



2.3 Labor force structure

	Population aged 15–64		Labor force								
	millions		1980	Total millions 1998	2010	Average annual growth rate %		Female % of labor force		Children 10–14 % of age group	
	1980	1998				1980–98	1998–2010	1980	1998	1980	1998
Albania	2	2	1	2	2	1.7	1.6	38.8	41.1	4	1
Algeria	9	18	5	10	15	3.9	3.4	21.4	26.4	7	1
Angola	4	6	3	6	8	2.6	3.1	47.0	46.3	30	26
Argentina	17	23	11	14	18	1.7	2.0	27.6	32.3	8	3
Armenia	2	2	1	2	2	1.4	1.4	47.9	48.4	0	0
Australia	10	13	7	10	11	1.9	0.9	36.8	43.3	0	0
Austria	5	5	3	4	4	0.6	0.0	40.5	40.3	0	0
Azerbaijan	4	5	3	3	4	1.4	2.0	47.5	44.2	0	0
Bangladesh	44	71	41	64	83	2.5	2.2	42.3	42.3	35	29
Belarus	6	7	5	5	5	0.2	0.0	49.9	48.8	0	0
Belgium	6	7	4	4	4	0.3	0.1	33.9	40.6	0	0
Benin	2	3	2	3	4	2.6	2.9	47.0	48.3	30	27
Bolivia	3	4	2	3	4	2.5	2.6	33.3	37.6	19	13
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	3	2	2	2	0.5	1.1	32.8	38.1	1	..
Botswana	0	1	0	1	1	3.0	1.3	50.1	45.5	26	15
Brazil	70	108	47	76	90	2.6	1.3	28.4	35.4	19	15
Bulgaria	6	6	5	4	4	–0.5	–0.7	45.3	48.2	0	0
Burkina Faso	3	5	4	5	7	1.9	2.0	47.6	46.6	71	47
Burundi	2	3	2	4	5	2.5	2.4	50.2	48.9	50	49
Cambodia	4	6	4	6	8	2.7	2.2	55.4	51.9	27	24
Cameroon	5	7	4	6	8	2.7	2.3	36.8	37.8	34	24
Canada	17	21	12	16	18	1.6	0.6	39.5	45.4	0	0
Central African Republic	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Chad	2	3	2	3	5	2.5	2.9	43.4	44.6	42	37
Chile	7	10	4	6	8	2.5	2.1	26.3	32.9	0	0
China	586	837	540	743	822	1.8	0.8	43.2	45.2	30	9
Hong Kong, China	3	5	2	3	4	1.9	1.4	34.3	36.9	6	0
Colombia	16	25	9	18	23	3.5	2.2	26.2	38.2	12	6
Congo, Dem. Rep.	14	24	12	20	29	3.0	2.9	44.5	43.5	33	29
Congo, Rep.	1	1	1	1	2	2.7	2.8	42.4	43.4	27	26
Costa Rica	1	2	1	1	2	3.2	1.7	20.8	30.5	10	5
Côte d'Ivoire	4	8	3	6	7	3.2	2.0	32.2	33.1	28	19
Croatia	3	3	2	2	2	–0.1	–0.2	40.2	43.9	0	0
Cuba	6	8	4	5	6	2.2	0.6	31.4	38.9	0	0
Czech Republic	6	7	5	6	6	0.4	–0.4	47.1	47.4	0	0
Denmark	3	4	3	3	3	0.5	–0.5	44.0	46.4	0	0
Dominican Republic	3	5	2	4	5	2.9	2.3	24.7	30.1	25	14
Ecuador	4	7	3	5	6	3.3	2.8	20.1	27.4	9	5
Egypt, Arab Rep.	23	37	14	23	32	2.6	2.8	26.5	29.7	18	10
El Salvador	2	4	2	3	4	2.7	2.9	26.5	35.5	17	14
Eritrea	..	2	1	2	3	2.6	2.7	47.4	47.4	44	39
Estonia	1	1	1	1	1	–0.1	–0.1	50.6	49.0	0	0
Ethiopia	20	31	17	26	34	2.4	2.1	42.3	40.9	46	42
Finland	3	3	2	3	2	0.5	–0.5	46.5	47.9	0	0
France	34	39	24	26	27	0.6	0.3	40.1	44.8	0	0
Gabon	0	1	0	1	1	2.3	2.0	45.0	44.5	29	16
Gambia, The	0	1	0	1	1	3.6	2.3	44.8	45.0	44	35
Georgia	3	4	3	3	3	0.3	0.2	49.3	46.6	0	0
Germany	52	56	38	41	40	0.5	–0.2	40.1	42.1	0	0
Ghana	6	10	5	9	12	3.0	2.7	51.0	50.6	16	13
Greece	6	7	4	5	5	1.0	0.2	27.9	37.4	5	0
Guatemala	3	6	2	4	6	2.9	3.4	22.4	27.8	19	15
Guinea	2	4	2	3	4	2.2	2.2	47.1	47.2	41	32
Guinea-Bissau	0	1	0	1	1	1.8	1.9	39.9	40.4	43	37
Haiti	3	4	3	3	4	1.6	1.6	44.6	43.0	33	24
Honduras	2	3	1	2	3	3.5	3.5	25.2	31.0	14	8



