

Turning to occupations where men outnumber women, such as managerial positions, the gender wage gap is over 20 per cent in over half of the 19 countries and territories examined (figure 27, panel A). Four countries, Ethiopia, Panama, Peru and South Africa, have a gender wage gap of over 40 per cent in the occupational grouping of “Craft and related trades workers”, while the gap is over 20 per cent in almost all countries and territories examined, with the exception of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (figure 27, panel B). Compared to managerial positions, in 25 countries and territories the gender wage gap is significantly higher, on average, for “Craft and related trades workers”. This is because the gender wage gap for “Craft and related trades workers” is over 20 per cent for all but one country, whereas for managerial positions just over half of all countries have a gap over 20 per cent. Based on an analysis of the gender wage gap in the four occupations, the gender wage gap appears to be higher in occupations that are more segregated. In other words, the more concentrated that women and men are in a given sector, the higher the gender wage gap is likely to be.

Higher sectoral segregation is associated with lower occupational segregation. Women in female-dominated sectors face lower competition from men and thus stand higher chances of reaching better paid senior positions (Jarman et al., 2012; Hegewisch and Hartman, 2014). This is confirmed by an ILO study of the private education sector in Jordan, as it found that women formed 87.6 per cent of the private education workforce and occupied 75 per cent of the managerial positions (ILO, 2013e).

Men, however, may still be at an advantage over women in highly feminized sectors or occupations as men experience what may be termed a “glass escalator” (Campos-Soria et al., 2011; Wingfield, 2008). For example, in Australia, men who enter the nursing profession are more likely than women to be in senior positions (Huppatz and Goodwin, 2013). This is also the case in the United Kingdom (Mullan and Harrison, 2008). As men are perceived as more ambitious and competitive than women, they are seen as more suited to management jobs than women. This finding is confirmed by the ILO in the private education sector in Jordan, where there is a gender wage gap of 41.6 per cent in favour of men (ILO, 2013e).

Horizontal and vertical segregation also affects workers in the informal economy. A review of informal workers in the global horticulture commodities value chain shows that in the smallholder sector, women are more likely than men to be in contributing family work (Chan, 2013). By contrast, men are more likely to be engaged in the value chain. The differences in women’s and men’s employment in the informal horticulture sector leads to poorer pay and working conditions for women.

C. Women’s overrepresentation in low-wage jobs

The gender wage gap is further exacerbated by the concentration of women in low-wage employment. Between the mid-to-late 1990s and the mid-to-late 2000s, many countries witnessed an upward trend in the incidence of low-wage employment, defined as the percentage of workers whose earnings are two thirds below the median wage (ILO, 2010c). Between 2006 and 2011, the incidence of low pay among women fell slightly in 21 of the 28 European countries presented in figure 28. Still, in 22 out of the 28 countries the incidence of low-wage employment remains higher for women than for men (figure 28). Thus, based on the European Union statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC), 23.6 per cent of women were low-wage employees, as against 17.8 per cent of men. The gender gap in low pay – that is to say, the difference in the incidence of low pay between women and men – amounted to 5.8 percentage points, narrowing from a gap of 8.9 percentage points in 2006. But the reduction in the gender gap is partially explained by an increase (by 1.1 percentage points) between 2006 and 2011 in the number of men classified as low-paid employees, due to the loss of men’s employment in middle-paid jobs, such as construction, that resulted from the global financial crisis. Accordingly, this somewhat narrower gender gap in low pay (by 3.1 percentage points, which over a five-year period remains marginal) is due in part to a small reduction in the incidence of low pay among women, coupled with an increase in its incidence among men. This reduction should not, however, be interpreted as an overall improvement of women’s wages. It rather reflects a change in the composition of the pool of low-paid employees, in which the share of men increased from 51.9 per cent in 2006 to 54.4 per cent in 2011. Over the same period, the total share of low-paid employees among wage and salaried workers (both women and men) did not vary and remained at 20 per cent.