



International
Labour
Organization

Global Employment Trends for Women 2008 highlights South Asia¹

- South Asia has untapped female potential and sizeable decent work deficit. Of 511 million working age women and 540 million men, only 174 million women have a job, compared to 422 million men.
- For every 100 men active in the labour market (in work or looking for work) there are only 42 women. Only 3.4 out of 10 women of working age are working.
- Only 15.5 per cent of South Asian women are waged or salaried, (24.4 per cent of men).
- The already low female employment-to-population ratio (which also indicates the extent that economies are utilizing the productive potential of their working-age population) of 26.2 per cent is falling, but this trend is led by a decline in employment for young women, more of whom are in education.
- Those women who enter the labour market face greater a risk of unemployment than men; the 2007 female unemployment rate was 5.8 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent for men.
- Agriculture still accounts for 60.5 per cent of women's employment (42.9 per cent for men). But agricultural employment in South Asia is falling faster than anywhere else in the world – a fall of more than 13 percentage points in 10 years for women.
- Where have the female agricultural workers moved to? Surprisingly the biggest increase in jobs has been in industry (not services, although this often the focus of attention), which now accounts for 18.4 per cent of female employment (23 per cent for men). This increase in industrial sector jobs is the largest of any region worldwide.
- Unfortunately, this shift between employment sectors has not reduced the proportion of South Asian women in so-called vulnerable employment (unpaid family or own-account work), although there has been a fall in contributing family workers and a rise in own-account workers. The percentage in vulnerable employment remains the world's highest - more than 8 out of 10 working women (7 out of 10 men).
- South Asia has an enormous deficit in decent work. But there are hopeful signs; unemployment remains low, women are moving into more productive sectors and increasing productivity can push earnings above the poverty threshold.

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka