



The World's Women 2005 Progress in Statistics



United Nations

FACT SHEET | UNDER EMBARGO 12 NOON EST 18 JANUARY 2006

What Part Do Women Play in World Economic Activity? Their Contribution Still Not Fully Captured By Official Statistics

Slightly more than half of all countries provide gender specific data on economic activity, employment and unemployment and roughly a third of all countries do so frequently, according to a report released today from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on the state of statistics on women.

Since 1975, there has been “substantial improvement in terms of the number of countries or areas frequently reporting the economically active population by sex and age.” Much of this improvement is a result of the increasing number of countries or areas that produced these statistics from labour force surveys, in addition to censuses, in the last twenty years.

Women’s economic empowerment through employment is critical to achieving gender equality and their empowerment in other areas. In order for governments to plan and evaluate programmes, they require information on the economic activity of the population, including data on employment, unemployment, occupation and wages, which is disaggregated by sex, age and other socio-economic variables.

But for many countries, producing even the most basic statistics relating to the labour force remains a challenge. According to the report, titled *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics**, only 127 out of 204 countries or areas, comprising 50 per cent of the world’s population, reported the numbers of their economically active population at least once to the international statistical system during the most recent period 1995-2003.

Yet on a positive note, the report shows that where data in these areas is collected, it is almost always shown for both women and men.

Out of work but not out of the picture

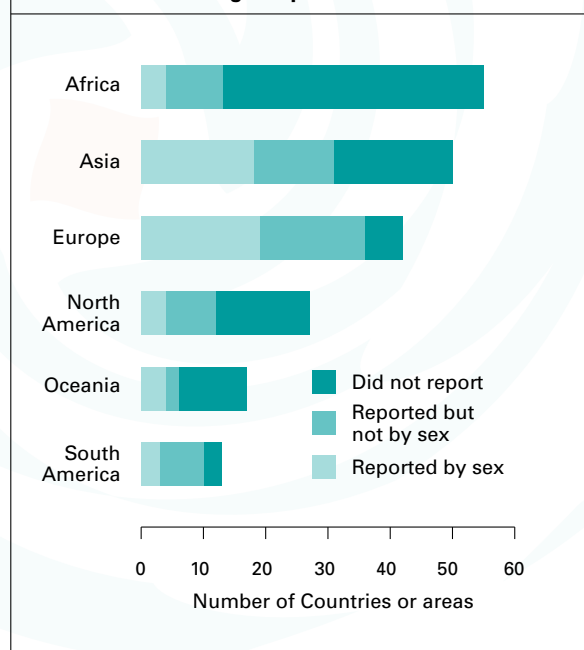
The biggest improvement by far in reporting among countries on work and economic activity is in the area of unemployment, according to *The World's Women* report.

The number of countries reporting unemployment data by sex has more than doubled in the last thirty years, to 114 from 45 countries or areas. Further breakdown of these statistics by age and educational level will help countries to monitor efforts to provide decent and productive work for their young women and men, as called for in the Millennium Development Goals.

Earning power

Closing the gap between women’s and men’s pay continues to be a major challenge in most parts of the world. Monitoring the size of this gap requires statistics on the earnings of women and men. According to the report, during the period 1995-2003, 108 of the 204 countries or areas reported data on wages by major industry group and less than a quarter of those 204 countries or areas reported them by sex. Countries or areas from Europe and Asia together account for almost three quarters of the countries or areas reporting data (see chart).

Chart 4.8. Number of countries or areas that reported data on wages by major industry group at least once during the period 1995-2003



Measuring time and the value of work

Time-use surveys, which measure how people spend their time throughout the day, enable the full extent of women's work and their contribution to the national economy to be recognized. According to the report, time-use surveys are increasingly being conducted in developing countries as well as developed countries, however it is still a new area and surveys remain ad hoc. There are not yet internationally agreed upon standards and methods for collecting time-use survey data.

Informal sector information still in its "infancy"

Collecting accurate and comprehensive information on the informal sector is difficult owing to the non-formal organizational structures and diverse activities and modes of operation. According to *The World's Women*, about 60 countries or areas have produced national statistics on employment in the informal sector since 1995. This is a relatively new area of national statistics, evidenced by the fact that an international statistical definition of informal employment was only adopted as recently as 1993 in an effort to standardize statistics. Methodological work has continued since then in this area.

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* *World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/17), United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.05.XVII.7, ISBN 92-1-161482-1 For more information see: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm>

The World's Women report is prepared by the Statistics Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) at regular five-year intervals starting in 1991. The three previous issues compiled and analyzed data on women's status world wide. Previous issues noted a lack of available official statistics disaggregated by sex. Therefore *The World's Women 2005* uniquely reviews and analyses the current availability of data and assesses progress made in the provision of national statistics, as opposed to internationally prepared estimates, relevant to gender concerns during the past 30 years. The first Annex table reports on the availability of national statistics of key gender concerns. The second Annex table provides updated figures for many of the indicators presented in *The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics*, plus some additional relevant indicators of the status of women and men.