



► Statistical Brief

October 2026

The state of domestic work in 2025: 15 years after Convention No. 189

Global and regional trends in employment, informality and working conditions

Key points

- Domestic work remains a major source of employment and an essential part of the care economy. In 2025, an estimated 80.0 million people aged 15 and over were employed as domestic workers, up from 75.6 million in 2019. However, **domestic work has not grown as a share of overall employment**, which has remained relatively stable at 2.2 per cent of total employment and 4.4 per cent of employees. Growth in the number of domestic workers has been concentrated in certain regions and largely reflects broader employment growth rather than an expansion of domestic work.
- **Informality among domestic workers has declined in most countries for which comparable data are available.** More than half of the countries reviewed have made progress in reducing informality among domestic workers while one third witnessed an increase. The apparent increase in informality globally therefore largely reflects the concentration of the global domestic workforce in countries with persistently high levels of informality, rather than a widespread increase in informality across countries.
- **Informality remains pervasive in domestic work.** An estimated 66.5 million domestic workers – more than four in five (83.1 per cent) – are informally employed, leaving the vast majority without the labour and social protections associated with formal employment.
- **Domestic workers earn just 53.3 per cent of the average monthly wage of other employees; and 35.2 per cent work at least 49 hours per week in their main job.** In many influential countries, domestic workers' wages increased, but at a slower pace than those of other employees, resulting in a widening relative wage gap—particularly among women, in Asia and the Pacific, and in lower-middle-income countries.
- **Informal domestic workers are disproportionately concentrated at the extremes of working time, with many working either very short or very long hours.** Short hours may reflect fragmented employment or underemployment, while long hours may result from inadequate working-time protections, standby requirements or the need to compensate for very low hourly earnings. Fewer than three in ten informal domestic workers work between 35 and 48 hours per week, compared with more than half of other employees. Across regions, informality rates among domestic workers are generally lowest for those working within the range of “normal hours”.
- **Those providing direct care and support face some of the lowest wages and longest hours.** This work is largely performed by women, who make up 77 per cent of the domestic work sector, but who earn 48 per cent of the average wages of other employees (compared to 65.8 per cent among men), while nearly one third works 49 hours or more each week. Domestic work also remains a key source of employment among women, accounting for 8.6 per cent of women employees.

► Global overview

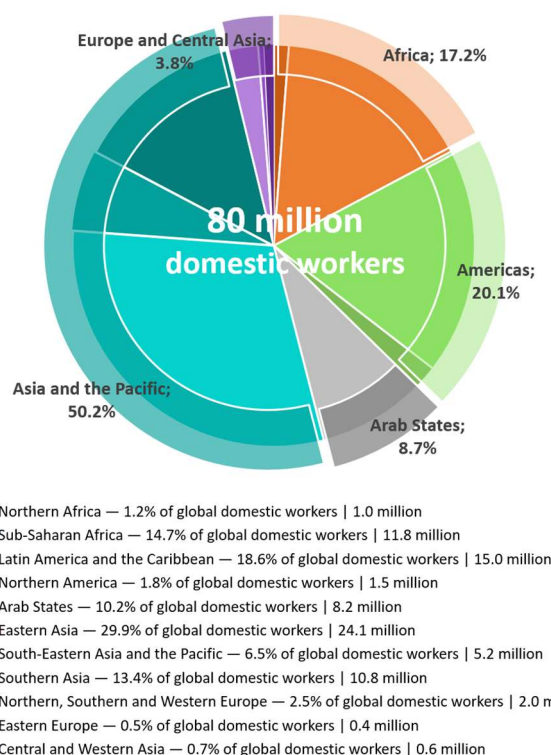
Size of the sector

Domestic work remains a major source of employment and an essential part of the care economy. The new estimates place the global number of domestic workers aged 15 and over at 80.0 million in 2025, up from 75.6 million in 2019. Yet, domestic work has not grown as a share of overall employment, which has remained relatively stable, currently at 2.2 per cent of total employment and 4.4 per cent of employees. While the number of domestic workers has increased globally, this growth has been concentrated in certain regions and largely reflects broader employment growth rather than an expansion of domestic work relative to other forms of employment.

The global domestic workforce grew by 4.4 million between 2019 and 2025, an increase of 5.8 per cent. Growth was geographically concentrated: Africa recorded the largest increase, adding around 4.2 million domestic workers, followed by Asia and the Pacific with 1.9 million and the Arab States with 0.4 million. The regional trend in Asia and the Pacific is heavily influenced by China; excluding China, the number of domestic workers rose from 16.4 million to 18.2 million. By contrast, the number fell by 1.6 million domestic workers in the Americas and by half a million in Europe and Central Asia. In both regions, domestic work also declined as a share of total employment—dropping from 3.7 per cent to 3.2 per cent in the Americas and from 0.8 per cent to 0.7 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

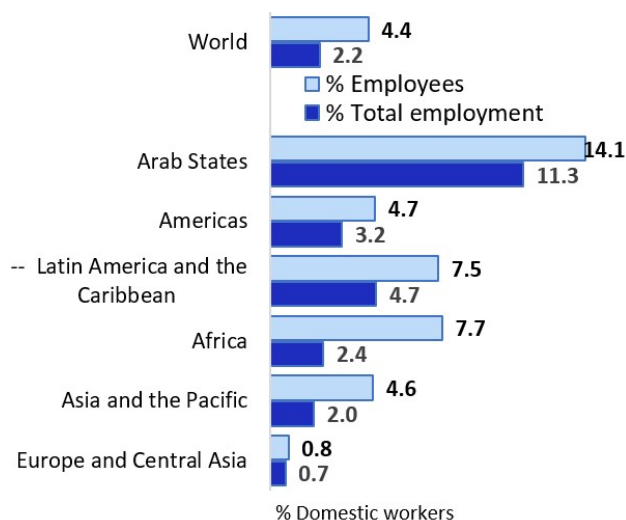
Asia and the Pacific continues to host the biggest share of domestic work, with 40.2 million workers. The Americas account for 20.1 per cent of the world's domestic workers, Africa for 17.2 per cent, the Arab States for 8.7 per cent and Europe and Central Asia for 3.8 per cent (figure 1). The Arab States have the highest incidence: domestic workers represent 14.1 per cent of total employees, compared with 4.7 per cent in the Americas, 7.7 per cent in Africa, 4.6 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 0.8 per cent in Europe and Central Asia (figure 2).

► **Figure 1. Distribution of domestic workers across regions, 2025 (percentage)**



Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 168 countries representing 97.5 per cent of global employment in 2025. Regional coverage is 96.0 per cent in Africa, 99.0 per cent in the Americas, 86.0 per cent in the Arab States, 98.2 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 96.1 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

► **Figure 2. Global and regional estimates of the percentage of domestic workers in total employment and among employees (% , 2025)**



Note: As for figure 1.

► Box 1. Gender segregation across typical domestic occupations

Available country data reveal marked gender segregation across domestic occupations. Women are concentrated among cleaners and helpers and in direct-care occupations, whereas men are more frequently employed as drivers, cooks, gardeners, maintenance workers and security guards. Men's occupational distribution is also more diverse and includes a larger residual group of miscellaneous or occasional jobs.

► **Figure 3. Occupational differences between women and men domestic workers (percentage points)**

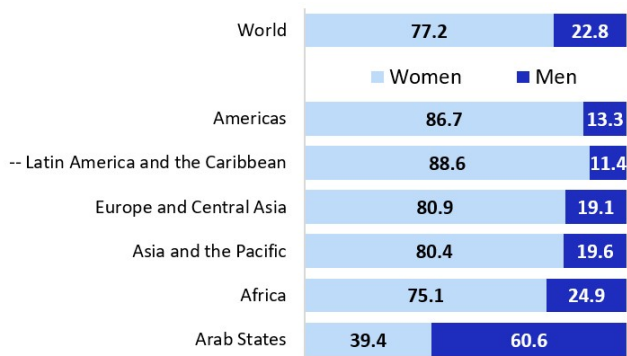


Note: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection, latest year available in selected countries.

A sector structured by gender

Domestic work continues to be strongly feminized. Women account for 61.8 million domestic workers and 77.2 per cent of the global total (figure 4). This global figure conceals sharply different regional patterns. Women represent 88.6 per cent of domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean (86.7 per cent in the Americas), 75.1 per cent in Africa, 80.4 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 80.9 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. In the Arab States, by contrast, men domestic workers account for a majority of the sector (60.6 per cent).

