



Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing

# Domestic Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile

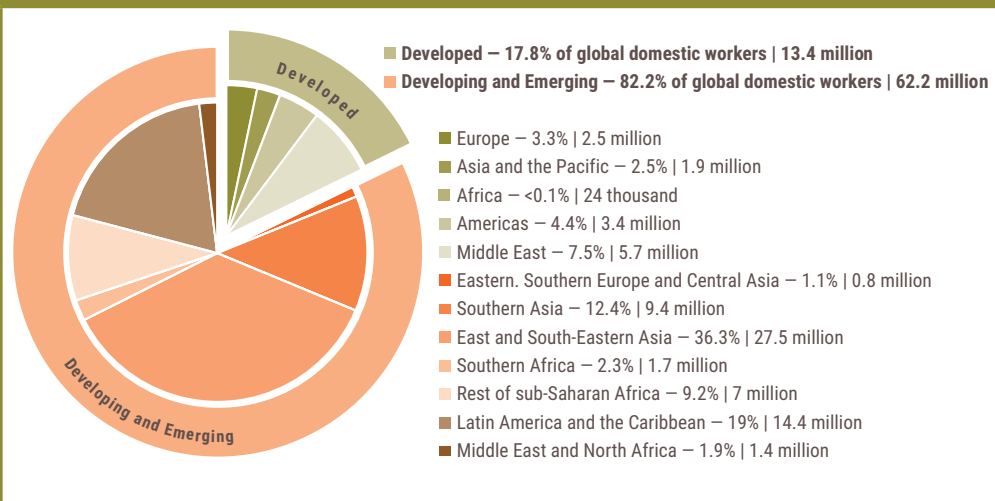
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Globally, there are almost 76 million domestic workers, and 76 per cent of them are women.<sup>1</sup>

Globally there are 75.6 million domestic workers aged 15 years and above (**table 1**). The reference or benchmark year for these estimates and all of the data in this brief is 2019 (see Box 1). The overwhelming majority (82 per cent) of domestic workers are in developing and emerging countries, while the number in developed countries is a substantial 13.4 million (**figure 1**). Over half (55 per cent) of the world's domestic workers are in two regions: East and South-eastern Asia has the highest share at 36 per cent, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean at 19 per cent.

Although there are large differences in the numbers of domestic workers across regions, the share of domestic workers in total employment is from 1 to 2 per cent almost everywhere (**table 1**). The exceptions where domestic workers comprise a larger share of total employment are: the developed countries of the Middle East at 20 per

Figure 1: Domestic workers by country income groups and geographic region: Per cent distribution and numbers of global domestic workers



<sup>1</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of domestic work, see ILO, 2021, "Making decent work a reality for domestic workers: Progress and prospects ten years after the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)". [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_802551/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_802551/lang--en/index.htm)

**Table 1. Domestic workers by country income group, geographic region and sex: Numbers in thousands and per cent of total employment (in parentheses)**

	Total		Women		Men	
	Number (thousands)	Per cent	Number (thousands)	Per cent	Number (thousands)	Per cent
<b>Developed</b>	<b>13 430</b>	<b>(2.2)</b>	<b>8 614</b>	<b>(3.3)</b>	<b>4 816</b>	<b>(1.4)</b>
Developed (except Middle East) <sup>(1)</sup>	7 754	(1.4)	6 596	(2.5)	1 158	(0.4)
Europe	2 490	(1.0)	2 211	(2.0)	279	(0.2)
Asia and the Pacific	1 885	(1.4)	1 708	(3.0)	177	(0.2)
Africa	24	(4.3)	20	(9.3)	4	(1.2)
Americas	3 354	(1.7)	2 656	(3.0)	698	(0.7)
Middle East	5 676	(20.1)	2 018	(47.0)	3 658	(15.3)
<b>Developing and Emerging</b>	<b>62 200</b>	<b>(2.3)</b>	<b>49 042</b>	<b>(4.8)</b>	<b>13 157</b>	<b>(0.8)</b>
Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia	832	(0.5)	597	(0.8)	234	(0.2)
Asia and the Pacific	36 858	(2.1)	28 554	(4.5)	8 304	(0.7)
Southern Asia	9 376	(1.4)	5 342	(3.6)	4 034	(0.8)
East and South-Eastern Asia	27 482	(2.5)	23 212	(4.8)	4 270	(0.7)
<i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i>	5 043	(1.5)	4 052	(2.8)	991	(0.5)
Sub-Saharan Africa	8 702	(2.2)	6 099	(3.3)	2 603	(1.2)
Southern Africa	1 709	(8.8)	1 281	(14.9)	428	(4.0)
Rest of sub-Saharan Africa	6 993	(1.9)	4 818	(2.8)	2 174	(1.1)
Latin America and the Caribbean	14 364	(5.2)	13 108	(11.6)	1 256	(0.8)
Middle East and North Africa	1 443	(1.6)	684	(4.1)	760	(1.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>75 630</b>	<b>(2.3)</b>	<b>57 656</b>	<b>(4.5)</b>	<b>17 973</b>	<b>(0.9)</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Because the countries of the Middle East are so different than other developed countries with information, a separate average excluding the Middle East is shown for the developed countries.

cent of total employment; Southern Africa at 9 per cent of total employment; and Latin America and the Caribbean at 5 per cent of total employment.

Globally, domestic work is 4 per cent of women's employment and 1 per cent of men's. In the developed countries of the Middle East,

almost half (47 per cent) of employed women are domestic workers, in comparison to 15 per cent of employed men.

## Box 1: Estimating the World's Domestic Workers

The data in this brief are based on 155 countries and territories, including 145 countries in the ILOSTAT Database that provide the information required to apply the common approach to identify domestic workers. For an additional 10 countries, for which labour force survey data were not available, data from secondary sources were used. All tables/graphs are for the 155 countries unless otherwise indicated.

The current estimates have a benchmark year of 2019 and input data range from 2009 to 2019, with 67 per cent of the countries referring to 2018 or 2019. In preparing the estimates, the proportion of domestic workers in total employment as estimated for the latest available year is applied to the absolute number of persons in employment in 2019. Benchmark employment data from 2019 are derived from the ILO modeled estimates.

