairness, and eliminating discriminatory rules, such as requiring women to withdraw pension savings upon marriage, which undermine long-term income security and autonomy.¹⁹⁸ Some countries affected by conflict, displacement or climate disruption have expanded or adapted social protection benefits and care services to address increased care needs and income security where public services are disrupted. These measures have been used to support household resilience and continuity of livelihoods, particularly among groups facing heightened exposure to shocks (box 10).¹⁹⁹ Likewise, countries

¹⁹⁴ ILO, *Working Time and the Future of Work*, 2018, 29.

¹⁹⁵ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*, 217–223.

¹⁹⁶ ILO, *Closing the Gender Gap in Paid Parental Leaves*, 14.

¹⁹⁷ See *UZ Daily*, “Mirziyoyev Approves Law on New State Social Insurance System”, 2025.

¹⁹⁸ Razavi et al., 2024, 81.

¹⁹⁹ ILO, *Gender, Equality and Inclusion for a Just Transition in Climate Action: A Policy Guide*, 2024, 42–49; ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26*, 225–226.



have used digital technologies to enhance delivery, inclusiveness and accessibility of social protection and have adapted social and labour protections to maintain coverage, adequacy and fairness in the face of changing labour markets.²⁰⁰

► Box 10. Gender-responsive social protection to move from crisis to recovery

In contexts of conflict, fragility and crisis, women, girls and marginalized groups often bear the heaviest burdens, facing disrupted livelihoods, increased unpaid care responsibilities and heightened exposure to gender-based violence.¹ Social protection plays a critical role in addressing these gendered impacts by bridging the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.² Together with emergency employment and access to essential services, social protection supports immediate relief while fostering longer-term recovery, resilience and inclusion. In Lebanon, the ILO's emergency response provides displaced women and men with disability benefits and other cash benefits, shelter rehabilitation and community-based employment, ensuring women's access to income and services in a crisis-affected context.³ In the State of Palestine, ILO programmes provide social protection with employment and skills support to vulnerable women and men in affected sectors, including those in informal employment.⁴ Similarly, in South Sudan and Ukraine, ILO interventions integrate social protection with labour market recovery, with explicit attention to women's economic empowerment, protection against exploitation and access to essential services.^{5, 6}

¹ ILO, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the World of Work in Fragile, Conflict and Disaster Settings*, 2022, 3. ² ILO, *General Survey on employment and decent work for peace and resilience*, forthcoming. ³ ILO, *ILO Support for the Emergency Response to the Crisis in Lebanon*, 2025. ⁴ ILO, "Partners Pledge Support to ILO's Palestinian Labour Market Recovery Programme", 2024. ⁵ ILO, "Empowered with ILO's Training, Women Farmers in Sudan Expand Cooperative and Market Opportunities", 2025. ⁶ ILO, *ILO Transitional Cooperation Strategy for Ukraine 2024–2025*.

- 117. Policies and negotiated agreements have been introduced to improve working conditions and wages for care workers**, who are essential in supporting economies and social well-being, and are predominantly women. Some improvements in this direction highlight that countries are advancing policies to improve working conditions, formalize employment and ensure adequate wages and access to social security for care workers.²⁰¹ Brazil's National Care Policy provides training, career pathways, wage guarantees and occupational safety measures. India's programmes expand vocational training for informal care providers. Italy, Mexico and the Russian Federation have implemented agreements, standards and tools to formalize domestic work and clarify roles. Wage improvements include Germany's minimum wage adjustments for all care sectors, Japan's wage increase for long-term care workers, and South Africa's increase in the national minimum wage for care workers.²⁰² Costa Rica and Kenya have introduced minimum wages for domestic workers.²⁰³ Thailand's recent national regulations increased overall protection for domestic workers, including paid maternity leave.²⁰⁴ A national collective bargaining agreement in Uruguay covers more than 100,000 workers, mostly women, recognizing three different job categories within domestic work with differentiated minimum wages.²⁰⁵ In Jordan, the Unified Contract for Workers in Private Schools and Kindergartens promoted

²⁰⁰ Luis Frota, Christina Behrendt and Shahra Razavi, "Digital Transformation Is Pivotal to Achieving the Goal of Universal Social Protection", ILO Observatory on AI, 2025.

²⁰¹ ILO, *Securing Decent Work for Nursing Personnel and Domestic Workers, Key Actors in the Care Economy*, ILC110/III/(B), 2022.

²⁰² ILO and OECD, *Women at Work in G20 Countries*, 2025, 16–17.

²⁰³ ILO, *Towards Pay Equity*, 2026, 45.

²⁰⁴ Ministry of Labour of Thailand, "Household Workers Celebrate as Labour Minister Successfully Pushes Ministerial Regulations Into Effect on April 30, Allowing 98 Days of Maternity Leave", 2024.

