

## Most women prefer to be working and the majority of men agree, ILO-Gallup report shows

International Labour Organization

The ILO-Gallup report, "*Towards a better future for women and work: Voices of women and men*", provides a first-ever account of global attitudes and perceptions of women and men regarding women and work. The results come from the Gallup World Poll which was conducted in 142 countries and territories and surveyed almost 149,000 adults. It is representative of more than 99 per cent of the global adult population.

The findings are revealing: A total of 70 per cent of women and a similar 66 per cent of men would prefer that women work at paid jobs. Each of these figures are more than double the percentages of those who would prefer women to stay at home. Women worldwide would prefer to be either working at paid jobs (29 per cent) or be in situations in which they could both work and take care of their families (41 per cent), according to the joint ILO-Gallup report. Only 27 per cent of women want to stay at home.

The 70 per cent of women who would like to work at paid jobs notably includes a majority of women who are not in the workforce. Importantly, this is true in almost all regions worldwide, including several regions where women's labour force participation is traditionally low, such as the Arab States and territories.

### Women's and men's views converge

Men's views are very similar to women's in many instances, the report showed.

Twenty-eight per cent of men would like women in their families to have paid jobs, 29 per cent would like them to only stay at home, and 38 per cent would prefer they be able to do both. At the global level, women who are working full time for an employer (more than 30 hours a week by Gallup's definition) are more likely to prefer situations where they can balance work and family/home obligations. Women and men with higher levels of education are also more likely to prefer that women both work at paid jobs and provide care.

"This survey clearly shows that most women and men around the globe prefer that women have paid jobs. Family-supportive policies, which enable women to remain and progress in paid employment and encourage men to take their fair share of care work, are crucial to achieving gender equality at work," ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder,

said.

In addition to polling people's preferences about women and work, respondents were asked whether it was acceptable for women in their families to have paid jobs. Women were more likely than men to consider paid jobs perfectly acceptable (83 per cent), while men lagged a bit behind (77 per cent).

Families play a significant role in shaping these attitudes: among women in households in which it is not acceptable for women to work outside the home, about one in three would like to work at paid jobs. Worldwide, adults become slightly less likely to agree that working outside the home is acceptable for women in their families if there are children younger than 15 in the household.

How do people feel about women and work?

### Work-family balance

Reconciling work with care for their families, however, poses a significant challenge for working women globally. In fact, both men and women in the vast majority of countries and territories surveyed mention, "balance between work and family" as one of the top problems facing women in paid jobs.

Other issues such as unfair treatment, abuse, harassment in the workplace, lack of good-paying jobs and unequal pay also emerge among the top problems in various regions of the world.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, about as many cite reasons that fall into the response category of "unfair treatment/discrimination" in the workplace (19 per cent) as mention work-family balance (18 per cent). In Northern, Southern and Western Europe, more mention work-family balance, but equal pay is also viewed as an important challenge.

And in Northern America, people are most likely to cite unequal pay (30 per cent), followed by work-family balance (16 per cent) and unfair treatment/discrimination (15 per cent). In Northern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and the Arab States, "family members do not approve of women working" is among the top five most frequently mentioned obstacles that working women face.

The obstacles that women see facing working women change with age. Young women between the ages of 15 and 29 are more likely than older women to mention unfair treatment, abuse or harassment at work. Meanwhile, those between 30 and 44 are

more likely than women in other age groups to mention lack of affordable care for their children and families. And, as women get older, they become more likely to mention unequal pay relative to men.

## Women's earnings and jobs: Growing equality?

Worldwide, the majority of women who are employed say what they earn is a significant source (30 per cent) or main source (26 per cent) of their household's income. Men are still more likely than women to report being the main providers: 48 per cent of employed men say what they earn is the main source of their household's income.

However, among employed women and men with higher levels of education, the gap regarding their contribution to their household's income is smaller.

Globally, women and men share similar views on women's employment opportunities. The report found that, if a woman has similar education and experience to a man, women and men worldwide are most likely to say that she has the same opportunity to find a good job in the city or area where they live. Worldwide, 25 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men say that women have better opportunities in finding good jobs. Existing evidence however, shows gender gaps in labour markets worldwide.

These attitudes vary, however, from region to region, and largely along women's educational attainment and their level of participation in the labour force. Northern America, for example, leads other regions in terms of perceived equal opportunity. The majority in the region (55 per cent) say a woman with similar qualifications as a man has the same opportunity to find a good job. Men (60 per cent) are more likely than women (50 per cent) to feel this way.

Northern, Western, and Southern Europe as well as Eastern Europe, on the other hand, lead other regions in terms of perceiving worse opportunities for women who have similar experiences and educational qualifications as men.

Worldwide, the more educated women are, the less likely they are to see better opportunities in the job market for women who are similarly qualified as men. However, men's views on women's opportunities do not change much with the level of their education.

The report is expected to help shape future ILO action in the context of its Women at Work Centenary Initiative, which aims at achieving full and lasting gender equality in a changing world of work.

"The world needs to advance gender equality and empower women at work. Not just for the benefit of women, but for the benefit of all humankind," said Jim Clifton, Chairman and CEO of Gallup.