Annex I contains the countries classified by geographic regions and country income groups; the specific surveys are in Annex II. All country data refer to ages 15 and above.

ILO's identification of domestic workers in national labour force surveys follows the statistical definition of domestic workers in the Resolution

concerning statistics on work relationships adopted at the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Domestic workers are defined as: "workers of any sex employed for pay or profit, including in-kind payment, who perform work in or for a household or households to provide services mainly for consumption by the household. The work may be performed within the household premises or in other locations" (ILO 2018b, para. 104). Based on the statistical definition of domestic work and domestic workers, the ICLS established the following categories of domestic workers in employment:

(a) **Domestic employees:** all workers engaged directly as employees of households to provide services mainly for consumption by the household members, irrespective of the nature of the services provided including:

- (i) live-in domestic employees;
- (ii) live-out domestic employees.

(b) **Domestic workers employed by service providers:** employees engaged by economic units such as agencies that provide domestic services to households.

(c) **Domestic service providers employed for profit:** domestic service providers employed for profit to provide domestic services to private households as independent workers or dependent contractors.

For the purpose of estimating the total number of domestic workers, a multi-step set of approaches was adopted:

1. the approach based on the industry classification;
2. the approach based on status in employment;
3. the approach based on the relationship to the head of the household, allowing for the identification of live-in domestic workers; and
4. the occupation-based or task-based approach, in combination with information on the place of work.

Each step captures domestic workers not yet identified in the previous steps.

The first three approaches (1–3) identify domestic workers who are directly employed by households, while the additional domestic workers identified through the task-based approach (4) are considered to be domestic workers employed by or through service providers. A rough approximation of the number of domestic workers employed by entities other than households is therefore the subtraction of the number of domestic workers directly employed by the household (approaches 1, 2 and 3) from the total number of domestic workers.

### Front page photos clockwise from the top left:

1. A domestic worker in Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images Reportage.
2. A domestic worker in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo by Ray Suk Maya.
3. A domestic worker in Lima, Peru. Photo by Juan Arredondo/Getty Images Reportage.
4. A domestic worker in Brisa del Este, Santo Domingo. Photo by Wendy Gonzalez.

In a little over half (97) of the 155 countries with data, domestic work accounts for less than 2.5 per cent of total employment (**figure 2**). In 29 countries, domestic work accounts for 2.5 to less than 5 per cent of total employment; and in another 29 countries, it accounts for 5 per cent or more of total employment.

Globally, 76 per cent of domestic workers are women (**figure 3**). Women comprise a higher share of domestic workers (85 per cent) in developed countries, excluding the developed countries of the Middle East, than in developing and emerging countries (79 per cent).

Women account for a higher share than men in all regions except the Middle East and North Africa. In the developed countries of the Middle East, only 36 per cent of domestic workers are women; in the emerging and developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa, 47 per cent are women. Women's share is highest in the developed countries of Asia and the Pacific and in the developing and emerging countries of Latin America—91 per cent in both regions.

Figure 2: Domestic workers as per cent of total employment

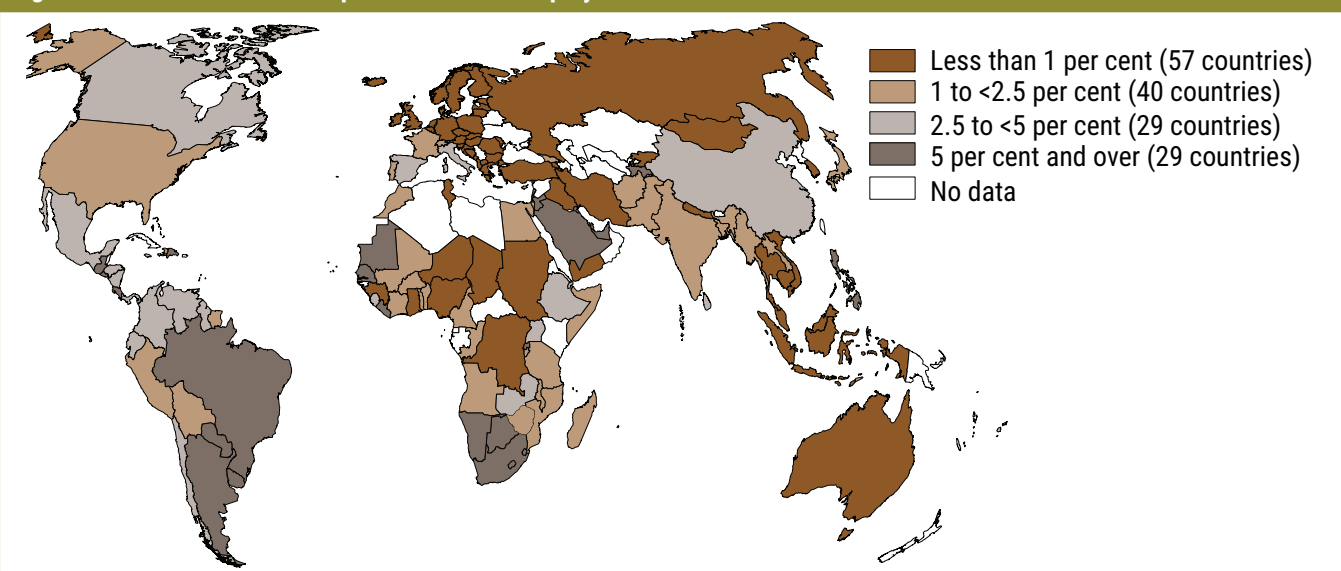
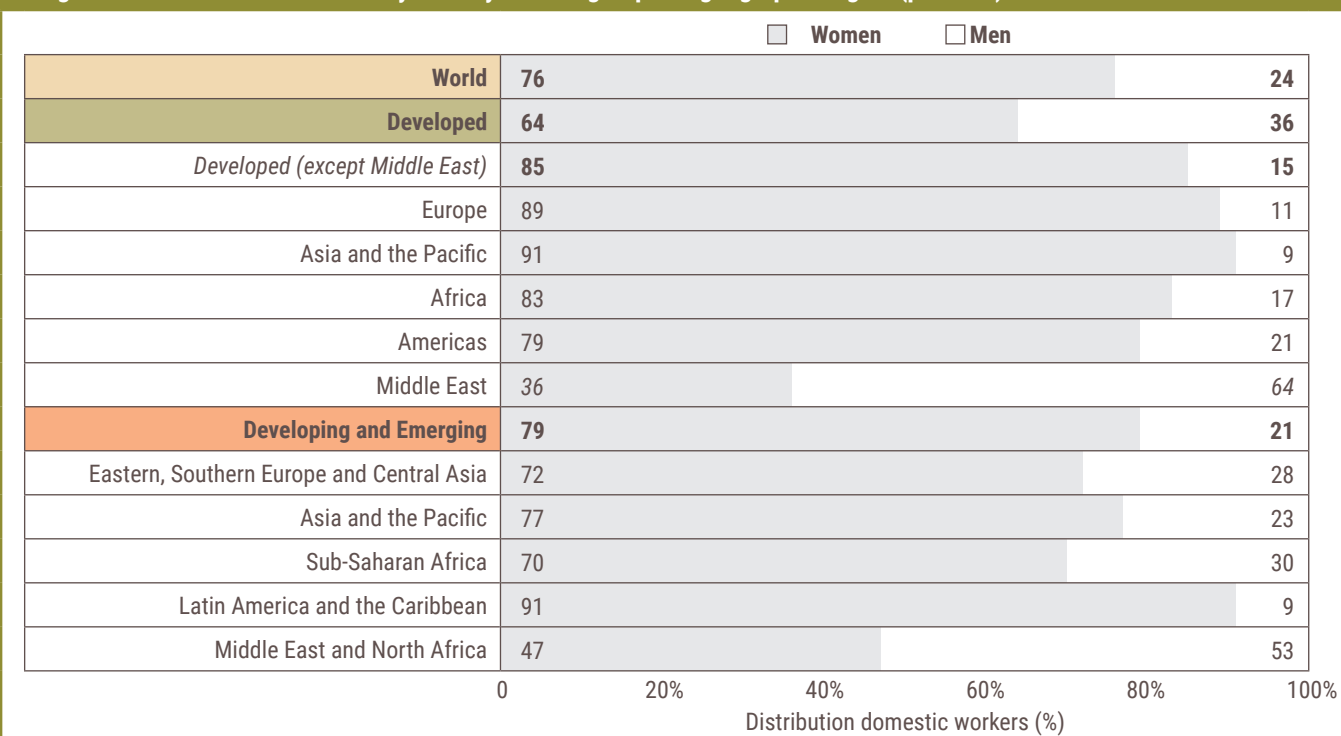


