

Where are Women?

An infographic snapshot of jobs *in* five strategic sectors



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About IFC

IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2025, IFC committed a record \$71.7 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging private sector solutions and mobilizing private capital to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

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Executive Summary

Jobs are the most reliable pathway out of poverty. They provide incomes, dignity, and stability, while strengthening communities and expanding opportunities for women. Recognizing the central role of employment in economic transformation, the World Bank Group (WBG) Jobs Council has identified five strategic sectors with strong potential to generate local jobs at scale:



Agribusiness



Tourism



Healthcare



Value-added Manufacturing



Infrastructure and Energy

This snapshot assessment asks a fundamental question: Where are women in these sectors today? To answer this, the research team drew on the latest available labor market data from International Labour Organization Statistics (ILOSTAT), as well as complementary datasets from the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade), Lightcast, the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Harvard Growth Lab. The results were used to map industries and provide a baseline of women's participation in the five strategic sectors, with a focus on eight dimensions of employment:

1. Women's overall representation across sectors
2. Informality
3. Occupational segregation
4. Education
5. Firm size distribution
6. Working hours
7. Emerging demand for labor captured through online job advertisements
8. Product complexity (for the value-added manufacturing sector only)

When combined, the five sectors account for between 47 to 66 percent of total employment across regions, highlighting their importance for job creation and economic development. However, women's participation varies substantially across sectors.

Of the five sectors, agribusiness is the largest employer, with women comprising 28 to 45 percent of its workforce. However, most of these jobs are informal, lower-skilled positions, with women underrepresented in higher-skill and managerial occupations. In addition, women are often concentrated in small agribusinesses. The healthcare sector has the highest prevalence of women workers, and in most regions they make up the majority of the healthcare workforce. However, the sector itself accounts for a relatively small share of total employment in almost all regions. Infrastructure and energy remains the most male-dominated sector, with women accounting for only a small fraction of workers across most countries.

In value-added manufacturing, women represent 26 to 45 percent of workers across regions, although participation declines sharply in South Asia and the Middle East. Women tend to be concentrated in medium-skilled clerical and service roles, with limited representation in higher-skilled occupations. The analysis of manufacturing complexity also reveals that women are disproportionately employed in low product complexity industries, such as textiles and apparel, while their presence remains limited in higher-value and technologically complex sectors, including electronics and advanced manufacturing.

The tourism sector presents a mixed picture. Women account for a large share of employment in several regions and make up more than half of all workers in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. However, their jobs are heavily concentrated in service and clerical occupations, and are often characterized by long working hours and high

informality. Despite these challenges, tourism offers relatively accessible points for women to enter the labor market, particularly for those without advanced degrees.

Across the five sectors, several broad patterns emerge. Women are most frequently employed in medium-skill occupations such as clerical, service, and support roles, while they remain underrepresented in technical, machine-operation, and leadership positions. Informality is pervasive in many sectors—particularly agribusiness and manufacturing—raising concerns about job quality and access to social protections. At the same time, women in sectors such as healthcare and infrastructure tend to have higher levels of education, reflecting greater skill barriers to entry.

Online job advertisements provide important data on emerging demand for labor. This data indicates that job opportunities are growing in several sectors, particularly in healthcare and in technical roles in manufacturing and infrastructure. However, many of these jobs require post-secondary or tertiary qualifications, with a potential mismatch between women's current employment patterns and the skills demanded by these expanding industries.

This infographic snapshot provides a baseline for understanding women's position in the five strategic sectors prioritized for job creation. While women already play an important role across several sectors, their participation remains constrained by occupational segregation, skill gaps, informality, and limited representation in higher-value segments of production.

The analysis is intended as a starting point and does not address questions related to policy. A deeper investigation of gender dynamics within these sectors—including constraints, enabling policies, and private-sector opportunities—will be essential to identify pathways for expanding women's access to quality jobs in these growing industries.

Introduction

All economies require the equal participation of both women and men to reach their full potential. Employment opportunities are a key to realizing this goal and to creating a world free of poverty on a livable planet. Yet women's participation in labor markets remains uneven across sectors, occupations, and regions. To accelerate job creation, the World Bank Group High-Level Advisory Council on Jobs has identified five strategic sectors with strong potential to generate employment at scale: **agribusiness, healthcare, infrastructure and energy, tourism, and value-added manufacturing**. These sectors are critical engines of economic growth and together account for a large share of employment in many economies.

This infographic snapshot asks a simple but important question: **Where are women in these sectors?** Drawing on globally-comparable labor force data compiled by ILOSTAT, as well as complementary datasets from UN Comtrade, Lightcast, UNESCO, and Harvard Growth Lab, this report shines a light on where women work, the types of jobs they hold, and the conditions under which they participate in the labor market.

The analysis focuses on several key dimensions of employment, including women's share of the workforce, occupational roles, education, firm size, distribution, informality, working hours, and skill requirements. It also

combines labor market data with complementary sources such as online job postings to provide additional insights into emerging job opportunities and sectoral dynamics.

Rather than a comprehensive assessment, this report provides a visual overview of the current landscape through a snapshot of women in the workforce. By presenting key patterns across the five sectors, it aims to highlight where progress has been made, where gaps remain, and where future efforts could expand economic opportunities for women. It does not address policy-related questions, but it does provide a foundation for further discussion and analysis in those areas.

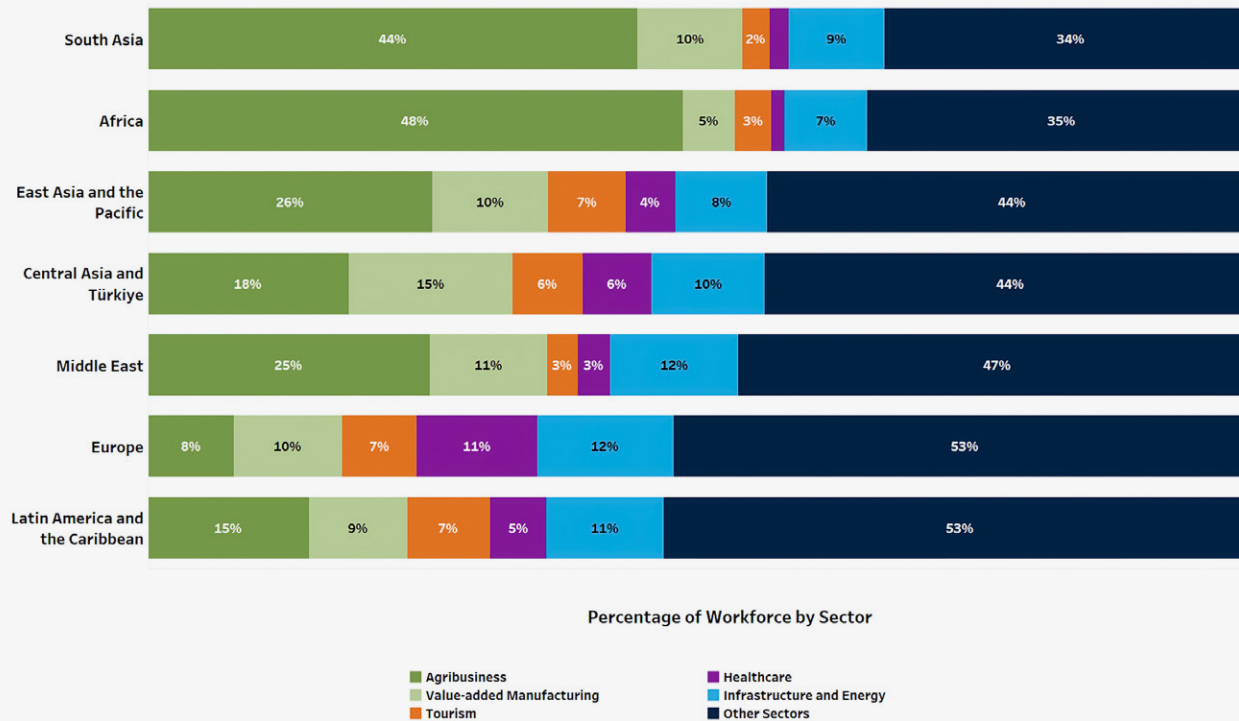
Unless otherwise noted, the infographics and figures in this report are based on the latest available ILOSTAT data for each country accessed on February, 2026.¹ More technical information on the data and methodology can be found in the annexes.

¹ Sixty-six percent of the data is from 2022 onwards.

An Overview of the Five Strategic Sectors

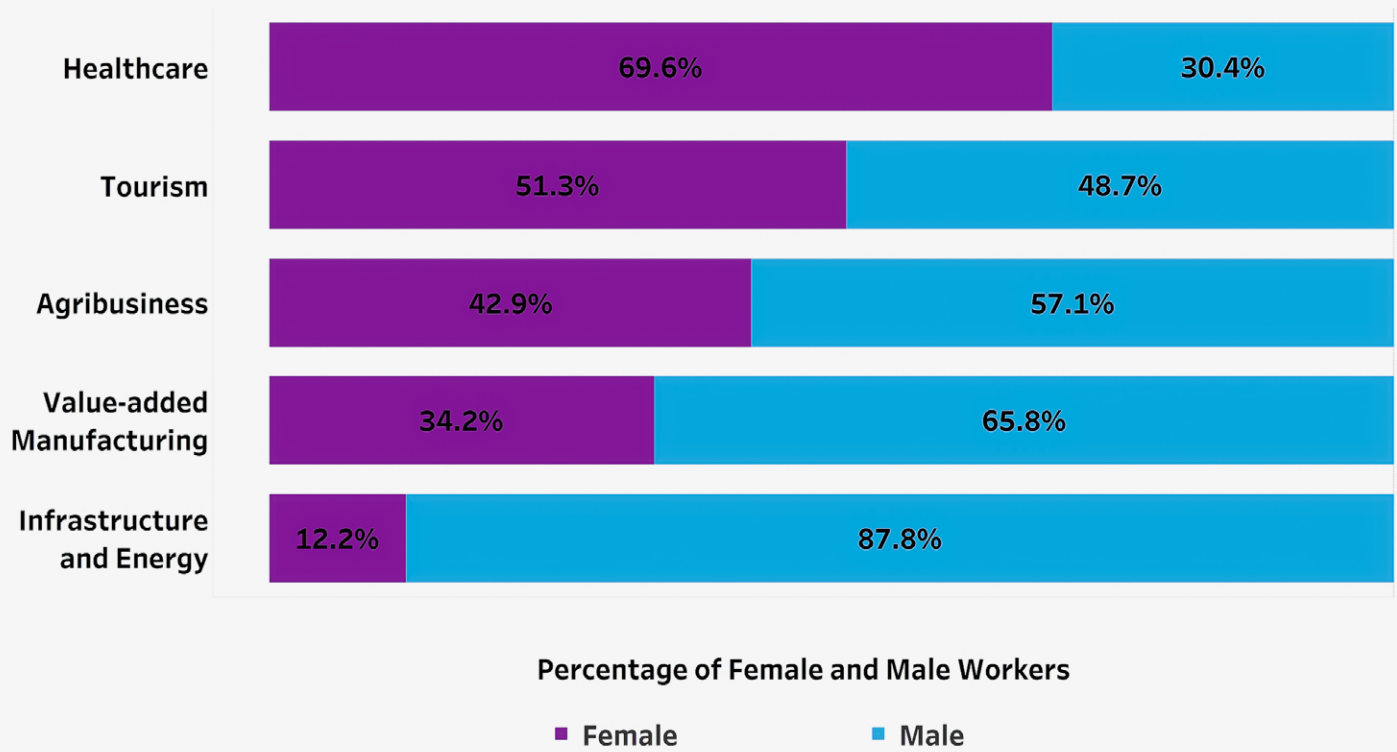
According to ILOSTAT data, the five strategic sectors account for 47 to 66 percent of total employment across regions.

FIGURE 1
Sectoral Distribution of Workers Across Regions



The share of female employment is highest in the healthcare sector and lowest in infrastructure and energy.

FIGURE 2
Share of Female and Male Workers by Sector



Among women, informal work is most common in the agribusiness sector. Although informality is least prevalent in healthcare, women still make up a larger proportion of informal workers in the sector, reflecting their greater share of the overall healthcare workforce.

FIGURE 3
Share of Women in Informal Jobs by Sector

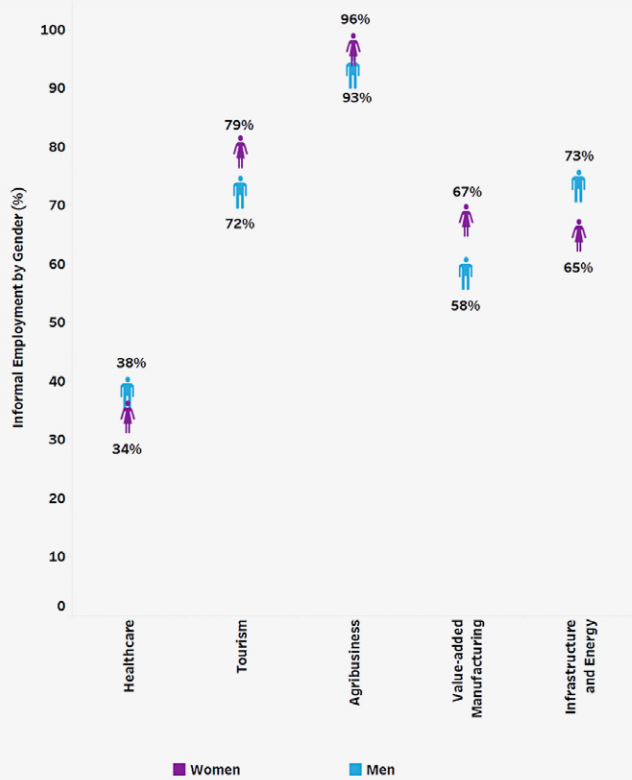
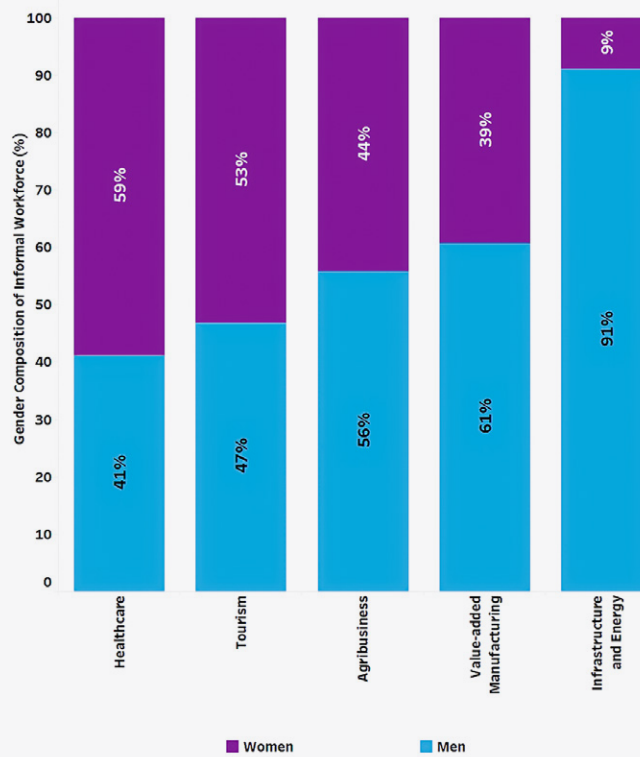
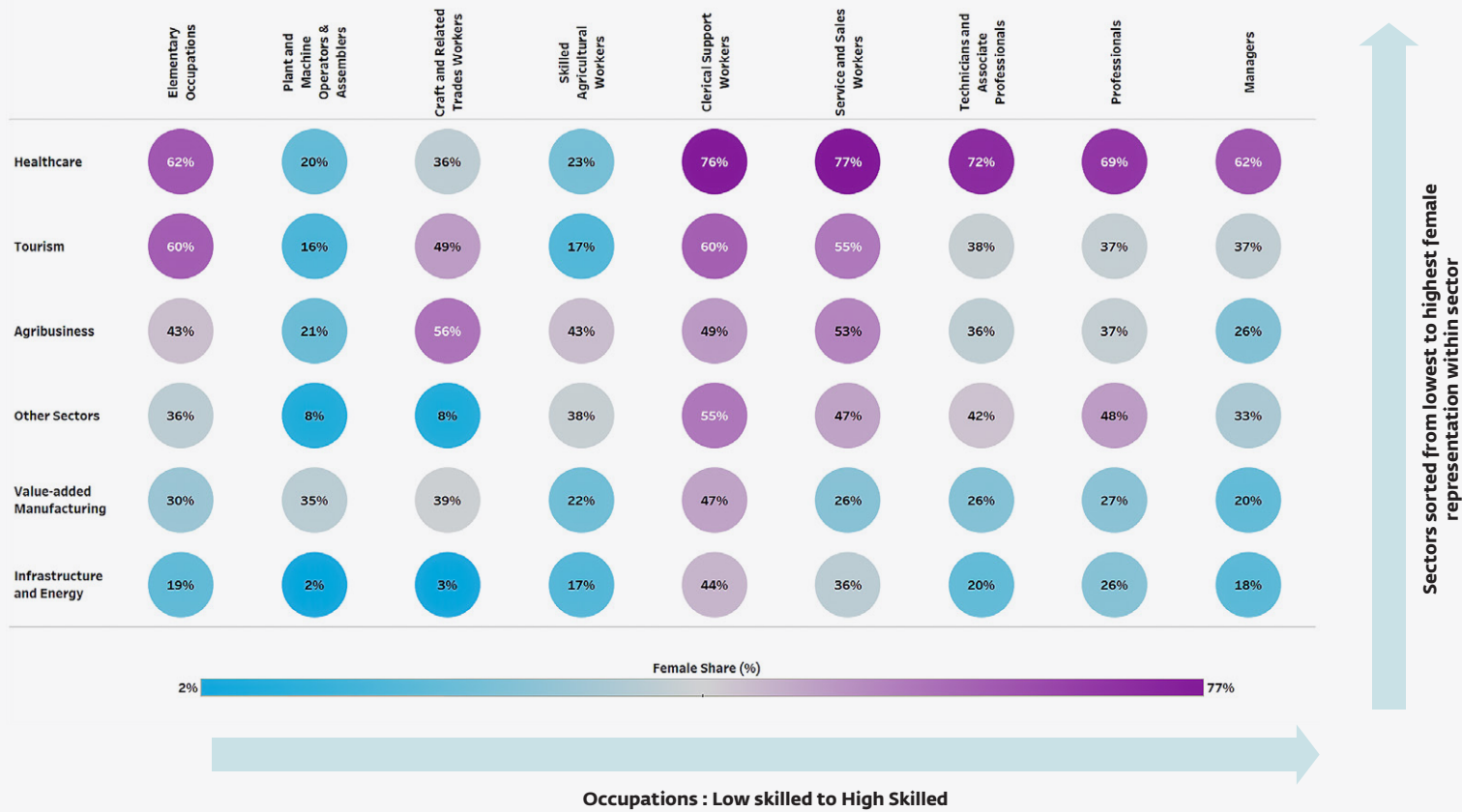


FIGURE 4
Gender Composition of Informal Workforce by Sector



Women mostly hold medium-skilled jobs such as clerical, sales, and service occupations, while they are least commonly found in plant and Machine Operators & Assemblers roles, and in leadership positions in sectors other than healthcare.

FIGURE 5
Share of Women Workers by Occupational Category and Sector



Women in healthcare, infrastructure and energy, and tourism tend to be more highly-educated than in other sectors.

FIGURE 6
Share of Women Workers with Post-Secondary Qualifications by Sector and Region



In agribusiness, half of all female workers are employed in small enterprises, while women in healthcare and manufacturing are more likely to work for medium or large employers.