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	Population aged 15–64		Labor force								
	millions		Total millions			Average annual growth rate %		Female % of labor force		Children 10–14 % of age group	
	1980	1998	1980	1998	2010	1980–98	1998–2010	1980	1998	1980	1998
Hungary	7	7	5	5	5	–0.3	–0.6	43.3	44.6	0	0
India	394	595	302	431	546	2.0	2.0	33.7	32.1	21	13
Indonesia	83	130	58	98	124	2.9	2.0	35.2	40.4	13	9
Iran, Islamic Rep.	20	36	12	19	28	2.6	3.4	20.4	25.9	14	3
Iraq	7	12	4	6	9	3.0	2.9	17.3	19.0	11	3
Ireland	2	2	1	2	2	1.0	1.4	28.1	33.9	1	0
Israel	2	4	1	3	3	3.2	2.3	33.7	40.6	0	0
Italy	36	39	23	25	25	0.6	–0.3	32.9	38.2	2	0
Jamaica	1	2	1	1	2	1.9	1.3	46.3	46.2	0	0
Japan	79	87	57	68	66	1.0	–0.3	37.9	41.2	0	0
Jordan	1	3	1	1	2	5.2	3.6	14.7	23.3	4	0
Kazakhstan	9	10	7	7	8	0.4	0.8	47.6	46.8	0	0
Kenya	8	15	8	15	20	3.6	2.3	46.0	46.1	45	40
Korea, Dem. Rep.	10	16	8	12	13	2.5	0.6	44.8	43.4	3	0
Korea, Rep.	24	33	16	23	27	2.2	1.1	38.7	41.0	0	0
Kuwait	1	1	0	1	1	2.1	4.4	13.1	31.2	0	0
Kyrgyz Republic	2	3	2	2	3	1.4	1.9	47.5	47.0	0	0
Lao PDR	2	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	31	26
Latvia	2	2	1	1	1	–0.4	–0.3	50.8	50.3	0	0
Lebanon	2	3	1	1	2	3.0	2.6	22.6	29.0	5	0
Lesotho	1	1	1	1	1	2.2	2.1	37.9	36.8	28	21
Libya	2	3	1	2	2	2.7	2.4	18.6	22.1	9	0
Lithuania	2	2	2	2	2	0.3	0.2	49.7	48.0	0	0
Macedonia, FYR	1	1	1	1	1	0.7	0.7	36.1	41.3	1	0
Madagascar	5	8	4	7	10	2.5	3.1	45.2	44.7	40	35