Figure 3: Share women and men by country income group and geographic region (per cent)





## Informal Employment

**Around 80 per cent of domestic workers are informal; 79 per cent of women domestic workers and 87 per cent of men are informal.**

Around 80 per cent of domestic workers are informal.<sup>2</sup> A larger proportion of men domestic workers than women are informal: 87 per cent of men domestic workers in comparison to 79 per cent of women (**table 2**). Additional tabulations show the share of informal employment among domestic workers is twice the share of informal employment of non-domestic employees (40 per cent). A larger percentage of domestic workers in developing and emerging countries are informal than in developed countries: 85 per cent in comparison to 62 per cent, respectively. However, when the Middle East countries are excluded, the developed country average is only 34 per cent. There is substantial variation in rates of informality across the geographic regions. In the developed region, informality ranged from 7 per cent in the developed countries of Asia and the Pacific to 99 per cent in the countries of the Middle East. Among developing and emerging countries, over 96 per cent of domestic workers were informal in Southern Asia, while 74 per cent were informal in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Table 2. Domestic workers who are informally employed by country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Per cent**

	Total	Women	Men
<b>Developed</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>81</b>
Developed (except Middle East) <sup>(1)</sup>	34	36	25
Europe	63	64	56
Asia and the Pacific	7	8	2
Africa	81	82	76
Americas	29	31	19
Middle East	99	99	99
<b>Developing and Emerging</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>89</b>
Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia	74	69	88
Asia and the Pacific	88	88	89
Southern Asia	96	99	93
East and South-Eastern Asia	85	85	86
<i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i>	86	86	87
Sub-Saharan Africa	93	92	94
Southern Africa	82	80	89
Rest of sub-Saharan Africa	95	95	95
Latin America and the Caribbean	74	74	68
Middle East and North Africa	95	94	97
<b>World</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>87</b>

In both developed and the developing and emerging country groups, a higher percentage of men than women domestic workers are informally employed. The largest difference is in developed countries (81 per cent of men and to 51 per cent women) in comparison

to 89 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women in emerging and developing countries. This is largely because the majority of men domestic workers are in the two regions where informality among domestic workers is the highest: the Middle East and North Africa and

<sup>2</sup> Most domestic workers are employees. Employees are considered informally employed if their employer does not contribute to social security on their behalf or if they do not benefit from paid annual leave or sick leave. Domestic workers who are statistically classified as independent workers are in informal employment if their activity (economic unit) is a non-incorporated private enterprise without a formal bookkeeping system or is not registered with relevant national authorities.

Asia and the Pacific. Thus, when the countries of the Middle East are excluded from the developed region average, a higher percentage of women than men in domestic work are informally employed (36 per cent for women in comparison to 25 per cent for men). In two of the regions under the emerging and developing country group, men domestic workers are more likely than women to be informally employed. In Eastern and Southern Europe and Central Asia, 88 per cent of men and 69 per cent of women domestic workers are informally employed and in Southern Africa 89 per cent of men and 80 per cent of women. However in two other regions, women domestic workers have higher rates of informality than men: in Southern Asia, 99 per cent of women domestic workers in comparison to 93 per cent of men; in Latin America and the Caribbean, 74 per cent of women domestic workers in comparison to 68 per cent of men. In the other regions, the rates of informality for women and men are fairly similar.

