



# Home-based Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile

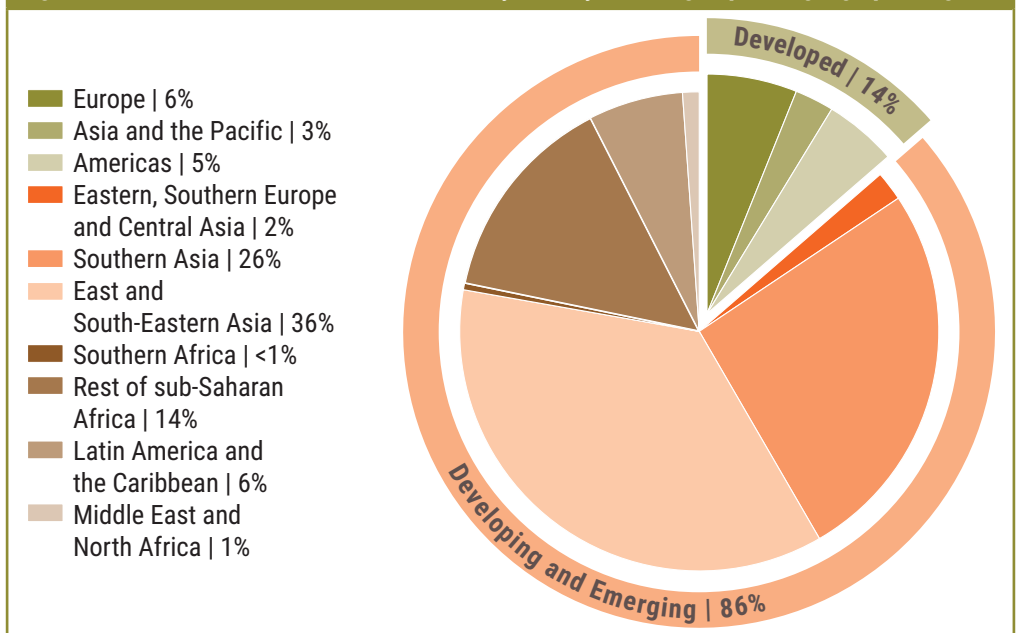
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Globally, 260 million women and men are employed in home-based work, including 35 million in developed countries.

Globally, there are 260 million home-based workers (**table 1**).<sup>1</sup> While the overwhelming majority (86 per cent) of home-based workers are in developing and emerging countries, the number in developed countries (35 million) is substantial. Asia and the Pacific, which has the largest population among the regions, accounts for 65 per cent of home-based workers (**figure 1**). Globally, and in developing and emerging countries, most home-based workers (84 and 82 per cent, respectively) are in non-agricultural work. In developed countries, the proportion in non-agricultural work is even higher (93 per cent).

<sup>1</sup> The data in this brief are based on the 118 countries in the ILOSTAT Database that have a place of work question in their survey. The data are from the years 2000 to 2019. Annex I contains the classification of countries in the geographic regions and country income groups; the specific surveys used are in Annex II.

Figure 1: Distribution of home-based workers by country income groups and geographic regions



**Table 1: Home-based workers in total and non-agricultural employment by country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Numbers in million and per cent of total (in parentheses)**

|  | TOTAL            |                   |                  | NON-AGRICULTURAL  |                   |                  |
|--|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|  | Total            | Women             | Men              | Total             | Women             | Men              |
| <b>World</b>   | <b>259.6</b> (8) | <b>146.8</b> (11) | <b>112.8</b> (6) | <b>217.5</b> (9)  | <b>119.9</b> (13) | <b>97.9</b> (7)  |
| <b>Developed</b>                                     | <b>35.4</b> (6)  | <b>17.3</b> (7)   | <b>18.0</b> (6)  | <b>32.8</b> (6)   | <b>16.2</b> (6)   | <b>16.5</b> (5)  |
| Europe   | 15.8 (7)         | 6.6 (6)           | 9.2 (7)          | 14.6 (6)          | 6.2 (6)           | 8.4 (6)          |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 6.8 (5)          | 3.8 (7)           | 3.1 (4)          | 5.5 (4)           | 3.1 (6)           | 2.4 (3)          |
| Americas   | 12.7 (7)         | 6.9 (8)           | 5.8 (6)          | 12.7 (7)          | 6.9 (8)           | 5.8 (6)          |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>                       | <b>224.2</b> (8) | <b>129.4</b> (13) | <b>94.8</b> (6)  | <b>184.6</b> (10) | <b>103.6</b> (15) | <b>81.3</b> (7)  |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia            | 5.2 (3)          | 2.5 (3)           | 2.7 (3)          | 3.6 (2)           | 1.7 (2)           | 1.9 (2)          |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 161.4 (9)        | 88.6 (14)         | 72.8 (6)         | 130.1 (11)        | 68.3 (16)         | 62.2 (8)         |
| Southern Asia  | 67.5 (10)        | 35.3 (24)         | 32.3 (6)         | 45.4 (12)         | 19.0 (29)         | 26.6 (8)         |
| East and South-Eastern Asia                          | 93.8 (8)         | 53.3 (11)         | 40.5 (6)         | 85.0 (11)         | 49.5 (14)         | 35.6 (8)         |
| <i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i> | <i>63.8 (18)</i> | <i>38.1 (26)</i>  | <i>25.7 (13)</i> | <i>52.7 (23)</i>  | <i>33.2 (33)</i>  | <i>19.6 (15)</i> |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                   | 38.2 (9)         | 25.3 (14)         | 12.8 (6)         | 33.1 (18)         | 22.2 (25)         | 10.9 (11)        |
| Southern Africa                                      | 1.1 (6)          | 0.5 (6)           | 0.7 (6)          | 1.1 (6)           | 0.5 (6)           | 0.7 (7)          |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                           | 37.1 (10)        | 24.8 (14)         | 12.2 (6)         | 31.9 (19)         | 21.7 (27)         | 10.2 (12)        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean                      | 16.6 (6)         | 11.0 (10)         | 5.5 (3)          | 16.2 (7)          | 10.8 (10)         | 5.4 (4)          |
| Middle East and North Africa                         | 2.9 (3)          | 2.0 (11)          | 0.9 (1)          | 1.8 (3)           | 0.9 (8)           | 0.9 (2)          |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries representing 86 per cent of global employment.