FIGURE 7
Gender Composition of Workforce by Sector and Firm Size

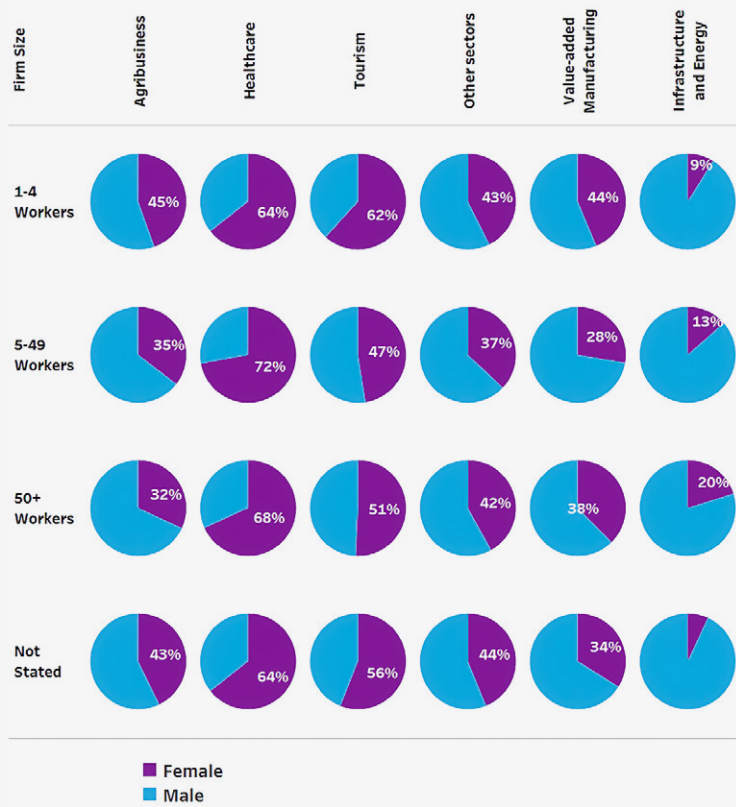
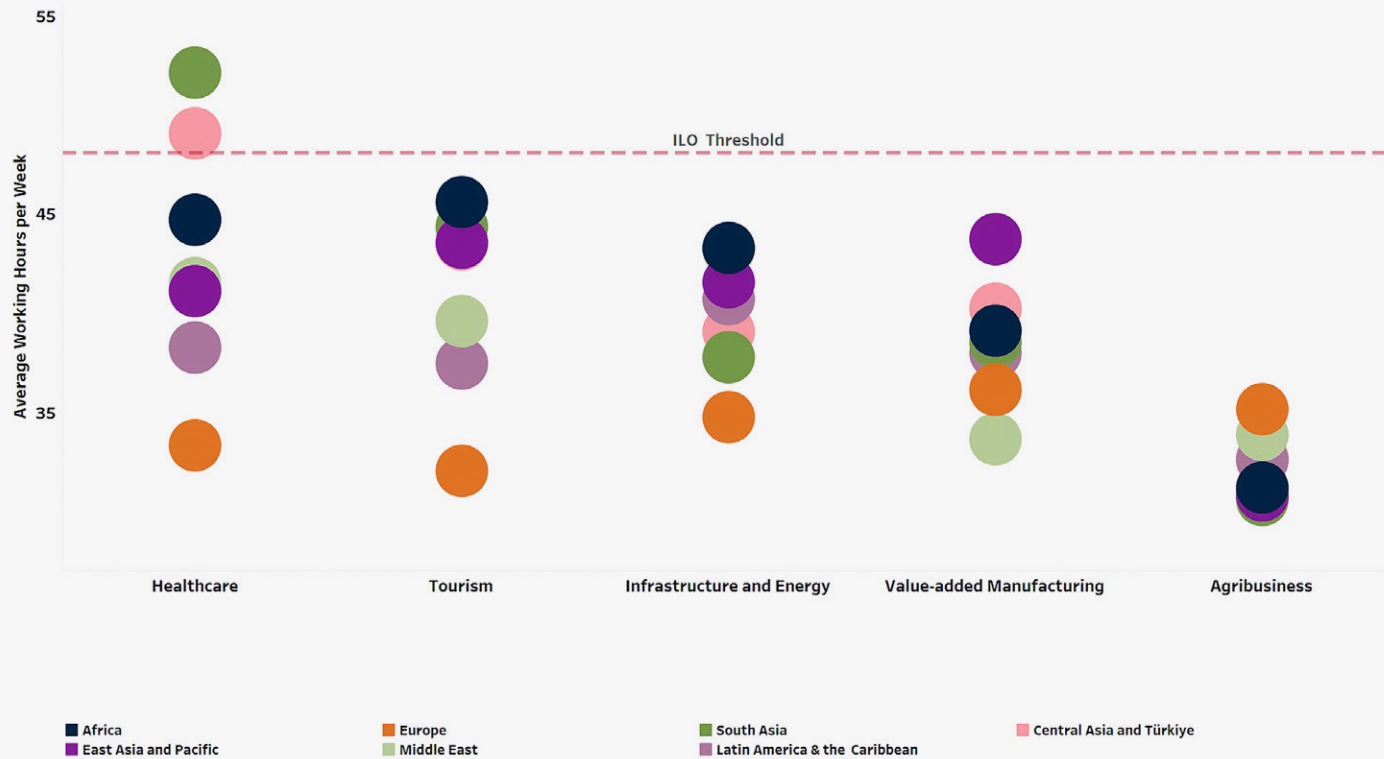


FIGURE 8
Distribution of Agribusiness Workers by Firm Size



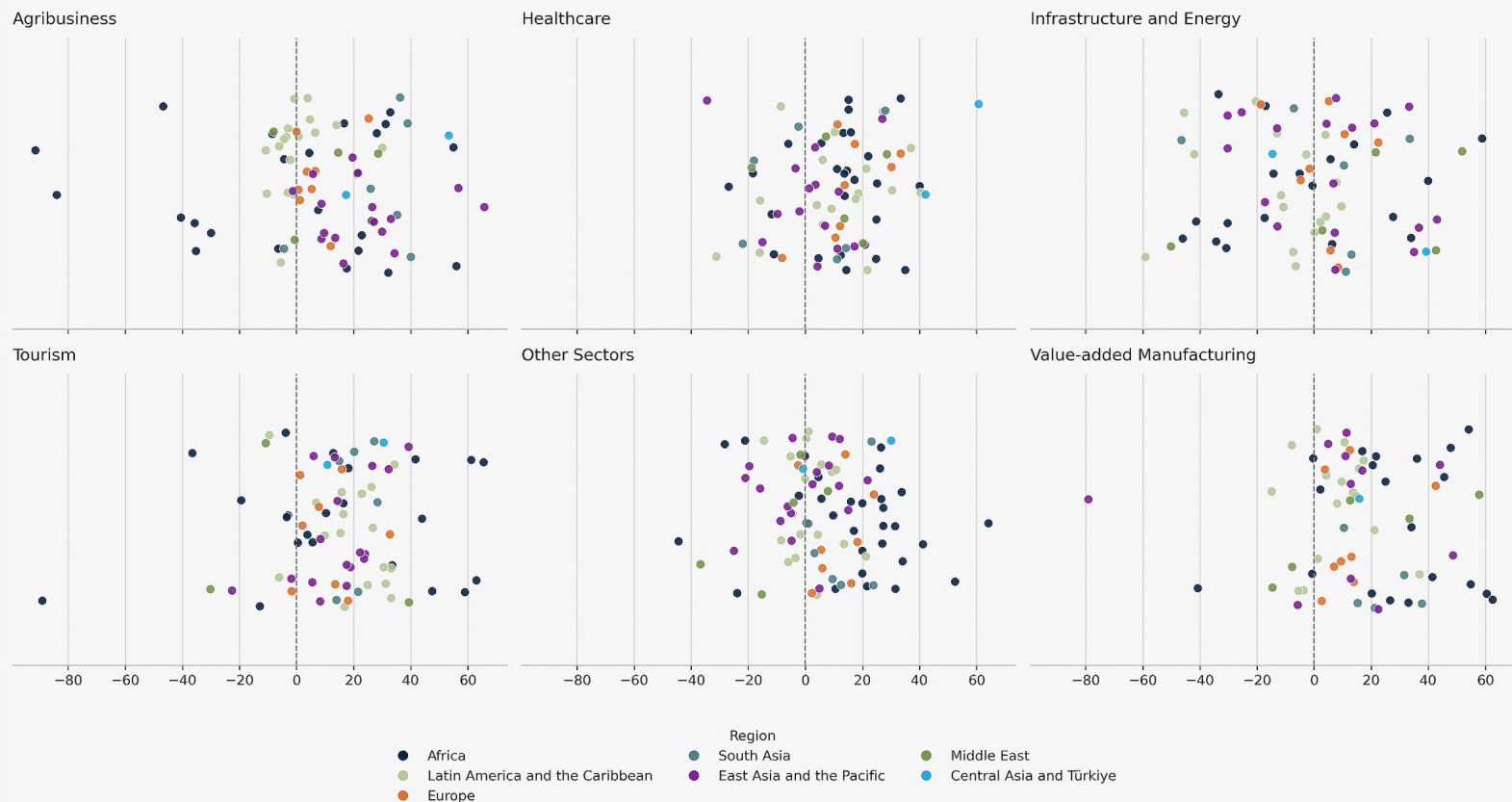
Women in healthcare and tourism work the longest number of hours each week, and in some regions, this exceeds the 48-hour threshold set by the International Labour Organization.

FIGURE 9
Average Working Hours for Women per Week by Sector



The unconditional gender wage gap in the five sectors hovers between 10 to 20 percent for most countries—but there are significant differences among them.²

FIGURE 10
Unconditional Gender Wage Gap by Sector and Region



² The unconditional gender wage gap reflects the raw difference in earnings between all male and female workers, while the conditional gender wage gap measures pay differences between men and women with similar education, experience, occupation, sector, and other characteristics.

Where are Women? An infographic snapshot of jobs in five strategic sectors

Agribusiness

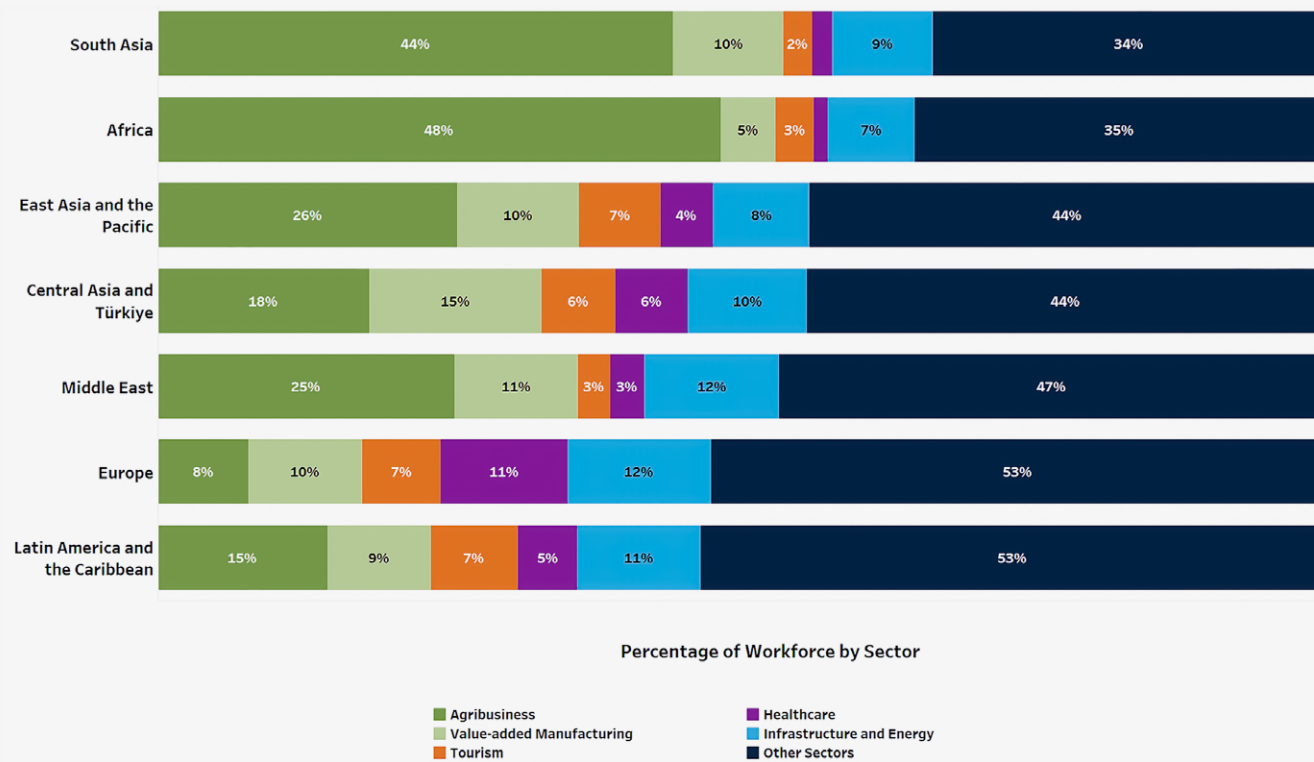
Agribusiness is the largest employer among the five strategic sectors, providing jobs to a substantial share of the global workforce and offering important opportunities for women. Across regions, women account for roughly 28 to 45 percent of agribusiness workers, although participation varies significantly depending on regional economic structures and labor market conditions. Women are primarily concentrated in low- and medium-skilled occupations such as crop production, elementary jobs, clerical roles, and service-related activities. The majority of female workers in agribusiness do not possess post-secondary education, reflecting both the relatively low skill requirements of many jobs and the limited access to formal training opportunities in rural and agricultural economies.

Female employment in agribusiness is also strongly associated with small establishments and informal work arrangements. Many women work on small farms or in family-operated businesses, where labor protections and social benefits are often limited. Informality is pervasive across the sector and tends to be slightly higher among women than men in most regions. Despite these constraints, agribusiness remains an important entry point for women into the labor market, with relatively low barriers. As the largest job-generator among the sectors, agribusiness presents significant potential for expanding employment opportunities for lower-skilled women.



Women represent about 40 percent of agribusiness workers, except in Latin America and the Caribbean.

FIGURE 11
Sectoral Distribution of Workers by Region



Women represent about 40 percent of agribusiness workers, except in Latin America and the Caribbean.

FIGURE 12
Share of Female and Male Agribusiness Workers by Region

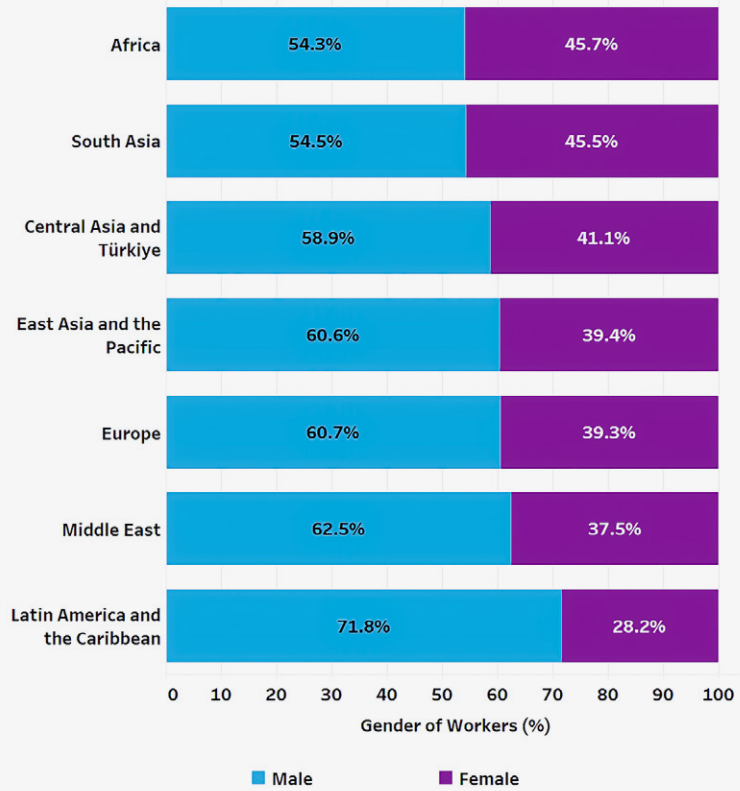
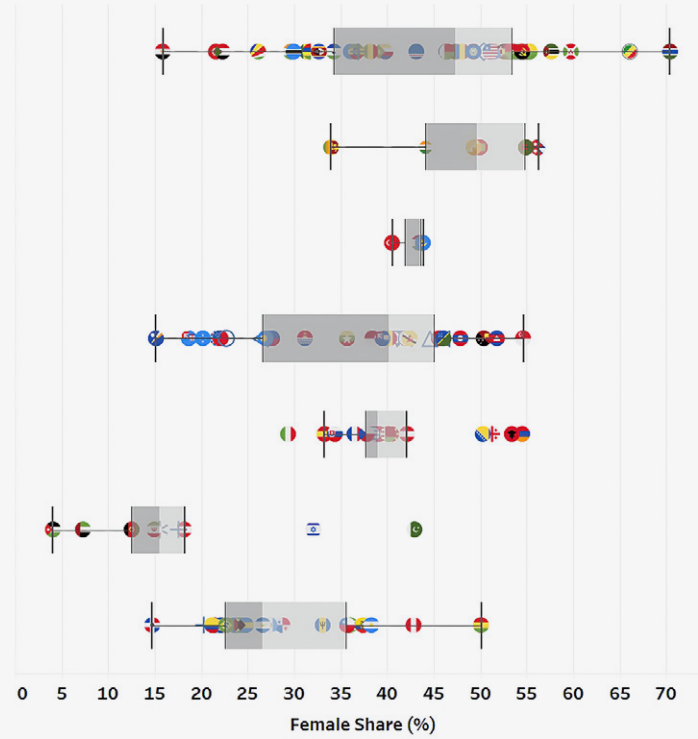


FIGURE 13
Share of Women Agribusiness Workers by Country



Informality is pervasive across the sector, with women making up 28 to 51 percent of informal workers. More than 97 percent of agribusiness jobs held by women in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa are informal.

FIGURE 14
Gender Composition of the Informal Agribusiness Workforce by Region

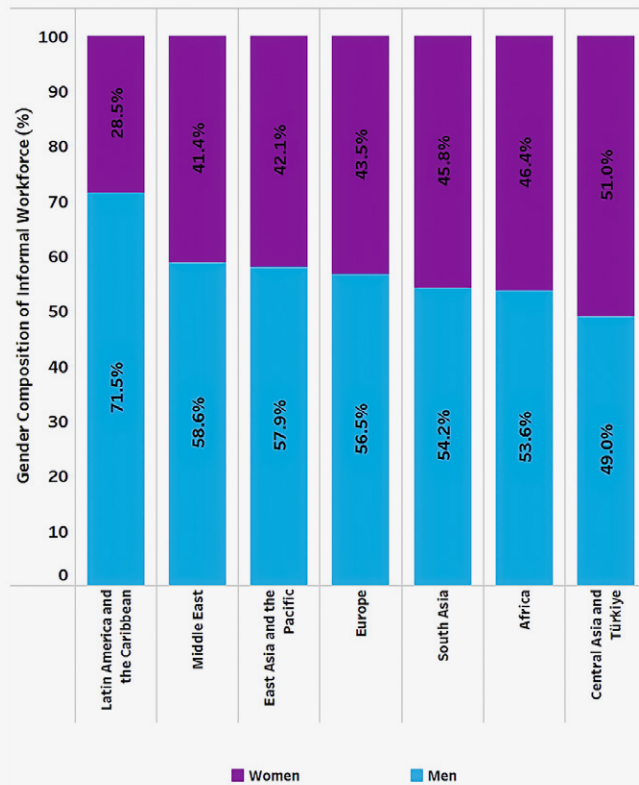


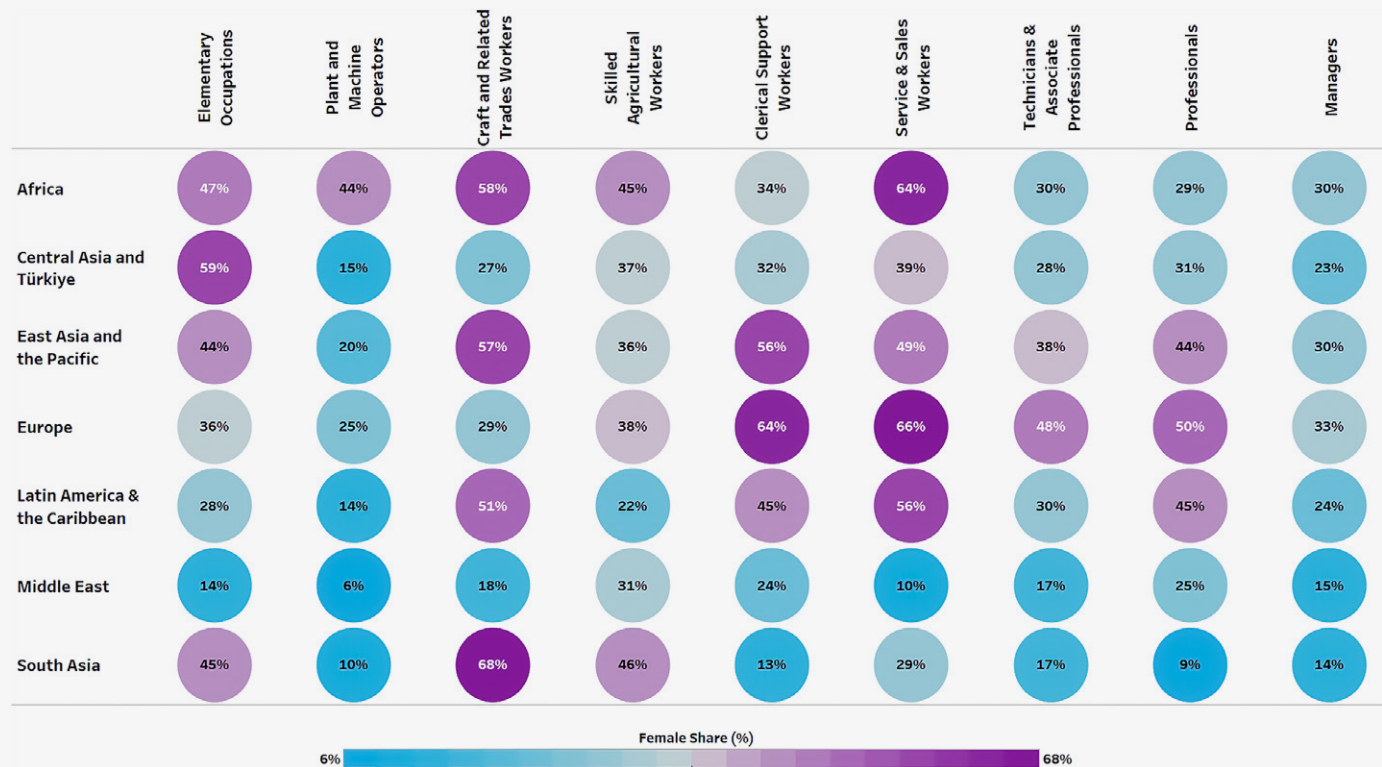
FIGURE 15
Share of Women in Informal Agribusiness Jobs by Region



Women are concentrated in low and medium-skilled occupations such as elementary jobs, craft and trade positions, clerical, and service-related roles.

FIGURE 16

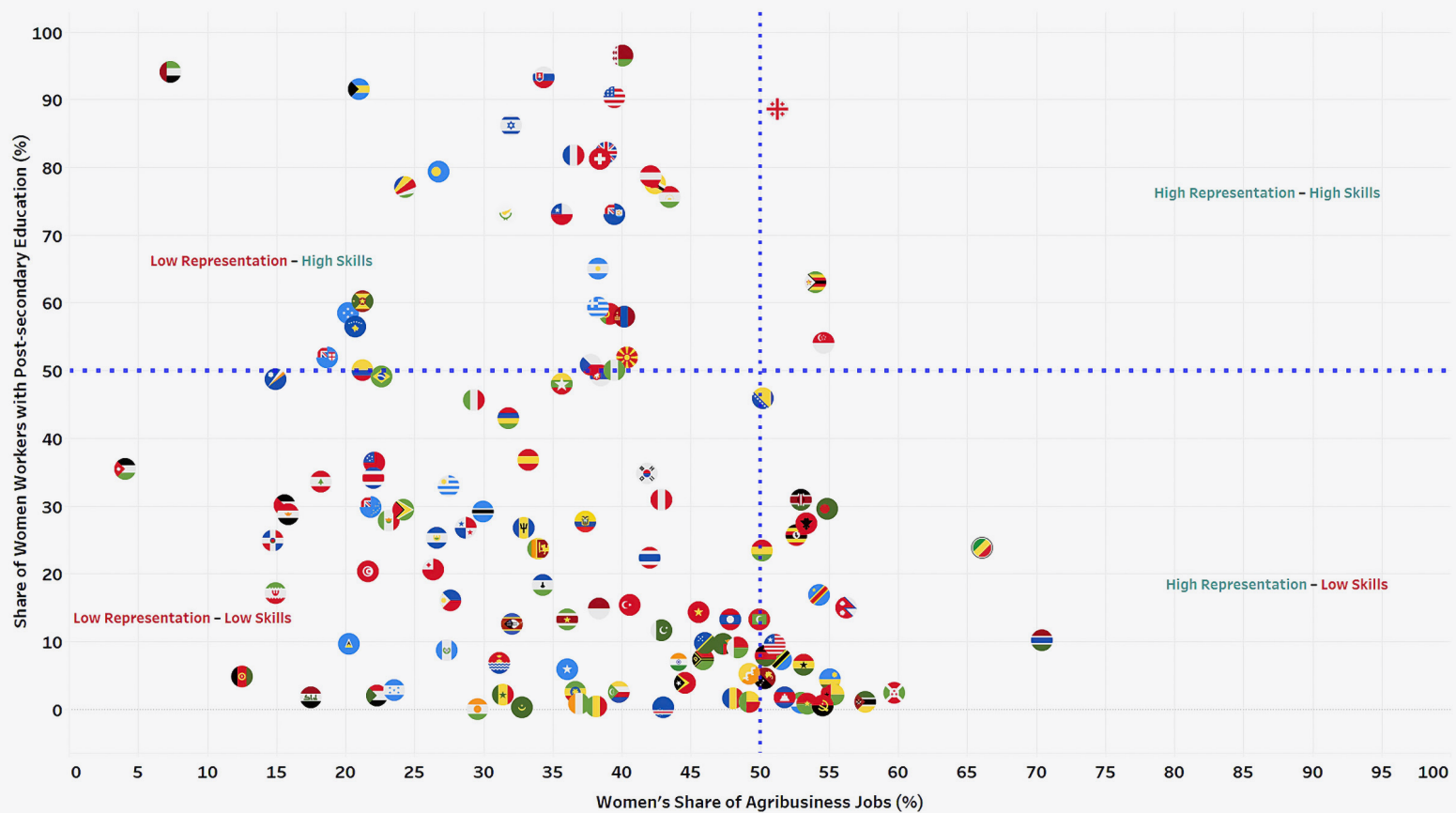
Share of Women Agribusiness Workers by Occupational Category



Most women working in agribusiness do not have post-secondary education — especially in developing and emerging economies.