²⁰⁵ Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Uruguay, *Trabajo doméstico: Acuerdo consolida avance histórico para más de 100 mil trabajadoras*, 2025.



strengthened compliance with employment contracts, and enhanced transparency across the country's private education sector.²⁰⁶

- 118. Greater attention is being paid to women's health and workforce participation.** Women's health beyond maternity has long been neglected, but there is growing consideration of conditions such as menstruation, endometriosis and menopause which affect labour market participation. The United Kingdom introduced legislation recognizing menopause as a serious workplace matter and requiring employers with more than 250 employees to publish a menopause action plan as part of their wider gender equality responsibilities as of 2027.²⁰⁷ Progress is also emerging through collective agreements that address menstrual hygiene, reproductive health, and well-being leave.²⁰⁸ For example, in 2020, the Health and Community Services Union in Victoria, Australia, advocated for paid leave and flexible arrangements covering menstruation, menopause, miscarriage, stillbirth, fertility treatments, hysterectomies and gender-affirming care.²⁰⁹ These measures focus on employers supporting continued labour market participation and dignity at work, rather than on the provision of medical treatment. Interventions are also starting to emerge in support of rural women and those in informal employment, who often face heightened risks due to inadequate workplace infrastructure, limited access to hygiene facilities, exposure to agro-chemicals, heat stress, heavy workloads and long hours. For instance, in India, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme improved women's ability to work safely and with dignity by integrating measures related to menstrual health and hygiene. Nevertheless, areas such as HIV services require continued attention (box 11).

► **Box 11. Advancing workplace health and inclusion for men and women with HIV**

Stigma, discrimination and gender inequalities, including gender-based violence and harassment, continue to fuel HIV transmission. New HIV infections have risen in at least 32 countries since 2010. In 2024, there were 570 new infections a day among young girls and adolescent women, yet they continue to have insufficient access to HIV services.

HIV testing and treatment gaps persist among men. Guided by the HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010 (No. 200), the ILO works to eliminate stigma and expand access to HIV services in workplaces. Through the VCT@WORK initiative, 2.5 million workers have received HIV information; nearly 1.5 million have been tested (1.1 million men, 0.4 million women); and over 48,000 workers (37,435 men, 11,182 women) who tested positive have been referred for treatment. Integrated approaches addressing tuberculosis, non-communicable diseases, gender inequality and violence – seen in countries such as China, Eswatini, India, Ukraine and Zambia – demonstrate how inclusive workplace policies and support for people living with HIV reduce stigma, improve health and promote economic and social inclusion.

- 119. As climate change intensifies health hazards, countries are increasingly paying attention to gender-responsive OSH strategies across women's life course, including through tailored gender- and age-responsive risk assessments, training and welfare facilities.** In response to a growing body of evidence indicating that rising temperatures are associated with increased levels of physical and domestic violence against women, and that climate-related stress, income

²⁰⁶ ILO, *Automation of the Unified Contract for Workers in Private Schools and Kindergartens*, 2025.

²⁰⁷ Government of the United Kingdom, *Implementing the Employment Rights Bill: Our Roadmap for Delivering Change*, 2025, 9.

²⁰⁸ ILO, *Achieving Gender Equality at Work*, General Survey, ILC111/III(B), 2023, para. 160; ILO, *Social Dialogue Report 2022: Collective Bargaining for an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery*, 98.

²⁰⁹ Marian Baird, Elizabeth Hill and Sydney Colussi, "Balancing Work and Fertility Isn't Easy – But Reproductive Leave Can Help", *The Conversation*, 2021.



loss, displacement and social instability can heighten risks of gender-based violence and harassment,²¹⁰ countries are also moving beyond general legal protections against discrimination and introducing more explicit measures, as seen in Canada, Karnataka State in India, and Spain.²¹¹

3.2. Well-functioning and accountable institutions are key to delivering on gender equality

120. **The ability of institutions to ensure transparent governance, maintain sound public financial management, and set policy directions on equal opportunities, treatment and participation remains fundamental to achieving gender equality in the world of work.** Governments play a pivotal role in promoting equality, safeguarding labour rights and enabling vulnerable workers to participate meaningfully in the labour market. Evidence also suggests that countries are increasingly looking to holistic measures for increasing women's participation and leadership, including in the design of legal frameworks. For example, Ghana's Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act aims to promote women's participation and leadership in all areas of society, including politics, economy, education and social life.²¹² Employers' and workers' organizations are equally vital, and their capacities need to be strengthened to articulate and respond to enterprises' and workers' priorities.
121. **Across many countries, labour inspectorates have developed gender-responsive tools to enforce anti-discrimination standards, equal pay, care-related rights (including breastfeeding) and occupational safety and health measures addressing gender-based violence and harassment and psychosocial risks.** For instance, Costa Rica, Georgia, Spain and Uruguay have established specialized gender equality units. Malaysia and Thailand have built dedicated capacities on addressing discrimination and gender-based violence and harassment.²¹³ Some experience also exists in extending inspection services to domestic work and the informal economy, as seen in Ireland, South Africa and Uruguay.²¹⁴ Yet gaps remain, as digital harassment, algorithmic management, remote work and climate-exacerbated hazards intersect with gender and age.
122. **Social dialogue enables governments and employers' and workers' organizations to negotiate lasting, systemic change.** It is particularly relevant in the context of labour market transitions, as it allows stakeholders to discuss strategies and incorporate gender equality for decent work into climate change responses and digital transformations through relevant policy instruments and a sectoral lens. All forms of social dialogue can play a decisive role in closing gender pay gaps, promoting maternity, paternity and parental leave, improving working time arrangements and embedding protections against violence and harassment. All of these actions



²¹⁰ Adrienne Epstein et al., "Drought and Intimate Partner Violence Towards Women in 19 Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa During 2011–2018: A Population-Based Study", *PLOS Medicine* 17, No. 3 (2020).

²¹¹ Government of Canada, "Menstrual Products Now Available at No Cost to Employees in Federally Regulated Workplaces", 2023; *Economic Times*, "Karnataka Cabinet Approves One-Day Menstrual Leave for Women Across Sectors", 2025; Government of Spain, *Ley Orgánica 1/2023*, 28 February 2023.