Although there are large differences in the *numbers* of home-based workers across regions, the *percentage* of home-based work as a share of total employment varies only from 3 to 10 per cent. The exception is in East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China), where home-based work is 18 per cent of total employment and 23 per cent of non-agricultural employment.

Although labour force participation rates for women are lower than for men in most countries, more women than men are home-based workers globally; women's share is 57 per cent in comparison to 43 per cent for men (**figure 2**). In developing and emerging countries, the share of women and men are similar to those worldwide: 58 per cent of women in comparison to 42 per cent of men. However in developed countries,

there are slightly more men than women; the anomaly is due to Europe, where men represent 58 per cent of home-based workers and women 42 per cent. In the developed countries of the Americas, as well as Asia and the Pacific, women outnumber men in home-based work. In both Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, there are nearly twice as many women home-based workers as men. In only two other

Figure 2: Distribution of home-based workers by sex and income groups of countries and geographic regions

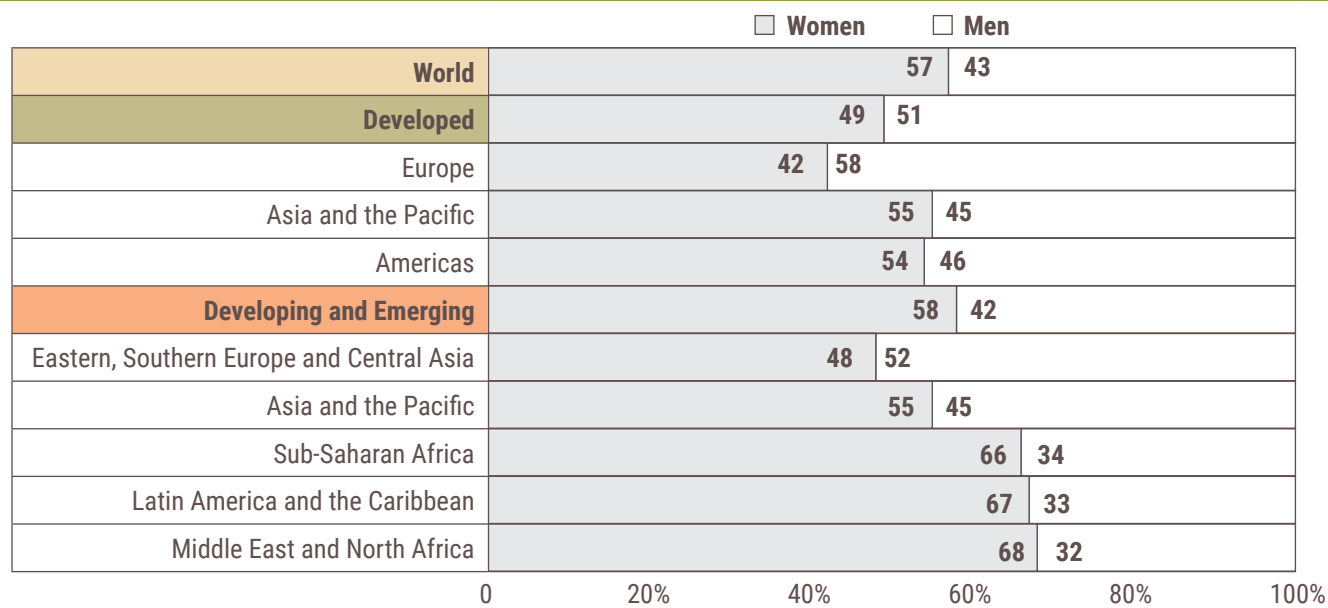


Figure 3: Home-based workers as per cent of total employment



Source: ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries.



A home-based worker who makes hair accessories in Lima, Peru. Photo by Sofia Trevino.

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

A home-based weaver in Laos. Photo by Marty Chen. A home-based tailor in Cape Town, South Africa. Photo by Sofia Trevino. A home-based hairdresser in Pleven, Bulgaria. Photo by Svetlin Ivanov. A home-based garment worker in Tiruppur, India. Photo courtesy of HNSA.

sub-regions are there more men home-based workers than women – Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia and Southern Africa – but the difference is relatively small.

In most of the countries with data, home-based workers comprise less than 10 per cent of all employed persons (dark and light brown in the map), but in some countries, home-based workers account for more than 15 per cent of the workforce (dark grey) (**figure 3**).