FIGURE 17

Women’s Representation and Educational Qualifications in the Agribusiness Sector by Country

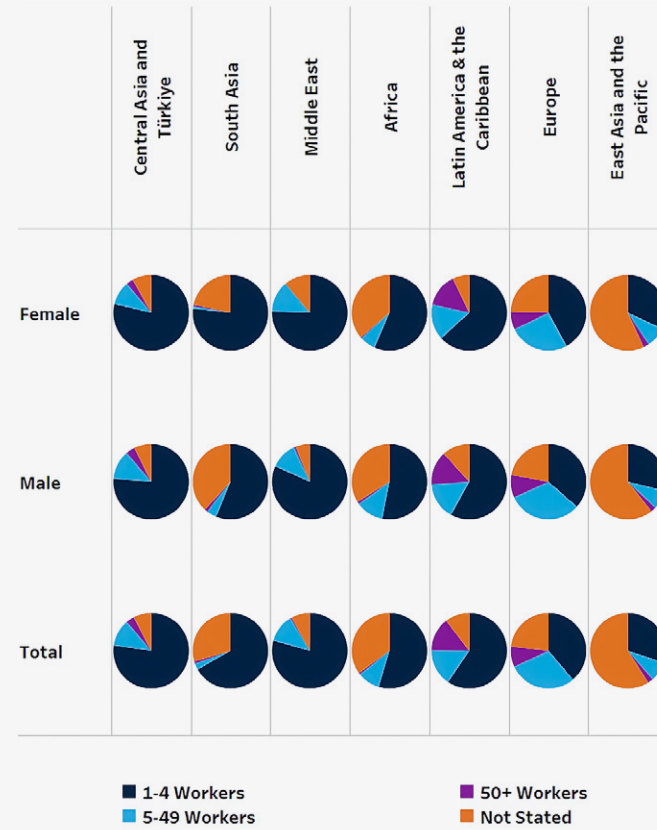


In most regions, women in the agribusiness sector are more likely to work for small farms and enterprises.

FIGURE 18
Gender Composition of Agribusiness Workforce by Region and Firm Size

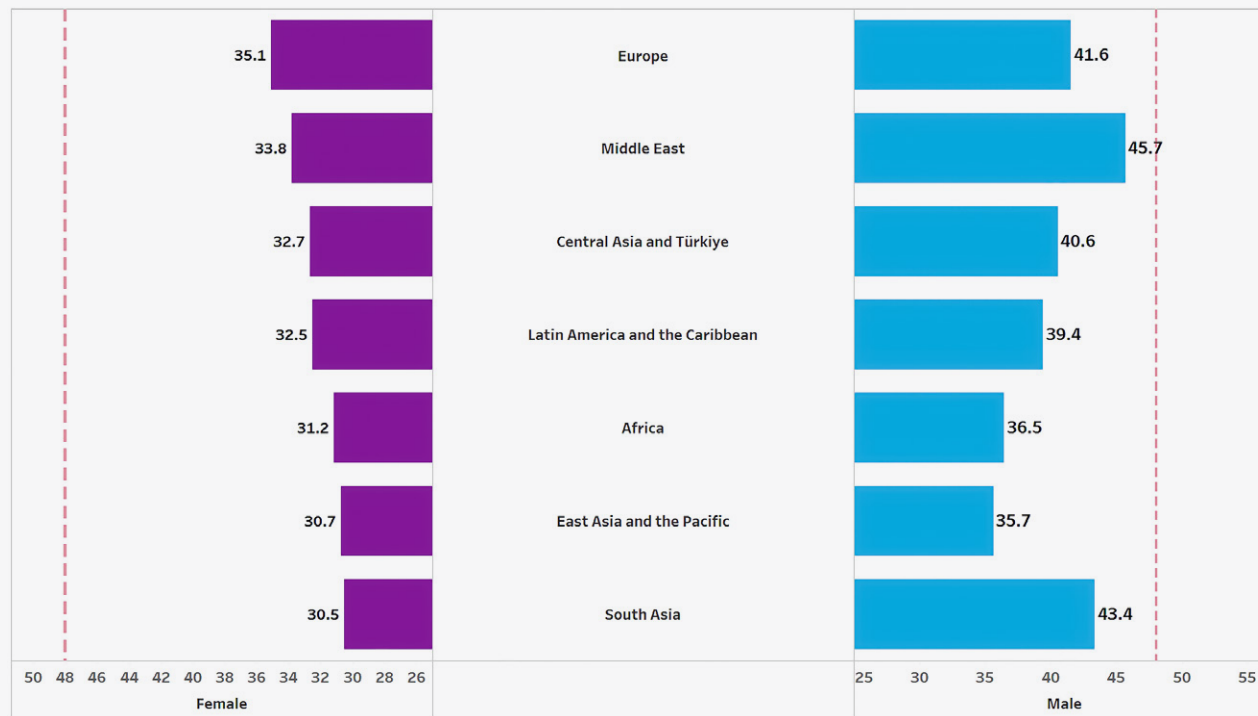


FIGURE 19
Distribution of Agribusiness Workers by Firm Size



Women work less than 40 hours a week in the agribusiness sector.

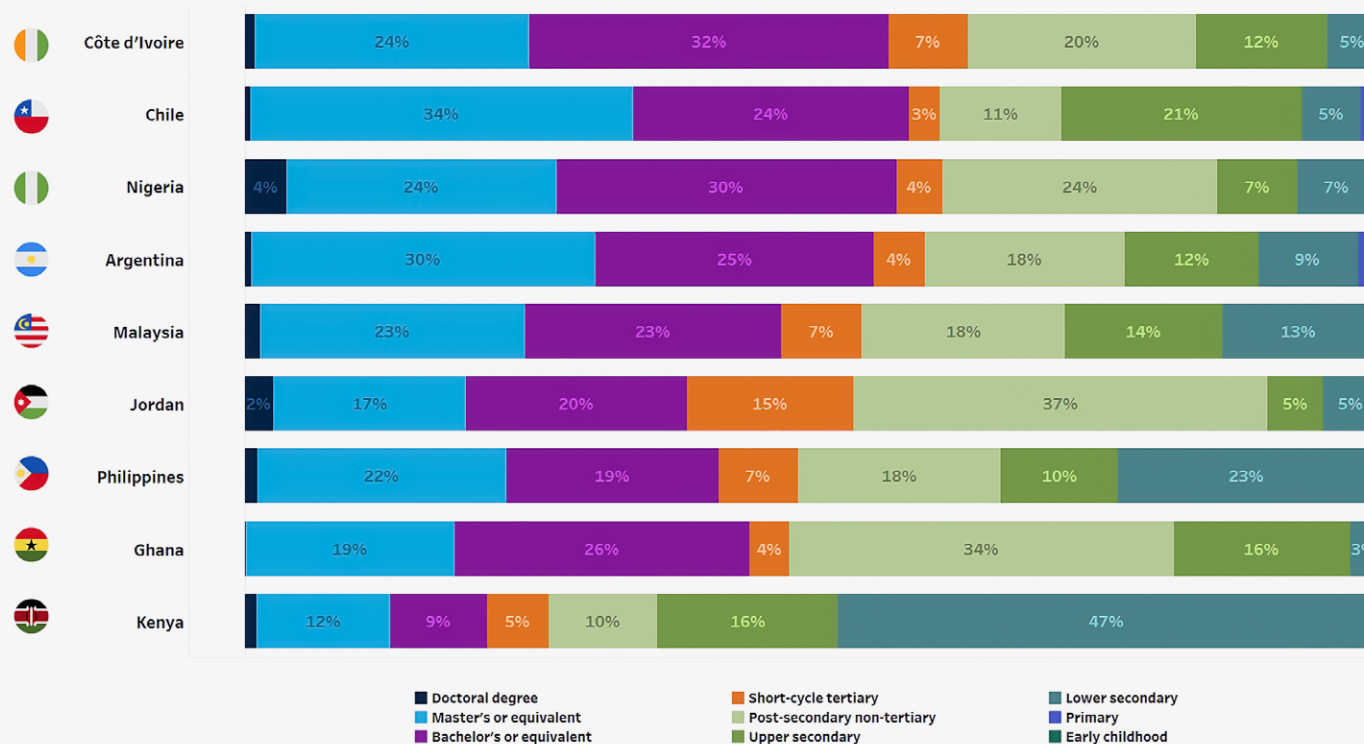
FIGURE 20
Average Weekly Work Hours in Agribusiness by Gender and Region



Note: The vertical red dashed line indicates the ILO threshold for excessive working hours.

Educational requirements listed in advertisements for agribusiness jobs vary widely across countries, reflecting differences in sector development, technology use, and workforce structure.

FIGURE 21
Education Required in Online Agribusiness Job Advertisements in Selected Countries



Source: Lightcast and UNESCO analysis of job advertisements posted online from July 2024-June 2025.

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Healthcare

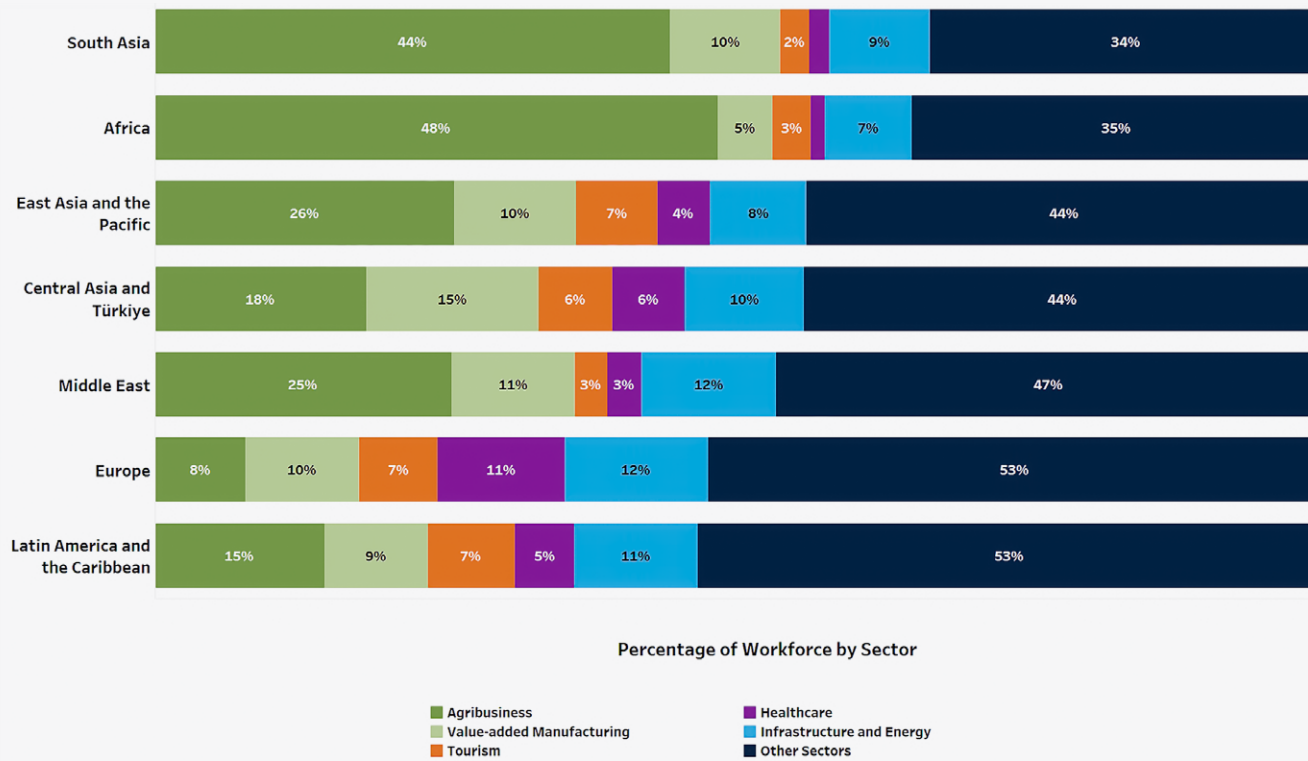
Among the five priority sectors, healthcare has the greatest proportion of women workers. Across regions, women make up between 45 and 75 percent of healthcare workers, reflecting the sector's strong association with care-related occupations. However, healthcare is one of the smaller sectors in terms of overall job numbers, accounting for less than 10 percent of total employment in many countries. Women hold a wide range of roles—from doctors, nurses and health technicians to administrative staff, logistics personnel, and health information specialists. However, they remain underrepresented in leadership, plant and machine operation, and managerial positions.

Healthcare is the most skill-intensive of the five priority sectors. In most countries, at least one-third of female healthcare workers hold a post-secondary degree, and the sector generally offers more formal employment opportunities than other sectors. However, long working hours are common, with women often working from 38 to over 50 hours per week in some regions. As global demand for health services continues to grow, the sector offers significant opportunities for skilled female employment.



Healthcare employs just 1.2 to 10.6 percent of workers, making it the smallest employer of the five sectors.

FIGURE 22
Sectoral Distribution of Workers Across Regions



Women constitute 45 to 75 percent of the healthcare workforce.

FIGURE 23
Share of Female and Male Healthcare Workers by Region

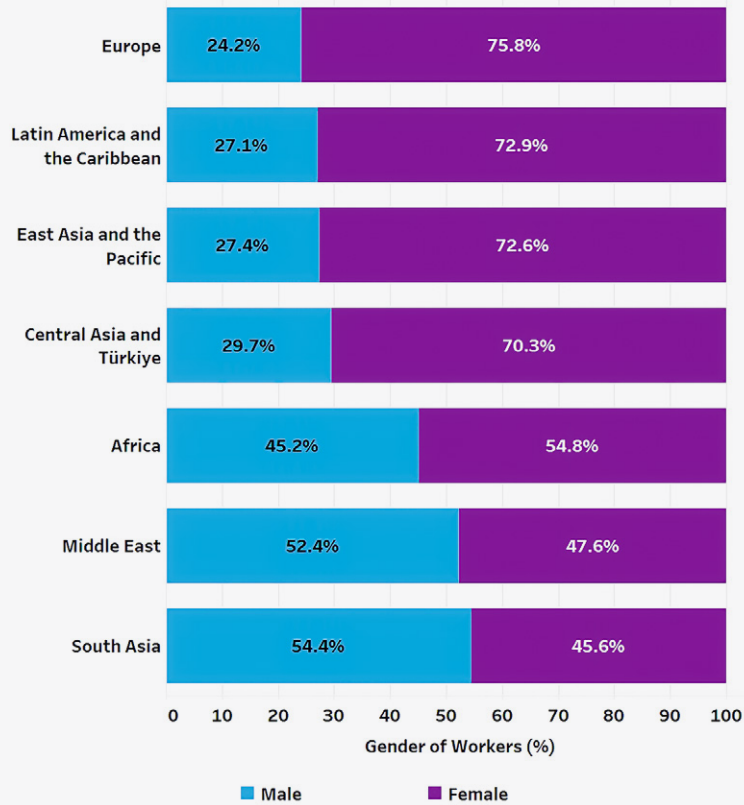
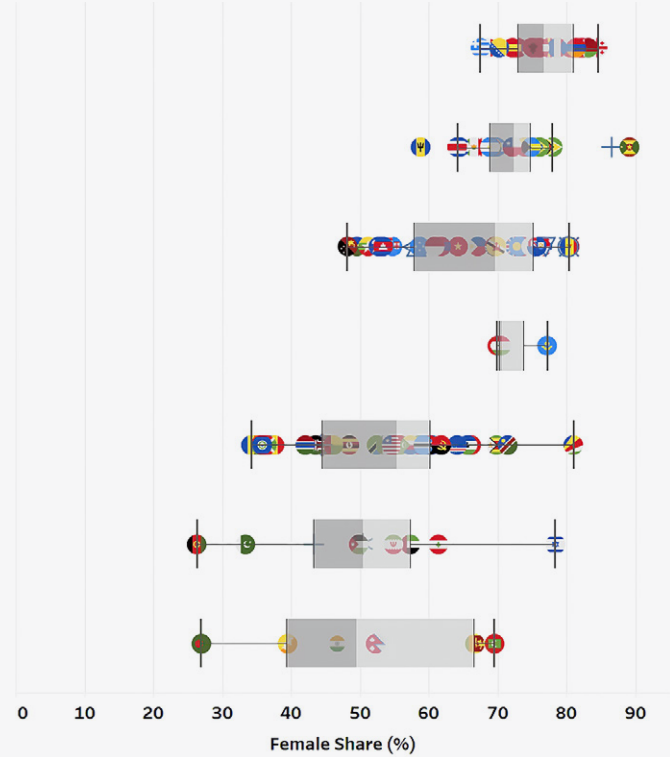


FIGURE 24
Share of Women Healthcare Workers by Country



Most healthcare workers have formal jobs, but women still constitute the majority of informal healthcare workers in most regions, except in the Middle East and South Asia.

FIGURE 25
Gender Composition of the Informal Healthcare Workforce by Region

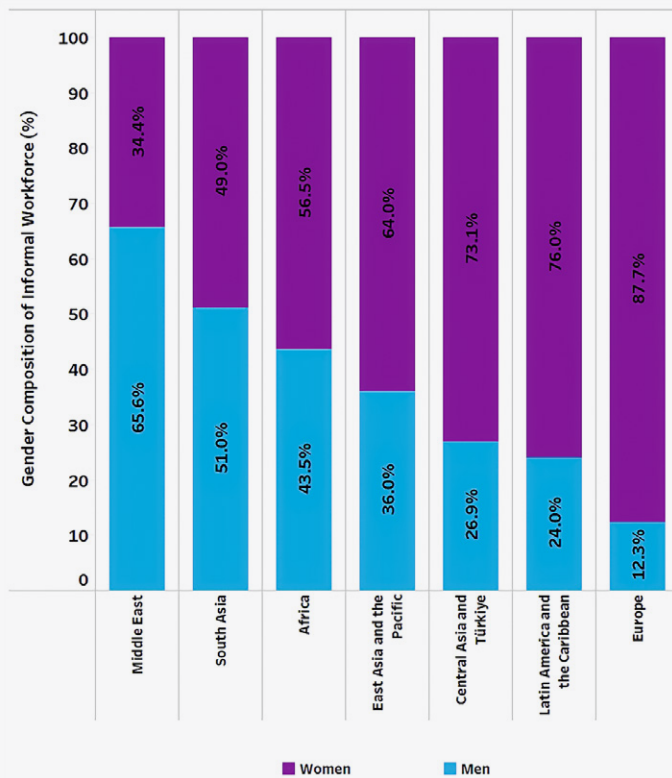
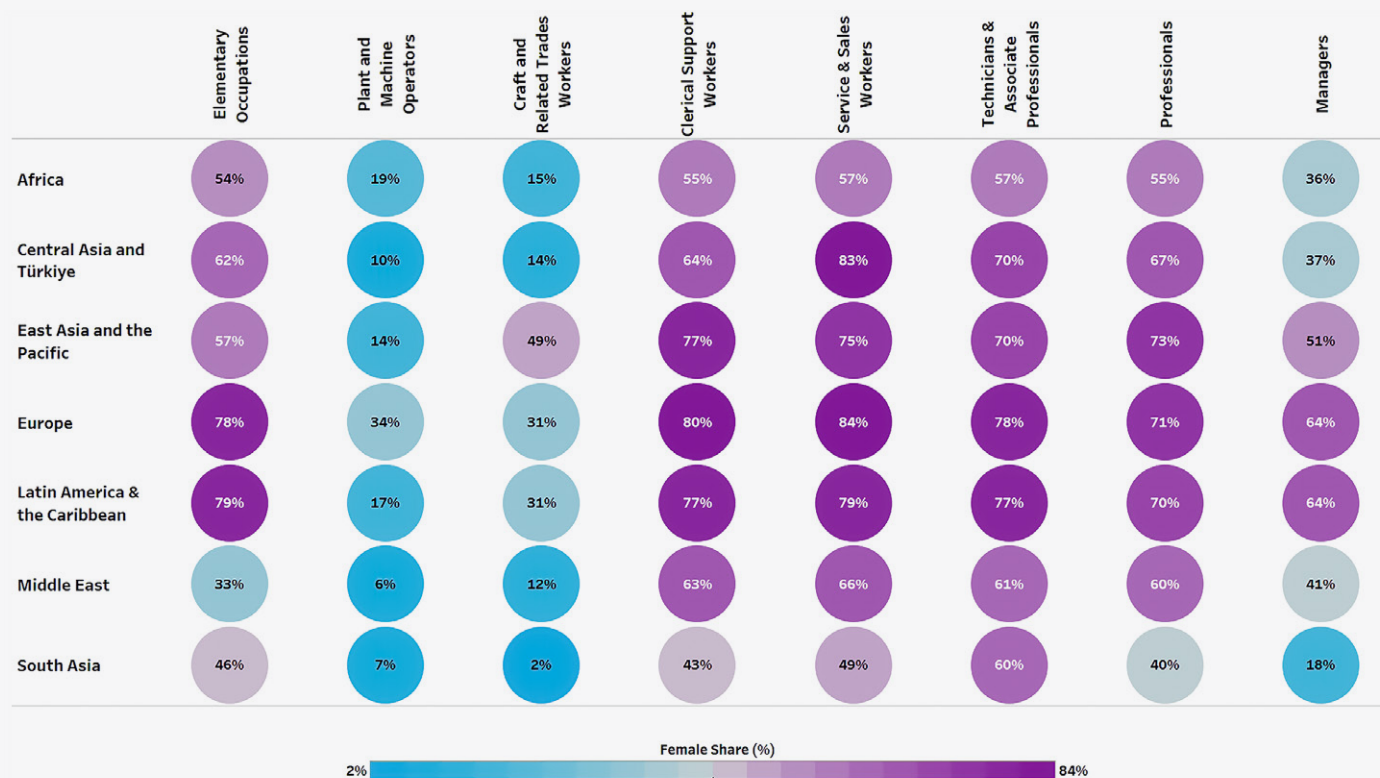


FIGURE 26
Share of Women in Informal Healthcare Jobs by Region



Women are well-represented in most healthcare occupations, except for higher-paying and managerial roles and machine operation.