► **Figure 4. Distribution of domestic workers by sex and region, 2025 (percentages)**

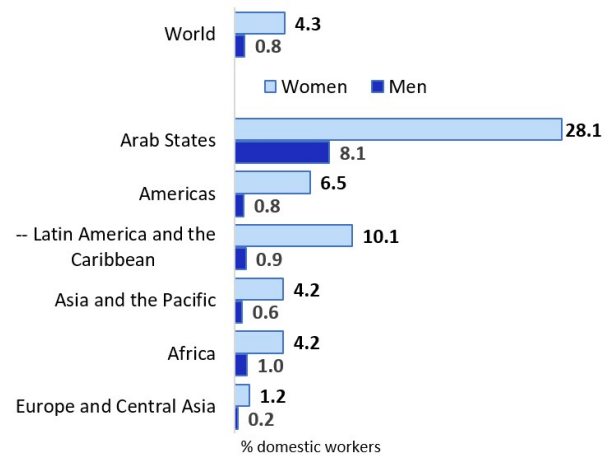


Note: As for figure 1.

Africa's expansion was overwhelmingly driven by women: the number of women domestic workers rose by around 3.8 million, compared with an increase of only 0.4 million among men. In the Americas, the decline was concentrated among women, even though the sector remains more feminized there than anywhere else.

Domestic work is not only highly feminized but also constitutes a particularly important source of employment — in particular wage employment — for women in several regions. Globally, domestic workers account for 4.3 per cent of women's total employment and 8.6 per cent of women employees, compared with 0.8 and 1.6 per cent, respectively, among men (figure 5). Domestic work represents 28.1 per cent of women's employment in the Arab States, 6.5 per cent in the Americas, around 4.2 per cent in both Africa and Asia and the Pacific, and 1.2 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. When measured as a share of women employees, it ranges from 1.4 per cent in Europe and Central Asia to 15.9 per cent in Africa and 33.2 per cent in the Arab States.

► **Figure 5. Percentage of domestic workers in total employment by sex and region (%; 2025)**



Note: As for figure 1.

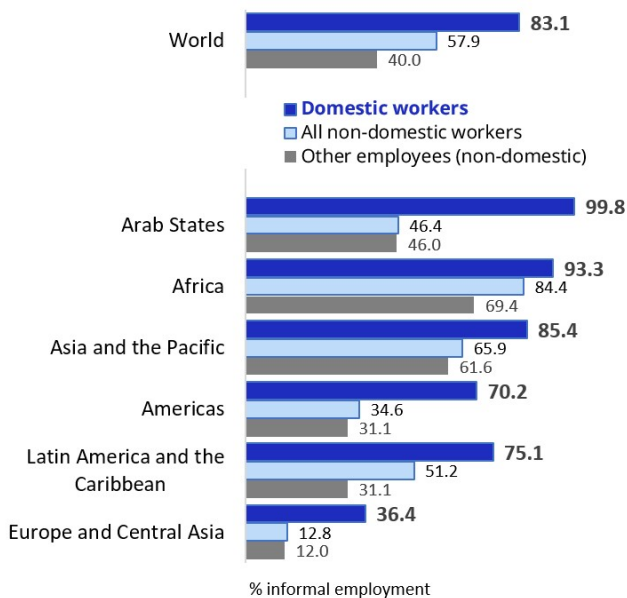
Informality has reduced in most countries, but remains pervasive

Informality among domestic workers has declined in most countries for which comparable data are available; however, the vast majority of domestic workers continue to work informally. The share of domestic workers in informal employment rose from 81.2 per cent in 2019 to 83.1 per cent in 2025, corresponding to an increase of roughly 61.4 million to 66.5 million. The apparent rise in the global rate however largely reflects compositional effects—including shifts in the geographical distribution of domestic workers towards countries where informality remains high—rather than a deterioration across countries. For the subset of countries with data available in both 2019 and 2025, more than half recorded a decline in the informal-employment rate among domestic workers, while one third experienced an increase and the remainder saw little or no change. Taken together, countries in which informality among domestic workers declined or remained broadly stable account for nearly 70 per cent of the world's domestic workers.

Informality is nearly universal in the Arab States and reaches 93.3 per cent in Africa. It affects 85.4 per cent of domestic workers in Asia and the Pacific and 70.2 per cent in the Americas. Europe and Central Asia has the lowest regional rate, but more than one in three domestic workers are still informal (figure 6). Globally, the informal-employment rate is higher among men than women, largely because male domestic work is concentrated in high-informality regions.

Domestic workers are more than twice as likely to be in informal employment than other employees.

► **Figure 6. Share of informal employment among domestic workers compared to other workers (% , 2025)**



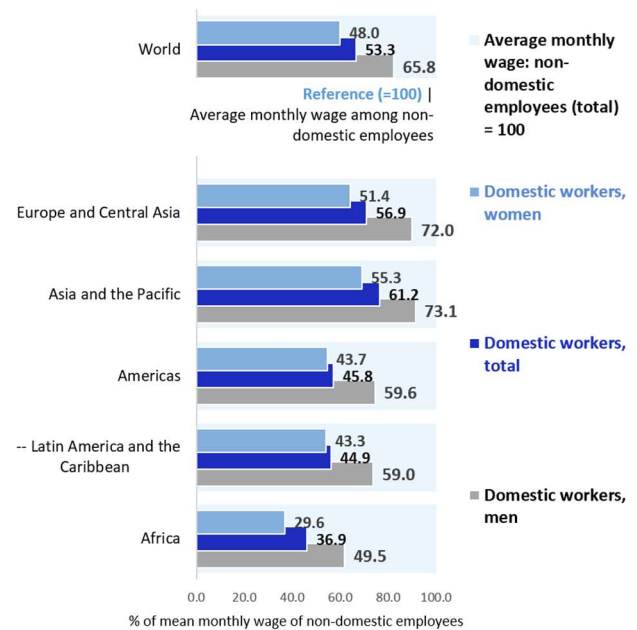
Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 148 countries representing 94.2% of global employment and 92.6% of global wage employment (Africa: 95.9%; Americas: 98.6%, Arab States: 48.9%, Asia and the Pacific: 94.9%, and Europe and Central Asia: 89.8%),

Wages and working time

Domestic workers earn just over half the average monthly wage of other employees. The global wage ratio fell from 56.4 in 2019 to 53.3 in 2025 (figure 7), indicating a widening relative wage gap, but this does not necessarily mean that domestic workers' wages declined. In many countries, their wages increased, but more slowly than those of other employees, causing them to fall further behind in relative terms (see below). Relative wages improved in Africa and Europe and Central Asia but deteriorated in the Americas and Asia and the Pacific. Informal domestic workers fare worse: their global average stands at 48.7 per cent of the wage of other employees (figure 8).

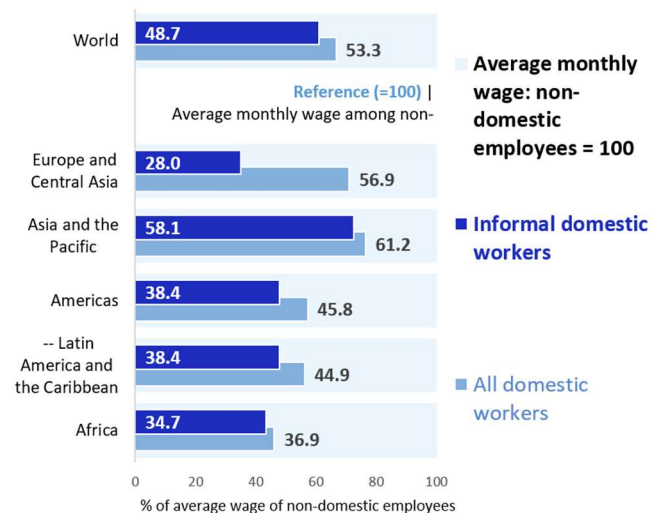
The gap is also strongly gendered: women domestic workers earn just 48.0 per cent of the average monthly wage of other employees, compared with 65.8 per cent among men.

► **Figure 7. Average monthly wage of domestic workers expressed as a percentage of average monthly wage of non-domestic employees (total and formal), by sex and region, 2025 (percentages)**



Note: The Arab States are not shown in the figure due to the insufficient representativeness of the available data. Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 139 countries representing 84 per cent of global wage employment (in 2025).

