CHAPTER II

LABOUR FORCE
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This chapter introduces working age populations, by gender, and their relation with labour force in ESCWA member countries during the period 2000-2009. Data on labour force, economic activity and unemployment are drawn from replies to a questionnaire sent by ESCWA to national statistical offices (NSOs), and from the publications of those offices in ESCWA member countries.

Table II-1 presents the economic activity rates for the active population, by gender and age group, in ESCWA member countries. Overall, economic activity rates ranged from 39.5 per cent in Jordan to 87.0 per cent in Qatar in 2010. Female participation rates were generally lower than male participation rates in all countries. In 2009, the gender gap in economic activity was more than 50 percentage points in most ESCWA member countries. Economic activity rates among the age group 15-24 years are lower than the overall rates in all ESCWA member countries.

Table II-2 shows data on adult and youth unemployment rates by gender in ESCWA member countries, according to the latest available year. Overall unemployment rates declined in ESCWA member countries for which data were available, except for Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, Iraq, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen showed high rates over 15 per cent. At the other end of the spectrum, relatively low unemployment rates of 5 per cent or less were found in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Young people are generally predisposed to higher rates of unemployment than adults. Unemployment rates among young people were at least twice as much as adult rates in all countries for which data are available. Young females showed higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts in most ESCWA member countries.

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Table II-3 presents data on employment rates by gender and economic activity in ESCWA member countries, according to the latest available data for the periods 2000-2005 and 2006-2010. In most countries, a number of occupational groups were dominant in the labour market, such as the services sector. By contrast, the share of employment decreased in two major sectors, agriculture and industry. In Qatar, the share of the labour force in the construction sector (44.3 per cent) is the highest among those countries for which data are available, the same share decreased in other countries, including the United Arab Emirates.

Table II-4 presents data on employment status by gender in ESCWA member countries in the periods 2000-2005 and 2006-2010. Most workers in all countries held salaried jobs in the period from 2006 to 2010, except for unpaid non-family workers in Jordan (0.2 per cent) and Lebanon (2.4 per cent). Egypt showed the highest percentage of employer jobs among ESCWA member countries, at 14.7 per cent. The table shows that the largest percentages of self-employed workers were in Lebanon (30.7 per cent in 2009) and the Syrian Arab Republic (28.8 per cent in 2010).
Sources

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Iraq


Jordan


Kuwait

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Lebanon


Oman

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Palestine

Qatar

Saudi Arabia

The Sudan

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Yemen