²¹² See Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection of Ghana, "MOGCSP Launches Affirmative Action Act to Advance Gender Equality in Ghana", 2025.

²¹³ ILO, *Training for Malaysian Inspectors on Forced Labour, Child Labour and Gender-Based Discrimination, Violence and Harassment in the Workplace: Facilitator's Manual*, 2022; ILO, *Labour Inspection Guidelines*, 2022.

²¹⁴ ILO, *Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects Ten Years After the Adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)*, 210.

reinforce equal rights at work, especially during periods of transition.²¹⁵ Collective bargaining agreements from Argentina, Lesotho, Morocco and Spain show that by addressing contract arrangements, wage equality, job security and anti-harassment protections, they can deliver measurable gains in safety, stability and equity for women and other at-risk workers.²¹⁶ Increasingly, social dialogue efforts are being expanded towards the inclusion and representation of workers from diverse groups, including persons with disabilities, migrants, and indigenous and tribal peoples. Some include workers in the informal economy, shaping formalization policies and interventions and improving their labour protections.

- 123. Employers' and workers' organizations are taking more proactive steps to strengthen women's representation and influence at work.** Institutionalizing gender equality in social dialogue outcomes helps embed norms, public policy and employer practices in ways that deliver meaningful, sustained rights and opportunities for all workers and employers. Many EBMOs now integrate gender equality into their core activities by providing gender equality and diversity training, conducting research, recognizing good practices and advocating for equal pay and women's leadership. They have also introduced gender focal points and expanded balanced and flexible working time arrangements or work organization arrangements to support women's advancement. They increasingly recognize that gender equality and inclusion initiatives enhance business performance, thereby improving income, reputation and talent attraction and resulting in overall higher levels of personal well-being.²¹⁷ Moreover, EBMOs indicate that gender equality initiatives have helped enhance their organizational business outcomes, with increased income from membership subscriptions and training revenue as well as enhanced organizational reputation.²¹⁸ Trade unions are also responding by adopting progressive leadership targets, restructuring to increase women's participation, prioritizing issues that affect women workers, including in collective bargaining agendas, and strengthening advocacy on gender equality.²¹⁹ The International Domestic Workers' Federation, which represents more than half a million domestic workers globally, is a recent example of successful organizing of women workers.²²⁰
- 124. These actions help build more democratic and representative organizations, ensuring that diverse perspectives shape social dialogue and respond to the needs of their members.** Research points to a correlation between women in leadership and a decrease in violence and harassment; for instance, an increase of one female director is associated with a 21.8 per cent decrease in workplace sexual harassment.²²¹ Together, these initiatives reinforce more inclusive and representative institutions and accelerate gender equality, including in the workplace.
- 125. Employers' and workers' organizations, together with social and solidarity economy actors and grassroots groups, can play a critical role in organizing, mobilizing and supporting informal economy workers, especially women.** In many countries, these organizations have extended membership and services to informal workers and economic units, forming alliances with informal economy organizations to expand access to social insurance, healthcare, childcare and training. They have advocated for policies promoting increases in labour protection and



²¹⁵ Mia Rönnmar and Susan Hayter (eds), *Making and Breaking Gender Inequalities in Work* (Edward Elgar, 2024), Ch. 8.

²¹⁶ ILAW, *Bargaining for Gender Equity*, 2025, 8 and 9.

²¹⁷ ILO and IOE, *Women in Business: How Employer and Business Membership Organizations Drive Gender Equality*, 2024, Ch. 2.

²¹⁸ ILO and IOE, 2024, 11.

²¹⁹ ITUC, "Women in Leadership", 2025.

²²⁰ ILO, *Making Decent Work a Reality for Domestic Workers: Progress and Prospects Ten Years After the Adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)*, 2021, 223–224.

²²¹ Shiu-Yik Au, Andréanne Tremblay and Leyuan You, "Does Board Gender Diversity Reduce Workplace Sexual Harassment?", *Corporate Governance: An International Review* 31, No. 5 (2022).

pathways to formality, provided business, financial and digital and green skills training, supported occupational health and safety, and facilitated market access for micro-entrepreneurs. These efforts have strengthened economic opportunities, often resulting in higher and more stable earnings for women in the informal economy.²²²

- 126. All forms of work should be recognized and measured, and the evidence applied.** Economic measurement frameworks must fully recognize that all forms of work – including unpaid care work and informal work, where many women are engaged – contribute to social and economic prosperity. Making unpaid care and domestic work visible is a critical first step towards advancing decent work for all. Countries should therefore strengthen their statistical capacity to systematically and regularly collect, use and disseminate data on unpaid care and informal work that is aligned with evolving international statistical standards (box 12).²²³ There is growing interest in complementing traditional macroeconomic indicators, including GDP, with additional measurements that provide insight into time use and informal employment. When used alongside GDP, these indicators can support policy analysis and contribute to the design of effective economic and social policies.

► **Box 12. Advancing labour data for an evolving world of work**

Since 2013, successive resolutions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) have evolved to better capture the full spectrum of work, including unpaid domestic and care work, volunteer work and unpaid trainee work. This is critical for recognizing the often-invisible contributions of women, youth and marginalized groups. Those same resolutions also promote the measurement of diverse aspects of working modalities and conditions, which is essential to understand differences between the experiences of women and men in the world of work.