► **Figure 8. Average monthly wage among domestic workers (total and in informal employment) compared to the average monthly wage of other employees (both sexes), by region, 2025 (percentages)**

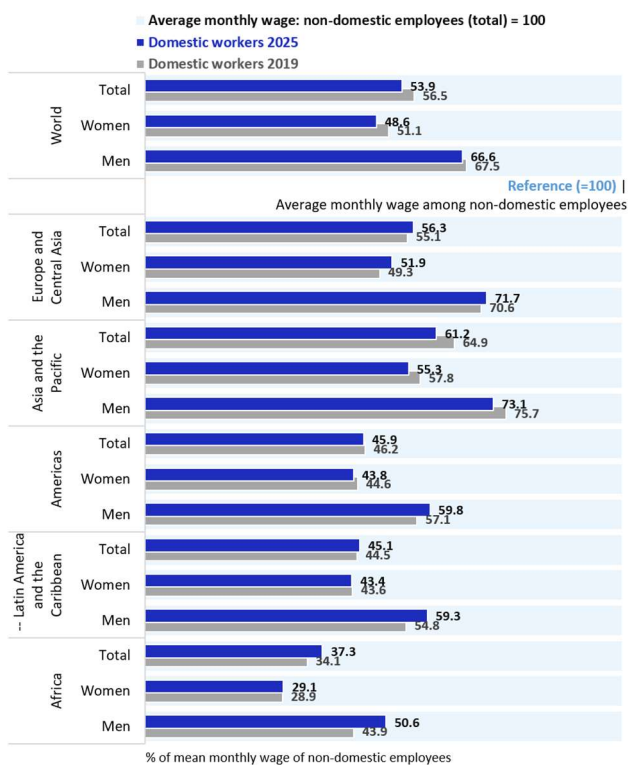


Note: As for figure 7.

A widening relative wage gap between 2019 and 2025 does not necessarily mean falling wages

Across the 111 countries covered in both 2019 and 2025, domestic workers' average monthly wage fell from 56.5 per cent of the wage of other employees in 2019 to 53.9 per cent in 2025 (figure 9). The relative wage gap therefore widened by 2.6 percentage points.¹ This does not mean that domestic workers' wages generally declined. In many countries, the average wage of domestic workers increased, but less rapidly than the wage of other employees.

► **Figure 9. Average monthly wage of domestic workers expressed as a percentage of average monthly wage of non-domestic employees, by sex and region, Comparison 2019-2025 (subset common countries)**



Note: The Arab States are not shown in the figure due to the insufficient representativeness of the available data. Source: Common countries between 2019 and 2025. ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 111 countries representing 83.4% of global employment and 78.4% of global wage employment.

Two mechanisms shape the aggregate trend.² First, relative wage growth within countries matters: the gap widens when other employees' wages grow faster than domestic workers' wages. This pattern is visible in several influential countries in the Americas and Asia and the Pacific. India is an important example: domestic workers' nominal wages increased, but the wages for other employees rose considerably faster. In the Americas, the United States, Mexico and Peru saw slower relative growth, while Brazil partly offsets the regional decline. Conversely, parts of Africa and Europe and Central Asia recorded relative gains because domestic-worker wages grew faster than those of other employees.

Second, the estimates are weighted by the number of domestic workers. A country therefore has greater influence when it accounts for a larger share of the domestic-worker population. A larger weight for countries with wide wage gaps can lower the aggregate ratio without a corresponding fall in wages within those countries.

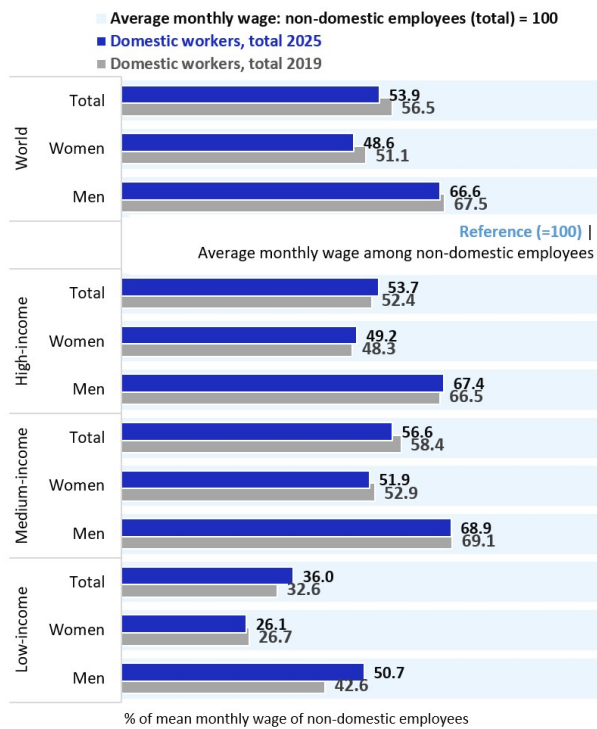
Asia and the Pacific recorded the largest regional decline, from 64.9 to 61.2 per cent, and is a major contributor to the global trend because it contains a large share of the world's domestic workers. The situation of domestic workers relative to other employees improved in Latin America and the Caribbean (44.5 to 45.1) and Africa (34.1 to 37.3 per cent). The gain was concentrated among men in both regions. Europe and Central Asia registered a more modest improvement (figure 9). By income group, the main deterioration occurred in lower-middle-income countries, where the ratio fell from 57.3 to 47.4 per cent. Upper-middle-income countries were nearly stable and low- and high-income countries improved slightly (32.6 to 36.0 per cent, figure 10).

¹ The global movement combines changes in relative wages within countries with changes in the geographical composition of domestic work.

² Because the indicator is a ratio, a decline can arise in three different ways: domestic workers' wages may fall while other wages rise or remain stable; both may increase, but domestic workers' wages may

increase more slowly; or the weights of countries with relatively low domestic-worker wages may increase. The second and third mechanisms are central to the present results.

► **Figure 10. Average monthly wage of domestic workers expressed as a percentage of average monthly wage of non-domestic employees, by income group of countries, Comparison 2019-2025 (subset common countries)**



Note: as for figure 9.

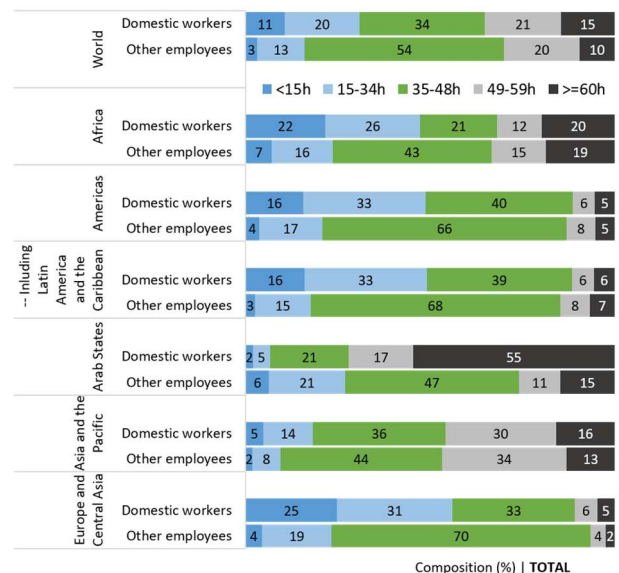
Working time

Domestic workers are overrepresented in the two extremes in terms of working hours, especially among those in informal employment. They are working either very long or very short hours.

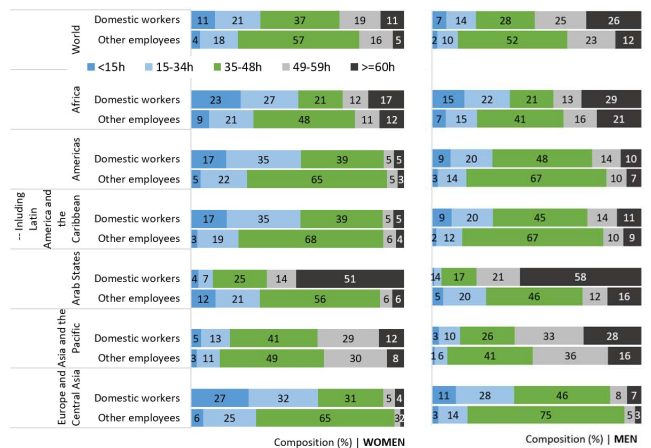
Long working hours remain widespread. Globally, 20.6 per cent of domestic workers work 49–59 hours per week and another 14.6 per cent work 60 hours or more. The Arab States stand out: 72.1 per cent work at least 49 hours and 54.6 per cent work 60 hours or more. Asia and the Pacific also records a high combined share of 45.9 per cent (figure 11). Short hours should not automatically be interpreted as favourable, since they may reflect involuntary part-time work, fragmented employment across households or underemployment.

► **Figure 11. Working time patterns among women and men domestic workers compared to other employees, by region, 2025 (percentages)**

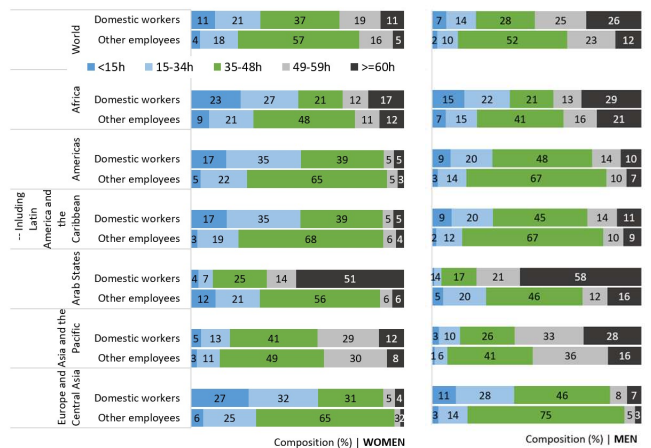
Total



Women



Men



Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 151 countries, covering 95.0 per cent of global employment and 93.7 per cent of global wage employment in 2025. Coverage of total employment is 93.2 per cent in Africa, 99.0 per cent in the Americas, 48.9 per cent in the Arab States, 96.3 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, and 92.9 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. Estimates for the Arab States should be interpreted with caution because of the limited representativeness of the available data.

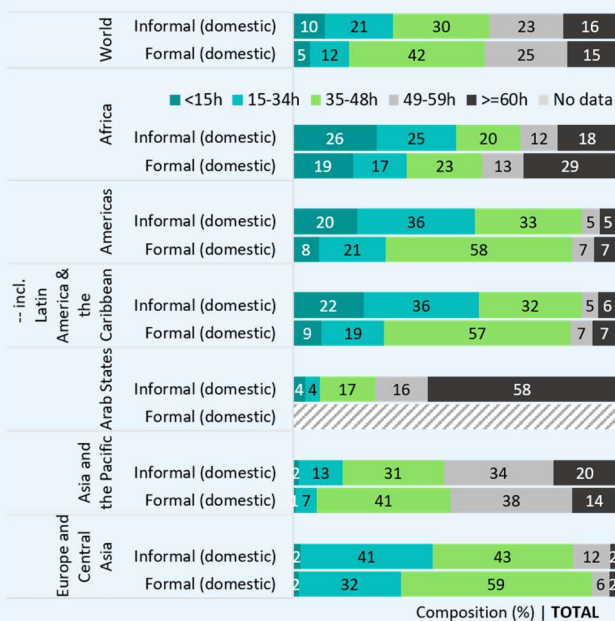
The interaction of low wages and long hours is particularly important. Low hourly earnings can push workers to accept multiple jobs, while live-in arrangements may blur the boundaries between working time, standby time and rest.

► Box 2. Working time and informality

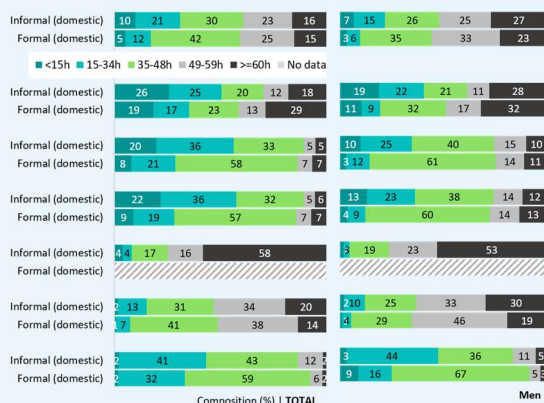
Working time and informality are closely linked. Domestic workers in informal employment are much more likely than formal domestic workers to work at the extremes of the working-time distribution (both very short and very long weekly hours) and earn lower wages. Fewer than three in ten domestic workers in informal employment work “normal hours” (35h-48h weekly) compared to 42 percent of those in formal employment (figure 12).

► Figure 12. Working time patterns among domestic workers in informal employment compared to those in formal employment by region, 2025 (percentages)

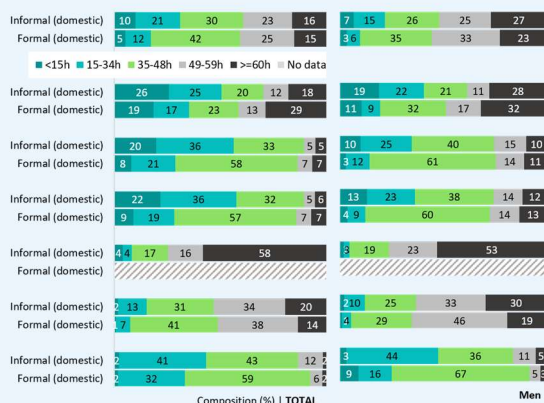
► Total



► Women



► Men

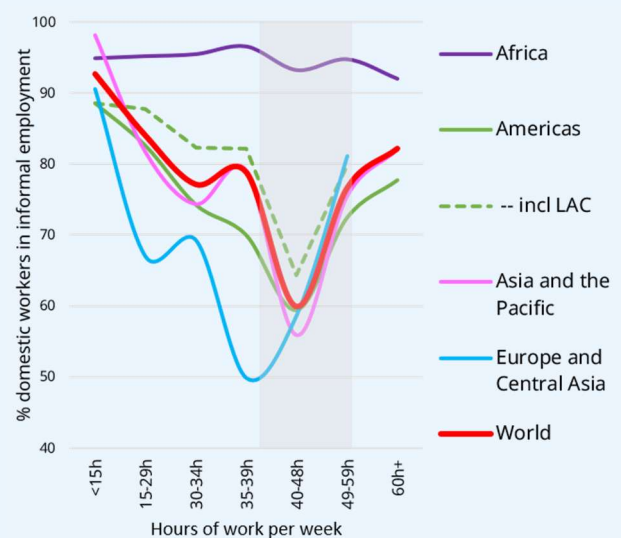


Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 143 countries representing 93.0% of global employment and 90.9% of global wage employment (Africa: 95.4%; Americas: 98.6%, Arab States: 48.9%, Asia and the Pacific: 94.8%, and Europe and Central Asia: 81.0%)

Across regions, informality is generally lowest among domestic workers working within the range of normal hours and rises among those working shorter or longer hours. (figure 13). This suggests that informality is associated with how domestic work is organized and protected. At the lower end, very short hours may reflect fragmented employment across several households, involuntary part-time work or underemployment. Such arrangements can make registration and contributions more complex, particularly where responsibility is divided among multiple employers. At the upper end, very long hours may point to gaps in working-time protection and enforcement, particularly for live-in workers where the boundaries between working time, standby time and rest can be difficult to establish.

The data therefore point to working-time policy as an important part of formalization strategies, rather than solely an issue of working conditions. Formalization and social security mechanisms need to accommodate short-hours and multi-employer work, including through simplified registration and proportionate contributions, and set clear rules on hours and rest, mechanisms for recording working time, and effective minimum-wage protection.

► Figure 13. Informal employment depending on weekly hours of work in the main job by region, 2025 (percentages)



Note: Data for the Arab States is not shown due to the limited number of domestic workers in formal employment. Source: as for figure 12.

Age and education profiles

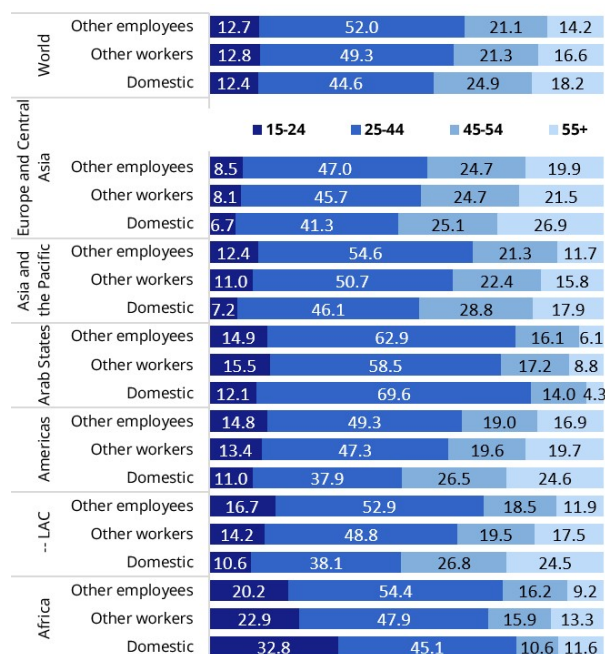
Age profile: a workforce spanning different stages of working life

Globally, 12.4 per cent are aged 15–24, almost half are aged 35–54 and 18.2 per cent are aged 55 or over (figure 14). Africa has by far the youngest profile: almost one third of domestic workers are aged 15–24, compared with less than one quarter of other workers. This may reflect the region's younger employment structure as well as early entry into domestic work and limited access to continued education or alternative employment. Young domestic workers may be particularly exposed to informality, weak bargaining power and limited knowledge of their labour rights, underscoring the importance of minimum-age protections, access to education and training, written contracts and effective monitoring of working conditions.

By contrast, domestic workers in the Americas and Europe and Central Asia have markedly older profiles. In the Americas, 24.6 per cent are aged 55 or over, compared with 19.7 per cent of other workers. In Europe and Central Asia, the corresponding shares are 26.9 and 21.5 per cent. The contrast is generally greater when domestic workers are compared with other employees. This concentration at older ages raises concerns about occupational safety and health, especially given the physically demanding nature of cleaning, lifting, caring and other household tasks. It also highlights the importance of adequate working-time protection, paid leave, social security coverage and access to pensions.