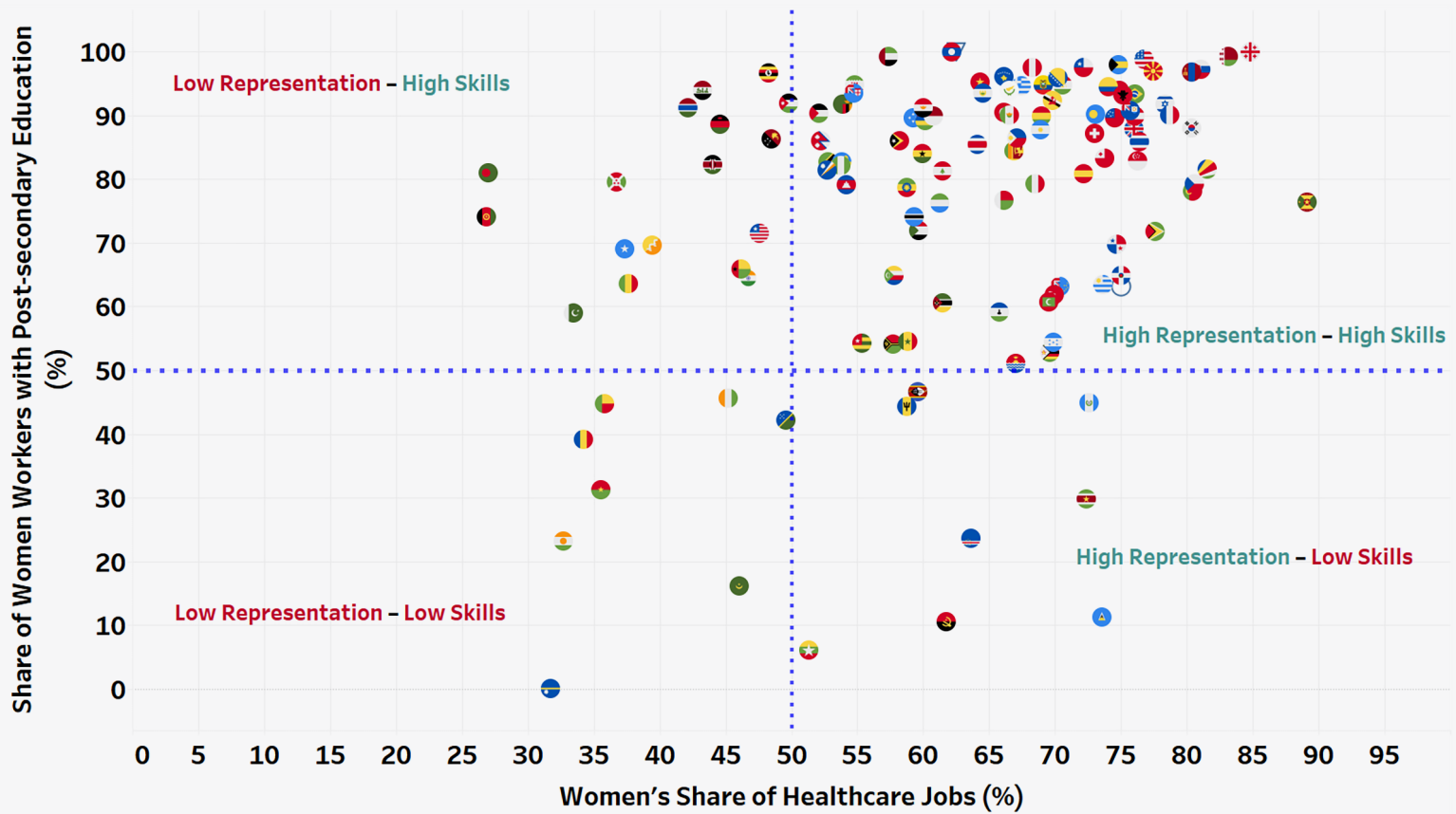
FIGURE 27
Share of Women Healthcare Workers by Occupational Category



In most countries, more than two-third of women healthcare workers have post-secondary education.

FIGURE 28

Women's Representation and Educational Qualifications in the Healthcare Sector by Country



In most regions, women healthcare workers are more likely to be found in medium-size enterprises.

FIGURE 29
Gender Composition of Healthcare Workforce by Region and Firm Size

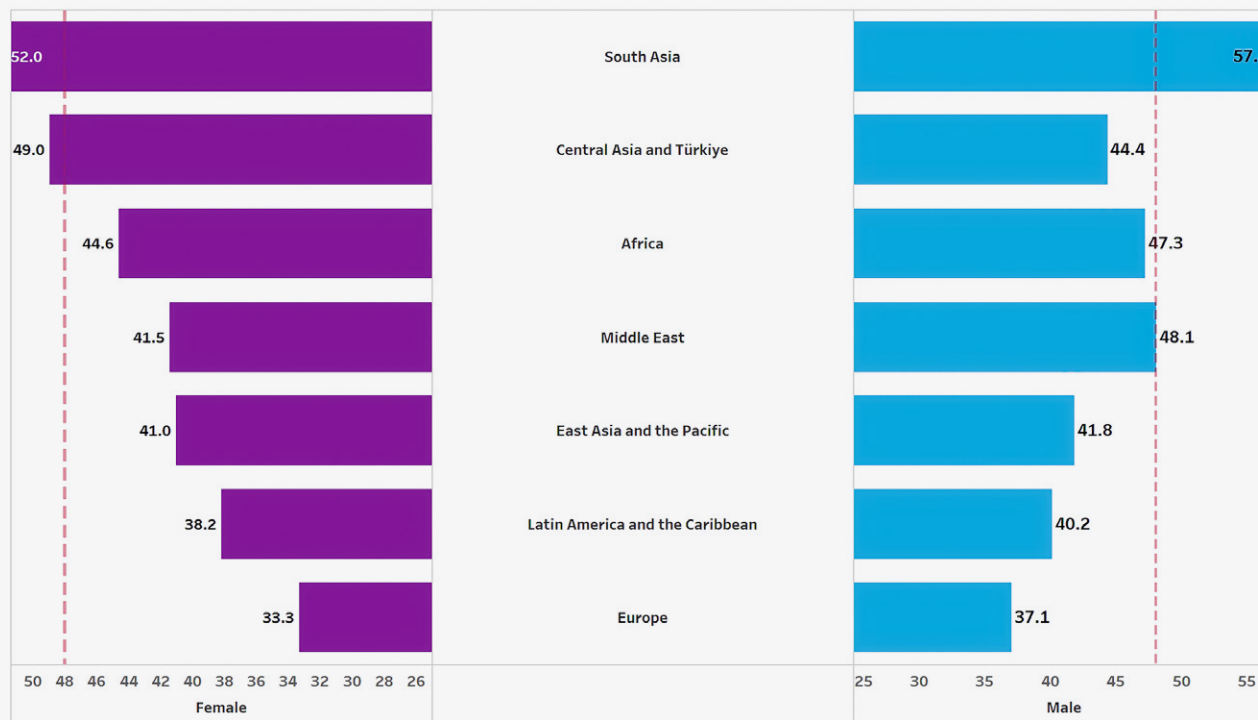


FIGURE 30
Distribution of Healthcare Workers by Firm Size



Average weekly working hours for women in the healthcare sector range from 38 or less in some regions to 52 hours in others, which is above the ILO's 48-hour threshold.

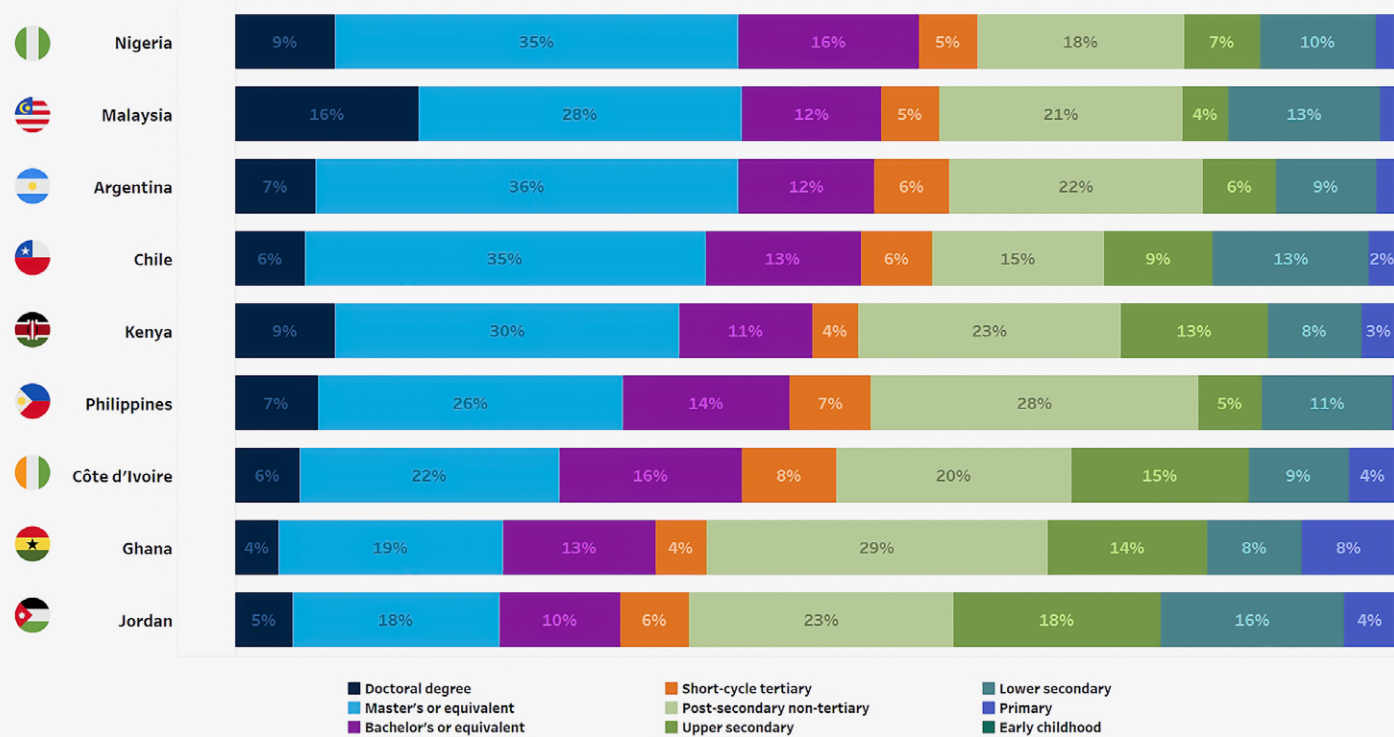
FIGURE 31
Average Weekly Working Hours in the Healthcare Sector by Gender and Region



Note: The vertical red dashed line indicates the ILO threshold for excessive working hours.

In most countries, over half of online advertisements for healthcare jobs require short-cycle tertiary education at a minimum.

FIGURE 32
Education Required in Online Healthcare Job Advertisements in Selected Countries



Source: Lightcast and UNESCO analysis of job advertisements posted online from July 2024-June 2025.

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Value-added Manufacturing

Value-added manufacturing accounts for approximately 5 to 10 percent of employment across countries and is critical for productivity growth and industrial development. Women's participation in this sector varies significantly across regions, ranging from over 40 percent in parts of Africa and East Asia to roughly 20 percent in the Middle East. While the sector remains male-dominated overall, women are strongly represented in clerical and service jobs. However, men hold most technical and engineering positions, highlighting persistent gender segmentation in manufacturing jobs.

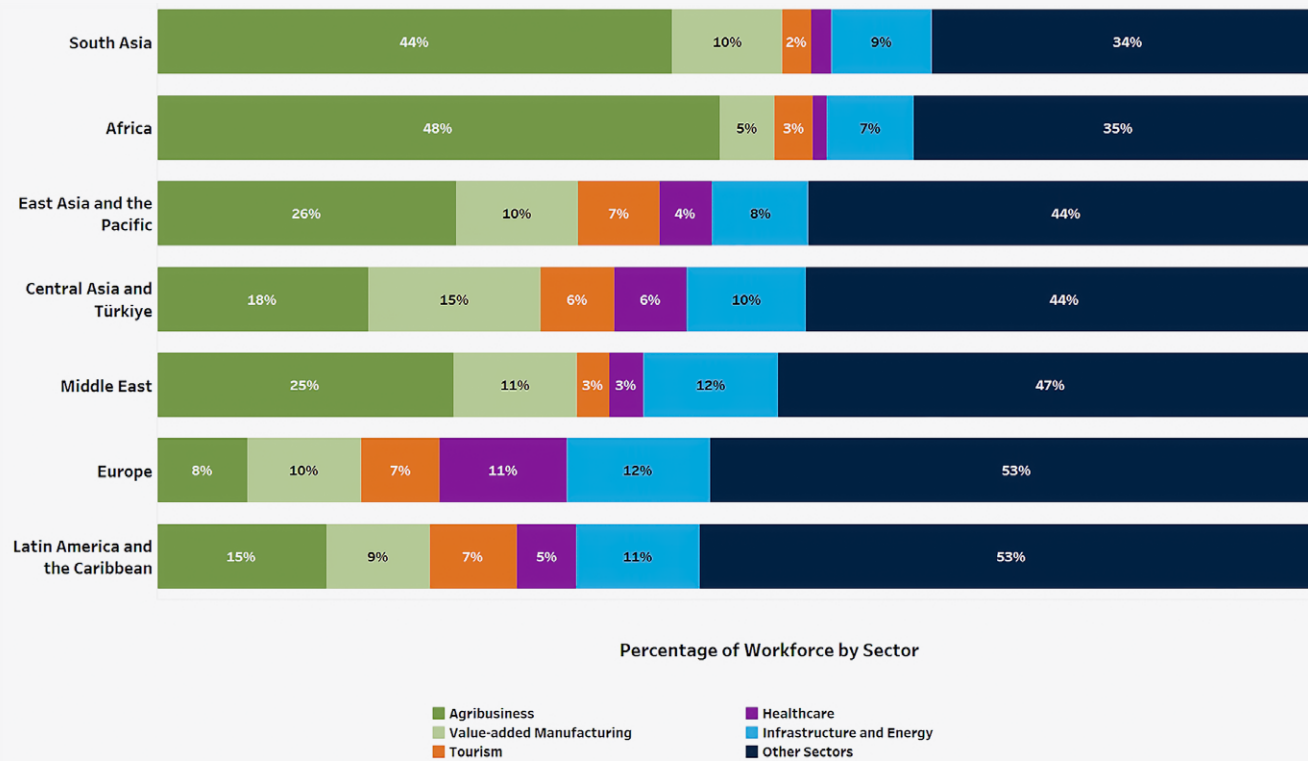
A close examination of product complexity reveals further gender disparities. Women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-complexity manufacturing industries such as textiles, apparel, and food processing, and in some countries women hold more than 50 percent of these jobs. In contrast, their presence remains much lower in higher-complexity industries such as electronics, machinery, and advanced manufacturing.

Informality is also widespread in many regions, and a large share of female manufacturing workers lack advanced educational qualifications. These patterns indicate that while manufacturing offers significant employment opportunities for women, structural barriers still limit their participation in higher-value and more technologically advanced segments.



Jobs in the value-added manufacturing sector constitute 5 to 10 percent of jobs across all sectors.

FIGURE 33
Sectoral Distribution of Workers Across Regions



In Africa and East Asia and the Pacific, women make up over 40 percent of manufacturing workers, compared to 26 percent in the Middle East.

FIGURE 34
Share of Female and Male Manufacturing Workers by Region

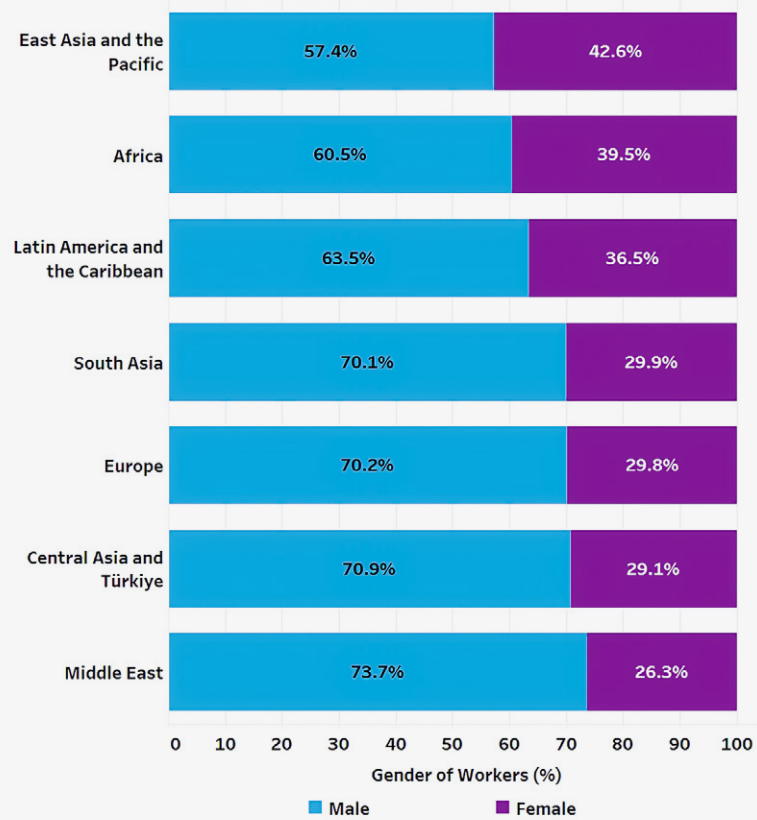
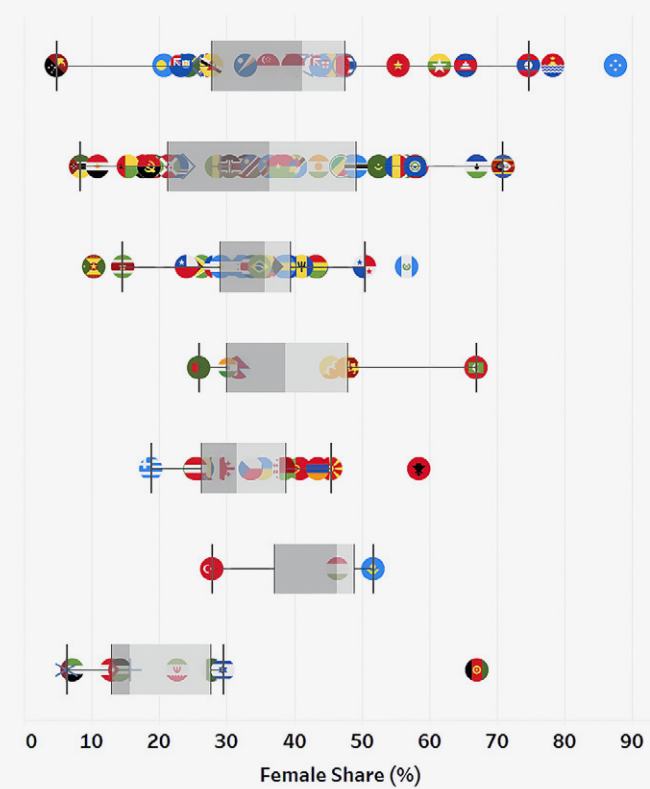


FIGURE 35
Share of Women Manufacturing Workers by Country



In Central Asia and Türkiye, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, more than 85 percent of women in value-added manufacturing work informally.

FIGURE 36
Gender Composition of the Informal Manufacturing Workforce by Region

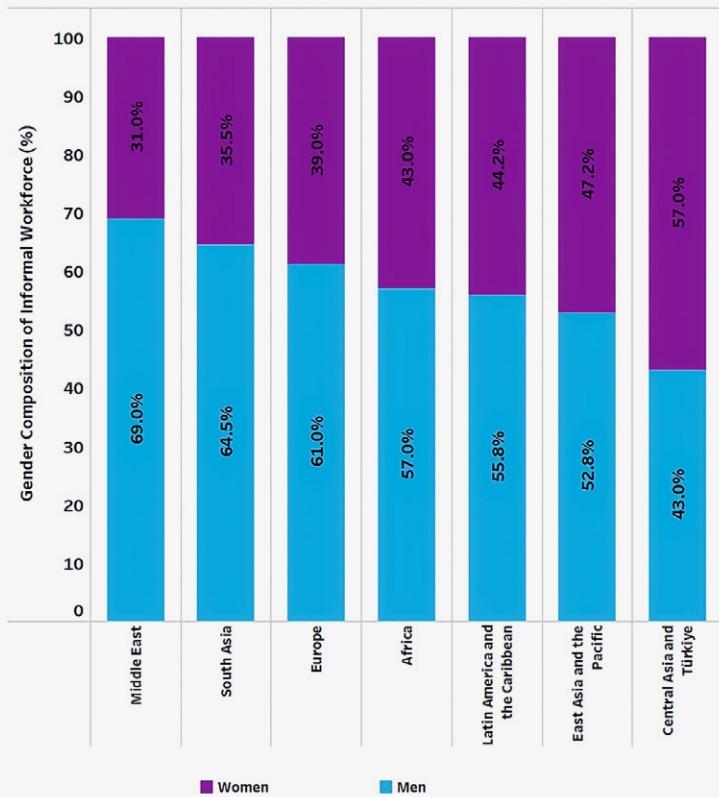
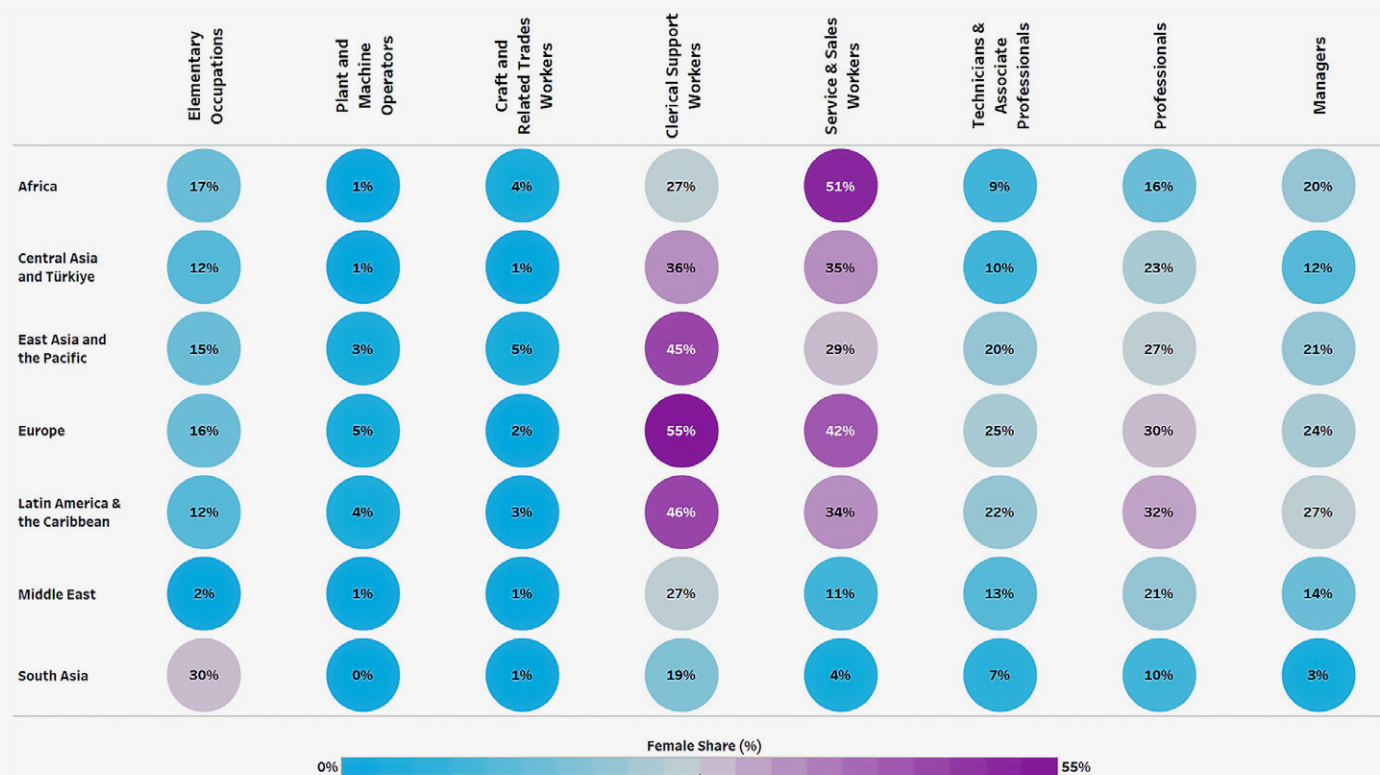


FIGURE 37
Share of Women in Informal Manufacturing Jobs by Region



While the manufacturing sector is largely male-dominated, clerical and service-related roles have stronger female representation.