**Table 2: Home-based workers as per cent of total employment by country income group and geographic regions: Number of countries in percentage categories**

|   | Less than 5% | 5-10%     | 10-14%    | 15% and more | Total      |
|---|--------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| <b>World</b>                              | <b>44</b>    | <b>41</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>12</b>    | <b>118</b> |
| <b>Developed</b>                          | <b>21</b>    | <b>14</b> | <b>7</b>  | <b>0</b>     | <b>42</b>  |
| Europe                                    | 16           | 9         | 5         | 0            | 30         |
| Asia and the Pacific                      | 4            | 3         | 0         | 0            | 7          |
| Americas                                  | 1            | 2         | 2         | 0            | 5          |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>            | <b>23</b>    | <b>27</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>12</b>    | <b>76</b>  |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia | 9            | 3         | 0         | 0            | 12         |
| Asia and the Pacific                      | 1            | 5         | 3         | 7            | 16         |
| Southern Asia                             | 0            | 2         | 0         | 2            | 4          |
| East and South-Eastern Asia               | 1            | 3         | 3         | 5            | 12         |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                        | 4            | 11        | 7         | 5            | 27         |
| Southern Africa                           | 0            | 2         | 0         | 0            | 2          |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                | 4            | 9         | 7         | 5            | 25         |
| Latin America and the Caribbean           | 3            | 8         | 4         | 0            | 15         |
| Middle East and North Africa              | 6            | 0         | 0         | 0            | 6          |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries representing 86 per cent of global employment.

### Box 1: Types of Home-Based Worker

Home-based workers are those who produce goods or provide services from in or around their own home, including in a structure attached to their home. Home-based workers can be found in all branches of the economy (agriculture, services, and manufacturing and other industry activities) and many sub-branches: from traditional sectors such as textiles, garments and shoes to professional services to modern sectors, including the manufacturing of automobile parts and airplane cushions, electronic assembly, data collection and processing.

While all types of home-based work can be found around the world, certain types predominate in specific geographic regions and country income groups. Among home-based workers, self-employed professionals, teleworkers (white-collar and pink-collar) and digital platform workers are more common in developed and emerging countries; traditional self-employed, industrial outworkers and contributing family workers are more common in developing countries. Digital platform workers who perform “crowdwork” from their homes are dispersed across all country income groups

It is important to understand which types of home-based work expanded and contracted during the lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The category that has expanded during COVID-19 are workers who used to commute to an office, both professional and clerical workers, but began working from home using information and communications technologies (ICTs). The categories of home-based workers who suffered the greatest loss of work and income during COVID-19 are the ones who do not use ICTs in their work, both traditional self-employed and (more so) industrial outworkers, as well as the contributing family workers who depend on them for work.

Among developed countries, home-based work is less than 5 per cent of total employment in half of the countries and less than 15 per cent of total employment in the other half (**table 2**). In developing and emerging countries, home-based work is a higher proportion of total employment, representing over 5 per cent of total employment in around 70 per cent of the countries and less than 5 per cent of total employment in only two sub-regions, specifically in most countries of Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia and all countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

In all other sub-regions of developing and emerging countries, it represents a higher share of employment, including 15 per cent or more in five countries each in sub-Saharan Africa and in East and South-Eastern Asia.

Home-based workers are found in all sectors of the economy and in all statuses in employment (**boxes 1 and 2**). This brief presents key indicators on home-based workers and their work across the world.



## Box 2: Improving the Measurement of Home-Based Workers and the Dependency in their Work Arrangements

Some home-based workers are independent self-employed workers who take entrepreneurial risks. Other home-based workers are dependent on a firm or its contractors for work orders, supply of raw materials and sale of finished goods. Those in this second category are referred to as homeworkers, piece-rate workers or sub-contracted workers. In recent years, better measurement of a broad work arrangement that includes homework has received increased attention due to its growth, as well as to the types of authority and economic risk under which these workers operate.

In 2018, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians agreed on a revised International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18) to include a new category, *dependent contractor*, which reflects aspects of both self- and wage employment. This category has special relevance to homeworkers. Dependent contractors are workers who have contractual arrangements of a commercial nature to provide goods or services for another economic unit, are not employees of that economic unit but are dependent on that unit for the organization and execution of the work or for access to the market.<sup>1</sup> Another recommendation places priority on a survey question on place of work. The implementation of these recommendations in labour force surveys will lead to improved data on home-based work.

However, in the data presented in this brief, independent home-based workers could not be fully distinguished from homeworkers. For this reason, this brief does not include data on the dependency of home-based workers. It includes the status in employment categories, based on the earlier ICSE statuses. The estimates for own account workers are likely to include misclassified dependent contractors — that is, sub-contracted piece-rate homeworkers.

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Office (ILO), 2018 Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships. 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), Geneva.

cent in urban areas, whereas in the Americas the shares are reversed, with 77 per cent in rural areas and 23 per cent in urban. Among developing and emerging countries, at least 80 per cent of home-based workers are in rural areas in two sub-regions: Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia; and Southern Africa. In two other sub-regions, a relatively high proportion are also in rural areas: the Middle East and North Africa at 73 per cent; and Southern Asia at 68 per cent. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 28 per cent of home-based workers are in rural areas.

The percentage distribution of women and men home-based workers across rural and urban areas is fairly similar at the global level and across the country income groups and geographic regions, with two exceptions. In Eastern and Southern Europe and Central Asia, 95 per cent of women home-based workers and 73 per cent of men are in rural areas; in the Middle East and North Africa, 81 per cent of women home-based workers and 54 per cent of men are in rural areas.