Age patterns also differ by sex. Women domestic workers are strongly concentrated in the core working ages: 53.9 per cent are aged 35–54, compared with 42.7 per cent of men. Men are more represented both among young domestic workers and at ages 55 and above. Africa and the Arab States stand out with an overrepresentation of very young women carrying out domestic work. These differences may reflect gendered occupational roles, migration patterns and unequal opportunities to move into other forms of employment over the life course.

► **Figure 14. Distribution of domestic workers, other workers and other employees by age range, 2025 (percentages)**



Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 164 countries representing 97.2% of global employment in 2025.

The age profile has implications: early entry into domestic work can limit education and subsequent occupational mobility, while prolonged employment in physically demanding and often informal jobs may compound health and income-security risks later in life. Policies should adopt a life-course perspective, combining protections for young workers with skills development, recognition of experience, occupational safety and health measures, enforceable working-time standards, formal contracts, social security registration and pension coverage.

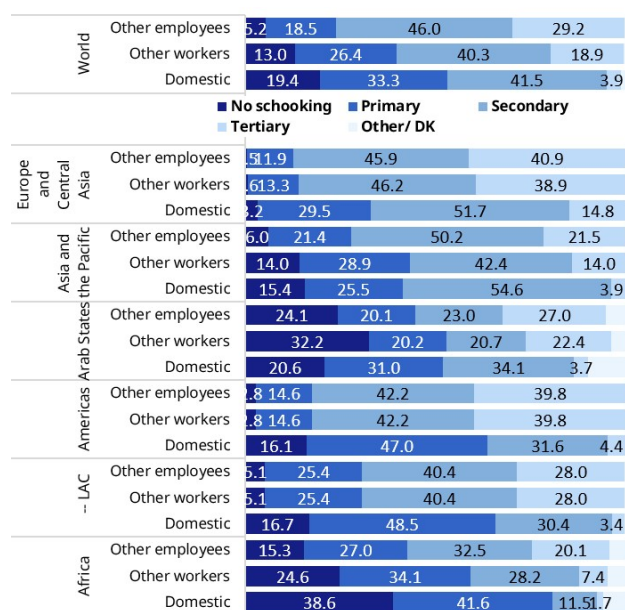
Education profile: skills extend beyond formal qualifications

Secondary education is the largest single attainment category among domestic workers worldwide, accounting for 41.5 per cent of domestic workers. Nevertheless, more than half have either no schooling (19.4 per cent) or only primary education (33.3 per cent), while just 3.9 per cent have tertiary education (figure 15).

Domestic workers have substantially lower educational attainment than both other workers and other employees: only 5.2 per cent of other employees have no schooling and 18.5 per cent have primary education, while 29.2 per cent

have tertiary education. The contrast with other employees is particularly pronounced for women: 35.2 per cent of other female employees have tertiary education, compared with only 3.8 per cent of women domestic workers.

► **Figure 15. Comparison of the educational profile of domestic workers compared to other workers and to other employees by region, 2025 (percentages)**



Source: ILO calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata collection from 142 countries representing 92.5% of global employment and 88.7% of global wage employment (in 2025).

These educational patterns reflect unequal access to schooling and the concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, including many migrant workers, in domestic work. The sector can provide an important entry point into employment for people with limited formal qualifications. However, lower educational attainment may also constrain access to information, weaken bargaining power and limit opportunities for training, certification and movement into better-paid occupations. It may therefore contribute to the observed association between domestic work, informality and low relative pay, but it does not by itself explain these outcomes. Decent work deficits also stem from gaps in legal coverage and enforcement, weak labour-market institutions, and the unequal bargaining relationships associated with work performed in private households.

Formal educational attainment should not be treated as a measure of the value or complexity of domestic work. Cleaning, cooking, household management and direct care require substantial practical, technical, organizational and interpersonal skills, often acquired through experience. Yet

these competencies frequently remain uncertified and are not adequately reflected in pay. Skills assessment, recognition of prior learning, accessible training and clearly defined occupational pathways can make these competencies more visible, improve service quality, and support wage progression and occupational mobility. Such measures should complement—not substitute for—formalization, adequate wages and effective labour protection.

Accessible information and clear employment terms are equally important. Written standard contracts, provided in a language and format workers can understand, can specify tasks, wages, working hours, rest periods, leave entitlements, social security contributions and termination procedures. Their effectiveness depends on supporting institutions: straightforward registration procedures, accessible information about rights, inspection arrangements adapted to private households, simple complaint and remedy mechanisms, freedom of association and credible enforcement. Together, skills recognition and effective labour protections can help address the disadvantages associated with limited formal education without implying that workers themselves are responsible for the poor conditions they experience.

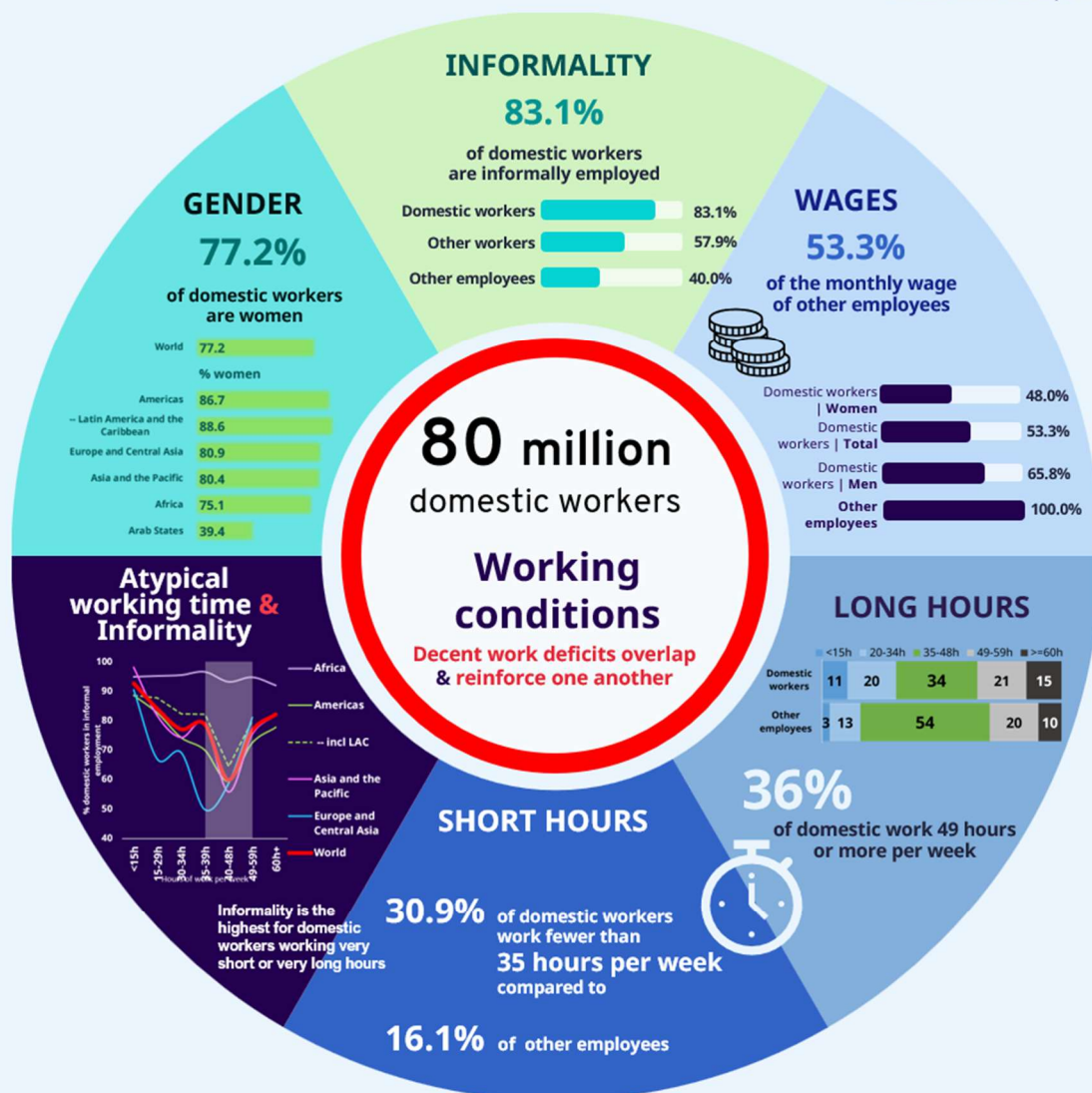
A shared challenge, diverse regional realities

The global picture points to both the scale of domestic work and the persistence of substantial decent work deficits. Domestic workers remain disproportionately exposed to informality, low relative wages and working-time extremes, while women—who make up the large majority of the workforce—often face the greatest disadvantages. These outcomes are closely interconnected: informal employment can reinforce low pay, fragmented schedules and excessively long hours, while limited access to education and recognized qualifications may restrict occupational mobility and bargaining power.

