CHAPTER II

LABOUR FORCE
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This chapter introduces working age populations by sex and their status within the labour force in ESCWA member countries during the period 2000-2012. Data on labour force, economic activity and unemployment are drawn from replies to a questionnaire sent by ESCWA to national statistical offices, and from the publications of those offices.

Table II-1 presents the labour force participation rate for the active population, by sex and age group. Overall, labour force participation rates ranged from 38 per cent in Jordan to 87 per cent in Qatar in 2012. Female participation rates were generally lower than male participation rates in all ESCWA member countries. The gender gap in economic participation was more than 40 percentage points in most countries. Labour force participation rates among the age group 15-24 years are lower than overall rates in all countries.

Table II-2 shows data on adult and youth unemployment rates by sex during the period 2000-2012. Overall unemployment rates declined in some ESCWA member countries for which data were available, while increasing in other countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, Iraq, Palestine, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen showed rates of unemployment 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 generally have 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 were available. Young females showed higher rates of unemployment than their male counterparts in most ESCWA member countries.
Table II-3 presents data on employment rates by sex and economic sector, according to the latest available data for the periods 2000-2005, 2006-2010 and 2011-2012. In most countries, a number of occupational groups were dominant in the labour market, such as the services sector. The share of employment in the agriculture sector is relatively low in many countries while it is higher than 40 per cent in Sudan and Morocco. By contrast, the share of employment decreased in two major sectors, agriculture and industry. In Qatar, the share of the construction sector (37 per cent of the labour force) 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 the employment status by sex in the periods 2000-2005 and 2006-2012. Most workers in all countries held salaried jobs in the period from 2006 to 2012, except for unpaid non-family workers in Jordan (0.2 per cent) and Lebanon (2.4 per cent). Egypt showed the highest percentage of employers among ESCWA member countries, at 16 per cent in 2011. The table shows that the highest percentages of self-employed workers were in Lebanon and Sudan (31 per cent in 2009), the Syrian Arab Republic (30 per cent in 2010) and Morocco (29 per cent in 2012).

Table III-3 presents data on the number of employed persons by sex and economic sector, according to the latest available data for the periods 2000-2005 and 2006-2012. In most countries, a number of occupational groups were dominant in the labour market, such as the services sector. The share of employment in the agriculture sector is relatively low in many countries while it is higher than 40 per cent in Sudan and Morocco. By contrast, the share of employment decreased in two major sectors, agriculture and industry. In Qatar, the share of the construction sector (37 per cent of the labour force) is the highest among those countries for which data are available. The same share decreased in other countries, including the United Arab Emirates.

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Sources

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