The 21st ICLS (2023) mandated the ILO to develop new statistical standards on work-related violence and harassment and on the measurement of care work. Both processes will culminate at the 22nd ICLS (2028). The ILO is currently developing draft guidelines on the measurement of violence and harassment in the world of work, informed by country-level research and validated survey tools, and light time-use modules for measuring unpaid domestic and care work in labour force surveys that have been rolled out to support national implementation. These new standards will support countries in measuring and valuing unpaid care work and in producing reliable data on violence and harassment at work.

In parallel, the ILO is continuing to refine global statistical standards and methodologies in emerging and under-documented areas – such as digital platform work, the informal economy, occupational safety and health, and international labour migration and mobility – where there are widespread inequalities that impact women and men, youth and disadvantaged groups differently.

3.3. Advancing a sustainable economy for the well-being of all

- 127.** Advancing a sustainable economy for the well-being of all is essential to addressing the underlying causes of inequality²²⁴ and to accelerating the delivery of the ILO's mandate. Such an approach sets the foundation for how economic systems, labour markets and enterprises function to generate productive employment, decent working conditions and inclusive growth. Economic strategies increasingly need to take into account the distributional and employment implications of major transitions, including technological change, demographic shifts and environmental pressures. **Integrating equality of opportunity and treatment, social justice**

²²² ILC.113/Report VI, section 2.2.2.

²²³ See "ICLS documents".

²²⁴ UN, Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 2025, para. 29(d).



and decent work objectives into macroeconomic, sectoral, labour market and enterprise policies helps support sustainable enterprises, job creation and workforce resilience during these transitions.

- 128. Employment policies and programmes that take into account gender-differentiated labour market patterns can contribute to addressing the structural challenges affecting women's and men's access to decent work.** Countries have been implementing gender-responsive national employment policies as an instrument to advance full employment, equity and gender equality. When well designed, these policies ensure that macroeconomic and sectoral policies generate decent employment opportunities for both women and men and address current and future challenges regarding employment creation, work quality and access to jobs, while overcoming the structural barriers to gender quality. Their effectiveness relies on a process of consultation and gender-responsive social dialogue, as illustrated in the cases of Albania, Namibia and Viet Nam.²²⁵
- 129. Gender-responsive fiscal and monetary policies that address inequalities can create decent employment opportunities for both women and men.**²²⁶ They include fiscal stimulus packages of the kind put in place to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, which comprised specific measures to support women and girls in critical policy areas (livelihoods, social protection, health, food security, public infrastructure and housing). They focus on expanding fiscal space, including through progressive taxation on income, wealth and profits. Additionally, they safeguard fiscal space for investment in social protection, care and other essential services, which is particularly important in the context of demographic shifts (box 13). Monetary policies can provide liquidity to governments, households and businesses, which enables them to avoid bankruptcy and debt build-up.²²⁷

► **Box 13. Integrating demographic shifts into macroeconomic policy**

Global fertility rates fell to 2.2 births per woman in 2024.¹ As fertility declines and migration remains limited, the old-age dependency ratio – the number of people aged 65 and above relative to those aged 16 to 64 – rises. Over the past 60 years, the global old-age dependency ratio has more than doubled; by 2050, it is expected to reach about 50 per cent in advanced economies and 35 per cent in emerging economies, coinciding with the start of global population decline.²

This shift places growing pressure on labour productivity, pension and health systems, as well as other parts of social protection systems, social services and macroeconomic stabilizers. Addressing these trends through fiscal policies will require careful consideration of investments in childcare and long-term care to support the reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work. It will also require investments in increasing labour force participation and quality of employment, including that of women, which contribute to sustainable and equitable social protection systems.³

¹ UNDESA, *World Fertility 2024*, 2025. ² Jiajia Gu et al., *Promoting Gender Equality and Tackling Demographic Challenges*, IMF Gender Notes, 2024/002. ³ See, for example, Angelo Lorenti et al., "Gendered Parenthood–Employment Gaps from Midlife: A Demographic Perspective Across Three Different Welfare Systems", *European Journal of Population* 40, No. 16 (2024).

- 130. Ensuring financial resources and the fiscal space for gender equality is closely linked to capable and accountable institutions.** Strong institutions are essential for mobilizing, allocating and managing public finances effectively and transparently, ensuring that resources are directed

²²⁵ ILO, *Technical Guidance Note on Gender-Responsive National Employment Policies: A Path for Gender Equality*, 2025, 39–43.

²²⁶ Esquivel, 2023.

²²⁷ ILO, "What are gender-responsive employment policies?", 2025.



towards inclusive and equitable development priorities. In this context, some countries have adopted gender budgeting as a means to strengthen both institutional accountability and the strategic use of fiscal space. Namibia, for instance, revised its budget circular for 2023–24 to instruct all government agencies to budget in a gender-responsive way.²²⁸ By integrating gender perspectives into all stages of the budget cycle, gender budgeting helps identify and address gender disparities in public spending, making policies more responsive to the needs of all segments of the population. Experience across countries indicates that the effectiveness of gender budgeting depends on a number of enabling factors, including institutional capacity, clarity of objectives, coordination across ministries and the availability of gender-disaggregated data. When these elements are in place, gender budgeting can complement existing fiscal frameworks.²²⁹

- 131. Sectoral policies are widely used by governments to support structural transformation by targeting specific sectors or subsectors with the objective of making them expand their productivity, value added, export orientation or employment.** Such policies play an important role in shaping how economic change affects labour demand and job quality, including in the context of environmental and technological transitions. The implementation of gender-responsive sectoral policies can maximize decent employment opportunities for all by recognizing women as producers, wage earners and unpaid carers, and channelling investments to support them. This facilitates women's entry into emerging, dynamic and high-productivity sectors such as energy, transport and the digital economy. While priority sectors vary across countries, such policies ensure that women truly benefit from the new job opportunities that emerge, and that measures are taken to avoid or compensate for the employment losses that structural transformation processes entail, including green transitions (box 14).²³⁰

► **Box 14. Ensuring a gender-responsive green transition**

The transition to low-carbon, resource-efficient economies – already valued at about US\$8 trillion globally – creates new sectors and job opportunities, often with higher wages and greater security. Yet these emerging industries remain male-dominated. Evidence from Europe and Central Asia shows that men hold most green jobs, while women working in “brown” (more polluting) sectors face steep barriers to moving into greener roles. In some countries, over 60 per cent of these women encounter major obstacles, including limited access to retraining, skills mismatches and structural discrimination. As a result, many are unable to gain the qualifications needed for higher-paid green jobs and may be channelled into lower-skill, lower-wage positions. Without targeted policies to close skills gaps, recognize women's contributions to the economy, ensure equitable access to jobs and resources, and promote women's entrepreneurship and leadership in these emerging green sectors, the green transition risks reinforcing, rather than reducing, labour market inequalities between women and men.

Sources: Lily Dai et al., *Investing in the Green Economy: Navigating Volatility and Disruption*, LSEG, 2025; Tiffany Sprague and Estefania Asturizaga, “The Green Transition Has Momentum Now, But Are We Failing Women, Again?”, UNDP, 2025.

- 132. Active labour market policies are being implemented to strengthen women's attachment to the labour market.** To be effective, they need to take into account women's full life course in the labour market, facilitate preparation, access, re-entry, retention and advancement, and provide for adequate pensions. Such policies include, for example: employment retention measures to prevent women from losing their jobs, in particular after childbirth; wage subsidies

²²⁸ ILO, *Gender-Responsive National Employment Policies*, 43.

²²⁹ Anuradha Seth, *Engendering Fiscal Space: A Policy Framework for Financing Gender Equality* (UN Women, 2025), 17.

²³⁰ Esquivel and Fontana, 2024.



with specific gender balance requirements supportive of women's re-entry into employment; and policies that support women's employability, job-readiness and entrepreneurship.

133. **In the context of rapid labour market transformations, lifelong learning systems support workers' ability to adapt to changing skills requirements while helping employers address productivity needs and skills shortages.** Many countries are promoting measures – including zero tolerance for discrimination, and harassment training programmes – to widen access to training and reduce barriers to entry in both traditionally male- and female-dominated sectors. While efforts have been made to encourage young women to pursue STEM studies and career paths, emerging labour market needs, particularly in health and care professions, also highlight the importance of attracting and retaining a diverse workforce across sectors.²³¹ In the context of an ageing workforce, ensuring that workers are properly trained and upskilled remains essential.
134. **Sustainable enterprises that apply decent work principles can strengthen gender equality while supporting competitiveness and productivity.** Across the economy, enterprises of different forms and sizes – including multinational enterprises, MSMEs, and organizations in the social and solidarity economy – play complementary roles in applying equal opportunity and treatment to women and men workers. In line with the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, enterprises should be guided by the principle of non-discrimination in their operations. For instance, gender-responsive policies and practices can be adopted by enterprises to promote gender equality in their own operations and supply chains. These approaches contribute to equal opportunities in recruitment, pay and promotions; balanced and flexible working time arrangements or work organization arrangements, parental leave and childcare support; and access to social protection in case of sickness, disability, unemployment, old age or pregnancy. They also help prevent discrimination, violence and harassment, and promote health and safety.
135. **Beyond their role as employers, enterprises influence gender outcomes through the way they engage in local markets and supply chains.** This may include sourcing from women-owned and -led businesses, applying fair and transparent payment terms and avoiding discriminatory practices in commercial transactions.²³² Entities in the social and solidarity economy (including cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations and social enterprises) reinforce these efforts by embedding equality, democratic governance, care-friendly services and collective entrepreneurship into their models, in particular to support women in the informal economy (box 15).



► Box 15. Women-owned and -led enterprises: Challenges, gaps and growth potential

Many enterprises owned and led by women operate in lower-margin, lower-growth sectors, often as informal microenterprises or own-account businesses. Targeted support is therefore essential to help women maintain and scale up their businesses, transition to formality and access higher-value markets. Promoting women's entrepreneurship is not only an equity issue but also an economic strategy: studies from India show that women-owned firms are more likely to hire female workers than male-owned firms, controlling for sector, size and region. Similarly, surveys in Europe indicate that female-led firms have a higher share of women employees across sectors. For example, in Central and Eastern Europe, female-led firms report workforces with around 50 per cent women, compared with roughly 35–40 per cent in

²³¹ ILO, *A Quantum Leap for Gender Equality*, 2019.

²³² ILO, "MSMEs: Powering social justice and inclusive growth", 2025.

male-led firms. Supporting women entrepreneurs thus has a multiplier effect on women's employment, strengthens local labour market inclusion, and enhances productivity, innovation and business resilience.

Sources: Gaurav Chiplunkar and Pinelopi K. Goldberg, "Aggregate Implications of Barriers to Female Entrepreneurship", 2024; European Investment Bank, *Support for Female Entrepreneurs: Survey Evidence for Why It Makes Sense*, 2022, 11.