Global averages, however, conceal considerable regional and subregional variation. The incidence and gender composition of domestic work, as well as levels of informality, wage disparities and working-time patterns, differ markedly across regions. The following sections examine these distinct regional profiles and highlight the areas in which policy responses need to be tailored to specific labour-market structures and institutional contexts.

Working conditions of domestic workers

Global estimates, 2025



► Domestic work in regions in 2025

Africa

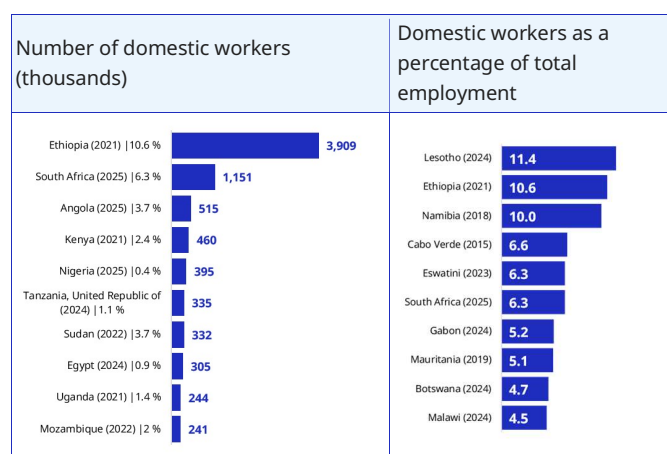
At a glance

- Rapid expansion has increased Africa's weight in global domestic employment, but job quality remains constrained by almost universal informality and a very large wage penalty.

► **Table 1. Domestic work at a glance, 2025**

	Domestic workers (millions)	Share of world total (%)	Share of total employment (%)	Share among employees (%)	Women's share (%)
Africa	13.787	17.2	2.4	7.7	75.1
Northern Africa	0.969	1.2	1.3	2.3	40.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	12.818	16.0	2.6	9.6	77.6

► **Figure 16. Domestic workers in numbers (first ten countries) in Africa, latest year**



Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection.

Incidence of domestic work in 2025

In 2025, the number of domestic workers in Africa is estimated at 13.8 million. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for

12.8 million workers, while Northern Africa has just under one million.

Domestic work represents 2.4 per cent of total employment and 7.7 per cent of employees. For women, however, the incidence reaches 4.2 per cent of total employment and 15.9 per cent of female employees. Domestic work is therefore an important component of women's paid employment, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where it represents 18.2 per cent of women employees.

Women account for 75.1 per cent of domestic workers in Africa. The regional average conceals opposite profiles: women form 77.8 per cent of the sector in sub-Saharan Africa, while men form the majority in Northern Africa (59.6 per cent).

Informality and working conditions

Informality is the region's key challenge: 93.3 per cent of domestic workers are informally employed. Because informality is widespread across African labour markets, domestic workers' relative overexposure is lower than in other regions. Nevertheless, they remain 1.6 times more exposed than other employees.

Working time: few hours for pay or very long hours

Approximately 31.9 per cent of domestic workers in the region work at least 49 hours per week, with nearly 20 per cent working 60 hours or more. Men are especially exposed to very long hours: 28.6 per cent work at least 60 hours, compared with 16.9 per cent of women. Conversely, the prevalence of short hours remains significant: over one in five domestic workers work fewer than 15 hours per week—a proportion three times higher than that of other employees. In total, nearly half of all domestic workers (47.3 per cent) work fewer than 35 hours per week, compared to just one in four other employees. This polarization in working hours may indicate time-related underemployment and the fragmentation of jobs across multiple households. Furthermore, it signals a risk of extremely low pay and exclusion from social protection systems due to the workers' inability to meet minimum qualifying thresholds.

Wage gap compared to other employees

Domestic workers receive, on average, 37.3 per cent of the monthly wage of other employees. Women's ratio is only 29.1 per cent, compared with 50.6 per cent for men.

Informal domestic workers receive about 34.7 per cent of the wage of other employees. The combination of informality, short paid hours for some workers and very long hours for others makes monthly earnings particularly vulnerable. The relative wage ratio improved between the two estimation rounds, but this does not remove the exceptionally large wage penalty.

Age and education

Africa's domestic workforce is considerably younger than its other workers: 32.8 per cent are aged 15–24, compared with 22.9 per cent of other workers. Educational attainment is also low: 38.6 per cent have no schooling and 41.6 per cent have only primary education; only 11.5 per cent have secondary and 1.7 per cent tertiary education. Women are more likely than men to have no formal schooling. Early entry, limited schooling and informality may reinforce one another, underlining the importance of minimum-age enforcement, continued education, accessible contracts and skills recognition.

Change between 2019 and 2025

Between 2019 and 2025, the number of domestic workers rose from 9.6 million to 13.8 million—an increase of 43 per cent and the largest absolute regional gain. Growth was overwhelmingly female and concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. The sector's incidence in total employment increased slightly, from 2.1 to 2.4 per cent, while its share among employees rose from 7.0 to 7.7 per cent. Over the same period, women's share changed from 68.4 to 75.1 per cent. The comparison is indicative because country coverage increased between the two rounds.

Americas

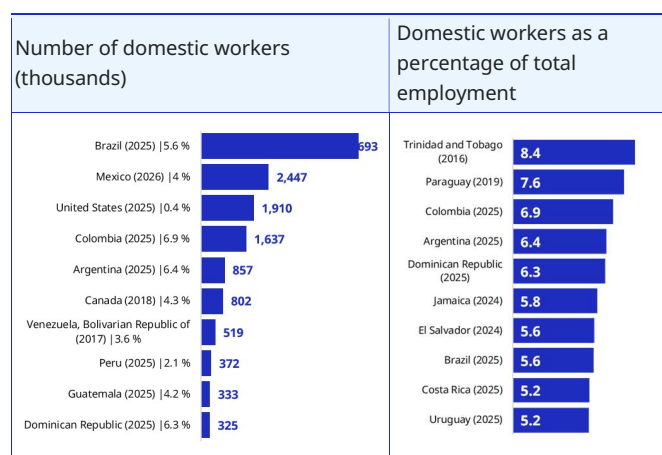
At a glance

- The regional domestic workforce contracted between 2019 and 2025. The sector remains more feminized than in any other broad region.
- Latin America and the Caribbean accounts for most domestic employment and differs markedly from Northern America in incidence and informality.

► **Table 2. Americas - Domestic work at a glance, 2025**

	Domestic workers (millions)	Share of world total (%)	Share of total employment (%)	Share among employees (%)	Women's share (%)
Americas	16.060	20.1	3.2	4.7	86.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	14.592	18.2	4.7	7.5	88.6
Northern America	1.469	1.8	0.8	1.6	67.5

► **Figure 17. Domestic workers in numbers (first ten countries) in the Americas, latest year**



Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection.

Incidence of domestic work in 2025

The Americas have 16.1 million domestic workers, 20.1 per cent of the global total; 14.6 million are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Domestic work accounts for 3.2 per cent of total employment and 4.7 per cent of employees. The incidence is much higher among women: domestic workers represent 6.5 per cent of women's total employment and 8.2 per cent of women employees, compared with 0.8 and 1.0 per cent for men.

Latin America and the Caribbean dominates the regional picture. Domestic work represents 4.7 per cent of total employment and 7.5 per cent of employees there, compared with less than 1 per cent of total employment in Northern America. Among women in Latin America and the Caribbean, domestic workers account for 10.1 per cent of total employment and 15.2 per cent of employees. The regional average therefore primarily reflects a large, highly feminized Latin American sector rather than the smaller and more formal Northern American sector.

The sector is more feminized than in any other broad region: women account for 86.7 per cent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, domestic work has a much larger role in women's employment than in Northern America.

Informality

In 2025, 70.2 per cent of domestic workers were in informal employment, with the rate reaching 72.3 per cent among women and 56.4 per cent among men. In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than three out of four domestic workers were informally employed that year. A decline in informality in countries with relatively small number of domestic workers was not enough to offset the increase or the "higher than average rates" observed in countries with the largest numbers of domestic workers in the subregion.

Wages and working time

Average monthly wages of domestic workers equal 45.8 per cent of those of other employees. The ratio is 43.7 per cent for women and 59.6 per cent for men. Informal domestic workers receive only 38.4 per cent of that of other employees. Between the common-country estimation rounds, the regional ratio declined, largely because wages of other employees increased more rapidly in several influential countries. The decline was concentrated among women.