Malawi	3	5	3	5	7	2.7	2.2	50.6	48.8	45	33
Malaysia	8	14	5	9	13	3.1	2.7	33.7	37.5	8	3
Mali	3	5	3	5	7	2.4	2.7	46.7	46.3	61	52
Mauritania	1	1	1	1	2	2.5	2.6	45.0	43.8	30	23
Mauritius	1	1	0	0	1	2.0	1.1	25.7	32.2	5	2
Mexico	35	59	22	38	51	3.0	2.4	26.9	32.6	9	6
Moldova	3	3	2	2	2	0.2	0.1	50.3	48.6	3	0
Mongolia	1	2	1	1	2	2.8	2.3	45.7	46.9	4	2
Morocco	10	17	7	11	15	2.4	2.5	33.5	34.7	21	3
Mozambique	6	9	7	9	11	1.6	2.2	49.0	48.4	39	33
Myanmar	19	29	17	24	28	1.7	1.6	43.7	43.4	28	24
Namibia	1	1	0	1	1	2.4	2.0	40.1	40.8	34	19
Nepal	8	13	7	11	14	2.3	2.6	38.8	40.5	56	43
Netherlands	9	11	6	7	7	1.5	–0.1	31.5	40.2	0	0
New Zealand	2	2	1	2	2	2.1	0.5	34.3	44.6	0	0
Nicaragua	1	3	1	2	3	3.7	3.3	27.6	35.1	19	13
Niger	3	5	3	5	7	3.0	3.3	44.6	44.3	48	44
Nigeria	36	64	29	48	67	2.8	2.7	36.2	36.3	29	25
Norway	3	3	2	2	2	0.9	0.2	40.5	46.1	0	0
Oman	1	1	0	1	1	3.5	2.6	6.2	15.7	6	0
Pakistan	44	72	29	49	72	2.9	3.3	22.7	27.7	23	16
Panama	1	2	1	1	1	3.0	1.9	29.9	34.7	6	3
Papua New Guinea	2	3	2	2	3	2.2	2.1	41.7	42.0	28	18
Paraguay	2	3	1	2	3	2.9	2.8	26.7	29.6	15	7
Peru	9	15	5	9	13	3.0	2.8	23.9	30.6	4	2
Philippines	27	44	19	32	42	2.9	2.4	35.0	37.6	14	6
Poland	23	26	19	20	20	0.4	0.2	45.3	46.2	0	0
Portugal	6	7	5	5	5	0.5	0.1	38.7	43.8	8	1
Puerto Rico	2	3	1	1	2	1.8	1.4	31.8	36.6	0	0
Romania	14	15	11	11	11	–0.2	0.1	45.8	44.5	0	0
Russian Federation	95	101	76	78	79	0.1	0.1	49.4	48.9	0	0