- 136. Effective policy leadership and coherent institutional coordination on gender equality enable enterprises to thrive.** When gender equality is embedded in national enterprise, employment, industrial and SME policies, supported by dedicated institutions with allocated budgets and access to reliable sex-disaggregated data, public authorities are better equipped to design, implement and monitor measures that encourage enterprises to adopt gender-responsive responsible business practices in line with international labour standards. In recent years, enterprises have increased their efforts to promote gender equality in response to evolving legislation and human rights due diligence processes.
- 137. Enterprises also depend on enabling conditions such as access to finance, skills development, infrastructure, technology and markets.** Over recent years, initiatives to improve these conditions have expanded, including through dedicated funds, training programmes, mentorship schemes and financial incentives aimed at supporting enterprise growth. When designed with a gender perspective, such measures help reduce the structural barriers that women face.
- 138. However, the success of these initiatives rests on a broader framework of enabling social and care policies, services and infrastructures.** A recent survey shows that women's businesses are 47 per cent more likely than men's to close due to family or personal reasons.²³³ Therefore, investments in care services and infrastructure, interventions at the enterprise level (box 16) and care-related social protection benefits for the self-employed can support entrepreneurs with family responsibilities. In particular, the extension of care leave policies to small business owners and the provision of care facilities are critical enablers for women to thrive in entrepreneurship.

► Box 16. Innovative care intervention models at the enterprise level

ILO-supported initiatives show how investing in care systems can drive decent work, gender equality and sustainable economic outcomes. In Colombia, strengthening care cooperatives formalized community-based care work, improved working conditions, enhanced women's leadership and collective agency, and introduced culturally grounded innovations such as "care houses" that integrate childcare, eldercare and broader community and environmental well-being. In Ethiopia, workplace childcare centres in garment factories and agriculture enabled women to return to work after maternity, increased men's engagement in caregiving, improved workers' well-being and job security, and delivered clear productivity, retention and stability gains for employers, thereby demonstrating that care at work is an investment, not a cost. In the Republic of Moldova, a market systems approach expanded childcare access through women's entrepreneurship, on-site and institutional childcare solutions, and policy guidance, combining service provision with reforms to licensing and standards. In Sri Lanka, care cooperative initiatives are on their way to formalizing domestic workers.

Sources: ILO, *Cuidando desde el territorio : Experiencias de cooperativas y entidades de la economía social y solidaria en América Latina*, 2025, 23–27; "ILO-Supported Daycare Transforms Lives of Working Mothers in Addis Ababa", 2025; "Expanding Childcare Services through Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Moldova", 2024; "Unlocking the Potential of Care Cooperatives in Sri Lanka", 2025.

²³³ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, *GEM 2024/2025 Women's Entrepreneurship Report*, 8.



- 139. Skills development is essential for preparing entrepreneurs for the digital and green transitions, but for women the challenge is both gaining new skills and ensuring that their existing capabilities are recognized and applied in high-growth sectors.** Many governments are addressing this through women-focused training that builds competencies while linking participants to markets, finance, business networks and formalization pathways. To avoid reinforcing occupational segregation, some programmes have sought to broaden women's access to emerging opportunities in digital technologies and green industries, while considering national development priorities and enterprise capacity. This includes supporting women's entry into renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency and circular-economy solutions, and embedding gender considerations into environmental and procurement policies. Public investments in digital and technical infrastructure, including broadband access, digital literacy and tools for online business, further enable women's participation. While the adoption of digital tools such as e-commerce and remote work systems is primarily driven by productivity, market access and resilience considerations, the expanded participation of women is emerging as an associated benefit of these transitions.
- 140. A transition from the informal to the formal economy is essential to advance gender equality, as formality enhances access to decent work and economic opportunities for women.** Gender inequality and discrimination are significant factors shaping women's concentration in sectors of the informal economy, reinforced by social norms, unpaid care responsibilities and limited access to representation and voice. Some workers, such as waste pickers, street vendors, domestic workers and home-based workers, are particularly exposed to decent work deficits in the informal economy. Enterprises can advance from the informal to the formal economy when they have access to appropriate support and an enabling environment, which could provide access to social protection for business owners and their workers and to other business support services, networks and market opportunities (box 17).²³⁴

► **Box 17. Formalizing MSMEs and their workers in Cabo Verde**

An ILO pilot project in the largest informal market in the capital of Cabo Verde strengthened resilience and formalization among women entrepreneurs. Through training in business management, taxation and financial literacy, over 2,000 women received support, resulting in 900 businesses registered and 888 loan applications approved, of which 75 per cent from women-led enterprises. Access to subsidized credit expanded women's access to finance and social protection; social security registrations rose from 3,700 entrepreneurs in 2016 to 25,177 in 2023, including 12,407 women.

Source: ILO, *Formalization of Micro and Small Enterprises and Their Employees: Experiences from Cabo Verde*, 2025.



²³⁴ ILO, *Supporting women entrepreneurs through formalization*, 2025.