### Specific Occupational Categories

**The overwhelming majority of women in domestic work (around 80 per cent) are engaged as cleaners and helpers while men in domestic work are engaged in a wider range of activities.**

Across the 32 countries with available data in **Table 3**, the overwhelming majority of women in domestic work (around 80 per cent) are engaged as cleaners and helpers. Men in

domestic work are engaged in a wider range of activities: around one third report the broad category: security guards, gardeners and building maintenance; around one quarter are cleaners and helpers, and a little less than one quarter are drivers.

In only a few countries, work in cleaning and helping accounts for less than 80 per cent of what women domestic workers do. The countries where cleaning and helping among women domestic workers is not so prominent fall into two categories. In some countries (Brazil, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Serbia and the United States) relatively large percentages of women are engaged in direct care—ranging from 43 per cent of women in domestic work in Serbia to 14 per cent in Ecuador.

A very small percentage of men are engaged in direct care. The United States is the exception, with 16 per cent of men in domestic work and 20 per cent of women providing direct care.

### Hours worked

**Domestic workers tend to be over-represented among those who work more or less than 35 to 48 hours per week, which is considered the normal or standard work week.**

Domestic workers tend to be over-represented among all workers who put in both shorter and longer hours per week than the 35 to 48 hour

range considered as the normal or standard work week. Globally among women, 39 per cent of domestic workers compared to 58 per cent of non-domestic employees work the standard range of hours; among men, 31 per cent of domestic workers in comparison to 52 per cent of non-domestic employees (**table 4**). The same pattern is shown in each country income group.

Domestic workers are more likely than non-domestic employees to have longer hours in each country income group and especially in developing and emerging countries. For example, in emerging countries among women, 35 per cent of domestic workers and only 30 per cent of non-domestic employees work longer than 48 hours a week; among men, 57 per cent of those in domestic work in comparison to 44 per cent of non-domestic employees work these longer hours. Another section of the brief will analyze long hours of work among live-in and live-out domestic workers.

Domestic workers, especially women, are also more likely than other workers to work fewer hours per week. Among women in developed countries, 48 per cent of domestic workers and 34 per cent of non-domestic employees work less than 35 hours a week; among men, 25 per cent of domestic workers and 17 per cent of non-domestic employees work these lesser hours. Additional tabulations show that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Central Asia, domestic workers have fewer hours than non-domestic employees, and that the difference

**Table 3. Occupational distribution of domestic workers by country income groups, geographic regions and sex: per cent, latest available year<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Cleaners and helpers		Direct care <sup>(2)</sup>		Drivers		Cooks		Security guards, gardeners, building maintenance	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Simple average (32 countries)<sup>(3)</sup></b>	<b>81</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Developed</b>										
Brunei Darussalam	100	25	<1	<1	<1	62	<1	<1	<1	<1
Saudi Arabia	88	21	<1	<1	9	76	1	2	1	2
United Arab Emirates	94	27	3	<1	0	47	1	12	1	9
United States	78	76	21	16	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	2
<b>Developing and Emerging</b>										
<i>Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia (emerging)</i>										
Serbia	53	29	43	4	0	5	1	4	2	21
<i>Asia and the Pacific</i>										
Bangladesh	84	7	1	<1	1	55	5	8	4	23
Cambodia	41	6	3	1	1	36	12	12	16	15
India	85	28	5	2	0	23	1	1	1	6
Lao People's Democratic Republic	94	4	<1	<1	1	78	5	2	1	16
Mongolia	45	10	21	<1	0	9	11	<1	<1	8
Myanmar	30	4	<1	<1	0	6	2	<1	46	67
Pakistan	87	24	4	1	0	16	1	11	<1	41
Philippines	93	98	7	2	0	0	1	1	<1	<1
Sri Lanka	64	7	8	<1	<1	7	1	<1	16	31
Thailand	76	24	10	1	<1	52	8	7	2	15
Timor-Leste	76	6	<1	1	0	85	16	1	<1	5
Viet Nam	90	70	7	4	0	3	<1	<1	<1	3
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>										
Lesotho	96	11	<1	<1	0	3	1	<1	1	80
Rwanda	89	69	<1	<1	0	3	6	7	3	19

**Table 3 (Continued). Occupational distribution of domestic workers by country income groups, geographic regions and sex: per cent, latest available year<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Cleaners and helpers		Direct care <sup>(2)</sup>		Drivers		Cooks		Security guards, gardeners, building maintenance	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Tanzania, United Republic of	82	33	8	3	<1	2	<1	<1	3	40
Togo	91	<1	<1	<1	0	19	<1	5	6	67
Uganda	82	12	1	3	0	7	<1	<1	7	52
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>										
Brazil	77	60	20	6	<1	8	2	1	<1	24
Dominican Republic	76	6	15	2	0	29	9	13	<1	31
Ecuador	84	28	14	4	0	20	2	1	<1	45
El Salvador	90	10	6	<1	<1	26	1	<1	1	15
Honduras	90	31	8	0	0	5	<1	<1	1	49
Jamaica	76	5	22	2	0	0	<1	1	1	85
Peru	97	65	3	<1	0	11	<1	<1	<1	22
<i>Middle East and North Africa</i>										
Jordan	99	7	<1	<1	0	<1	<1	<1	<1	90
Lebanon	95	14	1	1	<1	53	1	2	<1	13

<sup>(1)</sup> The data do not add to 100 per cent for some countries due to non-response.

<sup>(2)</sup> Direct care refers to face-to-face personal care activities for children, the elderly or other family members.

<sup>(3)</sup> Because data are available for only four developed countries and many more emerging and developing countries, the averages for all countries and emerging and developing countries are almost the same.

between domestic workers and non-domestic employees is even greater when the countries of the Middle East are excluded from the developed country average. The developing country group is an exception to this pattern. Among men, 26 per cent of domestic workers in comparison to 30 per cent of non-domestic employees have a shorter work week. Among women in developing countries, the two groups

have similar average work weeks: 42 per cent of domestic workers and 41 per cent of non-domestic employees have a shorter work week.