### Rural/Urban

**Globally, around 56 per cent of home-based workers are in rural areas and 44 per cent in urban areas.**

Around 56 per cent of home-based workers globally are in rural areas and 44 per cent in urban areas; these percentages are mirrored in

developing and emerging countries as a group. In developed countries, urban areas are 2 per cent higher (**table 3**). However there are large differences in the percentage distribution of home-based workers across rural and urban areas within the geographic/country income groups and sub-regions. Among developed countries, in Europe only 28 per cent of home-based work is in rural areas and 72 per

**Table 3: Home-based workers by urban and rural location, country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Per cent distribution**

|   | TOTAL     |           | WOMEN     |           | MEN       |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|   | Rural     | Urban     | Rural     | Urban     | Rural     | Urban     |
| <b>World</b>                              | <b>56</b> | <b>44</b> | <b>57</b> | <b>43</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>45</b> |
| <b>Developed</b>                          | <b>54</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>52</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>56</b> | <b>44</b> |
| Europe                                    | 28        | 72        | 28        | 72        | 28        | 71        |
| Asia and the Pacific                      | 62        | 39        | 58        | 42        | 66        | 34        |
| Americas                                  | 77        | 23        | 71        | 29        | 84        | 16        |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>            | <b>56</b> | <b>44</b> | <b>57</b> | <b>43</b> | <b>55</b> | <b>45</b> |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia | 82        | 15        | 95        | 5         | 73        | 22        |
| Asia and the Pacific                      | 59        | 41        | 61        | 39        | 57        | 43        |
| Southern Asia                             | 68        | 32        | 72        | 28        | 63        | 37        |
| East and South-Eastern Asia               | 47        | 53        | 47        | 53        | 47        | 53        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                        | 51        | 49        | 51        | 48        | 50        | 50        |
| Southern Africa                           | 80        | 20        | 79        | 18        | 78        | 22        |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                | 50        | 50        | 51        | 49        | 48        | 52        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean           | 28        | 72        | 31        | 69        | 22        | 78        |
| Middle East and North Africa              | 73        | 27        | 81        | 19        | 54        | 46        |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 109 countries.

## Status in Employment

**The share of own account home-based work for both women and men is higher in the developing and emerging countries than in developed countries and, conversely, the share of employees is higher in developed countries.**

Globally, women home-based workers are more than twice as likely as men to be contributing family workers. Conversely, men are more likely than women to be employers or own account workers. But men and women home-based workers are equally likely to be employees (**table 4**). This pattern is also reflected in developing and emerging countries, where the overwhelming majority of home-based workers are concentrated: 13 per cent of both women



*A home-based Nubian craft producer in Kenya.  
Photo by Leslie Vryenhoek*

and men are employees; 58 per cent of women and 69 per cent of men are own account workers; and 25 per cent of women but only 12 per cent of men are contributing family workers. However, in developed countries the pattern is different. A much larger share of women home-based workers than men are employees (59 per cent in comparison to 47 per cent) and, conversely, a larger share of men than women are own account workers (45 per cent in comparison to 27 per cent).

While the share of own account home-based work for both women and men is higher in developing and emerging countries, the share of employees is higher in developed countries. Among developing and emerging

**Table 4: Home-based workers by status in employment, country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Per cent distribution**

|  | WOMEN    |                    |          |                            | MEN      |                    |          |                            |
|--|----------|--------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|----------------------------|
|  | Employer | Own account worker | Employee | Contributing family worker | Employer | Own account worker | Employee | Contributing family worker |
| <b>World</b>   | 5        | 54                 | 19       | 23                         | 7        | 65                 | 19       | 10                         |
| <b>Developed</b>                                     | 5        | 27                 | 59       | 8                          | 6        | 45                 | 47       | 3                          |
| Europe   | 3        | 42                 | 52       | 3                          | 4        | 57                 | 38       | 1                          |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 6        | 27                 | 36       | 31                         | 11       | 55                 | 24       | 10                         |
| Americas   | 7        | 12                 | 80       | 1                          | 6        | 21                 | 73       | 0                          |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>                       | 4        | 58                 | 13       | 25                         | 7        | 69                 | 13       | 12                         |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia            | 1        | 32                 | 62       | 5                          | 4        | 8                  | 86       | 0                          |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 2        | 56                 | 13       | 29                         | 5        | 72                 | 10       | 13                         |
| Southern Asia  | 1        | 61                 | 7        | 30                         | 5        | 79                 | 6        | 10                         |
| East and South-Eastern Asia                          | 2        | 53                 | 17       | 27                         | 5        | 67                 | 14       | 15                         |
| <i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i> | 3        | 58                 | 15       | 24                         | 8        | 58                 | 19       | 15                         |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                   | 19       | 55                 | 12       | 14                         | 24       | 49                 | 19       | 8                          |
| Southern Africa                                      | 5        | 33                 | 58       | 3                          | 19       | 32                 | 48       | 0                          |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                           | 19       | 56                 | 11       | 14                         | 24       | 50                 | 17       | 8                          |
| Latin America and the Caribbean                      | 2        | 82                 | 8        | 8                          | 8        | 74                 | 12       | 6                          |
| Middle East and North Africa                         | 1        | 35                 | 6        | 58                         | 9        | 59                 | 27       | 5                          |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries.

countries, the one exception to this pattern of higher proportions of home-based workers in own account work and lower proportions as employees is Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia. All countries in this sub-region are classified as emerging economies and have a legacy of a centralized economy.

### **Branch of Economic Activity/Industry**

#### **Services is the main branch of home-based employment for both men and women.**

Services is the main branch of home-based employment for both women and men everywhere (**table 5**). Globally, 55 per

cent of home-based workers are engaged in the services sector with almost no difference between women and men in the share of services. In developed countries, services comprise a much greater share of home-based work than in developing and emerging countries as a group: 79 per cent in comparison to 51 per cent. Industry with manufacturing as the major component is