► Chapter 4

Accelerating action on the transformative agenda for gender equality

- 141.** Gender equality is central to the ILO's mandate and is a key objective of the ILO and its constituents. The tripartite constituents agreed on a transformative agenda for gender equality in the world of work by adopting the Centenary Declaration in 2019 and the Call to Action in 2021. Since then, they have consistently called for action on gender equality to be accelerated. Doing so is not only a matter of fairness and rights, but a precondition for labour market resilience, sustainable development, social justice and peace. The cost of inaction is too high, for societies and economies alike, particularly at a time of rapid and profound transitions.
- 142.** The review in this report reveals progress in certain areas of gender equality in the world of work and persistent gaps that remain. Tackling the deep-rooted structural drivers of gender inequality will advance women's rights to work and at work. The current transitions and transformations present a critical opportunity for a more equal world of work. For this to be realized, interventions must be designed to respond to the realities of all women and men in the labour market. Achieving gender equality is a win for individuals, families, economies and social development. To enhance the effectiveness of the transformative agenda, the ILO and its constituents may consider prioritizing a number of areas for further discussion and action.

4.1. Strengthened integration of, and increased attention to, gender equality and non-discrimination in international labour standards

- 143. The Agenda remains a compass for addressing the root causes of gender inequalities in the world of work, including in the context of ongoing economic, technological, demographic and environmental transitions.** Its relevance depends not only on its guiding framework but also on how effectively its core elements are integrated into law and policy design, institutional practice and constituents' work. This calls for greater coherence across the key dimensions of the Agenda and for consistent implementation by ILO constituents.
- 144. A more integrated and holistic approach to the fundamental principles and rights at work is needed.** Alongside stand-alone commitments on gender equality and non-discrimination, they should also be treated as mutually reinforcing. Such an approach would be more effective in addressing the interconnected structural barriers that perpetuate inequalities, exclusion and poverty. Significant progress on all fundamental principles and rights at work is more likely to be made through integrated policy interventions, including equal pay for work of equal value; adequate wage policies, working time arrangements, care leave policies and services; and prevention of, and zero tolerance for, violence and harassment. OSH frameworks that better respond to the different needs of all workers throughout their life course are particularly important in the context of transitions. Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are essential to advancing gender equality.
- 145. Strengthening the implementation of international labour standards is key to advancing gender equality in the world of work.**²³⁵ Removing legal, institutional and practical barriers that

²³⁵ Including Conventions Nos 100, 111, 156, 183 and 190.



limit the effective application of standards, particularly for women and other groups facing structural disadvantages in the labour market, is an important step. This calls for the design and implementation of both preventive and proactive measures for gender equality in the world of work in line with international labour standards, and the leveraging of evidence-based approaches for addressing discriminatory social norms and attitudes. Removing the onus on the individual to establish discrimination and improving access to justice can also help accelerate progress. As digitalization and the transition to environmentally sustainable economies reshape employment and work organization, international labour standards should actively guide labour market transitions.

- 146. Making social dialogue more inclusive will have a greater impact on gender equality.** Robust social dialogue can help ensure that gender equality objectives are not only adopted but also implemented and monitored in ways that reflect diverse workers' lived realities and employers' needs. By integrating gender considerations and broadening representation, social dialogue becomes a powerful tool for equality, safety, productivity and sustainable outcomes for all workers and employers, and ensures a more effective response to the changing world of work.

4.2. Greater efforts on gender-responsive employment, enterprise and wage policies

- 147. Expanding access to high-productivity and better-valued jobs is essential to tackling gendered sectoral and occupational segregation – a deeply entrenched structural barrier.** Effective employment frameworks would combine gender-responsive employment policies and gender-responsive active and passive labour market policies (including income support or replacement measures) to ensure decent employment opportunities for both women and men, particularly in emerging sectors, as well as tailored strategies for young women, who are over-represented among those not in employment, education or training. Other important measures would include the expansion of funding, procurement opportunities and enterprise support for enhanced productivity of women-owned businesses, particularly those entering digital, green and other high-growth sectors. Addressing equal pay for work of equal value through pay transparency, objective job evaluations and proactive legislation alongside tackling persistent low pay and promoting work-life policies would make vital female-dominated sectors more attractive and improve talent retention and labour market attachment while promoting fairness. This would contribute to addressing gender-based sectoral and occupational segregation and create an enabling environment for enterprises to invest, grow and create quality jobs across sectors. Promoting and implementing inclusive organizational cultures can challenge persistent discriminatory norms and stereotypes and enable more women to enter male-dominated and emerging sectors. Sustained investments in high-quality, affordable and accessible care services and infrastructure are vital for creating decent work for care workers, supporting workers with care responsibilities and promoting demand-driven, job-rich growth.
- 148. Effective policy action for the transition from informality to formality needs a strong gender analysis,** as women in some parts of the world are disproportionately represented among informal workers, particularly those unprotected, such as waste pickers, street vendors, domestic workers and home-based workers. Attention should also be paid to informal enterprises (including MSMEs), which account for a significant share of employment and economic activity in many countries. Successful formalization strategies typically combine measures that address structural drivers of informality – including gender inequalities; unequal unpaid care responsibilities; limited access to skills development, to justice and dispute resolution, and to finance and markets; and weak labour market institutions – with policies that improve the business environment for enterprise growth and productivity. Strengthening the legal and



regulatory frameworks, expanding universal and sustainable social protection through comprehensive, adequate and sustainable coverage over the life course, and enhancing labour inspection and compliance mechanisms are important components of this approach. In this context, social dialogue and the active engagement of employers' and workers' organizations are critical to designing and implementing context-specific, rights-based solutions that support transitions to decent work in the formal economy.