## Earnings

**Globally, the wages of domestic workers are only about 56 per cent of those of non-domestic employees,**

**with domestic workers in developing countries earning less than one-third of what non-domestic employees do. Women earn considerably less than men in each country income group.**

Globally, domestic workers earn about 56 per cent of the wages of all non-domestic



**Table 4. Domestic workers and non-domestic employees by hours worked per week, country income group and sex: Per cent distribution**

		WOMEN					MEN				
		<20h	20-34h	35-48h	49-60h	>60h	<20h	20-34h	35-48h	49-60h	>60h
Developed	Domestic workers	24	24	39	7	6	8	17	54	13	9
	Non-domestic employees	11	23	58	6	1	5	12	65	15	3
Emerging	Domestic workers	11	14	40	24	11	5	8	29	33	24
	Non-domestic employees	3	9	58	24	6	2	6	48	31	13
Developing	Domestic workers	28	14	19	15	24	14	12	26	21	27
	Non-domestic employees	20	21	38	13	9	15	15	38	17	16
World	Domestic workers	13	15	39	21	11	7	10	31	30	23
	Non-domestic employees	6	14	58	18	5	3	8	52	27	11

**Table 5. Average monthly wages of domestic workers as a percentage of average monthly wages of all non-domestic employees by country income group and sex<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Domestic workers Total	Domestic workers Women	Domestic workers Men
Developed	53	49	67
Emerging	58	53	69
Developing	32	27	43
<b>World</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>67</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Based on 104 countries

employees (**table 5**). Domestic workers in developed countries earn 53 per cent of the average wages of non-domestic employees. Their lower earnings may be related to their shorter working hours, since about half work less than 35 hours a week (**table 4**). By contrast, domestic workers in developing countries earn the least compared to non-domestic employees, but they tend to work longer hours on average.

There are also large differences between women and men. Women fare less well than men: women and men domestic workers earn 51 and 67 per cent, respectively, of what all non-domestic employees earn on average.

Women in the developing country group earn only a small proportion (27 per cent) of the non-domestic employees' earnings. Men in developing countries fare slightly better, earning 43 per cent. The relative earnings of



Myrtle Witbooi, President of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). Photo by Kendra Hughes.

domestic workers, compared to non-domestic employees, are somewhat higher in the emerging region: 53 per cent for women and 69 per cent for men. In developed countries, women's earnings average 49 per cent of what non-domestic employees earn, while men earn 67 per cent.

## Live-in and Live-out Arrangement and Hours of Work

### Live-in domestic workers are twice as likely as live-out domestic workers to work more than 48 hours per week.

In the subset of countries with data on living arrangements of domestic workers, live-in domestic workers are two times as likely as live-out domestic workers to work more than 48 hours per week: among women, 65 per cent of live-ins compared to 33 per cent of live-outs; and among men, 56 per cent of live-ins and 52 per cent of live-outs (**table 6**). Further, among women domestic workers, 70 per cent or more of live-ins work longer than a 48-hour week in 21 (of the 39) countries, while live-outs had long workweeks in only 2 countries; among men, live-ins had a long workweek in 12 of the 35 countries with data, and live-outs in 8 of the 39 countries.

A related question is whether the live-in/live-out arrangement has a different effect on working a long workweek for women and for men. Among those who live in, a greater proportion of women than men work a long

**Table 6. Percentage of live-in and live-out domestic workers working more than 48 hours/week by sex in selected countries<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Percentage live-in domestic workers		Percentage domestic workers working more than 48h per week			
			Women		Men	
	Women	Men	Live-in	Live-out	Live-in	Live-out
<b>Simple average (39 countries)</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>52</b>
<i>Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia (emerging)</i>						
Turkey	6	4	71	20	0	41
<i>Asia and the Pacific</i>						
Bangladesh	11	3	81	31	76	77
Cambodia	9	2	79	51	0	42
India	5	14	99	35	90	83
Indonesia	34	21	89	29	81	41
Nepal	10	10	36	21	63	58
Pakistan	2	27	100	12	92	70
Philippines	27	15	81	42	77	38
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>						
Burkina Faso	39	11	68	45	93	68
Burundi	76	78	81	76	78	71
Cabo Verde	7	0	18	24	n/a <sup>(2)</sup>	76
Cameroon	9	19	79	47	61	60
Chad	9	37	68	29	44	61
Congo, DR.	10	14	48	34	51	49
Côte d'Ivoire	60	16	65	45	0	49
Eswatini	11	14	35	38	40	62
Ethiopia	21	51	65	9	39	30
Gambia	39	36	77	30	100	49
Mali	68	37	72	20	46	71
Mauritania	9	33	60	55	67	32

**Table 6 (Continued). Percentage of live-in and live-out domestic workers working more than 48 hours/week by sex in selected countries<sup>(1)</sup>**

	Percentage live-in domestic workers		Percentage domestic workers working more than 48h per week			
			Women		Men	
	Women	Men	Live-in	Live-out	Live-in	Live-out
Senegal	17	11	91	54	100	65
Tanzania United Rep.	73	86	81	76	65	80
Togo	56	13	73	34	61	60
Uganda	66	80	75	49	49	63
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>						
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	8	2	53	16	0	20
Chile	13	3	14	6	47	11
Colombia	12	29	53	21	48	34
Haiti	34	40	74	35	52	67
Honduras	21	0	75	42	n/a <sup>(2)</sup>	68
Jamaica	13	2	64	15	39	12
Panama	16	11	15	7	15	7
Paraguay	8	2	36	20	72	40
Peru	8	4	58	29	76	36
<i>Middle East and North Africa</i>						
Jordan	91	0	88	63	n/a <sup>(2)</sup>	89
Tunisia	7	0	100	13	n/a <sup>(2)</sup>	58
United Arab Emirates	97	83	89	44	77	41
Yemen	25	5	0	18	67	70

<sup>(1)</sup> Only countries with over 5 per cent of total domestic workers who are live in are included.

<sup>(2)</sup> Not ascertained as no men in the country were reported as live-in domestic workers.

workweek in 19 of the 32 countries where data are reported for both women and men. Among those who live out, a higher

proportion of men work a long workweek in 32 (of the 39) countries.