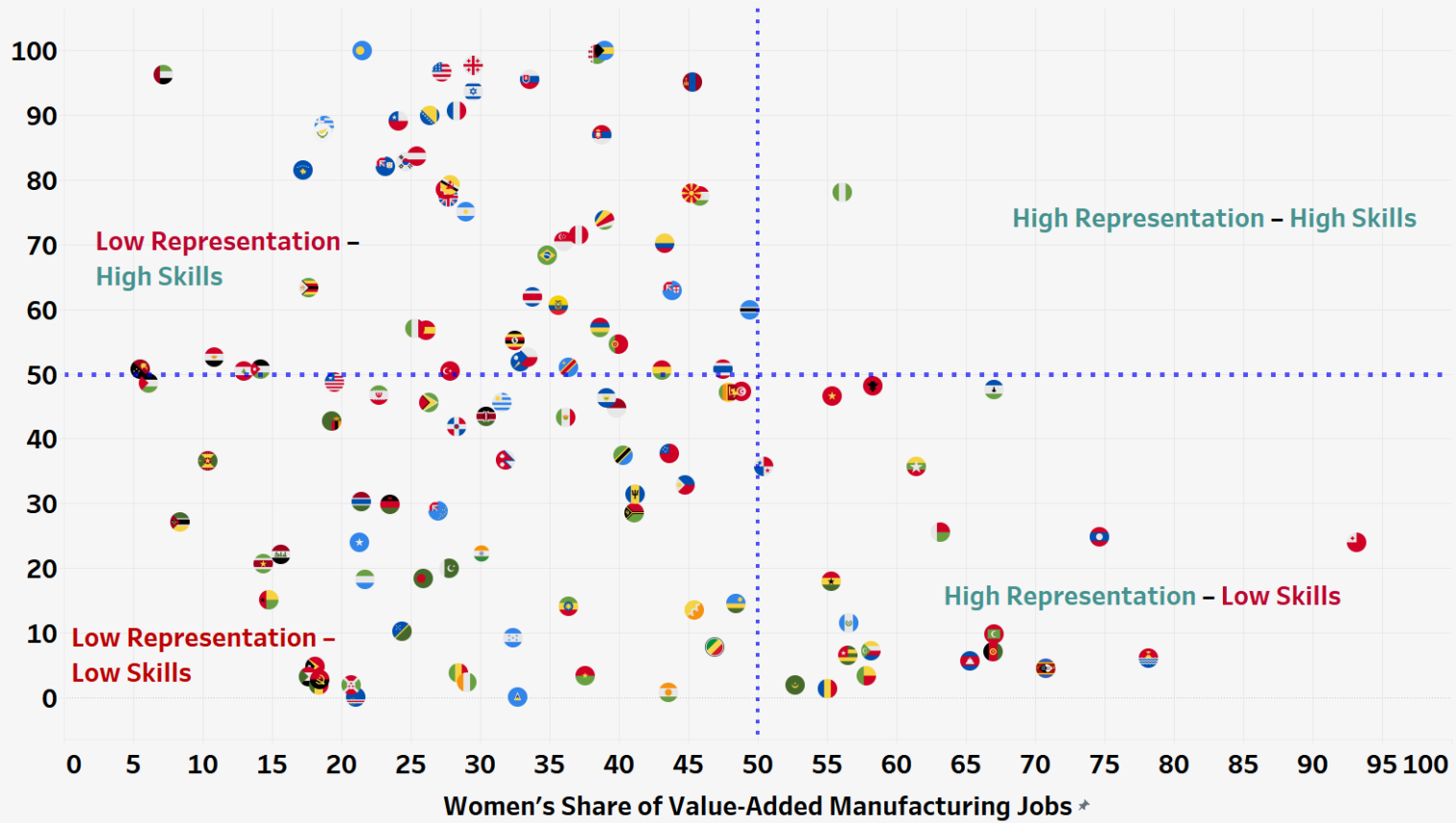
FIGURE 38
Share of Women Manufacturing Workers by Occupational Category



Women constitute less than half of the manufacturing workforce, and in most countries, a majority of these women workers do not have a post-secondary education.

FIGURE 39

Women's Representation and Educational Qualifications in the Manufacturing Sector by Country



Women are more likely to work in medium and large manufacturing establishments rather than small firms, although this varies across regions.

FIGURE 40
Gender Composition of Manufacturing Workforce by Region and Firm Size

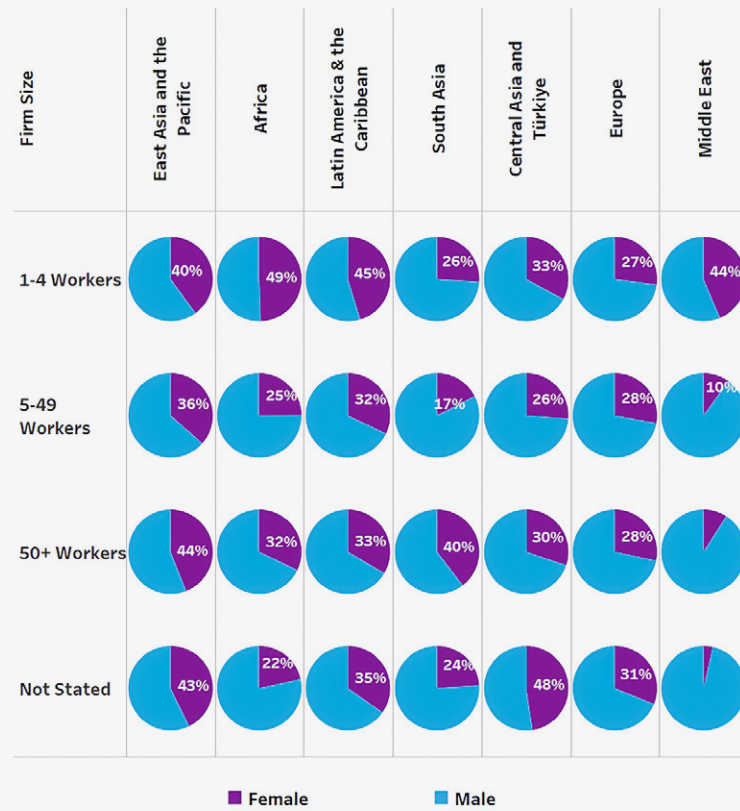
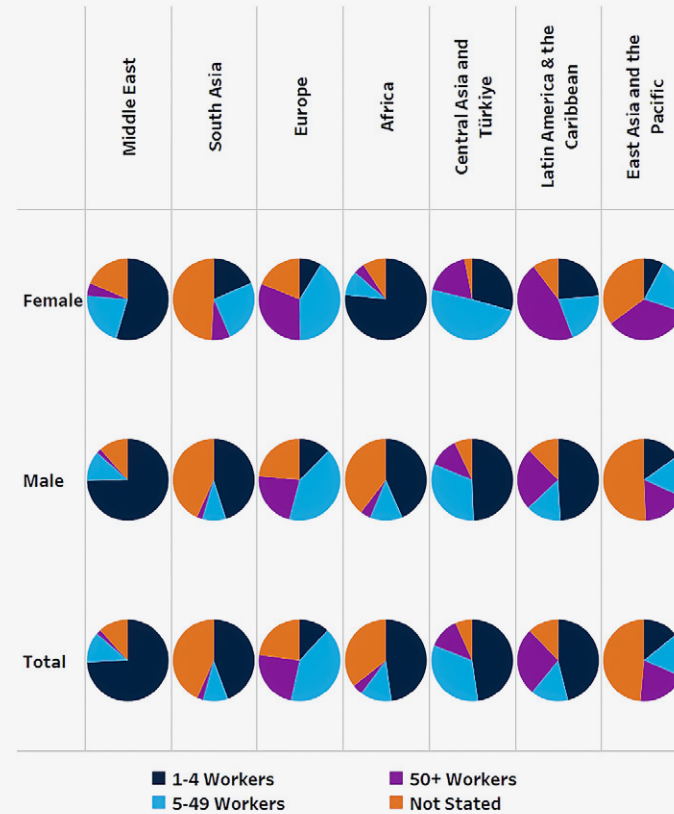


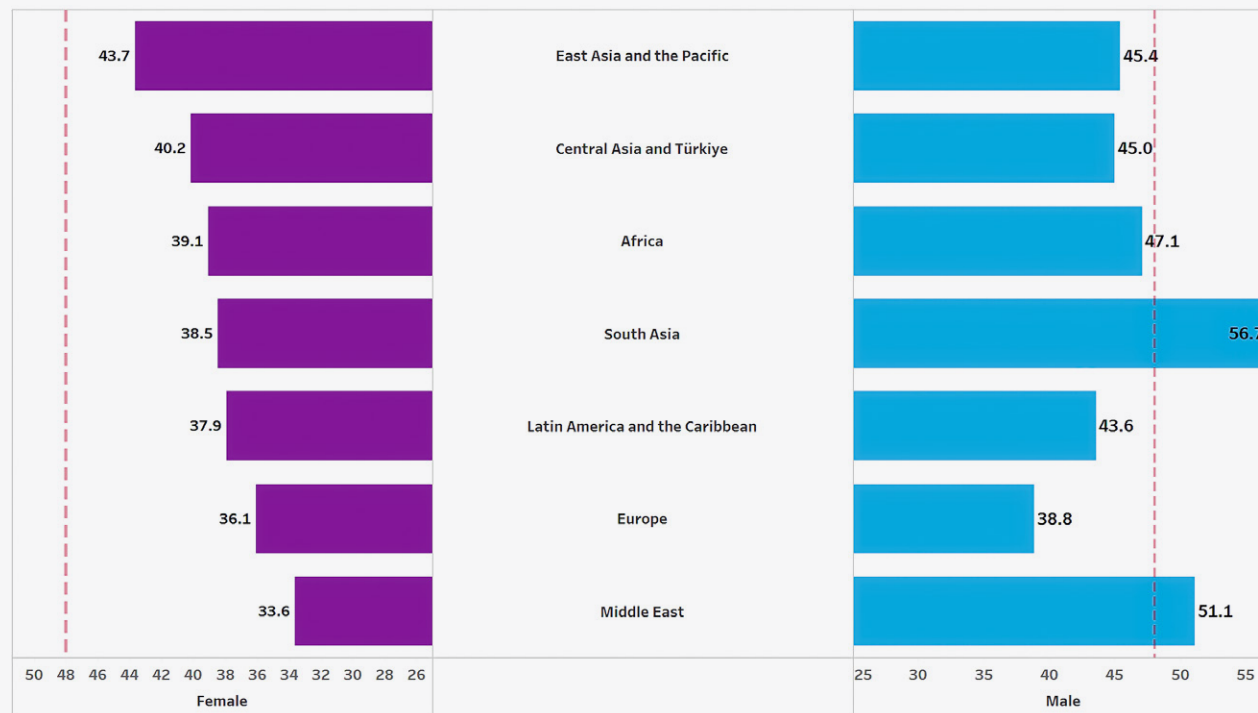
FIGURE 41
Distribution of Manufacturing Workers by Firm Size



In East Asia and the Pacific and Central Asia and Türkiye, women in the manufacturing sector average more than 40 working hour per week but less than the ILO's threshold of 48 hours.

FIGURE 42

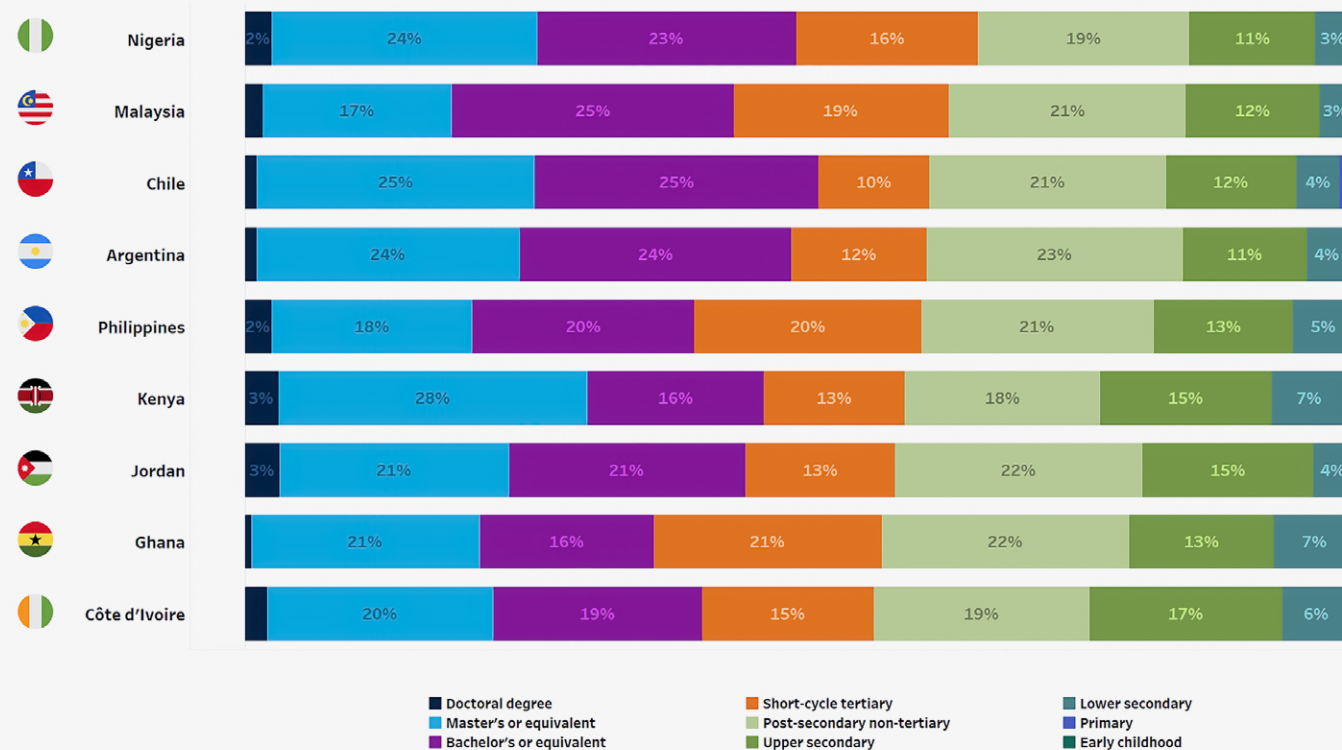
Average Weekly Working Hours in the Manufacturing Sector by Gender and Region



Note: The vertical red dashed line indicates the ILO threshold for excessive working hours.

Online manufacturing job advertisements mostly target medium to highly skilled workers, reflecting the sector's technical demands as well as opportunities for non-college graduates.

FIGURE 43
Education Required in Online Manufacturing Job Advertisements in Selected Countries

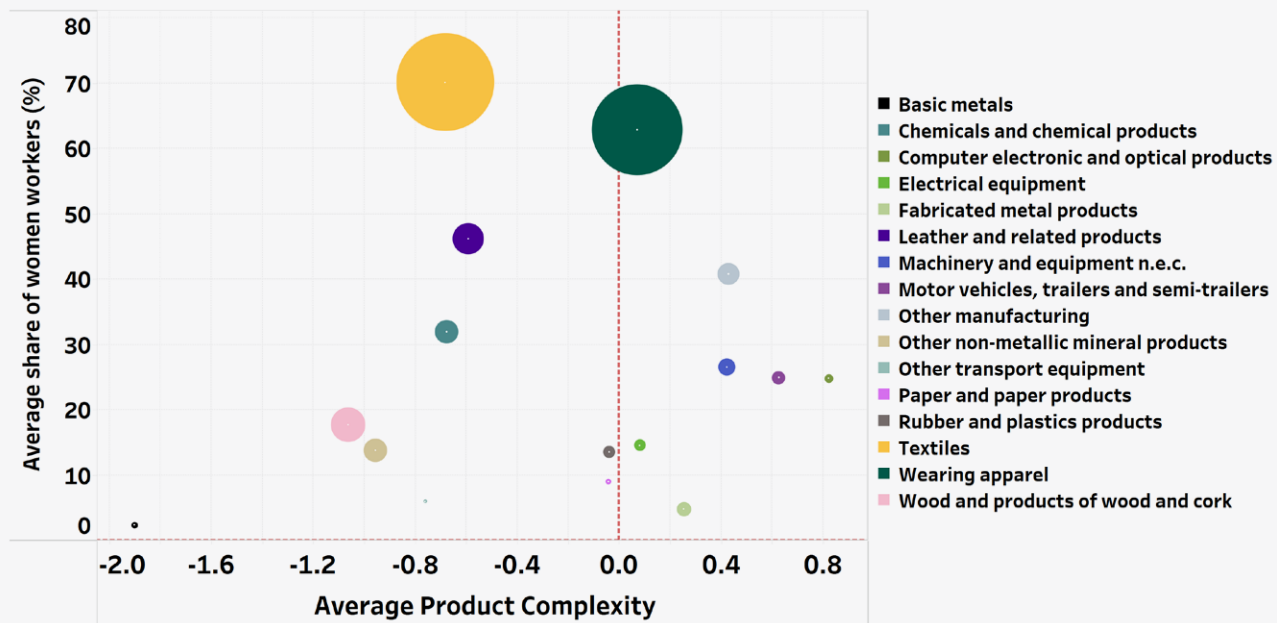


Source: Lightcast and UNESCO analysis of job advertisements posted online from July 2024-June 2025.

In Africa, women are heavily concentrated in low-complexity manufacturing industries like textiles and food and have a minimal presence in higher-complexity sectors, highlighting persistent entry barriers to more advanced and technical fields.

FIGURE 44

Africa: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



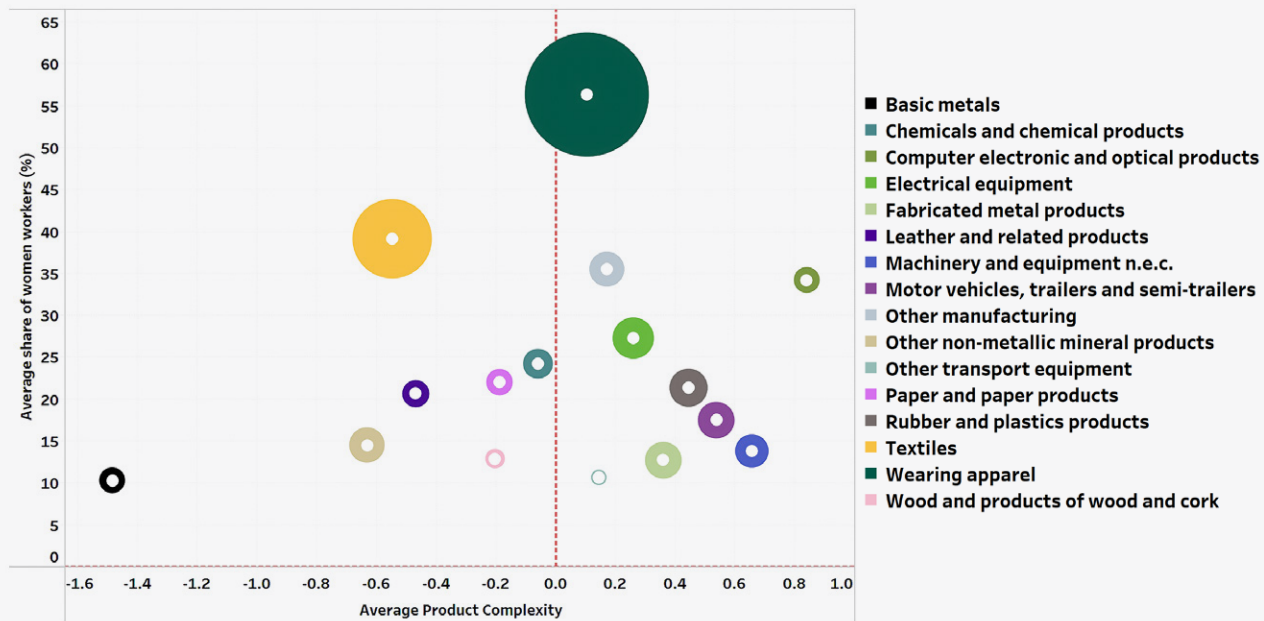
Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

In Central Asia and Türkiye, women are concentrated in low-complexity industries but make up about one-third of the workforce in complex sectors like electronics.