4.3. More effective action to accelerate the Agenda's impact

- 149. Accelerating delivery of the Agenda requires concrete and coordinated action.** This includes the systematic application of gender analysis and gender-responsive approaches across labour market policies, including employment and enterprise development strategies, ensuring that crisis responses, digital and just transition frameworks and social protection reforms uphold workers' rights and adequately reflect intersectional realities, while anchoring this work in social dialogue. It also includes systematic synergy with other relevant ILO action plans, such as those on the follow-up to the resolution concerning fundamental principles and rights at work and to the resolution concerning decent work and the care economy.²³⁶ Central to these efforts are the Office's continued investments in high-quality, evidence-based analysis and in the production of disaggregated labour market data, supported by advances in international statistical standards and strengthened national statistical systems. In addition to existing databases such as the World Social Protection Database and diagnostic tools on informality and on gender-responsive sectoral policy,²³⁷ data and measurement tools, including to measure the cost of discrimination, would be essential to inform and accelerate policy action. Enhanced coordination across ILO departments, field offices, the Bureau for Employers' Activities and the Bureau for Workers' Activities, and with constituents will be essential to accelerate results and reinforce institutional accountability.
- 150. Programmatic interventions should be combined with strong, coordinated alliances and partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.** Programmes led by the ILO and multilateral partners provide technical expertise, policy guidance, capacity-building and frameworks to promote equitable labour practices, safe working environments and equal opportunities for women and men across sectors. These interventions reach their full potential when embedded within a cohesive partnership ecosystem building on international initiatives²³⁸ and including regional organizations and feminist and solidarity networks. Such collaborations align global standards with local realities, facilitate resource mobilization, foster knowledge-sharing and strengthen accountability mechanisms. These are key to strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships, a commitment made in the Doha Political Declaration.



4.4. The role of the ILO in the way forward

- 151.** The Agenda remains a critical and timely framework for action for the ILO and its constituents to overcome and dismantle structural barriers and ensure rights that advance a sustainable economy for the well-being of all.

²³⁶ GB.352/INS/3/1, 2024; GB.352/INS/3/2, 2024.

²³⁷ ILO, *Diagnosis of Informality: Methodological Note*, 2021, and Esquivel and Fontana, 2024.

²³⁸ Such as the ILO's Global Coalition for Social Justice, the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, the Equal Pay International Coalition, the ILO's South4Care initiative, the Global Alliance for Care, the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy, the UN Global Compact, and the Sevilla Platform of Action on Investing in Care for Equality and Prosperity.

152. Drawing on its tripartite structure, international labour standards and normative mandate, and long-standing, comprehensive technical expertise, the ILO is well-positioned to adopt a more integrated and evidence-based approach across its programme of work to address persistent gender gaps and emerging challenges to gender equality in the context of transformative changes in the world of work. This requires both targeted interventions and the systematic mainstreaming of gender equality across all programme and budget outcomes.
153. The ILO could further support constituents in strengthening their capacities to deliver on gender equality through policy advice and capacity-building on data and policies that advance a sustainable economy for the well-being of all.
154. Such support to constituents could focus on developing integrated approaches across the four strategic objectives of the ILO to promote gender equality at work. This could include the design of coherent legal and policy frameworks that take account of national and economic contexts and consider transitions from the informal to formal economy, as well as major transitions in the world of work.
155. Priority policy and technical areas warranting more attention include: integrating gender equality and non-discrimination more prominently in the fundamental principles and rights at work; ensuring greater and equal access for women to productive and decent jobs across occupations and sectors, including for young women; improving the recognition and valuation of feminized occupations; expanding labour protection and social protections to all workers. The right to organize and social dialogue remain foundational pillars for realizing the Agenda.
156. The ILO could deepen efforts to address key structural barriers relating to unequal pay, unpaid care work and work-life balance for workers with care responsibilities, and violence and harassment, and ensure that these efforts are integrated across all areas of its technical, policy and programmatic work, as relevant.
157. By capitalizing on its expertise and comparative advantage in wage policies, including living wages, the ILO could promote efforts to address gender pay gaps and improve wages and working conditions, particularly in feminized and informal sectors.
158. Further efforts could be undertaken to support the design of gender-responsive enterprise and innovation ecosystems that foster sustainable enterprises and enable women-owned enterprises to access finance, markets and opportunities in transforming economies.
159. The ILO could support constituents' capacity to gather, analyse and use data disaggregated by relevant socio-economic characteristics to better inform law and policy design, and to diagnose the drivers of sectoral and occupational segregation and identify effective measures to address them.
160. This could be accompanied by enhanced efforts to build constituents' capacity to engage in social dialogue to advance gender equality and non-discrimination, with attention to the effective representation and participation of women.
161. The ILO could build on its close collaboration with its International Training Centre in Turin to offer, through the Gender Academy, tailored training courses and the effective mainstreaming of gender equality and non-discrimination into courses covering topics such as employment promotion, international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection, social dialogue and innovation.
162. The ILO could develop knowledge and evidence on the impact and effectiveness of existing laws and regulations aimed at eliminating discrimination in employment and occupation. It could also facilitate the exchange of findings within and across countries.



- 163.** Further research on the costs of social and economic discrimination could be carried out, including through innovative methodologies and measurement tools, to support policymaking.
- 164.** Moreover, in a changing world of work, the ILO could invest in gaining a better understanding of the impacts of technological change, climate change and demographic shifts on women's employment across countries at different levels of development.
- 165.** The ILO could ensure greater coherence and operational integration of work related to gender equality within its programming, country-level engagement, global policy influence and partnerships. Strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies and partners on development cooperation and knowledge development to advance gender equality in all spheres of life and throughout the life course, and to shift social norms and gender stereotypes that underpin gender inequalities, will be essential to the success of the Agenda.