A domestic worker in Chile. Photo courtesy of IDWF. |

## Hiring Directly by Households or by/through Service Providers

Around 27 per cent of domestic workers globally were hired by or through a service provider.

Domestic workers may be employed directly by households or indirectly by or through service providers, including agencies and platforms (**table 7**). Most domestic workers were hired directly by a household. Of the sub-set of countries with data, only around 27 per cent of domestic workers globally were hired indirectly by or through a service provider. The data available for the seven developed countries show large differences among the countries. European Commission data were used to supplement these data: the European Commission found that 70 per cent of domestic workers in Europe are employed by public or private organizations, while only 30 per cent are directly hired by households.<sup>3</sup>

In 12 of 61 countries, over half of domestic workers were hired indirectly through a service agency. The countries with large percentages of indirect hiring are diverse—from Niger, where 69 per cent of domestic workers are hired indirectly, to the United States at 57 per cent, to Timor-Leste at 88 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> See European Commission. Personal and household services webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1427&langId=en>

**Table 7. Domestic workers hired by or through service providers by total, women, and men: Country income group, geographic region (per cent)**

	Percentage of women domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of men domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of all domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>
<b>Simple average (all 61 countries)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Developing and emerging (54 countries)</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Developing and emerging</b>			
<i>Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia (Emerging)</i>			
Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019)	36	0	34
Kyrgyzstan (2018)	71	50	66
North Macedonia (2019)	79	51	77
Serbia (2019)	30	14	28
<i>Asia and the Pacific</i>			
Bangladesh (2017)	9	37	17
Cambodia (2019)	39	50	43
Iran, Islamic Republic of (2018)	22	67	49
Kiribati (2015)	43	69	56
Maldives (2016)	14	22	17
Mongolia (2019)	54	0	38
Myanmar (2019)	22	79	63
Nepal (2017)	43	59	51
Samoa (2017)	13	8	11
Sri Lanka (2018)	16	26	23
Thailand (2018)	22	61	34
Timor-Leste (2013)	81	92	88
Tonga (2018)	43	67	52
Viet Nam (2018)	19	32	19
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>			
Botswana (2012)	46	22	39



**Table 7 (Continued). Domestic workers hired by or through service providers by total, women, and men: Country income group, geographic region (per cent)**

	Percentage of women domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of men domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of all domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>
Burkina Faso (2018)	30	33	31
Cameroon (2014)	4	9	5
Comoros (2014)	31	9	27
Côte d'Ivoire (2017)	0	7	1
Eswatini (2016)	88	86	87
Ethiopia (2013)	3	5	4
Ghana (2015)	13	21	16
Guinea (2019)	21	0	20
Malawi (2013)	12	11	12
Mali (2018)	19	43	23
Namibia (2018)	13	11	12
Niger (2017)	83	33	69
Nigeria (2016)	19	19	19
Rwanda (2018)	1	2	1
Senegal (2015)	24	24	24
Sierra Leone (2014)	14	9	12
South Africa (2019)	2	2	2
Tanzania, United Republic of (2014)	5	1	4
Togo (2017)	32	79	41
Uganda (2017)	1	2	1
Zambia (2018)	25	24	25
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>			
Argentina (2019)	5	19	6
Brazil (2019)	0	1	0
Dominican Republic (2019)	16	34	18

In Asia and the Pacific, men in domestic work are more likely to be hired indirectly than women; in the other regions, however, there is no regular pattern by sex.

## Education

### Around one-half of women and men domestic workers have a secondary level of education.

Globally, secondary is the highest level of education for around half of domestic workers (52 per cent of women and 51 per cent of men) compared to a somewhat lower per cent of women (48 per cent) and higher per cent of men (53 per cent) among the non-domestic employed (**table 8**). However in developing countries, domestic workers are much less likely to have secondary education (22 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men); and, among non-domestic employed, the percentages with secondary education are even lower (17 per cent for women and 27 per cent for men).

Domestic workers are much less likely to have tertiary education compared to the non-domestic employed in every country income group. Conversely, they are more likely to have primary education only compared to the non-domestic employed. A large share of domestic workers have no education. Globally, the percentage who have no education is higher among domestic workers in comparison to the non-domestic employed. However, in



**Table 7 (Continued). Domestic workers hired by or through service providers by total, women, and men: Country income group, geographic region (per cent)**

	Percentage of women domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of men domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>	Percentage of all domestic workers hired indirectly <sup>(1)</sup>
Ecuador (2019)	18	49	21
El Salvador (2019)	2	12	3
Guyana (2018)	20	4	14
Honduras (2017)	7	0	6
Jamaica (2016)	2	5	3
Suriname (2016)	58	0	46
<i>Middle East and North Africa</i>			
Egypt (2018)	50	64	60
Iraq (2012)	34	5	9
Lebanon (2019)	1	3	1
Tunisia (2014)	18		27
Yemen (2014)	8	0	1
<b>Developed</b>			
Brunei Darussalam (2019)	2	0	2
Cook Islands (2019)	25	28	26
Japan (2010)	10	18	11
Seychelles (2019)	69	36	61
United Arab Emirates (2018)	1	0	1
United States (2019)	56	66	57
Uruguay (2019)	10	39	15

<sup>(1)</sup>Hired indirectly means hired by or through service providers.

developing countries 55 per cent of women and 40 per cent of non-domestic employed have no education in comparison to 43 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men domestic workers.

Among domestic workers, the differences in the educational levels across the country income groups are much greater than the differences between women and men within each group. The developing countries are the

exception where women domestic workers have less education than men: 43 per cent of women domestic workers have no education in comparison to 36 per cent of men and only 22 per cent of women have secondary education in comparison to 29 per cent of men.

## Age

**Half of women domestic workers are ages 15-24 in developing countries, compared to less than 10 per cent in developed countries.**

Globally, the per cent distribution across the age categories for domestic workers and for the non-domestic employed are very similar (**table 9**). Only 12 per cent of women in both worker groups are ages 15-24, compared to 18 per cent of male domestic workers and 13 per cent of male non-domestic employed. For ages 55 and above, the percentages are also similar for the two worker groups: 15 per cent for women and men domestic workers in comparison to 13 per cent of women non-domestic employed and 15 and 16 per cent of men.

