

Source:

ILO: The changing role of women in the economy: Employment and social issues, Governing Body doc. GB.261/ESP/2/2, 261st Session (Geneva, November 1994).

In Africa, the rates of open unemployment for women are often double those for men and have been rising in recent years. In urban Kenya, 24.1 per cent of women versus 11.7 per cent of men were unemployed in 1991. In South Africa, women's unemployment rate was 9.3 per cent as compared to men's 8.0 per cent in 1991. And in Egypt, the comparative rates were 27.8 per cent of women and 6.3 per cent of men.

In the Caribbean (Bahamas, Jamaica) and some Latin American countries (Panama, Nicaragua), the gender differentials are particularly large in the context of high absolute levels of unemployment. In São Paulo (Brazil), 31 per cent of economically active women were unemployed as compared to 11 per cent of men; and the mean period of unemployment was much longer for women (11.2 months as compared to eight months for men). Underemployment, especially measured in terms of income relative to hours worked, is an almost exclusively female phenomenon. The "added worker" effect (more poor women entering the labour force to compensate for male unemployment or to make up for falling real household incomes) has been documented for Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay in the 1980s.

In the Asian and Pacific region, open unemployment rates from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s have been higher for women than for men in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka. In Pakistan for the period 1990-91, unemployment rates were 13.8 per cent for women versus 3.9 per cent for men in rural areas, and 27.8 per cent for women versus 5.9 per cent for men in urban areas. In Sri Lanka in 1992, 21.0 per cent of women in the labour force were unemployed as compared to 10.6 per cent of men. In Indonesia, unemployment rate increases with educational level for both sexes but the rate for women with senior high school education and above is almost twice as high as for their male counterparts. Only in labour-short economies of Hong Kong (China), Singapore and the Republic of Korea have female unemployment rates been lower than male rates.