FIGURE 45

Central Asia and Türkiye: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



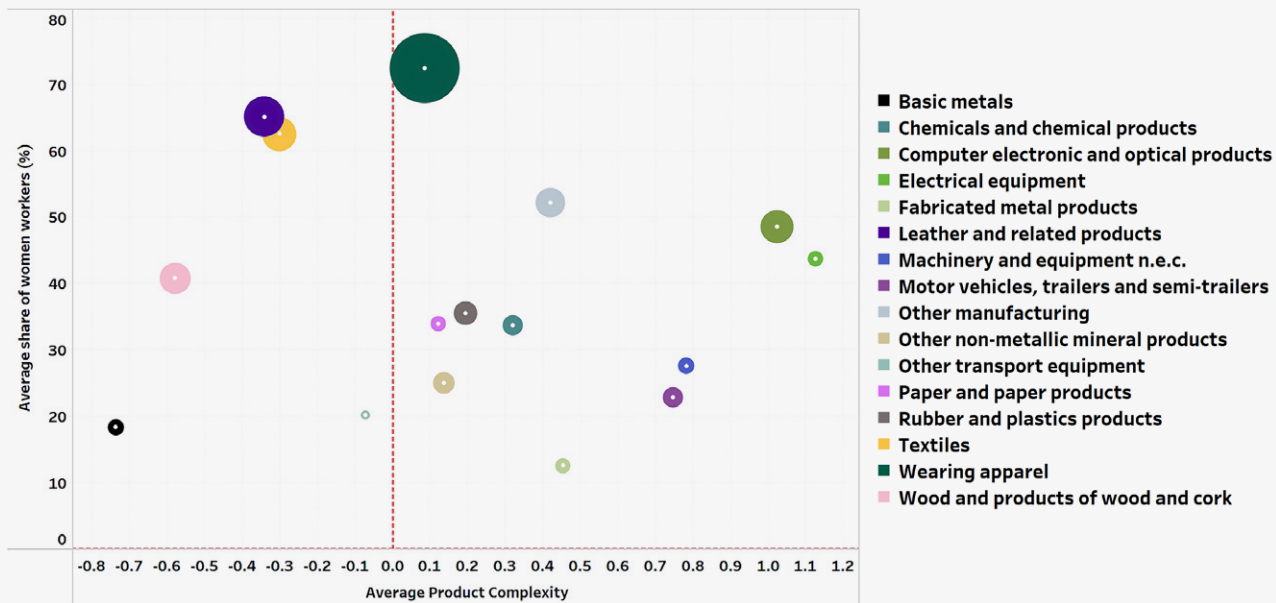
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In East Asia and the Pacific, women are highly concentrated in less complex industries like textiles. However, they also make up four in 10 workers in complex sectors like electronics and computer manufacturing.

FIGURE 46

East Asia and the Pacific: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



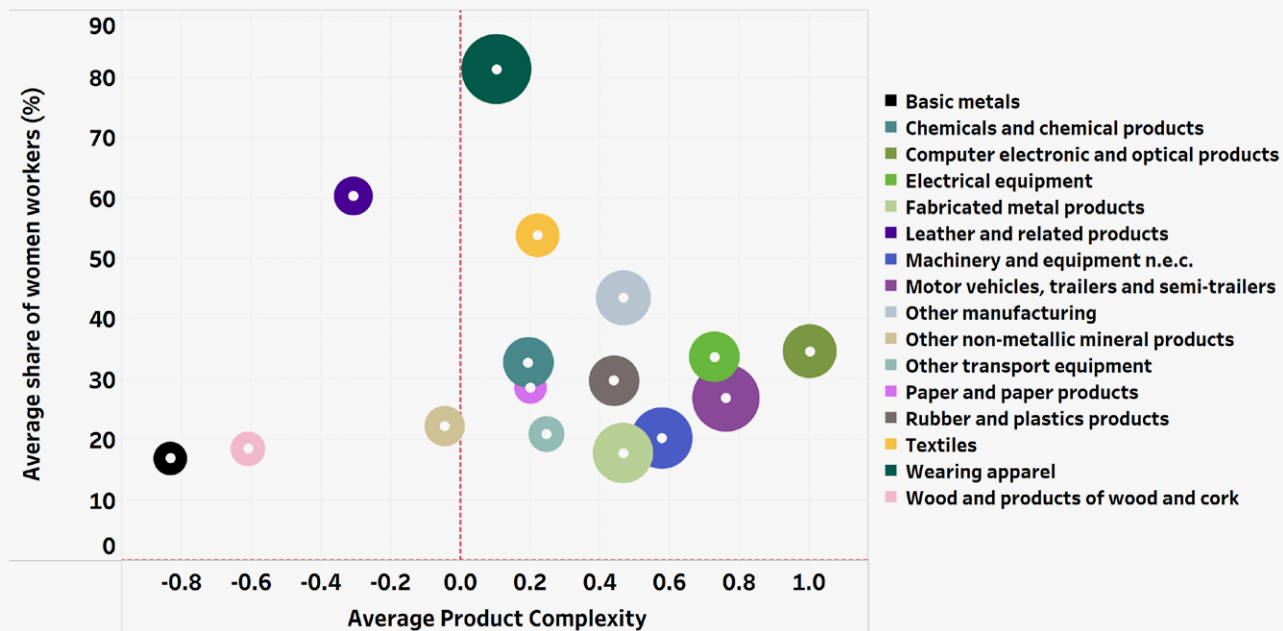
Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

In Europe, women are better represented in complex manufacturing than in other regions, especially in sectors like pharmaceuticals and textiles. Even in male-dominated industries like motor vehicles, one in five workers are women.

FIGURE 47

Europe: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



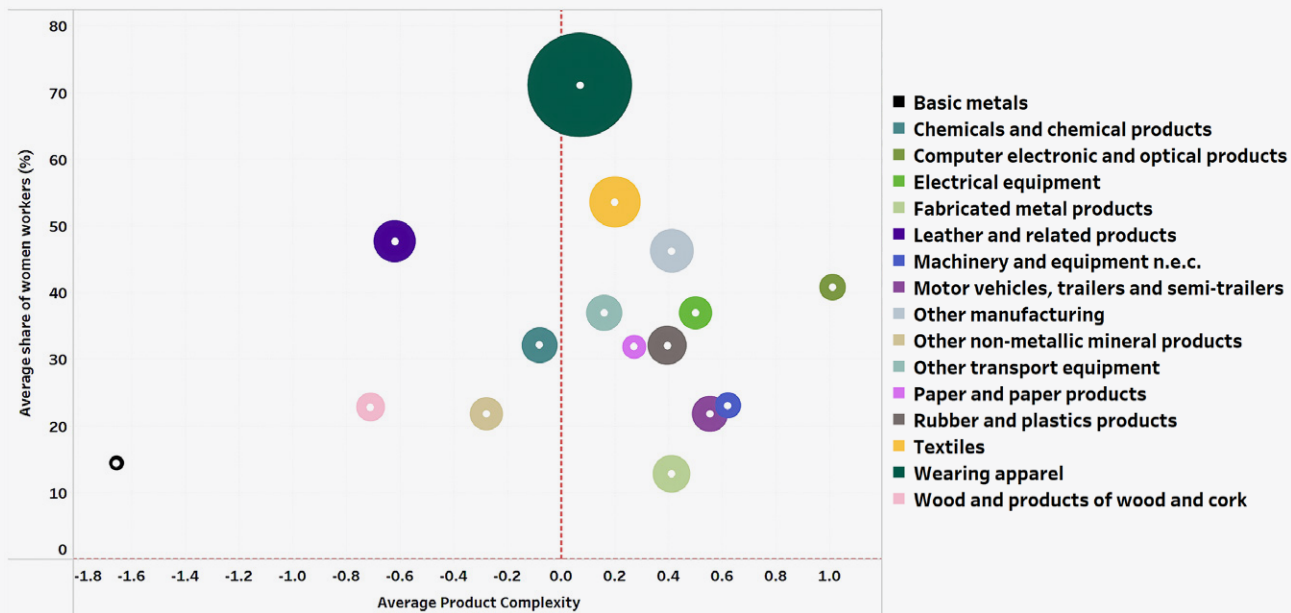
Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, women comprise more than half of the workforce in low-complexity industries such as apparel, textiles, and leather. Notably, female representation also exceeds 40 percent in high product complexity sectors like computer and optical products, indicating positive progress.

FIGURE 48

Latin America and the Caribbean: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries

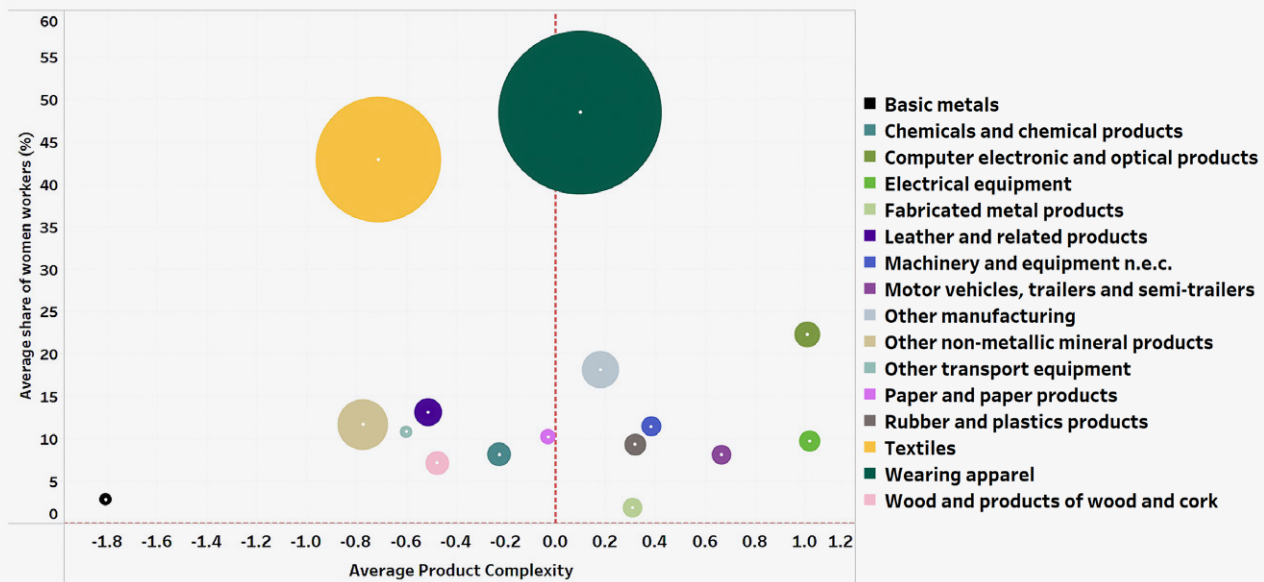


Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

In the Middle East, women work mostly in low-complexity industries.

FIGURE 49
Middle East: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



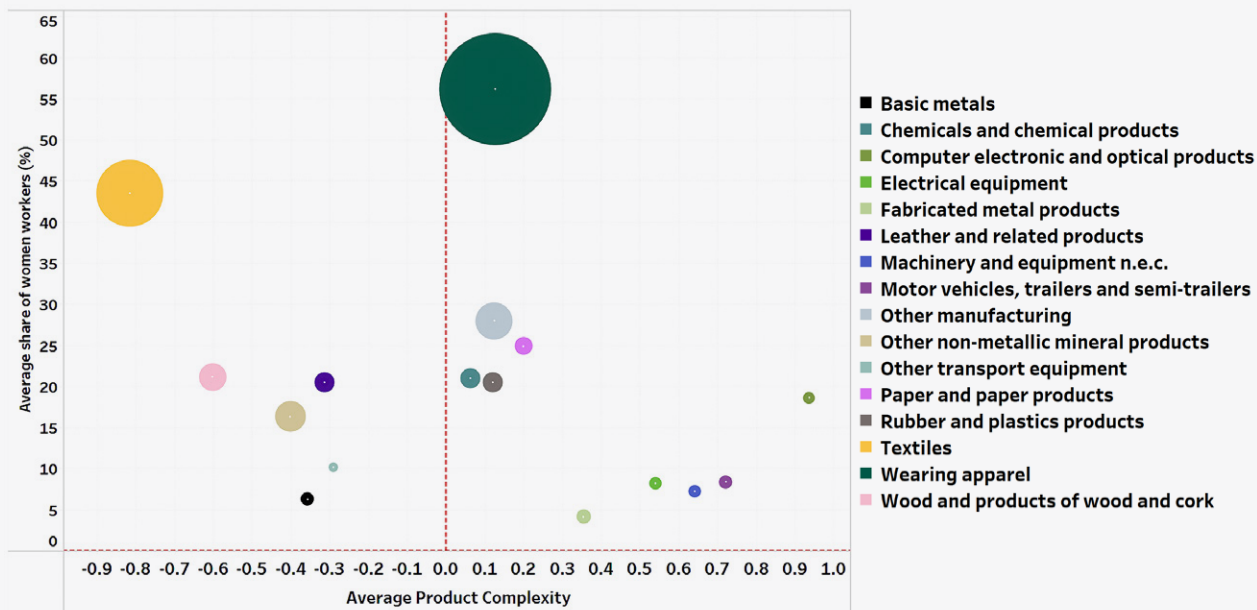
Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

In South Asia, women are concentrated in low or moderately complex industries such as apparel, while fewer than one in five women work in more complex manufacturing industries.

FIGURE 50

South Asia: Product Complexity and Share of Women Workers in Various Industries



Note: The bubble size is proportional to the number of women working in the industry.

Sources: UN Comtrade and Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI) product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition. The Harvard Growth Lab Atlas of Economic Complexity, UN Comtrade, and BACI data on the Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

Where are Women? An infographic snapshot of jobs in five strategic sectors

Tourism

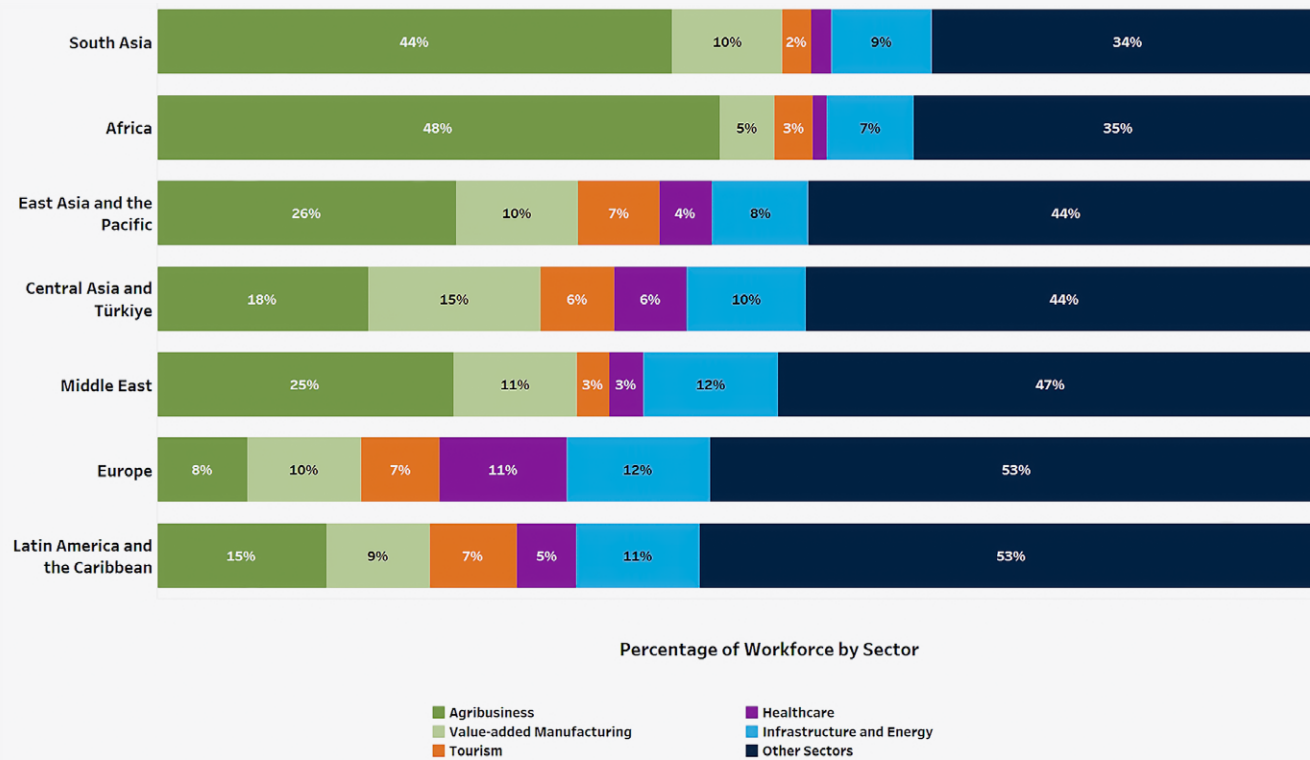
Tourism provides employment for approximately 2 to 7 percent of workers in most economies and offers women access to relatively broad employment opportunities. Female participation in the sector varies widely across regions, ranging from about 12 percent in the Middle East to nearly 70 percent in parts of Africa. Women are primarily concentrated in service-oriented occupations such as hospitality, food preparation, customer service, and clerical roles. These positions typically require interpersonal and service-related skills rather than advanced technical qualifications.

Although tourism creates employment opportunities for workers with diverse educational backgrounds, most women in the sector do not possess post-secondary qualifications. Informality and working more than 40 hours per week are common in most regions apart from Europe. Nevertheless, the sector's relatively low entry barriers and strong demand for service workers make tourism an important employment channel for women. In economies where tourism plays a major role in local development, the sector can contribute significantly to expanding female labor force participation.



Jobs in the tourism sector account for 2 to 7.4 percent of all jobs across sectors.

FIGURE 51
Sectoral Distribution of Workers Across Regions



Women hold more than half of all tourism jobs in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe.

FIGURE 52
Share of Female and Male Tourism Workers by Region

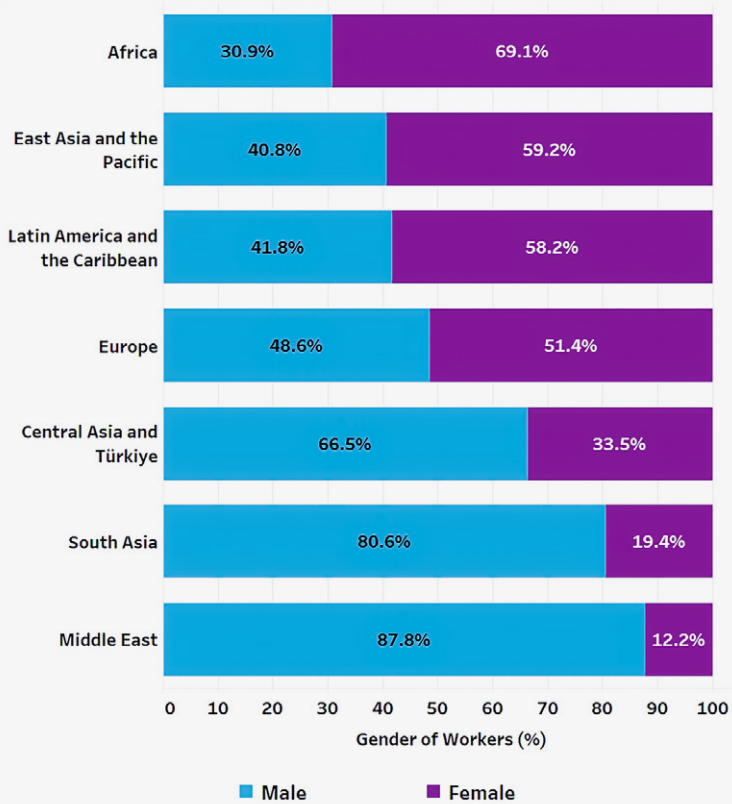
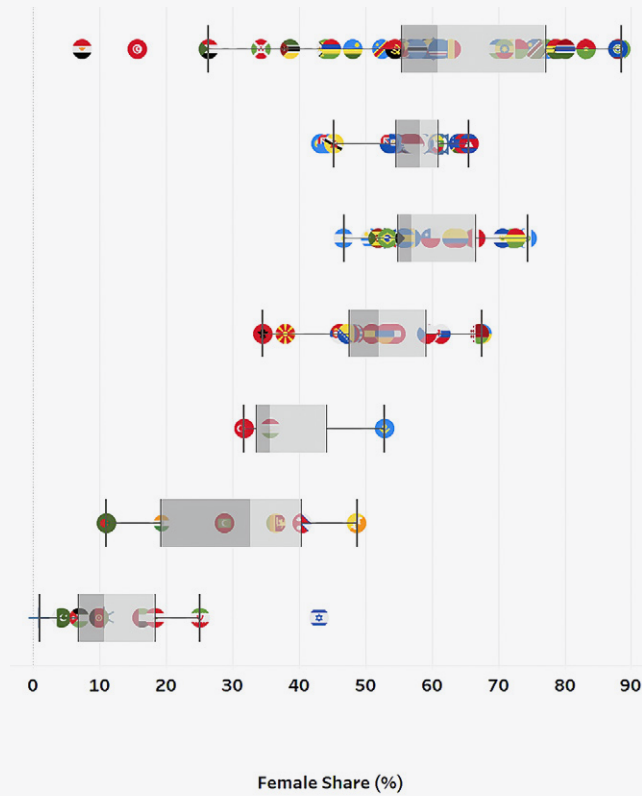


FIGURE 53
Share of Women Tourism Workers by Country



Informality is widespread among both women and men in the tourism sector.