**Table 5: Home-based workers by branch of industry, country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Per cent distribution**

|  | TOTAL       |                |           | WOMEN       |                |           | MEN         |                |           |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|
|  | Agriculture | Manufacturing* | Services  | Agriculture | Manufacturing* | Services  | Agriculture | Manufacturing* | Services  |
| <b>World</b>   | <b>16</b>   | <b>29</b>      | <b>55</b> | <b>18</b>   | <b>25</b>      | <b>56</b> | <b>13</b>   | <b>32</b>      | <b>55</b> |
| <b>Developed</b>                                     | <b>7</b>    | <b>14</b>      | <b>79</b> | <b>7</b>    | <b>9</b>       | <b>84</b> | <b>8</b>    | <b>17</b>      | <b>75</b> |
| Europe   | 7           | 15             | 78        | 6           | 8              | 86        | 8           | 20             | 72        |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 20          | 11             | 69        | 19          | 14             | 67        | 23          | 6              | 71        |
| Americas   | 1           | 14             | 85        | 0           | 8              | 91        | 1           | 18             | 81        |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>                       | <b>18</b>   | <b>31</b>      | <b>51</b> | <b>20</b>   | <b>28</b>      | <b>52</b> | <b>14</b>   | <b>35</b>      | <b>51</b> |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia            | 30          | 16             | 54        | 31          | 21             | 49        | 29          | 14             | 56        |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 19          | 32             | 49        | 23          | 28             | 50        | 15          | 36             | 50        |
| Southern Asia  | 33          | 34             | 33        | 46          | 33             | 20        | 17          | 33             | 49        |
| East and South-Eastern Asia                          | 9           | 30             | 60        | 7           | 23             | 69        | 12          | 37             | 50        |
| <i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i> | 17          | 23             | 59        | 13          | 22             | 66        | 24          | 24             | 52        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                   | 13          | 28             | 58        | 12          | 28             | 60        | 15          | 31             | 54        |
| Southern Africa                                      | 0           | 11             | 89        | 0           | 1              | 99        | 0           | 20             | 79        |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                           | 14          | 29             | 57        | 13          | 28             | 59        | 16          | 32             | 52        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean                      | 2           | 34             | 64        | 2           | 33             | 65        | 3           | 34             | 63        |
| Middle East and North Africa                         | 39          | 17             | 44        | 53          | 13             | 34        | 6           | 27             | 67        |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries.

\*Manufacturing is the main component of this category, which also includes related industries, specifically: mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities; and construction. These additional activities will have limited relevance to home-based work.

second in importance at 29 per cent globally: 14 per cent in developed countries and 31 per cent in developing and emerging countries. Agriculture comprises 16 per cent of home-based employment globally, 7 per cent in developed countries and 18 per cent in developing and emerging countries. However in some sub-regions, agriculture is a larger

share of home-based work, specifically 30 per cent in Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia, 33 per cent in Southern Asia, and 39 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa.

At the global level there is little difference in the percentage distribution of women and men home-based workers across the

different branches. However, in developed countries, services comprise a somewhat higher percentage of women's home-based work than men's – 84 per cent in contrast to 75 per cent. Women are less likely to be in manufacturing than men – 9 per cent in contrast to 17 per cent. In developing and emerging countries, there is little difference



**Table 6: Percentage of home-based workers who are informally employed in developing and emerging countries, by geographic regions and sex**

|   | TOTAL     | WOMEN     | MEN       | Difference<br>Women-Men (% points) |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>            | <b>90</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>4</b>                           |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia | 63        | 78        | 35        | 43                                 |
| Asia and the Pacific                      | 92        | 92        | 91        | 2                                  |
| Southern Asia                             | 98        | 98        | 98        | 0                                  |
| East and South-Eastern Asia               | 80        | 83        | 74        | 9                                  |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                        | 88        | 92        | 81        | 11                                 |
| Southern Africa                           | 74        | 80        | 64        | 16                                 |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                | 88        | 92        | 81        | 11                                 |
| Latin America and the Caribbean           | 85        | 88        | 77        | 12                                 |
| Middle East and North Africa              | 98        | 99        | 94        | 5                                  |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 70 developing and emerging countries representing 72 per cent of employment in developing and emerging countries when China is excluded, and representing 52 per cent when China is included in the total.

in the percentage of women and men home-based workers in services. Women are less likely to be in manufacturing than men (28 per cent in contrast to 35 per cent) and are more likely to be in agriculture than men (20 per cent in contrast to 14 per cent). However, this pattern is not consistent across two sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific. In Southern Asia, the per cent of home-based workers in services is much lower for women than men (20 per cent in contrast to 49 per cent), while the per cent of women in agriculture is far higher than for men (46 per cent compared to only 17 per cent of men). The shares of women and men in home-based manufacturing,

however, are the same. By contrast, women in East and South-Eastern Asia, both with and without China, are more likely to be in services than men (more than 65 per cent in contrast to around 50 per cent). Large differences between women and men home-based workers are also found in the Middle East and North Africa, where 34 per cent of women compared to 67 per cent of men are in services; 53 per cent of women home-based workers but only 6 per cent of men are in agriculture. Finally, in Southern Africa almost all women in home-based work are in services (99 per cent) with a much lower, but still high, per cent of men (79 per cent).

## Informal Employment

**In developing and emerging countries, the proportion of home-based workers that are informal ranges from 60 to 98 per cent.**

Estimates of the informality of home-based employment in developed countries, and therefore for the world, are not possible with the data now available; the surveys used to identify home-based workers in developed countries did not include questions that would allow an assessment of informality. In developing and emerging countries, where the data do exist, home-based work is overwhelmingly informal. Overall, 90 per cent of home-based workers across all developing and emerging countries are informal; and in every sub-region, over 60 per cent are informal (**table 6**). The proportion who are informal ranges from 98 per cent in both Southern Asia and the Middle East and North Africa to 63 per cent in Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia.

In developing and emerging countries, informality is only slightly higher among women than among men home-based workers: 92 per cent in comparison to 88 per cent. However, in several sub-regions the difference between women and men is large – especially in Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia, where 78 per cent of women home-based workers are informal in comparison to 35 per cent of men. This

is also true among home-based workers in Southern Africa, where 80 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men are informal.

