

overwhelming majority of women work in services (91.4 and 86.2 per cent respectively). Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the services sector is highly female-dominated, with a difference of 25.3 percentage points between men's and women's shares of employment in this sector. The high share of women in the services sector is partially explained by the significance of domestic work as a source of employment in this region, as over 18 million women – or 26.6 per cent of all female wage workers – are in domestic work (ILO, 2013a).

B. Agricultural sector employs most women in low- and lower-middle-income countries

Globally, in 2015 one fourth of all active women were engaged in agriculture (figure 13). Although women's employment in this sector has decreased over the last twenty years, agriculture remains the most important source of employment for women in low-income and lower-middle-income countries. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60 per cent of all working women remain in agriculture. In many developing economies, women are concentrated in time and labour-intensive agricultural activities, which are often poorly remunerated (FAO, 2015a; World Bank, 2014). The decrease has been much more remarkable in upper-middle-income and high-income countries, where the share of women in agriculture is 9.5 and 2.6 per cent respectively.

With economic growth, countries tend to shift from sectoral employment in agriculture to industry and then to services, or directly from agriculture to services (ILO, 2014b; ILO, 2010a). This is the observed trend at the global level. Women's share of employment in agriculture is 14.5 percentage points lower today than in 1995, while men's share has decreased by 11.5 percentage points. Regionally, the decline in women's employment in agriculture is most evident in Eastern Asia (31.1 percentage points).

The majority of women have shifted their employment from agriculture to services, while men have found employment in both services and industry. Over the last twenty years, men's employment in industry has increased by 5.3 percentage points, while the global share of women in industry has declined by 5.6 percentage points since 1995.

C. In high-income countries women are concentrated in health, education, wholesale and retail trade sectors

Figure 14 shows a detailed breakdown of women and men's employment by sector. In the last two decades, women's employment has shifted from agriculture and, to a lesser extent, from the manufacturing sector, to the wholesale and retail trade sector and to health and education, while the decrease in male employment in agriculture has been absorbed mainly by the construction sector and, in low-income and upper-middle-income countries, also by the manufacturing sector.

The concentration of women in the manufacturing sector has significantly declined since 1995. Generally, women have been concentrated in those manufacturing jobs which are more labour-intensive, such as those in the textile and apparel industries. Changes in technology over the last two decades, particularly in Eastern Asia, have led to the global defeminization of the manufacturing sector, by shifting production in the manufacturing sector from more labour-intensive to more capital-intensive activities (Kucera and Tejani, 2014; Caraway, 2007).

In upper-middle-income countries, the majority of women are employed in the wholesale and retail trade sector (33.9 per cent) and in the manufacturing sector, which, despite the growing process of defeminization, still absorbs 12.4 per cent of female employment.

In high-income countries, the main source of female employment is the health and education sector, in which almost one third of employed women have jobs. Male employment is not so highly concentrated in a specific sector. Thus, while construction is clearly male-dominated and represents 11.8 per cent of male employment, male employment is fairly equally distributed over several sectors (construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and transport).

Overall, the high concentration of women in particular types of employment has been associated with a high incidence of part-time work and relatively low pay, especially in sectors such as sales, cleaning and catering services (Grimshaw and Rubery, 1997). In addition, the overrepresentation of women in health, education and social work may be attributed to social assumptions which undervalue the skills required for such jobs. For instance, education – and in particular the teaching of younger children – is considered an extension of women's traditional, maternal role (Shaeffer, 2015; Drudy, 2008).