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	millions		1980	Total millions		Average annual growth rate %		Female % of labor force		Children 10–14 % of age group	
	1980	1998		1998	2010	1980–98	1998–2010	1980	1998	1980	1998
Rwanda	3	4	3	4	6	2.8	2.6	49.1	48.9	43	41
Saudi Arabia	5	12	3	7	10	4.9	3.2	7.6	14.8	5	0
Senegal	3	5	3	4	5	2.6	2.4	42.2	42.6	43	29
Sierra Leone	2	3	1	2	2	2.0	2.2	35.5	36.6	19	15
Singapore	2	2	1	2	2	2.3	0.7	34.6	39.0	2	0
Slovak Republic	3	4	2	3	3	0.9	0.4	45.3	47.8	0	0
Slovenia	1	1	1	1	1	0.2	–0.1	45.8	46.5	0	0
South Africa	16	26	10	16	19	2.4	1.5	35.1	37.6	1	0
Spain	23	27	14	17	17	1.3	0.1	28.3	36.7	0	0
Sri Lanka	9	12	5	8	10	2.2	1.7	26.9	36.2	4	2
Sudan	10	16	7	11	15	2.6	2.8	26.9	29.0	33	28
Sweden	5	6	4	5	5	0.7	–0.3	43.8	47.9	0	0
Switzerland	4	5	3	4	4	1.3	0.0	36.7	40.2	0	0
Syrian Arab Republic	4	8	2	5	7	3.7	3.7	23.5	26.5	14	4
Tajikistan	2	3	2	2	3	2.3	3.0	46.9	44.3	0	0
Tanzania	9	17	9	16	21	3.0	2.2	49.8	49.2	43	38
Thailand	26	42	24	37	42	2.3	1.2	47.4	46.3	25	14
Togo	1	2	1	2	2	2.6	2.4	39.3	40.0	36	28
Trinidad and Tobago	1	1	0	1	1	1.6	1.6	31.4	33.7	1	0
Tunisia	3	6	2	4	5	2.9	2.2	28.9	31.2	6	0
Turkey	25	41	19	30	37	2.6	1.8	35.5	37.0	21	9
Turkmenistan	2	3	1	2	3	3.0	2.4	47.0	45.7	0	0
Uganda	6	10	7	10	13	2.4	2.3	47.9	47.6	49	44
Ukraine	33	34	27	25	24	–0.3	–0.3	50.2	48.7	0	0
United Arab Emirates	1	2	1	1	2	4.9	1.8	5.1	14.1	0	0
United Kingdom	36	38	27	30	30	0.5	0.0	38.9	43.7	0	0
United States	151	178	109	138	153	1.3	0.9	41.0	45.7	0	0
Uruguay	2	2	1	1	2	1.3	0.9	30.8	41.3	4	1
Uzbekistan	9	14	6	10	13	2.6	2.3	48.0	46.6	0	0
Venezuela, RB	8	14	5	9	13	3.3	2.6	26.7	34.1	4	0
Vietnam	28	46	26	39	48	2.3	1.7	48.1	49.1	22	7
West Bank and Gaza	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Yemen, Rep.	4	8	2	5	8	4.2	3.1	32.5	28.0	26	19
Yugoslavia, FR (Serb./Mont.)	6	7	4	5	5	0.7	0.2	38.7	42.7	0	0
Zambia	3	5	2	4	5	2.9	2.4	45.4	45.0	19	16
Zimbabwe	3	6	3	5	7	3.0	1.6	44.4	44.5	37	28
World	2,595 s	3,701 s	2,035 s	2,846 s	3,384 s	1.9 w	1.4 w	39.1 w	40.5 w	20 w	12 w
Low income	1,433	2,172	1,214	1,771	2,156	2.1	1.6	40.0	40.6	27	17
Excl. China & India	442	723	364	584	775	2.6	2.4	40.2	41.2	29	24
Middle income	657	936	464	646	780	1.8	1.6	37.5	38.6	10	5
Lower middle income	403	558	291	386	465	1.6	1.6	40.2	40.1	9	4
Upper middle income	254	378	173	260	315	2.3	1.6	32.9	36.3	11	7
Low & middle income	2,090	3,107	1,679	2,416	2,936	2.0	1.6	39.3	40.1	23	13
East Asia & Pacific	820	1,206	719	1,026	1,172	2.0	1.1	42.6	44.5	26	9
Europe & Central Asia	274	315	214	236	251	0.5	0.5	46.7	46.1	3	1
Latin America & Carib.	201	313	130	212	269	2.7	2.0	27.8	34.4	13	9
Middle East & N. Africa	91	166	54	94	135	3.1	3.0	23.8	26.9	14	5
South Asia	508	777	392	573	740	2.1	2.1	33.8	33.1	23	16
Sub-Saharan Africa	195	330	170	275	369	2.7	2.5	42.3	42.2	35	30
High income	505	594	357	430	447	1.0	0.3	38.4	42.9	0	0
Europe EMU	178	197	119	135	134	0.7	0.0	36.7	41.1	1	0