Working time arrangement explain to some extent the wage gap between domestic workers and other employees; and between women and men. Half of domestic workers work fewer than 35 hours per week and 15.5 per cent work fewer than 15 hours. Only 40.0 per cent fall within the 35–48-hour range, compared with 66.2 per cent of other employees. Women are concentrated in shorter schedules, while men are more exposed to long hours: 23.5 per cent of men work at least 49 hours, compared with 9.6 per cent of women. Short hours may signal part-time preferences in some contexts, but can also mean underemployment, multiple employers and discontinuous contribution histories.

Age and education

The region's domestic workforce is relatively old: 24.6 per cent are aged 55 or over, compared with 19.7 per cent of other workers. Women are particularly concentrated at ages 35–54. The education gap is wide. Almost half have primary education and 31.6 per cent secondary education, while only 4.4 per cent have tertiary education; among

other employees, 39.8 per cent have tertiary education. Northern America differs markedly: most domestic workers have secondary or tertiary education.

Change between 2019 and 2025

The number of domestic workers fell from roughly 17.6 million to 16.1 million. Their incidence declined from 3.7 to 3.2 per cent of total employment and from about 5.1 to 4.7 per cent of employees. The contraction was concentrated among women. These changes may reflect labour-market recovery patterns, demographic change, formal service provision and measurement effects, and should not be interpreted as evidence that households' care needs declined.

Arab States

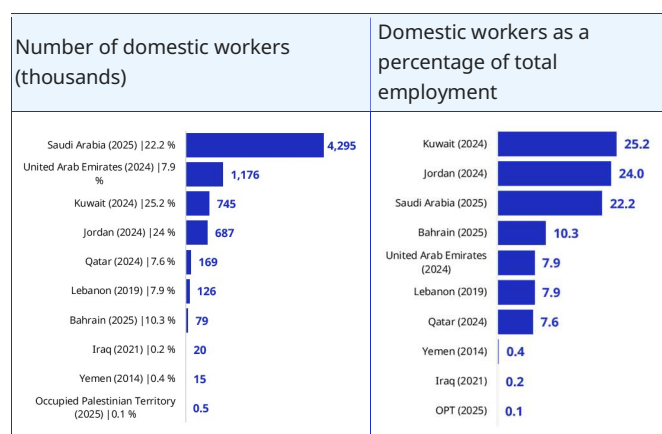
At a glance

- Domestic work has its highest incidence in total employment and among employees in this region.
- Men form the majority, unlike in every other broad region.
- Near-universal informality and exceptionally long hours are the dominant working-condition features.

► Table 3. Arab States - Domestic work at a glance, 2025

	Domestic workers (millions)	Share of world total (%)	Share of total employment (%)	Share among employees (%)	Women's share (%)
Arab States	7.0	8.7	11.3	14.1	39.4

► Figure 18. Domestic workers in numbers (first ten countries) in the Arab States, latest year



Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection with the exception of Saudi Arabia (official GASTAT workbook); Kuwait (Central Statistical Bureau (CSB)) and Bahrain (Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)).

Incidence of domestic work in 2025

The region has 7.0 million domestic workers and the world's highest incidence: 11.3 per cent of total employment and 14.1 per cent of employees.

Domestic work has a significant weight in regional employment. Among women it represents 28.1 per cent of total employment and 33.2 per cent of employees; among men, 8.1 and 9.8 per cent respectively.

Men account for 60.6 per cent of domestic workers—the only broad region where men are the majority. The male majority reflects the inclusion of drivers, gardeners, guards and other household occupations alongside female-dominated cleaning and care work, as well as the central role of migrant labour.

National administrative data are particularly important in this region; also because household surveys may not fully capture migrant domestic workers living in employers' households.

Informality

The available estimates point to almost universal informality. In practical terms, the legal and administrative status of migrant domestic workers does not meet the conventional survey measures of informal employment. Visa sponsorship, exclusion from labour-law provisions, non-registration for social insurance and weak enforcement can overlap in different ways. The estimate of informality should therefore be read as a strong signal of protection deficits.

Working time³

Working time provides the clearest regional signal, although its coverage is also limited. Only 21.3 per cent work 35–48 hours. More than half work at least 60 hours, including 58.0 per cent of men and 50.7 per cent of women. Live-in arrangements, standby time and unclear boundaries between work and rest can make actual exposure even harder to measure. Written contracts, enforceable daily and weekly limits, rest periods, record-

keeping and access to complaints mechanisms are essential.

Age and education

The domestic workforce is concentrated at ages 25–44: approximately 69.6 per cent fall between 25 and 44, while only 4.3 per cent are aged 55 or over. The profile is consistent with labour migration at prime working ages. Educational attainment is heterogeneous: 34.1 per cent have secondary education, 31.0 per cent primary and 20.6 per cent no schooling, but 10.6 per cent fall into the residual “other” category. Men are much more concentrated in secondary education than women, while women are more likely to have no schooling. Accessible, multilingual information and contracts are therefore especially important.

Asia and the Pacific

At a glance

- While the proportion of domestic work in total employment is relatively low, the region contains about half of the world's domestic workers. China has a major influence on the regional aggregate.
- Long hours and high informality coexist with large subregional differences in gender composition.

Incidence of domestic work in 2025

The region contains 40.2 million domestic workers— more than half of the global total—although domestic work represents only 2.0 per cent of regional employment. China alone accounts for about 22.0 million;⁴ excluding China, the regional total is 18.2 million. Excluding China, domestic work represents 1.6 per cent of employment rather than 2.0 per cent, and women's share falls from 80.4 to 74.0 per cent. Southern Asia has a lower incidence in total employment but a relatively high share among employees, reflecting the relatively low proportion of wage workers in total employment. It is also much less feminized: women

³ The figures on wages are based on a limited and unrepresentative set of countries and exclude several Gulf economies and are not presented here.

⁴ Recent Chinese government publications refer to more than 30 million workers in the country's “household services industry” ([Ministry of Commerce, 2026](#)). Administrative sources also report more than 9 million workers registered on the national information platform, compared with 16.7 million credit-information records in March 2025—

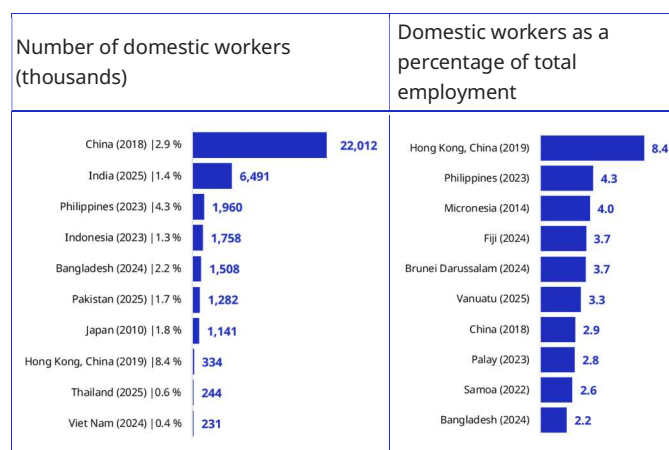
figures based on different units that are not national employment estimates ([2026 source](#); [2025 source](#)). As the methodology and coverage of the 30 million estimate are not documented and the national sectoral concept appears broader than the ILO definition, this brief retains the internationally comparable ILO estimate of approximately 22 million domestic workers, updated to 2025. The difference may reflect distinct statistical populations and should not be interpreted as evidence that the ILO estimate is too low.

account for 65.7 per cent, compared with more than 80 per cent in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.

► **Table 4. Asia and the Pacific - Domestic work at a glance, 2025**

	Domestic workers (millions)	Share of world total (%)	Share of total employment (%)	Share among employees (%)	Women's share (%)
Asia and the Pacific	40.2	50.2	2.0	4.6	80.4
Eastern Asia	24.1	30.2	2.8	5.2	86.7
South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific	5.2	6.6	1.4	2.7	81.9
Southern Asia	10.8	13.5	1.4	4.8	65.7

► **Figure 19. Domestic workers in numbers (first ten countries) in Asia and the Pacific, latest year**



Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection.

Informality

Approximately 34.3 million domestic workers are in informal employment. Southern Asia stands out at 97.8 per cent, including 99.1 per cent of women. Eastern Asia records 82.7 per cent, but excluding China the estimated rate is much lower, illustrating the decisive influence of a single country. South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific has the lowest subregional rate at 72.4 per cent, although this still represents almost three quarters of the sector.

Wages and working time

Domestic workers earn, on average, 61.2 per cent of the monthly wage of other employees. The ratio is considerably higher for men, at 73.1 per cent, than for women, at 55.3 per cent. Among domestic workers in informal employment, it falls to 58.1 per cent. For the subset of countries with data available in both 2019 and 2025, the

ratio declined between the two estimation rounds, indicating a widening relative wage gap. Country-level evidence suggests that domestic workers' wages often increased, but generally less rapidly than those of other employees, notably in India.

