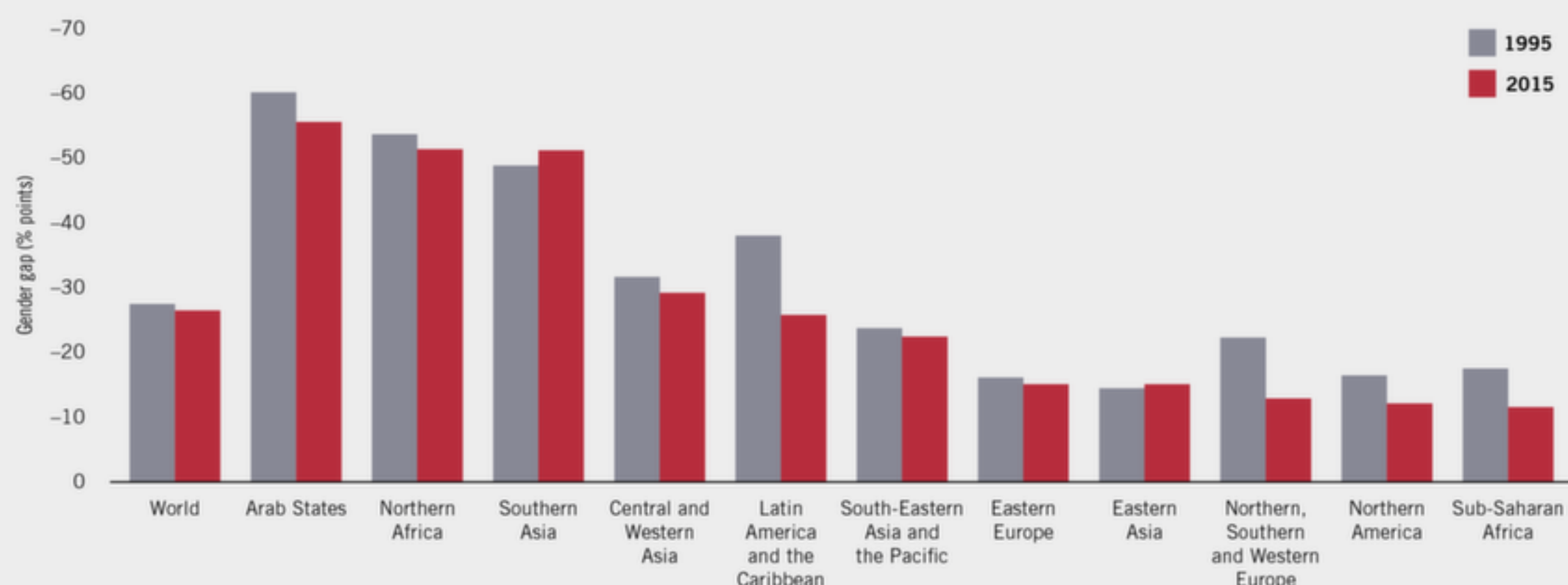


Figure I Gender gaps in labour force participation rates by region, 1995 and 2015



Note: The gender gap is measured as the difference between women's and men's labour force participation rates. The data cover 178 countries and the same countries are covered in figures II and IV.

Source: ILO calculations based on ILO, *Trends Econometric Models*, November 2015.

Young women face the highest risk of unemployment

Women are more likely to be unemployed than men, with global unemployment rates of 5.5 per cent for men and 6.2 per cent for women. With the exception of Eastern Asia, Eastern Europe and Northern America, male unemployment rates are lower than female unemployment rates in all other regions of the world, with the highest gender unemployment gaps found in Northern Africa and the Arab States. In Northern, Southern and Western Europe, and in Northern America, the gender unemployment gaps have narrowed as a result of the financial crisis, largely under the impact of the economic downturn on the male-dominated sectors and the rising employment rates for married women, who in some contexts are entering employment to compensate for losses in family income caused by male unemployment.

Globally, youth unemployment remains an issue of concern. Unemployment is affecting young women more than young men in almost all regions of the world. In Northern Africa and the Arab States, the female youth unemployment rate is almost double that of young men, reaching as high as 44.3 and 44.1 per cent, respectively. In contrast, youth unemployment is higher for young men than for young women in Northern America, Eastern Asia and Northern, Southern and Western Europe. As a result of the financial crisis, this inverse gender gap in youth unemployment has even increased in Northern, Southern and Western Europe and in Northern America; in this last region, however, there have been some signs of the narrowing of gaps in recent years.

The quality of women's jobs remains a challenge

Status in employment and informal employment

In 2015, a total of 586 million women were own-account or contributing family workers. Women remain overrepresented as contributing family workers. Some progress has been made, however, in closing the gender gap in this regard. Globally, the share of contributing family workers has decreased significantly among women (by 17.0 percentage points over the last 20 years) and to a lesser extent among men (by 8.1 percentage points over the same period), resulting in a decrease in the gender gap from 19.5 percentage points in 1995 to 10.6 percentage points in 2015 (figure II). This trend is part of an economic restructuring shift away from agricultural work, which largely consisted of subsistence and small-scale activities. That said, however, many working women remain in employment statuses and in occupations that are more likely to consist of informal work arrangements. In sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia, a high proportion of women work as contributing family workers (34.9 per cent and 31.8 per cent, respectively) or as own-account workers (42.5 per cent and 47.7 per cent, respectively).