## Occupations

**The largest occupational group for home-based workers is services and sales, followed closely by craft and trade.**

Globally, the majority of home-based workers are in two major occupational categories: services and sales (32 per cent) plus craft and trades (29 per cent) (**table 7**). The latter includes handicraft, garment and related craft workers, goods processing workers, and workers in building trades and in repair. These two major occupational groups account for 83 per cent of home-based workers in developing countries, 60 per cent in the emerging countries but only 26 per cent in developed countries. In contrast, in developed countries, professionals and technicians comprise 47 per cent of home-based workers and managers an additional 10 per cent.

Services and sales plus craft and trades account for a higher per cent of women's and men's home-based work in developing countries (87 per cent in contrast to 77 per cent); a lower share for women and men in emerging countries (65 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively); and a still lower share for women and men in developed countries (29 per cent of women and 24 per cent for men).

In all three country income groups, men home-based workers are more likely than women to be in managerial and professional occupations. Professional/technician and managerial occupations account for: 47 per cent of

women and 69 per cent of men in home-based work in developed countries; 13 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men in emerging countries; and 3 per cent of women and 10 per cent of men in developing countries.

**Table 7: Home-based workers (outside agriculture) by occupations, country income groups and sex: Per cent distribution**

|              | Managers | Professionals and Technicians | Clerks | Services and Sales | Craft and Trades* | Plant operators and Assemblers | Elementary occupations** | Other |
|--------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <b>Total</b> |          |                               |        |                    |                   |                                |                          |       |
| World        | 9        | 10                            | 7      | 32                 | 29                | 3                              | 6                        | 3     |
| Developed    | 10       | 47                            | 8      | 19                 | 8                 | 1                              | 5                        | 2     |
| Emerging     | 10       | 8                             | 8      | 30                 | 30                | 4                              | 6                        | 4     |
| Developing   | 2        | 4                             | 0      | 49                 | 34                | 2                              | 8                        | 0     |
| <b>Women</b> |          |                               |        |                    |                   |                                |                          |       |
| World        | 6        | 8                             | 10     | 35                 | 30                | 2                              | 5                        | 4     |
| Developed    | 8        | 39                            | 13     | 22                 | 7                 | 1                              | 7                        | 3     |
| Emerging     | 7        | 6                             | 11     | 33                 | 32                | 2                              | 4                        | 4     |
| Developing   | 1        | 2                             | 0      | 55                 | 32                | 1                              | 8                        | 0     |
| <b>Men</b>   |          |                               |        |                    |                   |                                |                          |       |
| World        | 13       | 13                            | 4      | 27                 | 28                | 5                              | 7                        | 2     |
| Developed    | 12       | 57                            | 2      | 15                 | 9                 | 2                              | 2                        | 1     |
| Emerging     | 14       | 10                            | 5      | 27                 | 28                | 6                              | 7                        | 3     |
| Developing   | 2        | 8                             | 1      | 39                 | 38                | 4                              | 8                        | 0     |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 99 countries.

\* Includes construction, metal machinery, electrical and electronic workers, handicraft and printing, food processing and crafts.

\*\* Includes occupations that typically involve the performance of simple and routine physical tasks that may require considerable physical effort and limited skills, e.g. cleaners, street sales and service workers, and refuse workers.

## Hours of Work

### Home-based workers have a longer workweek in developing and emerging countries than in developed countries.

The data in this section represent only one part of the workweek, the time spent in market-oriented work. Especially for women, another important component of the total time spent in work is the non-market activities performed to maintain the household and family. Thus, it is not surprising that women home-based workers tend to spend fewer hours in home-based work than men (**table 8**). A larger share of men than women work more than 48 hours a week in home-based work at each country income level. Conversely, more women than men work less than a 35 hour week at every country income level.

Globally, around one third of women and men home-based workers work 35-48 hours a week. In developed countries, a little less than



*A beadworker in Pakistan.  
Photo courtesy of HomeNet Pakistan.*

half of women home-based workers and a little more than half of men work 35-48 hours a week. In emerging countries, around 30 per cent of women and men work 35-48 hours,

while in developing countries, around one quarter of women and men work 35-48 hours.

A larger percentage of women and men home-based workers work 49 or more hours per week in emerging and developing countries than in developed countries: in emerging countries, 32 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men; in developing countries, 31 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men; and in developed countries, only 15 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men.

## Education

**In developing and emerging countries, nearly one-third of women home-based workers and one-quarter of men have no education.**

A larger percentage of home-based workers have completed secondary education than other levels of education: around 44 per cent of women and 48 per cent of men globally

**Table 8: Home-based workers by hours worked, country income groups and sex: Per cent distribution**

|              | WOMEN         |           |           |           |               | MEN           |           |           |           |               |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
|              | Less than 20h | 20h-34h   | 35h-48h   | 49h-60h   | More than 60h | Less than 20h | 20h-34h   | 35h-48h   | 49h-60h   | More than 60h |
| <b>World</b> | <b>18</b>     | <b>21</b> | <b>32</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>13</b>     | <b>6</b>      | <b>11</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>22</b>     |
| Developed    | 16            | 20        | 49        | 11        | 4             | 7             | 10        | 54        | 19        | 9             |
| Emerging     | 19            | 20        | 29        | 18        | 14            | 6             | 11        | 30        | 27        | 27            |
| Developing   | 20            | 24        | 25        | 13        | 18            | 14            | 17        | 26        | 18        | 26            |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 114 countries.

and in developing and emerging countries; and 57 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men in developed countries (**table 9**). However, in developing countries, nearly one third of women and one quarter of men have no education. In some sub-regions, the per cent with no education is even higher. In both Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, around 46 per cent of women home-based workers and 25 per cent of men have no

education; in the Middle East and North Africa, 54 per cent of women and 45 per cent of men have no education. By contrast, many home-based workers in developed countries have completed tertiary education: 39 per cent of women and 42 per cent of men.