Further, the patterns for developed and emerging countries are similar. However developing countries show striking differences. Among the developing countries, a large share of domestic workers are young in ages: 15-24 (50 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men). This is a much larger proportion than for the non-domestic employed (25 per cent for women and 22 per cent for men). It is

also much larger than for domestic workers in emerging and developed countries. In emerging countries, among domestic workers only 10 per cent of women and 15 per cent of

men are ages 15 to 24, in comparison to 12 to 13 per cent for both women and men non-domestic employed. The proportions of young domestic workers is even lower for developed

countries. By contrast, in developed countries, 55 per cent of women domestic workers and 45 per cent of non-domestic workers (women and men) are ages 45 or older.

**Table 8. Domestic workers and non-domestic employed by highest level of education, country income group and sex: Per cent distribution**

		Domestic workers						Non-domestic employed <sup>(1)</sup>					
		None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Other	Total	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Other	Total
Developed	Women	7	22	55	16	0	100	1	3	48	49	0	100
	Men	11	21	41	27	0	100	1	6	54	39	0	100
Emerging	Women	21	21	54	3	0	100	18	14	52	16	0	100
	Men	21	18	56	4	0	100	17	16	55	13	0	100
Developing	Women	43	32	22	1	2	100	55	21	17	4	2	100
	Men	36	31	29	4	1	100	40	25	27	6	2	100
World	Women	21	22	52	4	0	100	18	12	48	20	0	100
	Men	22	20	51	6	0	100	16	15	53	16	0	100

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes all persons employed and not only employees.

**Table 9. Domestic workers and non-domestic employed by age, country income groups and sex: Per cent distribution**

		Domestic workers								Non-domestic employed <sup>(1)</sup>							
		15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total	15-24	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
Developed	Women	7	7	10	21	27	21	7	100	10	11	11	23	23	17	5	100
	Men	9	12	12	24	22	15	6	100	9	10	11	24	22	17	6	100
Emerging	Women	10	8	10	28	29	11	3	100	12	13	13	29	22	9	3	100
	Men	15	13	11	23	22	12	4	100	13	13	12	25	22	12	4	100
Developing	Women	50	13	9	14	7	3	2	100	25	16	13	22	14	7	4	100
	Men	44	15	11	13	11	5	2	100	22	14	13	22	15	9	5	100
World	Women	12	9	10	27	28	12	3	100	12	13	13	27	21	10	3	100
	Men	18	13	11	22	20	11	4	100	13	13	12	25	21	12	4	100

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes all persons employed and not only employees.

## Annex I - Classification of countries/territories by region

### Developed countries

#### Europe

Austria  
Belgium  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czechia  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Israel  
Italy  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom

#### Asia and the Pacific

Australia  
Brunei Darussalam  
Cook Islands  
Hong Kong, China  
Japan  
Korea, Republic of

#### Sub-Saharan Africa

Mauritius  
Seychelles

#### Americas

Canada  
Chile  
Panama  
Trinidad and Tobago  
United States  
Uruguay

### Emerging countries

#### Eastern, Southern Europe and

#### Central Asia

Albania  
Armenia  
Bosnia And Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Georgia  
Kosovo  
Kyrgyzstan  
Moldova, Republic of  
Montenegro  
North Macedonia  
Russian Federation  
Serbia  
Turkey

#### Asia and the Pacific

#### Southern Asia

Bangladesh  
India  
Iran, Islamic Republic of  
Maldives  
Nepal  
Pakistan  
Sri Lanka

#### East and South-Eastern Asia

Cambodia  
China  
Fiji  
Indonesia  
Kiribati  
Lao People's Democratic  
Republic  
Malaysia  
Micronesia  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
Philippines  
Samoa  
Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Tonga  
Tuvalu  
Viet Nam

#### Sub-Saharan Africa

#### Southern Africa

Botswana  
Eswatini  
Lesotho  
Namibia  
South Africa

#### Rest of sub-Saharan Africa

Angola  
Benin  
Cabo Verde  
Cameroon  
Comoros  
Congo  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Djibouti  
Ghana  
Mauritania  
Nigeria  
Senegal  
Tanzania, United Republic of

Zambia  
Zimbabwe

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

Argentina  
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)  
Brazil  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Dominican Republic  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Guyana  
Honduras  
Jamaica  
Mexico  
Nicaragua  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Saint Lucia  
Suriname  
Venezuela, Bolivarian  
Republic of

#### Middle East and North Africa

Egypt  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Lebanon  
Morocco  
Occupied Palestinian  
Territory  
Tunisia

### Developing countries

#### Central Asia

Tajikistan

#### Asia and the Pacific

Southern Asia  
Afghanistan

#### Sub-Saharan Africa

#### Rest of sub-Saharan Africa

Burkina Faso  
Burundi  
Chad  
Congo, Democratic Republic  
of the  
Ethiopia  
Gambia  
Guinea  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Mozambique  
Niger  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone  
Somalia  
Togo  
Uganda