Labor force structure 2.3

About the data

The labor force is the supply of labor available for the production of goods and services in an economy. It includes people who are currently employed and people who are unemployed but seeking work, as well as first-time job-seekers. Not everyone who works is included, however. Unpaid workers, family workers, and students are among those usually omitted, and in some countries members of the military are not counted. The size of the labor force tends to vary during the year as seasonal workers enter and leave it.

Data on the labor force are compiled by the International Labour Organization (ILO) from census or labor force surveys. For international comparisons, the most comprehensive source is labor force surveys. Despite the ILO's efforts to encourage the use of international standards, labor force data are not fully comparable because of differences among countries, and sometimes within countries, in their scope and coverage. In some countries data on the labor force refer to people above a specific age, while in others there is no specific age provision. The reference period of the census or survey is another important source of differences: in some countries data refer to a person's status on the day of the census or survey or during a specific period before the inquiry date, while in others the data are recorded without reference to any period. In developing countries, where the household is often the basic unit of production and all members contribute to output, but some at low intensity or irregular intervals, the estimated labor force may be significantly smaller than the numbers actually working (ILO, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* 1997).

The labor force estimates in the table were calculated by World Bank staff by applying labor force activity rates from the ILO database to World Bank population estimates to create a series consistent with these population estimates. This procedure sometimes results in estimates of labor force size that differ slightly from those published in the ILO's *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*. The population aged 15–64 is often used to provide a rough estimate of the potential labor force. But in many developing countries children under 15 work full or part time. And in some high-income countries many workers postpone retirement past age 65. As a result labor force participation rates calculated in this way may systematically over- or underestimate actual rates.

In general, estimates of women in the labor force are lower than those of men and are not comparable internationally, reflecting the fact that for women, demographic, social, legal, and cultural trends and norms determine whether their activities are regarded

as economic. In many countries large numbers of women work on farms or in other family enterprises without pay, while others work in or near their homes, mixing work and personal activities during the day. Countries differ in the criteria used to determine the extent to which such workers are to be counted as part of the labor force.

Reliable estimates of child labor are hard to obtain. In many countries child labor is officially presumed not to exist and so is not included in surveys or in official data. Underreporting also occurs because data exclude children engaged in agricultural or household activities with their families. Most child workers are in Asia. But the share of children working is highest in Africa, where, on average, one in three children aged 10–14 is engaged in some form of economic activity, mostly in agriculture (Fallon and Tzannatos 1998). Available statistics suggest that more boys than girls work. But the number of girls working is often underestimated because surveys exclude those working as unregistered domestic help or doing full-time household work to enable their parents to work outside the home.

Definitions

- **Population aged 15–64** is the number of people who could potentially be economically active.
- **Total labor force** comprises people who meet the ILO definition of the economically active population: all people who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period. It includes both the employed and the unemployed. While national practices vary in the treatment of such groups as the armed forces and seasonal or part-time workers, in general the labor force includes the armed forces, the unemployed, and first-time job-seekers, but excludes homemakers and other unpaid caregivers and workers in the informal sector.
- **Average annual growth rate of the labor force** is calculated using the exponential endpoint method (see *Statistical methods* for more information).
- **Females as a percentage of the labor force** show the extent to which women are active in the labor force.
- **Children 10–14 in the labor force** are the share of that age group active in the labor force.

Data sources

Population estimates are from the World Bank's population database. Labor force activity rates are from the ILO database Estimates and Projections of the Economically Active Population, 1950–2010. The ILO publishes estimates of the economically active population in its *Yearbook of Labour Statistics*.

Table 2.3a

The gap between men's and women's labor force participation is narrowing

Labor force participation rate (%)

	1980		1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Colombia	78.4	22.4	78.4	52.0
Egypt, Arab Rep.	72.4	7.4	73.4	21.6
France	70.7	44.4	62.3	47.2
Indonesia	84.7	44.3	82.3	52.8
Pakistan	87.2	7.0	82.3	12.7
Senegal	88.0	61.3	85.7	61.2

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market.

In almost all countries for which data are available, women are less likely than men to participate in the labor force. But the rates at which women do participate vary widely. Female labor force participation tends to be lowest in the Middle East and North Africa—and highest in Sub-Saharan Africa and the transition economies of Europe and Central Asia.

Where women's labor force participation is low, there are often cultural reasons. In the Middle East and North Africa strict gender segregation, stemming from religious strictures and concerns about marriageability, discourage schooling and work outside the home for girls and women. Where women's participation is high, as in several Sub-Saharan African countries, it often reflects their large role in agricultural work.

In many countries the gap between men's and women's participation narrowed in 1980–97, reflecting women's rising education levels, the expanding employment in services (occupations typically dominated by women), and changing norms and laws relating to women's economic role.