It is noteworthy that in East and South-Eastern Asia, women in home-based work are better educated than men. In this sub-

region, fewer women home-based workers than men have no education (20 per cent of women in contrast to 31 per cent of men), and more women than men have completed primary education (13 per cent of women and 11 per cent of men), secondary education (54 per cent of women and 49 per cent of men) and tertiary education (12 per cent of women and 9 per cent of men).

**Table 9: Home-based workers by education, country income groups, geographic regions and sex: Per cent distribution**

|  | WOMEN        |           |           |           |          | MEN          |           |           |           |          |
|--|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
|  | No education | Primary   | Secondary | Tertiary  | Other    | No education | Primary   | Secondary | Tertiary  | Other    |
| <b>World</b>   | <b>27</b>    | <b>15</b> | <b>44</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>22</b>    | <b>13</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>0</b> |
| <b>Developed</b>                                     | <b>2</b>     | <b>2</b>  | <b>57</b> | <b>39</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b>     | <b>6</b>  | <b>50</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>1</b> |
| Europe   | 1            | 1         | 43        | 53        | 2        | 2            | 1         | 48        | 46        | 3        |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 1            | 2         | 76        | 22        | 0        | 0            | 2         | 53        | 46        | 0        |
| Americas   | 4            | 2         | 61        | 33        | 0        | 1            | 15        | 51        | 33        | 0        |
| <b>Developing and Emerging</b>                       | <b>31</b>    | <b>17</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>9</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>26</b>    | <b>15</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>0</b> |
| Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia            | 5            | 9         | 41        | 46        | 0        | 1            | 1         | 57        | 42        | 0        |
| Asia and the Pacific                                 | 31           | 15        | 45        | 9         | 0        | 28           | 13        | 49        | 10        | 0        |
| Southern Asia  | 46           | 17        | 33        | 4         | 0        | 25           | 15        | 49        | 11        | 0        |
| East and South-Eastern Asia                          | 20           | 13        | 54        | 12        | 0        | 31           | 11        | 49        | 9         | 0        |
| <i>East and South-Eastern Asia (excluding China)</i> | 20           | 24        | 45        | 10        | 0        | 18           | 21        | 49        | 12        | 0        |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                                   | 46           | 25        | 24        | 3         | 2        | 27           | 27        | 40        | 5         | 2        |
| Southern Africa                                      | 1            | 6         | 79        | 14        | 0        | 7            | 4         | 83        | 7         | 0        |
| Rest of sub-Saharan Africa                           | 47           | 25        | 23        | 2         | 2        | 28           | 29        | 36        | 5         | 2        |
| Latin America and the Caribbean                      | 16           | 22        | 44        | 18        | 0        | 14           | 23        | 46        | 17        | 0        |
| Middle East and North Africa                         | 54           | 14        | 29        | 3         | 0        | 45           | 18        | 25        | 11        | 0        |

**Source:** ILO calculations based on labour force survey (or similar household survey) data from 118 countries.



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

### Developed countries

#### *Europe & Western Asia*

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  
Japan  
New Zealand  
Republic of Korea  
Taiwan (China)

#### *Americas*

Chile  
Panama  
Trinidad and Tobago  
United States  
Uruguay

### Emerging countries

#### *Eastern, Southern Europe and Central Asia*

Albania  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Georgia  
Kyrgyzstan  
Montenegro  
North Macedonia  
Republic of Moldova  
Romania  
Russian Federation  
Serbia  
Turkey

#### *Asia and the Pacific*

*Southern Asia*  
Bangladesh  
India  
Pakistan  
*East and South-Eastern Asia*  
Cambodia  
China  
Fiji  
Indonesia  
Lao PDR  
Mongolia  
Myanmar  
Philippines  
Samoa  
Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Tonga

#### *Sub-Saharan Africa*

*Southern Africa*  
Namibia  
South Africa  
*Rest of sub-Saharan Africa*  
Angola  
Comoros  
Congo  
Cote d'Ivoire  
Ghana  
Mauritania  
Mauritius  
Senegal  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

#### *Latin America and the Caribbean*

Argentina  
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)  
Brazil  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Dominican Republic  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Guyana  
Jamaica  
Mexico  
Suriname  
Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)

#### *Middle East and North Africa*

Egypt, Arab Rep.  
Jordan  
Lebanon  
Sudan  
Tunisia

### Developing countries

#### *Asia and the Pacific*

*Southern Asia*  
Nepal

#### *Sub-Saharan Africa*

*Rest of sub-Saharan Africa*  
Benin  
Burundi  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Ethiopia  
Gambia  
Guinea  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Niger  
Rwanda  
Togo  
United Republic of Tanzania  
Uganda

