

C. Fewer women work excessive hours

Excessive hours of work may both expose workers to potential safety and health risks and be associated with higher compensation and career prospects (Lee et al., 2007). Across 100 countries, more than one third of men in employment and more than one fourth of women in employment work more than 48 hours a week. Excessive hours are most common in Asia, specifically in the regions of East, Western and Central Asia, where close to half of men and women employed are working more than 48 hours a week. Two principal conclusions may be drawn from the global picture of the share of total men and women working long hours (figure 9). First, men tend to work longer hours than women, whether in wage and salaried employment or in self-employment. A difference of 10.8 percentage points separates men and women wage and salaried workers and over 5.5 percentage points those who are self-employed. Second, the proportion of workers engaged in long working hours is higher among the self-employed. This is also the case for short working hours, which means that the self-employed are more likely to work either more than 48 hours or less than 35 hours a week. This suggests that working hours tend to be more polarized for self-employed than for wage and salaried workers whose working hours tend to cluster around standard working hours, in line with national regulations.

Figure 9

Excessive hours of work: Wage and salaried workers and self-employed working more than 48 hours a week and gender gap, 100 countries (latest year available)



Note: Global estimates based on 100 countries representing more than 87 per cent of total employment (Northern Africa: 62.2 per cent; sub-Saharan Africa: 71.0 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean: 95.2 per cent; Northern America: 100 per cent; Eastern Asia: 96.7 per cent; South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific: 67.0 per cent; Southern Asia: 95.3 per cent; Northern, Southern and Western Europe: 99.5 per cent; Eastern Europe: 81.9 per cent; Central and Western Asia: 44.8 per cent). The Arab States are not represented in this figure because their representation is less than 25 per cent. Latest years are used (data for 2010 and after for more than 80 per cent of the countries). The notion of excessive hours of work is defined as more than 48 hours worked per week, based on usual hours of work in all jobs.

Source: ILO calculations based on national household survey data.

D. Longer working days for women when including unpaid work

According to the International Labour Conference of Labour Statisticians resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (2013b), unpaid work, including unpaid care work, is included in the definition of “own-use production work” and is therefore considered a form of work. Unpaid work is work that produces goods and services for household consumption, which includes collecting firewood and fuel, fetching water, cooking, cleaning and also providing care for children, the elderly and other dependants. Across the world, the vast majority of unpaid household and care work is performed by women. As a result, when all activities, whether paid or not, are taken into account, women’s working days become longer than men’s (figure 10). In developed economies, women spend on average 6 hours and 45 minutes per day on both paid and unpaid work compared to 6 hours and 12 minutes for men.

In developing economies, the total hours spent on paid work and unpaid household and care work in a day is 7 hours and 9 minutes for women and 6 hours and 16 minutes for men (United Nations, 2015). The difference is mostly accounted for by the fact that, in both developed and developing economies, women spend more time on unpaid work: on average women perform at least two and a half times more