FIGURE 54
Gender Composition of the Informal Tourism Workforce by Region

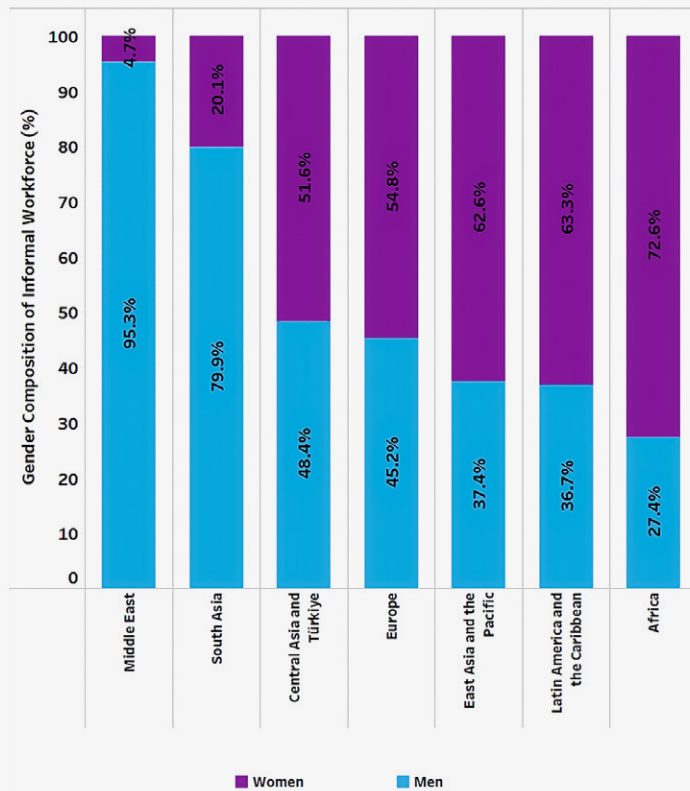
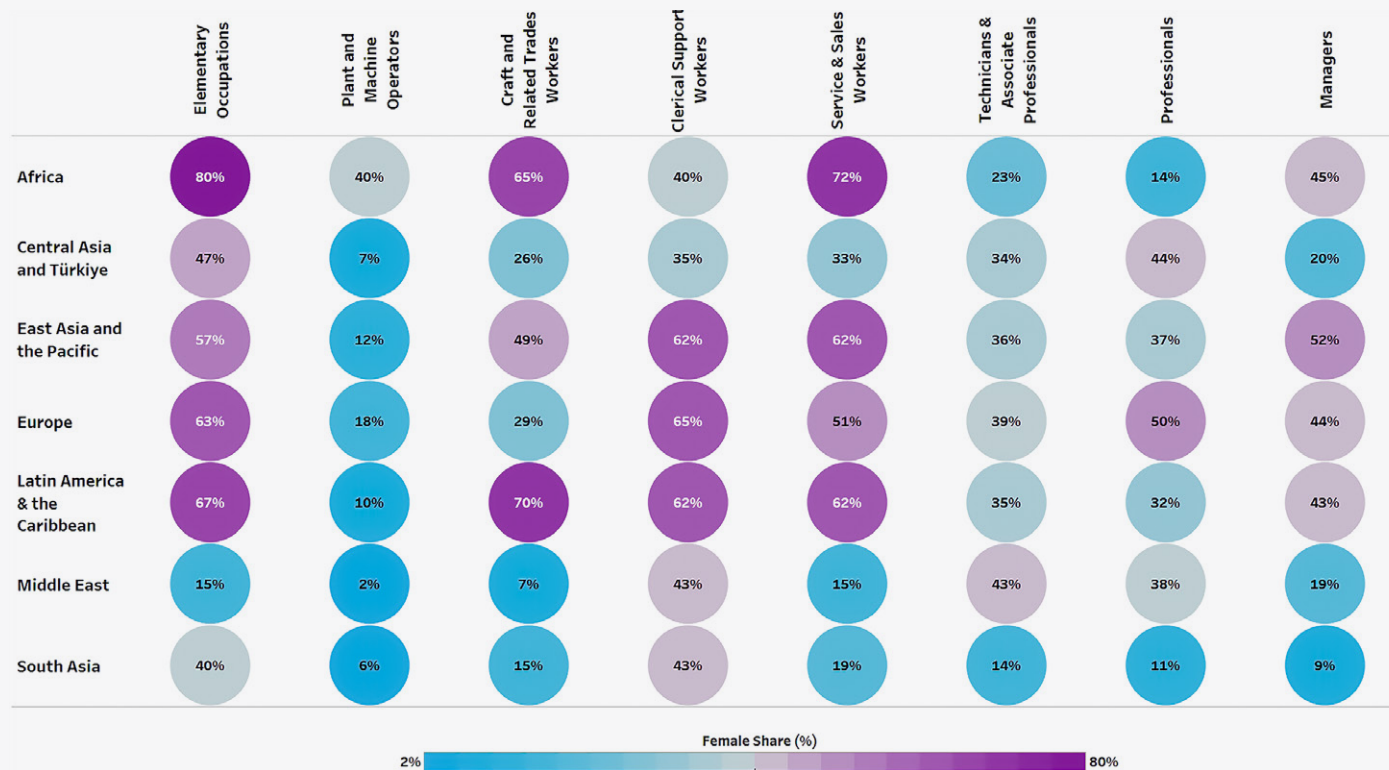


FIGURE 55
Share of Women in Informal Tourism Jobs by Region



In the tourism sector, women are mostly found in clerical, service, and elementary occupations.

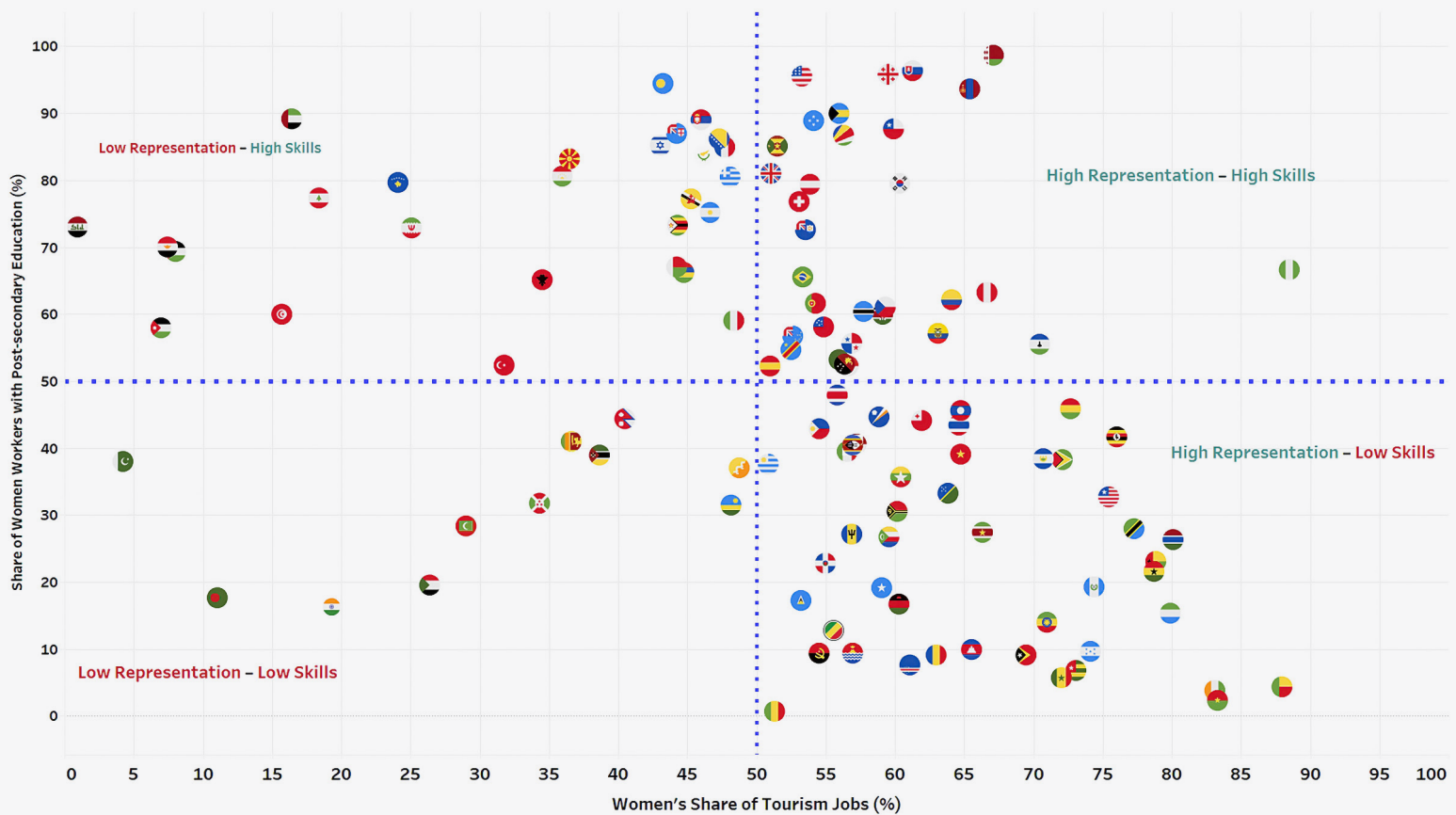
FIGURE 56
Share of Women Tourism Workers by Occupational Category



While the share of women in the tourism sector is relatively high, education requirements vary substantially across countries.

FIGURE 57

Women's Representation and Educational Qualifications in the Tourism Sector by Country

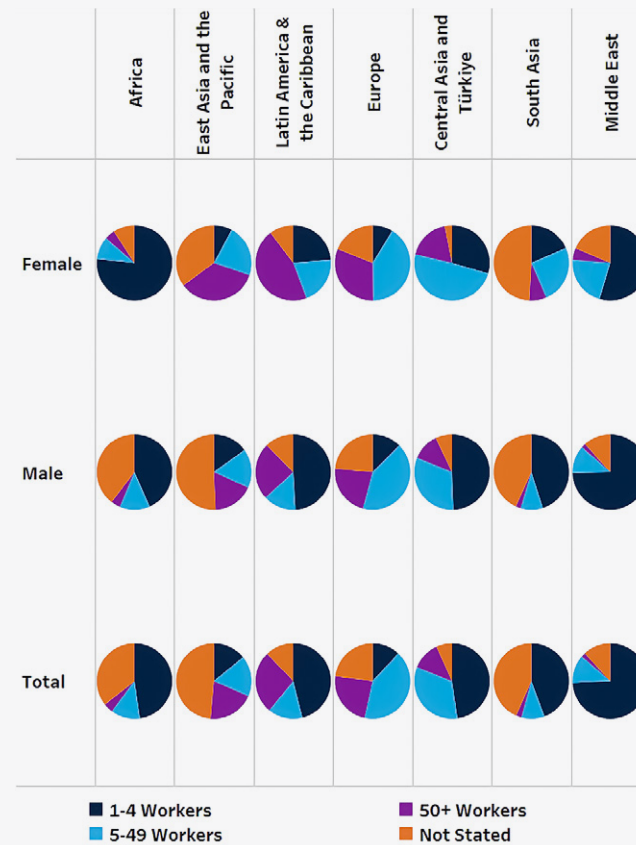


Women in the tourism sector are more likely to work in medium and large establishments, although there are some exceptions.

FIGURE 58
Gender Composition of Tourism Workforce by Region and Firm Size

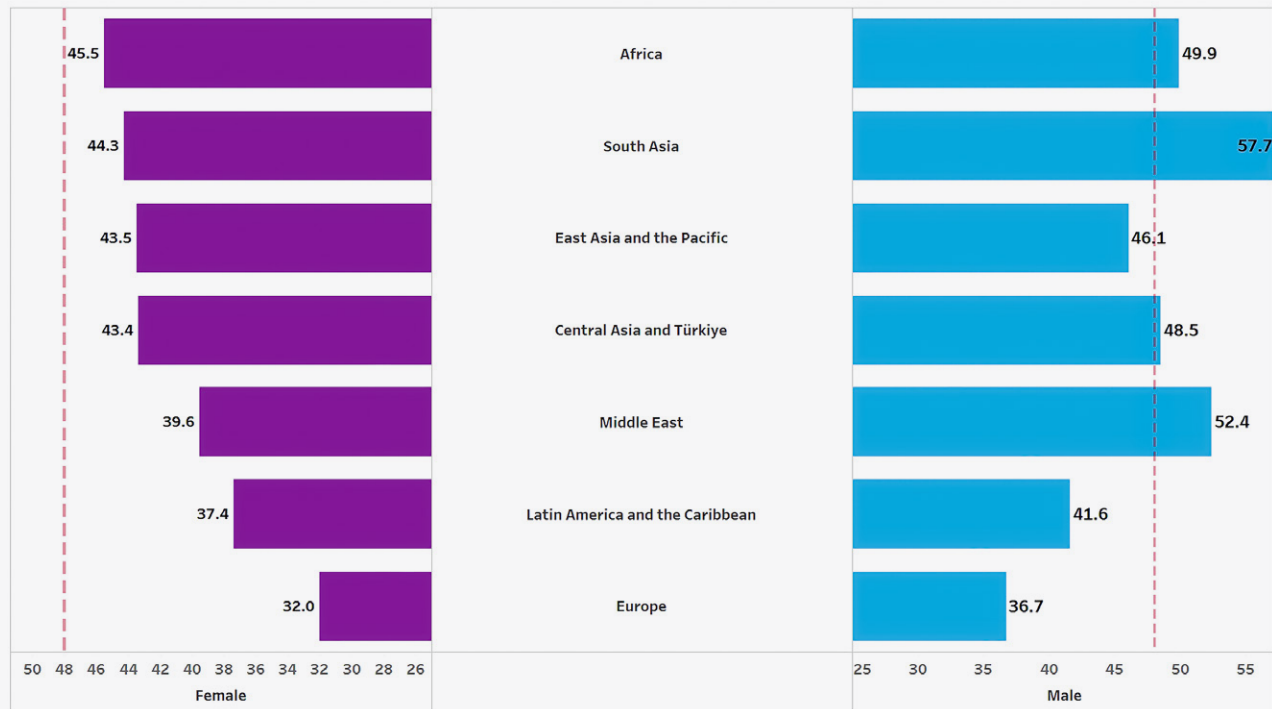


FIGURE 59
Distribution of Tourism Workers by Firm Size



In many regions, both women and men in the tourism sector work more than 40 hours per week.

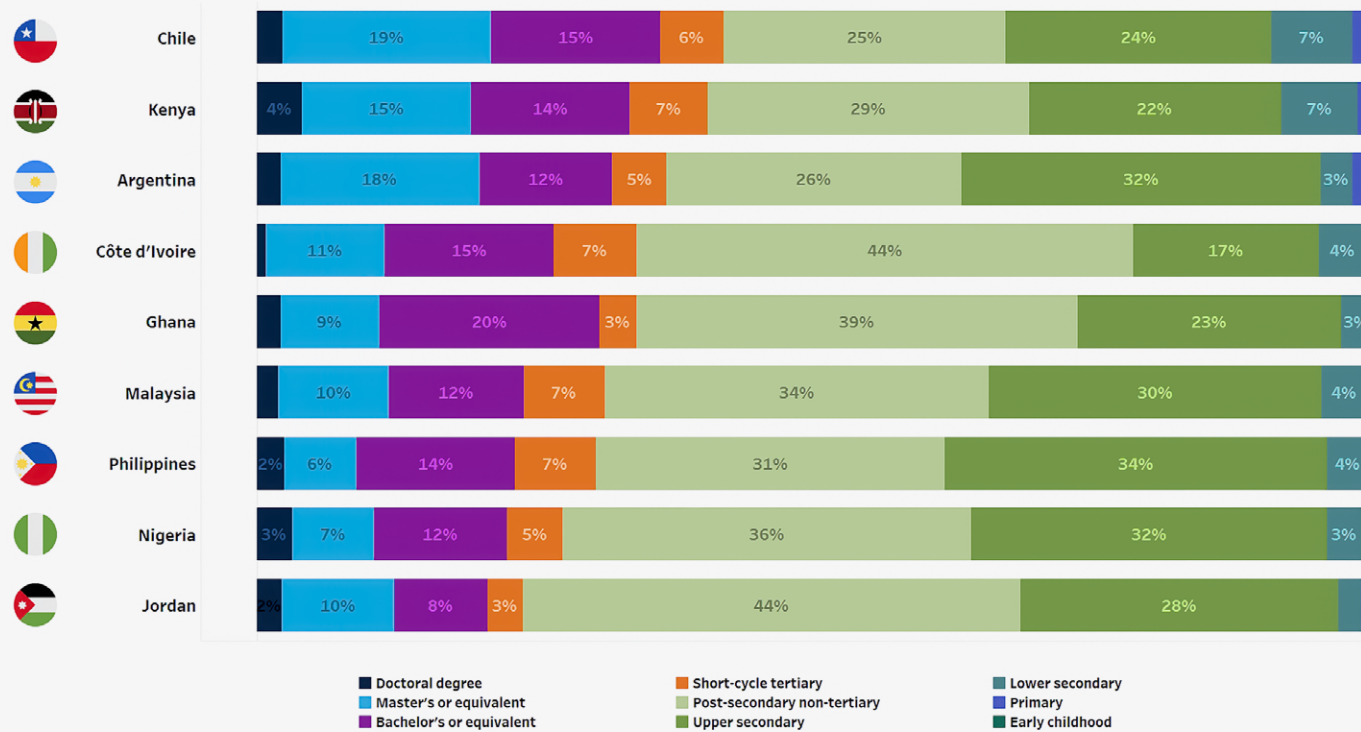
FIGURE 60
Average Weekly Working Hours in the Tourism Sector by Gender and Region



Note: The vertical red dashed line indicates the ILO threshold for excessive working hours.

Tourism job advertisements mostly target lower and intermediate education levels, reflecting limited opportunities for highly educated workers.

FIGURE 61
Education Required in Online Manufacturing Job Advertisements in Selected Countries



Source: Lightcast and UNESCO analysis of job advertisements posted online from July 2024-June 2025.

Where are Women? An infographic snapshot of jobs in five strategic sectors

Infrastructure and Energy



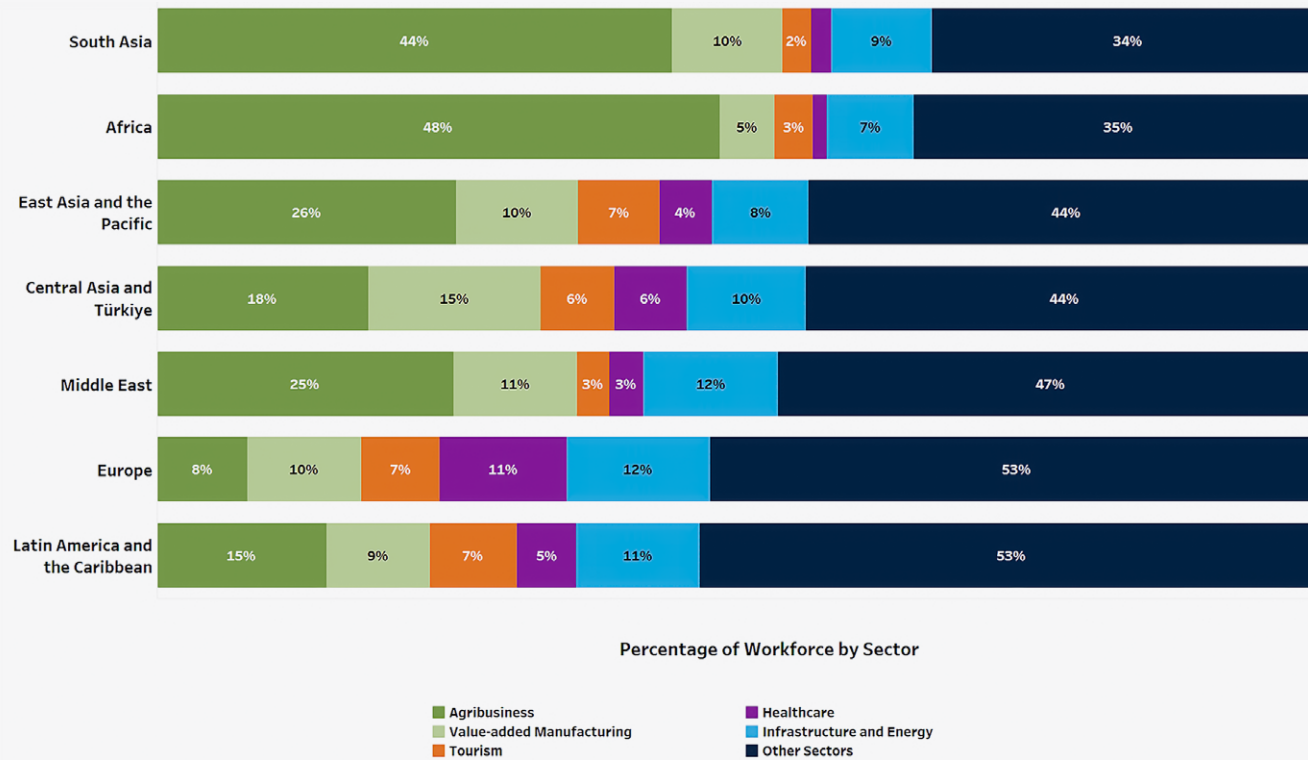
Infrastructure and energy remain the most male-dominated of the five priority sectors. Female participation in these industries is typically very low, ranging from about 3 to 19 percent of the workforce across most regions. The sector is characterized by a strong concentration of women in clerical, administrative, and support roles, while men hold the overwhelming majority of technical and engineering positions. Structural barriers—including gender stereotypes in technical fields and limited access to engineering and technical training—continue to constrain women's entry into core occupations.

Despite their limited numbers, women working in infrastructure and energy often have relatively high levels of education. In many countries, more than half of female workers in the sector possess post-secondary qualifications, reflecting the specialized and technical nature of many infrastructure and energy roles. Women are also more likely to be employed in medium or large establishments, which tend to offer more formal employment arrangements. However, workers often perform more than 40 hours of work per week, and informality remains widespread in some regions. These patterns suggest that while the sector offers high-quality employment opportunities for skilled workers, significant barriers still limit broader female participation.



The infrastructure and energy sector constitutes 7.4 to 12.3 percent of the workforce across regions.

FIGURE 62
Sectoral Distribution of Workers Across Regions



The infrastructure and energy sector has very low female representation of ranging from 3 to 19 percent across regions.

FIGURE 63
Share of Female and Male Infrastructure and Energy Workers by Region

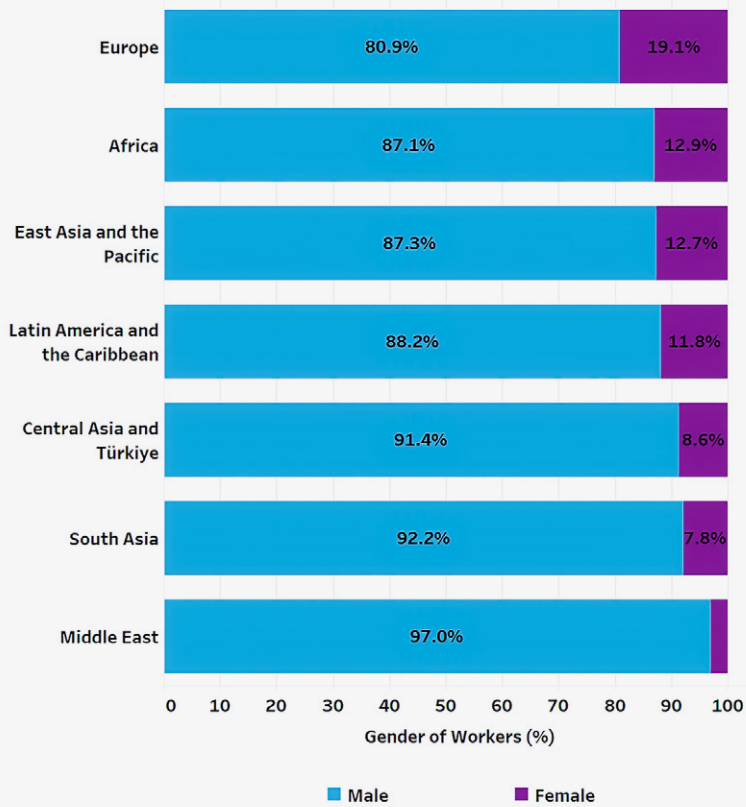
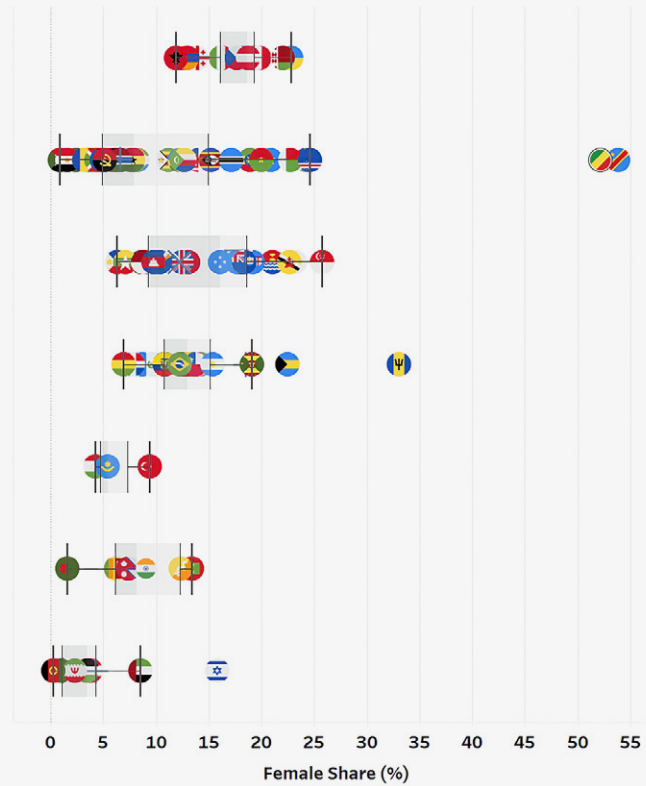


FIGURE 64
Share of Women Infrastructure and Energy Workers by Country



Informality is very high in infrastructure and energy, accounting for 77 to 99 percent of jobs held by women.