#### *Latin America and the Caribbean*

Haiti

#### *Middle East and North Africa*

Yemen

## Annex II

### Surveys included: Household surveys (76 countries/territories)

|                                  |  |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Albania                          | Labour Force Survey, 2013  | Dominican Republic               | Permanent Labour Force Survey (Encuesta de fuerza de trabajo, ENFTC), 2018  |
| Angola                           | Integrated Population Welfare Survey (Inquérito Integrado sobre o Bem-Estar da População, IBEP), 2009                  | Ecuador                          | National Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo, ENEMDU), 2019           |
| Argentina                        | Permanent Household Survey (Encuesta Permanente de Hogares, EPH), 2018   | Egypt                            | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Austria                          | Labour Force Survey, 2018  | El Salvador                      | Multipurpose Household Survey (Encuesta de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples, EHPM), 2018   |
| Bangladesh                       | Labour Force Survey, 2017  | Ethiopia                         | Labour Force Survey, 2013   |
| Benin                            | Modular Integrated Household Survey (Enquête Modulaire Intégrée sur les Conditions de Vie des ménages, EMICOV), 2011   | Fiji                             | Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2016  |
| Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Household Survey (Encuesta de Hogares, EH), 2017   | Gambia                           | Labour Force Survey, 2012   |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina           | Labour Force Survey, 2019  | Georgia                          | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Brazil                           | National Household Sample Survey (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios, PNADC), 2018                            | Ghana                            | Labour Force Survey, 2015   |
| Brunei Darussalam                | Labour Force Survey, 2014  | Guatemala                        | National Employment and Income Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Empleo e Ingresos, ENEI), 2018 (Q2)   |
| Burundi                          | Household Survey (Enquête sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages), 2014   | Guinea                           | Integrated Regional Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur L'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, ERI-ESI), 2019 |
| Cambodia                         | Labour Force Survey, 2012  | Guyana                           | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Chile                            | National Employment Survey (Encuesta Nacional del Empleo, ENE), 2018   | Haiti                            | Household Survey (Enquête sur les conditions de vie des ménages, ECVMAS), 2012  |
| Colombia                         | Global Integrated Household Survey (Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares, GEIH), 2018                                    | India                            | Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2018  |
| Comoros                          | Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel, ENESI), 2014                       | Indonesia                        | National Labour Force Survey, 2018 (Q3)   |
| Congo                            | Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête sur l'emploi et le secteur informel, EESIC), 2009                       | Jamaica                          | Labour Force Survey, 2014   |
| Cook Islands                     | Labour Force Survey, 2019  | Jordan                           | Labour Market Panel Survey JLMPS, 2016  |
| Costa Rica                       | National Household Survey (Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, ENAHO), 2018  | Kyrgyzstan                       | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Côte d'Ivoire                    | Labour Force Survey, 2016  | Lao People's Democratic Republic | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête sur l'emploi, le secteur informel et la consommation des ménages), 2012 | Lebanon                          | Labour Force Survey, 2019   |
|                                  |  | Liberia                          | Labour Force Survey, 2010   |
|                                  |  | Madagascar                       | National Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête Nationale sur l'Emploi et le secteur Informel, ENESI), 2015                       |
|                                  |  | Malawi                           | Labour Force Survey, 2013   |
|                                  |  | Mali                             | Modular Permanent Household Survey (Enquête Modulaire et Permanente auprès des Ménages, EMOP), 2018                                       |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Mauritania                         | Integrated Regional Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, ERI-ESI), 2017 |
| Mauritius                          | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Mexico                             | Labour Force Survey, 2019 (Q2)  |
| Mongolia                           | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Myanmar                            | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Namibia                            | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Nepal                              | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Niger                              | Integrated Regional Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, ERI-ESI), 2017 |
| Pakistan                           | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Panama                             | Labour Market Survey (Encuesta de Mercado Laboral, EML), 2018   |
| Republic of Moldova                | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Republic of Korea                  | Labour and Income Panel Survey, 2016  |
| Rwanda                             | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Samoa                              | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Senegal                            | National Employment Survey (Enquête Nationale sur l'Emploi au Sénégal, ENES), 2015  |
| Serbia                             | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Sudan                              | Labour Force Survey, 2011   |
| Thailand                           | Informal Employment Survey, 2018  |
| Timor-Leste                        | Labour Force Survey, 2013   |
| Togo                               | Integrated Regional Employment and Informal Sector Survey (Enquête Régionale Intégrée sur l'Emploi et le Secteur Informel, ERI-ESI), 2017 |
| Tonga                              | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| Trinidad and Tobago                | Continuous Sample Survey of Population, 2016  |
| Tunisia                            | Labour Market Panel Survey, 2014  |
| Turkey                             | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Uganda                             | Labour Force and Child Labour Survey, 2017  |
| United Kingdom                     | Labour Force Survey, 2018   |
| United Republic of Tanzania        | Labour Force Survey, 2014   |
| Uruguay                            | Permanent Household Survey (Encuesta Continua de Hogares, ECH), 2018  |
| Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) | Household Sample Survey (Encuesta de Hogares por Muestreo), 2017  |
| Yemen                              | Labour Force Survey, 2014   |
| Zambia                             | Labour Force Survey, 2017   |
| Zimbabwe                           | Labour Force Survey, 2014   |

## European Labour Force Survey, 2017 (28 countries/territories)

Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland

## ISSP 2015 (11 countries/territories)

Australia, China, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines, Russian Federation, South Africa, Suriname, Taiwan (China), United States

## EU Working Conditions Survey, 2015 (3 countries/territories)

Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia



A home-based worker in Nongchok, Bangkok, Thailand.  
Photo by Marty Chen

This brief was prepared jointly by WIEGO and the ILO (INWORK). WIEGO is collaborating with HomeNet International (HNI) on the launch of this new global network.

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### Statistical Briefs

WIEGO Statistical Briefs are part of the WIEGO Publication Series. They 1) provide statistics on the informal economy and categories of informal workers in accessible formats at the regional, country and city levels; or 2) describe the methods for the collection, tabulation and/or analysis of statistics. See [www.wiego.org/wiego-publication-series](http://www.wiego.org/wiego-publication-series).

**HomeNet International (HNI)** is a proposed global network of membership-based organizations representing home-based workers from, Africa, Eastern Europe & Central Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean, South Asia and South East Asia. The vision of HNI “is for greater visibility and recognition of home-based workers and a strong, united and representative voice on global platforms, where they effectively engage and challenge those who have power over their working lives, such as governments and employers”.

### About WIEGO

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.

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