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

Haiti

#### Middle East and North Africa

Sudan  
Yemen

## Annex II National sources

### Household surveys (145 countries/territories)

Afghanistan	Living Conditions Survey, 2017	Costa Rica	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, 2019
Albania	Labour force survey, 2019	Côte d'Ivoire	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2017
Angola	Inquérito Integrado sobre o Bem-estar da População, 2009	Croatia	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Argentina	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, 2019	Cyprus	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Armenia	Labour force survey, 2019	Czechia	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Austria	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Denmark	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Bangladesh	Labour Force Survey, 2017	Djibouti	Quatrième Enquête Djiboutienne Auprès des Ménages pour les Indicateurs Sociaux, 2017
Belgium	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Dominican Republic	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Benin	Enquête Modulaire Intégrée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages, 2011	Ecuador	Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo, 2019
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Encuesta de Hogares, 2019	Egypt	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Labour Force Survey, 2019	El Salvador	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples, 2019
Botswana	Labour Force Survey, 2012	Eswatini	Labour Force Survey, 2016
Brazil	Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua, 2019	Estonia	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2017
Brunei Darussalam	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Ethiopia	Labour Force Survey, 2013
Bulgaria	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Fiji	Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2016
Burkina Faso	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2018	Finland	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Burundi	Enquête sur les conditions de vie des ménages, 2013	France	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Cabo Verde	International Maritime Organization, 2015	Gambia	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Cambodia	Labour force survey, 2019	Georgia	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Cameroon	Quatrième Enquête Camerounaise auprès des Ménages, 2014	Ghana	Labour Force Survey, 2015
Canada	Labour Force Survey, 2018	Greece	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Chad	Enquête Harmonisée sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages, 2019	Guatemala	Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos, 2019
Chile	Encuesta Nacional del Empleo, 2019	Guinea	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2019
China	China Household Income Project and administrative sources, 2014	Guyana	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Colombia	Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares, 2019	Haiti	Enquête sur les conditions de vie des ménages, 2012
Comoros	Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel aux Comores, 2014	Honduras	Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples, 2017
Congo	Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel, 2009	Hungary	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Congo, Democratic Republic of	Enquête sur l'emploi, le secteur informel et sur la consommation des ménages (Enquête 1-2-3), 2012	India	Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2019
Cook Islands	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Indonesia	National Labour Force Survey, 2018
		Iran, Islamic Republic of	Labour force survey, 2018
		Iraq	Household Socio Economic Survey, 2012
		Ireland	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
		Israel	Labour Force Survey, 2017
		Italy	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2017
		Jamaica	Labour Force Survey, 2016
		Japan	Japanese General Social Surveys, 2010

Jordan	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Panama	Encuesta de Mercado Laboral, 2019
Kiribati	Census, 2015	Paraguay	Encuesta Permanente de Hogares Continua, 2019
Kosovo	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Peru	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, 2019
Kyrgyzstan	Labour Force Survey, 2018	Philippines	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Lao People's Democratic Rep.	Labour Force Survey, 2017	Poland	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Latvia	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Portugal	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Lebanon	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Republic of Korea	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Lesotho	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Republic of Moldova	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Liberia	Labour Force Survey, 2010	Romania	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Lithuania	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Russian Federation	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Luxembourg	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Rwanda	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Madagascar	Enquête Nationale sur l'Emploi et le secteur Informel, 2015	Saint Lucia	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Malawi	Labour Force Survey, 2013	Samoa	Labour Force Survey, 2017
Maldives	Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2016	Senegal	Enquête Nationale sur l'Emploi au Sénégal, 2015
Mali	Enquête Modulaire et Permanente auprès des Ménages, 2018	Serbia	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Malta	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Seychelles	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Mauritania	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2017	Sierra Leone	Labour Force Survey, 2014
Mauritius	Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey, 2018	Slovakia	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018
Mexico	Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo, 2019	Slovenia	European Union Labour Force Survey), 2018
Micronesia	Household Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey, 2014	Somalia	Labour Force Survey, 2019
Mongolia	Labour Force Survey, 2019	South Africa	Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2019
Montenegro	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Spain	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2017
Morocco	Morocco Household and Youth Survey, 2010	Sri Lanka	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Mozambique	Inquérito aos Orçamentos Familiares, 2015	Sudan	Labour Force Survey, 2011
Myanmar	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Suriname	Suriname Survey of Living Conditions 2016
Namibia	Labour Force Survey, 2018	Sweden	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2017
Nepal	Labour Force Survey, 2017	Tajikistan	Living Standards Measurement Study, 2009
Netherlands	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Tanzania (United Republic of)	Labour Force Survey, 2014
Nicaragua	Encuesta Nacional de Hogares sobre la Medición del Nivel de Vida, 2014	Thailand	Informal Employment Survey, 2018
Niger	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2017	Timor-Leste	Labour Force Survey, 2013
Nigeria	Living Standards Measurement Study, 2016	Togo	Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, 2017
North Macedonia	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Tonga	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Norway	European Union Labour Force Survey, 2018	Trinidad and Tobago	Continuous Sample Survey of Population, 2016
Occupied Palestinian Territory	Labour Force Survey, 2019	Tunisia	Labour Market Panel Survey, 2014
Pakistan	Labour Force Survey, 2018	Turkey	Labour Force Survey, 2018
		Tuvalu	Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2016
		Uganda	Labour Force Survey, 2017
		United Arab Emirates	Labour Force Survey, 2018
		United Kingdom	Labour Force Survey, 2018
		United States	Current Population Survey, 2019



Uruguay	Encuesta Continua de Hogares, 2019
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo, 2017
Viet Nam	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Yemen	Labour Force Survey, 2014
Zambia	Labour Force Survey, 2018
Zimbabwe	Labour Force Survey, 2019

## Secondary sources (10 countries/territories)

Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics. Labour Force Survey, 2019
Bahrain	Labour Market Regulatory Authority. Bahrain Labour Market Indicators, 2019
China	China Household Income Project and administrative sources, 2014
Germany	Eurostat. Employment by sex, age and detailed economic activity, 2018
Hong Kong (China)	Census and Statistics Department, Immigration Department. Quarterly Report on General Household Survey, 2019
Kuwait	Public Authority for Civil Information, 2019
Malaysia	Department of Statistics Malaysia Official portal. Labour Force Survey, Distribution by economic activity, 2019
Qatar	Planning and Statistics Authority. Labour Force Survey 2019 report, 2019
Saudi Arabia	General Authority for Statistics (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). Labour Force Survey, 2019
Switzerland	Eurostat. Employment by sex, age and detailed economic activity, 2018

**Note:** Criteria used to identify domestic workers in countries are available in Annex 3 of [“Making decent work a reality for domestic workers: Progress and prospects ten years after the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 \(No. 189\)”](#) (ILO, 2021). The methodology is available in Annex 4 and country data for the latest available year in Annex 5.



A domestic worker in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.  
Photo by Fanuel Halelwa.



International  
Labour  
Organization



**This brief was prepared jointly by  
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The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a membership-based global organization of domestic and household workers. WIEGO and ILO have collaborated closely with IDWF since IDWF's inception.

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Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org)

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