FIGURE 65
Gender Composition of the Informal Infrastructure and Energy Workforce by Region

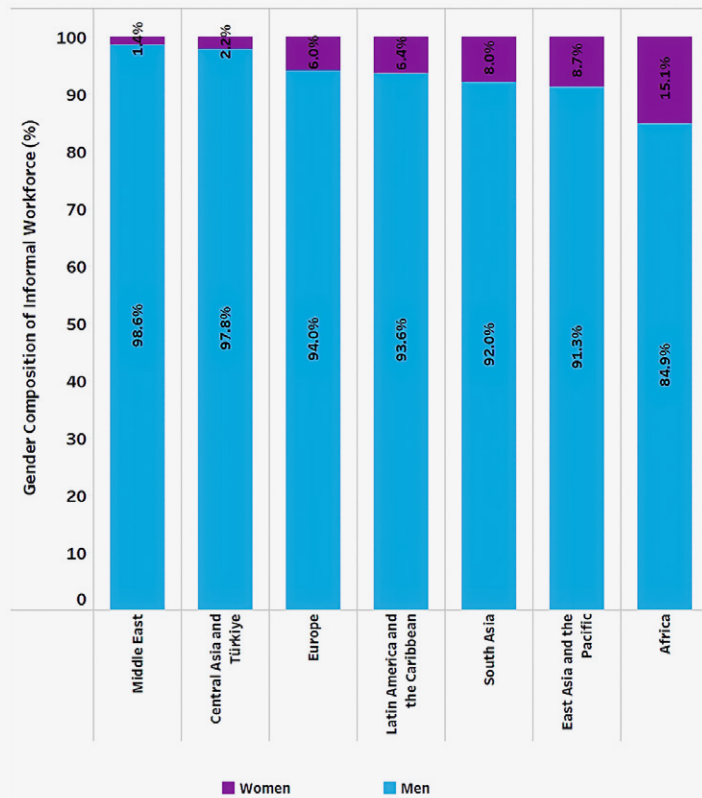
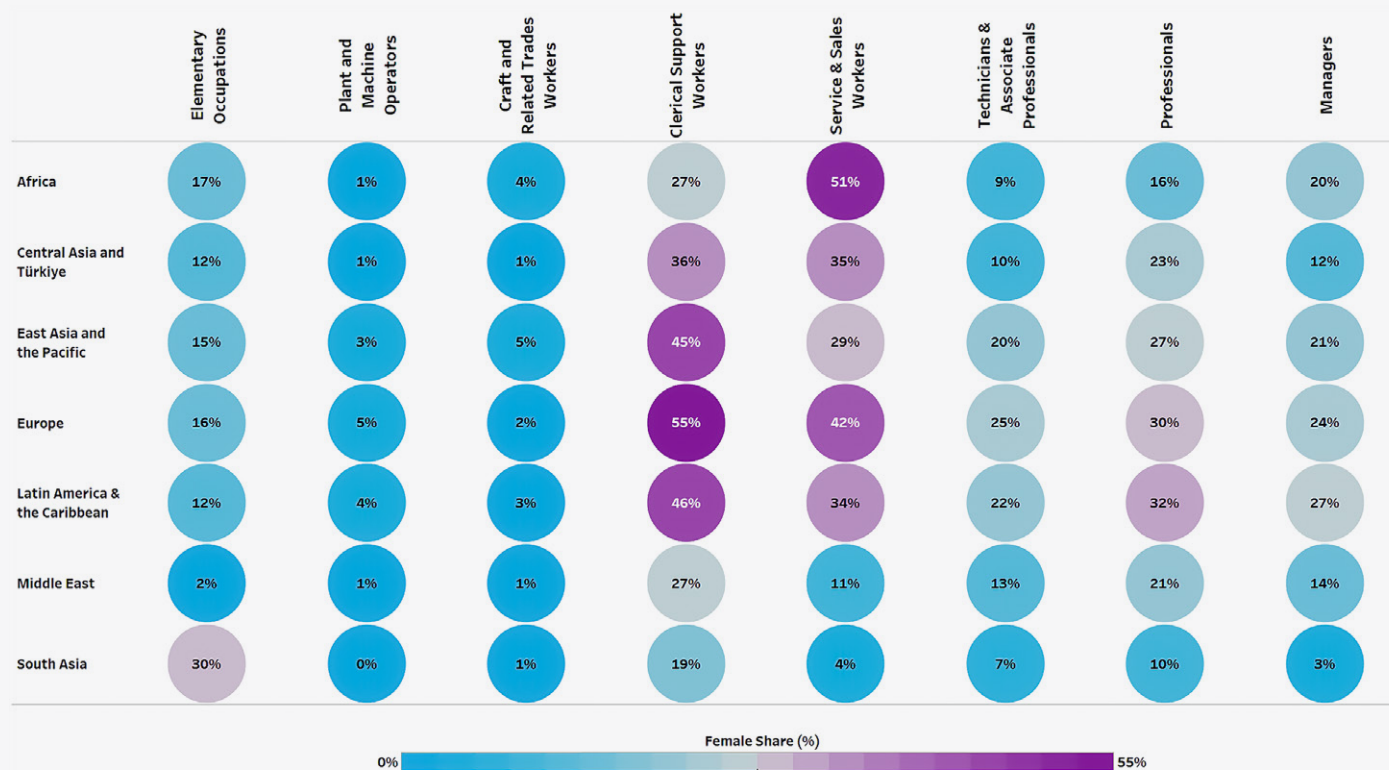


FIGURE 66
Share of Women in Informal Jobs in Infrastructure and Energy by Region



The infrastructure and energy sector remains overwhelmingly male-dominated, with women primarily in clerical and service roles.

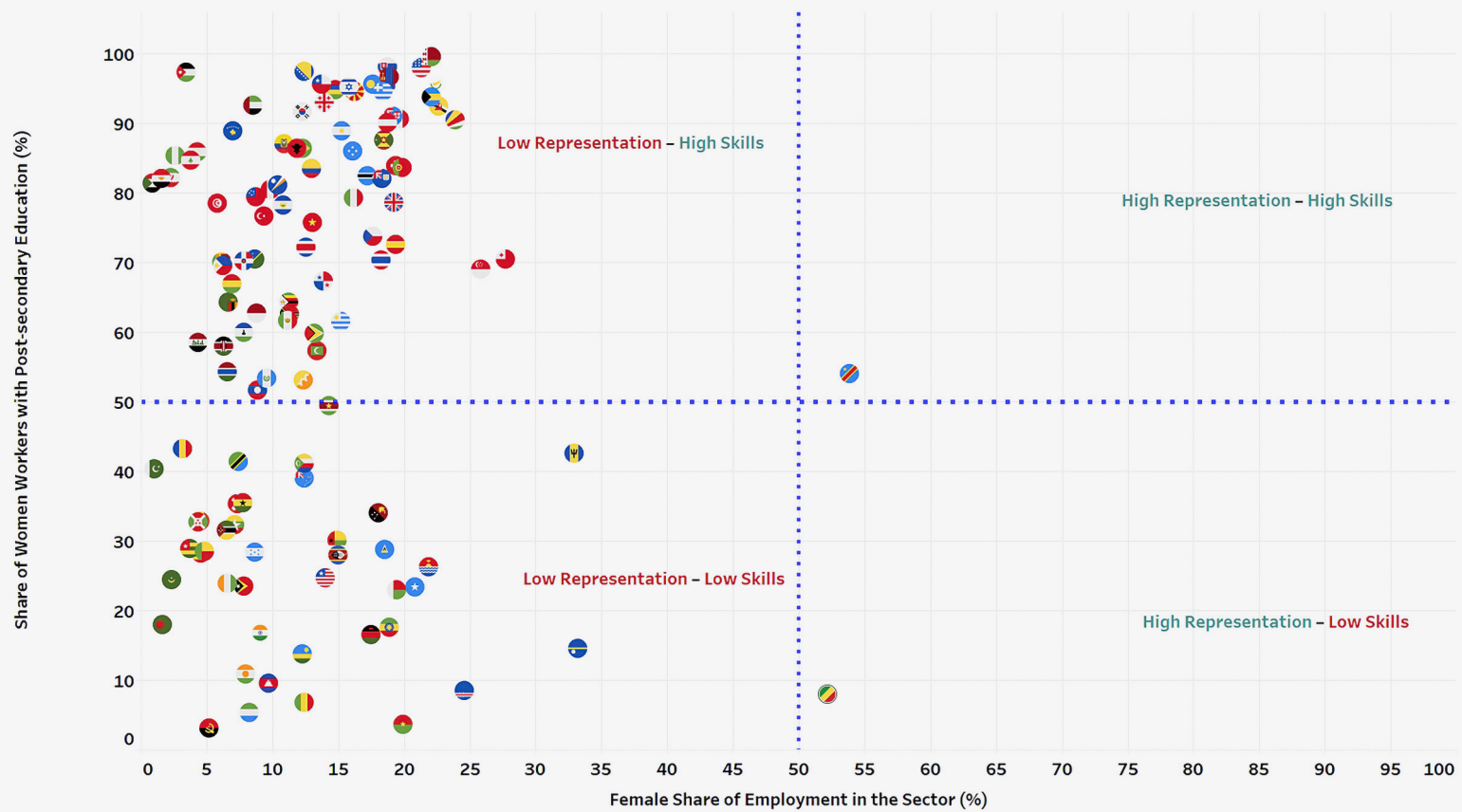
FIGURE 67
Share of Women Infrastructure and Energy Workers by Occupational Category



In many countries, more than half of women working in infrastructure and energy have post-secondary qualifications.

FIGURE 68

Women's Representation and Educational Qualifications in the Infrastructure and Energy Sector by Country

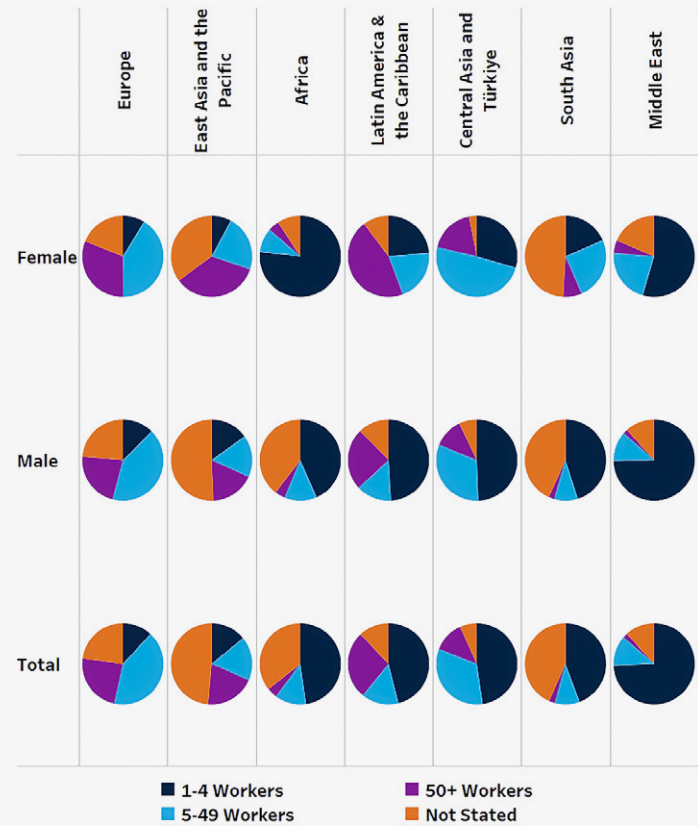


Larger firms have a greater proportion of women employees, but the extent varies across regions.

FIGURE 69
Gender Composition Infrastructure and Energy Workforce by Region and Firm Size



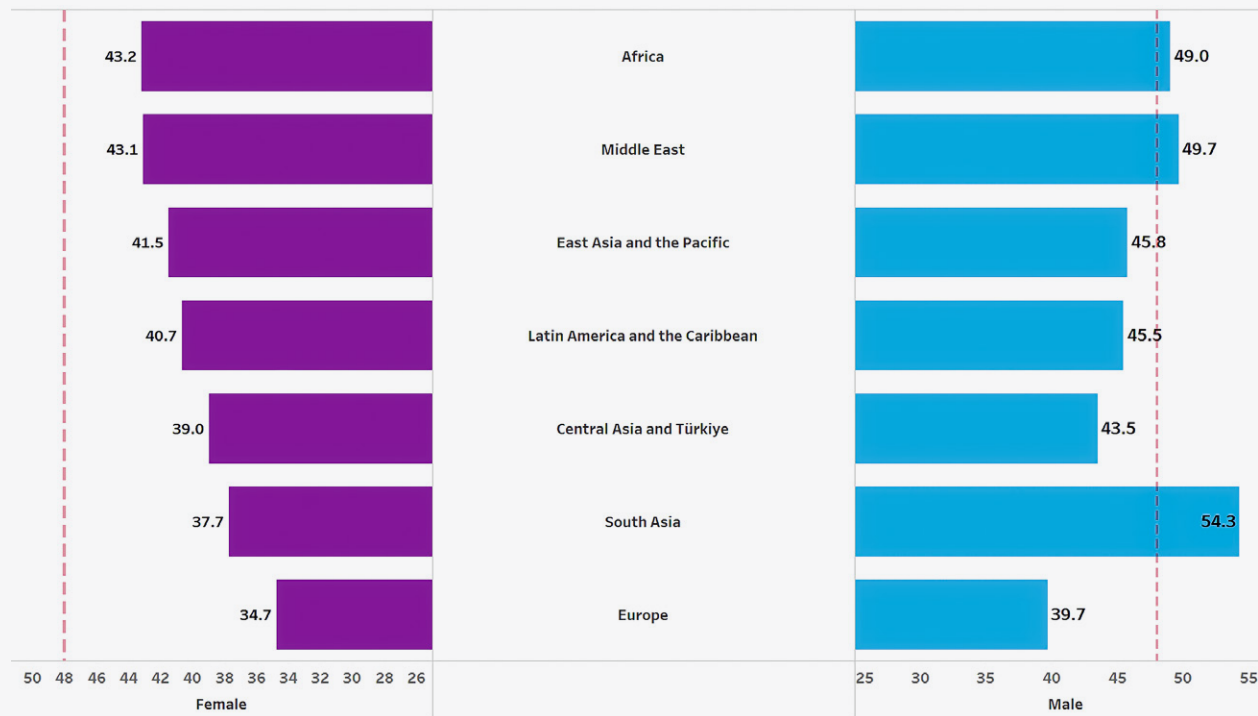
FIGURE 70
Distribution of Infrastructure and Energy Workers by Firm Size



Women in the infrastructure and energy sector work more than 40 hours per week in most regions, with the lengthiest hours in Africa and the Middle East.

FIGURE 71

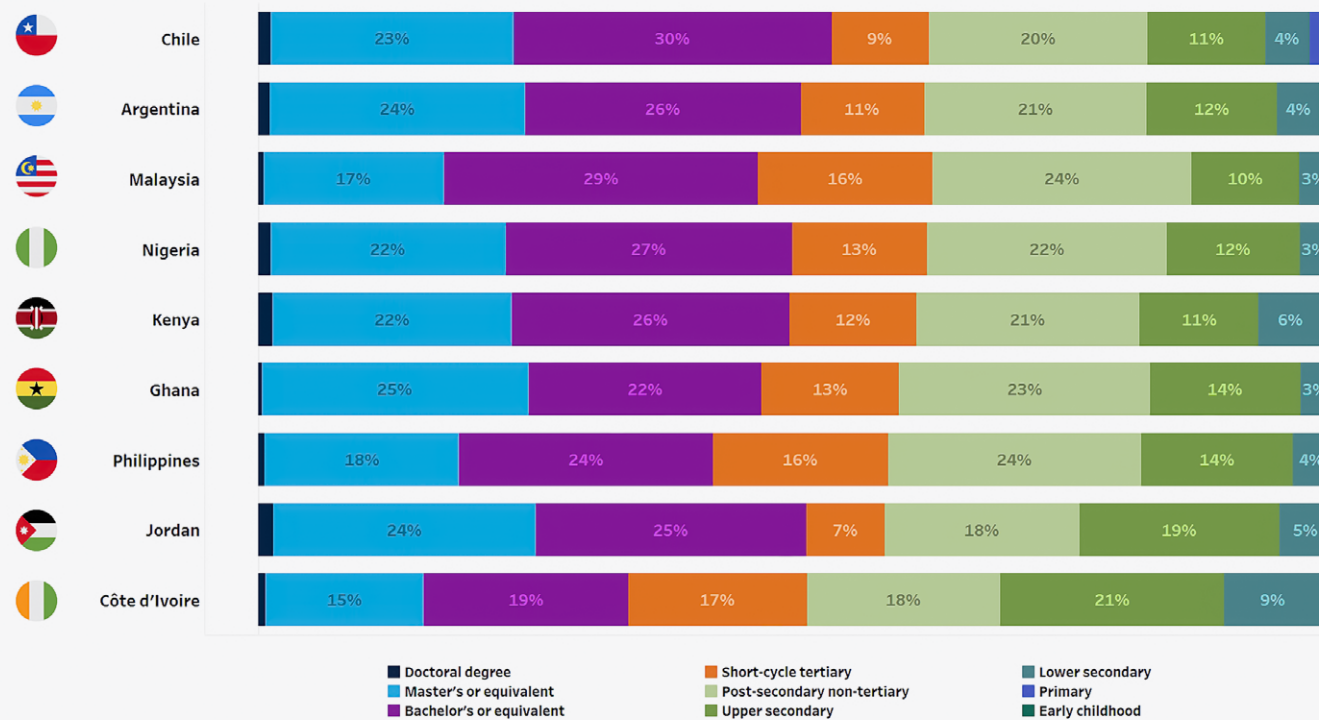
Average Weekly Working Hours in the Infrastructure and Energy Sector by Gender and Region



Note: The vertical red dashed line indicates the ILO threshold for excessive working hours.

Infrastructure and energy roles largely require bachelor or higher degrees, reflecting the sector's specialized and technical demands.

FIGURE 72
Education Required in Online Infrastructure and Energy Job Advertisements in Selected Countries



Source: Lightcast and UNESCO analysis of job advertisements posted online from July 2024-June 2025.



Where are Women? An infographic snapshot of jobs in five strategic sectors

Conclusion

This analysis provides an overview of women's employment patterns, highlighting where women work, the types of occupations they hold, the size of firms they are employed in, and the extent of informality in five strategic sectors. By bringing together comparable cross-country data, stakeholders can better identify structural differences in female participation across sectors and key gaps in occupational mobility, skills distribution, and access to formal employment.

These findings can help policy-makers design targeted interventions and set benchmarks for private sector initiatives. The data can support more sector-specific policies and support, including skills development programs, incentives for firms to hire and retain women in higher-productivity roles, and measures that promote formal employment and career progression. These actions can help ensure that growth in these strategic sectors translates into more inclusive, higher-quality employment for women.

Annex 1

Data Sources

This report combines several complementary datasets to provide a comprehensive snapshot of women's participation across the five strategic sectors. The primary source of employment statistics is ILOSTAT, which compiles internationally-comparable labor market data derived from national labor force and household surveys. Because the analysis aims to provide a current cross-country snapshot, the research team used the latest available data for each country at ILOSTAT database accessed in February 2026,

ILOSTAT: Primary Employment Data

The following datasets were used to analyze gender differences in employment across sectors:

- Employment by sex and economic activity, using the fourth revision of International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) at the two-digit level
- Employment by sex, occupation, and economic activity
- Employment by sex and nature of job (formal vs. informal)
- Employment by sex and establishment size
- Employment by sex and educational attainment
- Mean weekly hours worked by sex and economic activity
- Hourly earnings by gender (ISIC letter-level industries)

Labor Market Demand Data

Lightcast – UNESCO Collaboration

- Online job advertisement data for approximately nine countries were used to assess emerging labor demand and skill requirements.

Trade and Industrial Complexity Data

UN Comtrade / Base pour l'Analyse du Commerce International (BACI)

- Product-level trade data from 2007–2023 was used to analyze manufacturing activities and sector composition.

Harvard Growth Lab – Atlas of Economic Complexity / UN Comtrade / BACI

- Product Complexity Index (PCI) at the HS-4 level was used to assess the technological sophistication of manufacturing industries.

Annex 2

Methodology Summary

To analyze women's employment across the five strategic sectors, the team first mapped two-digit, fourth revision ISIC industry classifications to the World Bank Group's priority sectors: agribusiness, healthcare, infrastructure and energy, tourism, and value-added manufacturing.

The mapping followed a functional value-chain approach. Each ISIC industry's official description was compared with the operational definitions of the five sectors to determine how closely its economic activities aligned with the core functions of each sector. Based on this alignment, probabilities were assigned to each sector, reflecting the degree to which the industry contributes to that sector's value chain. The sector with the highest probability was selected as the primary classification.

Because labor market data are available only at the two-digit industry level, some industries contain activities that only partially correspond to the five sectors. In such cases, if a meaningful share of the industry's activities aligned with a sector, the entire industry was mapped to that sector to capture its broader economic footprint.

The probability estimates were generated using a semantic scoring workflow based on the official ISIC definitions, implemented through a large language model to identify the economic activities and value-chain roles of each industry. The results were manually reviewed and validated, including through consultations with subject-matter experts, to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Moreover, the analysis highlights value-added manufacturing sectors by linking detailed product trade codes (HS codes) to industry classifications (ISIC). Using this mapping, the research team calculated the average Product Complexity Index (PCI) for each sector. This allowed the team to assess whether women are more concentrated in industries that produce complex, higher-value products, which are generally associated with greater value addition and more advanced production activities.

A link to a detailed methodological note can be found [here](#).

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