Working time is heavily skewed towards long hours. Some 30.0 per cent work 49–59 hours and 15.9 per cent at least 60 hours. Men are particularly exposed: 60.5 per cent work 49 hours or more, compared with 40.5 per cent of women. Other employees are also concentrated in long schedules, but domestic workers remain less likely to fall in the 35–48-hour range. The interaction with informality increases the risk that overtime is neither recorded nor compensated.

Age and education

Only 7.2 per cent of domestic workers are aged 15–24; 56.0 per cent are aged 35–54 and 17.9 per cent are 55 or over.

Secondary education is the most common level of educational attainment among domestic workers, accounting for 54.6 per cent—a higher proportion than among other workers. By contrast, only 3.9 per cent of domestic workers have attained tertiary education, compared with 14.0 per cent of other workers and more than one in five other employees. Southern Asia presents a markedly different profile: 42.2 per cent of domestic workers have no formal schooling, while only 9.1 per cent have attained secondary education. In Eastern Asia, by contrast, secondary education predominates.

Change between 2019 and 2025

The number of domestic workers in the region increased from approximately 38.3 million in 2019 to 40.2 million in 2025, a rise of 4.9 per cent. This growth was entirely driven by women: their number increased by 7.7 per cent (around 2.3 million), while the number of men declined by 5.1 per cent (around 0.4 million). As a result, women's share of the sector rose from 78.4 to 80.4 per cent. At the same time, the incidence of domestic work in total employment edged down from 2.1 to 2.0 per cent. Its share among employees remained broadly stable at around 4.6 per cent, but increased among women (from 10.0 to 10.4 per cent) and declined among men (from 1.5 to 1.4 per cent).

Europe and Central Asia

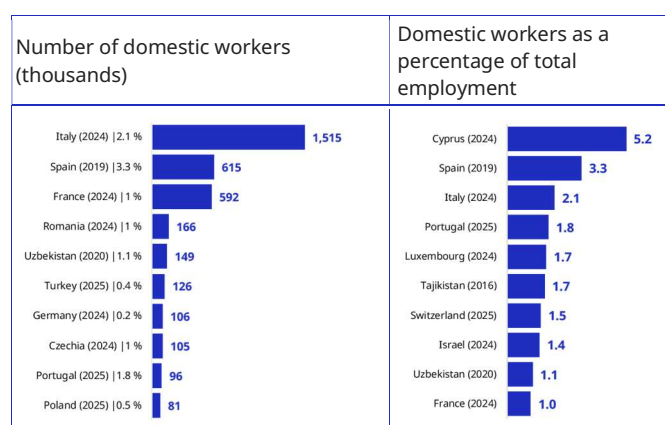
At a glance

- This is the smallest broad-regional domestic workforce.
- The regional informality rate is the lowest, but still affects more than one in three domestic workers.
- The aggregate masks large differences between Europe and Central and Western Asia.

► **Table 5. Europe and Central Asia - Domestic work at a glance, 2025**

	Domestic workers (millions)	Share of world total (%)	Share of total employment (%)	Share among employees (%)	Women's share (%)
Europe and Central Asia	3.0	3.8	0.7	0.8	80.9
Northern, Southern and Western Europe	2.0	2.5	0.9	1.1	85.2
Eastern Europe	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	77.9
Central and Western Asia	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.2	68.0

► **Figure 20. Domestic workers in numbers (first ten countries) in Europe and Central Asia, latest year**



Source: ILO Harmonized Microdata collection.

Incidence of domestic work in 2025

The region has 3.0 million domestic workers, or 3.8 per cent of the world total—the smallest broad-regional workforce. Domestic work accounts for 0.7 per cent of total employment and 0.8 per cent of employees.

Northern, Southern and Western Europe accounts for two thirds of the regional domestic workforce and is the most feminized subregion. Eastern Europe has the lowest incidence, at only 0.3 per cent of employment. Central and Western Asia has a higher share among employees and a

substantially larger male presence: women account for 68.0 per cent, compared with 85.2 per cent in Northern, Southern and Western Europe. These differences reflect distinct care systems, migration corridors and labour-market institutions.

Informality

The regional average conceals a range from 29.7 per cent in Northern, Southern and Western Europe to 58.2 per cent in Central and Western Asia. Eastern Europe stands at 37.8 per cent. Informality is somewhat higher among men than women regionally. Although formalization is more advanced, undeclared household employment, false self-employment, fragmented hours and migrant workers' status can leave important gaps in protection.

Wages and working time

More than half of domestic workers work fewer than 35 hours per week, and 24.8 per cent work fewer than 15 hours, compared with only 4.3 per cent of other employees. Women are particularly concentrated in short working schedules, while men are more likely to work standard or long hours. Short hours may facilitate labour-force participation in some circumstances, but they may also reflect involuntary part-time work or employment fragmented across several households, resulting in low monthly earnings and incomplete social security contribution records.

This working-time pattern partly explains the observed monthly wage gap. Domestic workers earn, on average, 56.9 per cent of the monthly wage of other employees. Because the indicator measures monthly rather than hourly wages, it captures differences in both pay rates and the number of hours worked. The much higher ratio for men—72.0 per cent, compared with 51.4 per cent for women—is therefore likely to reflect, at least in part, women's greater concentration in short-hours arrangements. Nevertheless, differences in working time alone cannot explain the full gap; hourly pay, occupation, informality and other worker and job characteristics also matter.

Informality compounds these disadvantages. Informal domestic workers receive only 28.0 per cent of the average monthly wage of other employees, suggesting that short or fragmented schedules often coincide with particularly low rates of pay and limited access to labour and social protection.

The regional wage ratio improved between the two estimation rounds for the common subset of countries, but national trends diverged. Relative wages improved in countries including the United Kingdom, Spain and the Netherlands, while deteriorating elsewhere.

Age and education

Europe and Central Asia has the oldest profile: 26.9 per cent are aged 55 or over, compared with 21.5 per cent of other workers. Northern, Southern and Western Europe is older still, with more than one third aged 55 or above. The physical demands of domestic and care work make occupational safety, reasonable workloads and pension coverage especially important.

Educational attainment is higher than in other regions but remains well below that of other employees. Secondary education is the largest category at 51.7 per cent; 14.8 per cent have tertiary education, compared with 40.9 per cent of other employees. Northern, Southern and Western Europe has a sizeable primary-educated group, while Eastern Europe is concentrated in secondary and tertiary education. Skills recognition and pathways into certified care occupations could support mobility and wages.

Change between 2019 and 2025

The regional number declined by close to half a million, to 3.0 million, and incidence remains below 1 per cent. The aggregate decline needs to be separated between Europe and Central Asia: demographic trends, migration and public and market-based care services may all contribute.

Turning recognition into decent work

Domestic work remains indispensable to households, economies and care systems, yet the workers providing these services continue to experience some of the largest decent work deficits. The findings underscore the need to extend effective labour and social protection, promote formalization, strengthen compliance with wage and working-time provisions, and ensure that domestic workers can exercise their rights in practice. Particular attention is required for women, migrant workers and those in informal employment, who frequently face overlapping disadvantages.

Progress will depend not only on appropriate legal frameworks but also on their effective implementation. Accessible information, written contracts, labour inspection adapted to the specific characteristics of domestic work, social security mechanisms suited to multiple-employer and part-time arrangements, and effective representation of workers and employers can all contribute to narrowing existing gaps. Recognizing and developing the skills used in domestic and care work can further support occupational mobility and fairer remuneration.

At the same time *formalization is essential, but protection cannot wait*. Given the persistent high level of informality, measures that simplify registration and remove legal, administrative and financial barriers should be combined with immediate action to address critical decent work deficits in the informal economy. In particular, essential rights (including fundamental principles and rights at work) and protection should not be made conditional on formal status. These measures should complement and facilitate—not replace—the transition to full formality.

The diversity of regional situations means that there is no single pathway to decent work. Nevertheless, the overall direction is clear: domestic workers must be recognized and protected as workers, on terms no less favourable than those enjoyed by other workers. Continued investment in comparable and regularly updated data—disaggregated by sex, employment arrangement and other relevant characteristics—will be essential to monitor progress and ensure that policy improvements reach those who remain furthest behind.

► Methodological note

- The methodology used to estimate the number of domestic workers is presented in Annex 4 in [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). ILOSTAT microdata sets were used as the basis for applying this approach in the vast majority of countries. Comparisons between the 2019 and 2025 estimation rounds should be interpreted with caution. Coverage increased from 156 countries representing 95.4 per cent of global employment in 2019 to 168 countries representing 97.5 per cent in 2025; source years and survey comparability may also differ.



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