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WOMEN 20

# W20's Perspective on the future of work

Understanding the Present to Build a Better Future for Everyone



The gender gap in labor force participation has narrowed in the last decades, however, women still lag behind men by 27%. Even today, 55% of women worldwide have no income of their own. Although the picture is far better in G20 countries, none of them has succeeded in closing the gender gap in labor force participation, in spite of the commitment to reduce this gap by 25% by 2025. As McKinsey states, if women in the economy as men do, there would be a 26% growth in global GDP by 2025.

Overall, the employment rate for women is 26 percentage points lower than for men and women account for 57% of part-time employees at a global level. Women are over-represented in a limited number of sectors and occupations that tend to exhibit less formality, dynamism and lower remunerations such as health, education, domestic work and services (wholesale and retail trade, cleaning and catering, among others).

**W20 encourages leaders to take concrete actions** to enable women to access new and decent jobs and work on policies and programs that aim to retain women talent on the labor market, favoring a fair and sustainable development as stated by G20 and the SDGs. Policies which do not account for the structural differences between men and women will perpetuate or even widen inequalities.

The future of work will bring various opportunities for both men and women. G20 governments must commit to ensure that women do not face the same limitations to access work, finances, productive resources as they do today.

To design the most suitable policies for the future of work based on evidence, there is an urgent matter: a need for gender disaggregated data. Accurate and timely information is necessary, and today we still experience considerable information gaps. G20 countries must ensure collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data on labor participation, salaries, land tenure, gender diversity in leadership and decision-making positions, access to education, new (digital) skills, and finance, as well as digital economic opportunities and participation on non-paid jobs (that is, care economy).

What do we envision in the future of work for women?

Let's make sure women are ready for the jobs of the future.

While the 4th Industrial Revolution has the potential to raise global income levels and improve people's lifestyles, we have to ensure that these benefits are shared more equally between countries and amongst men and women.

Currently, half of the world's population is not connected to the internet, creating a major divide between developed and developing nations. The future of work is related to having access and being able to use of digital technologies. For that reason, there is a need to boost access in developing countries. G20 leaders need to further investment in connectivity and infrastructure to ensure that the least developed countries do not fall further behind, with a special consideration to rural areas.

In terms of how automation is expected to affect the job market, on average, men and women will likely be exposed to similar risks of losing their jobs. In some cases, more female-dominated industries will be affected, and, in other cases more male-dominated ones. In general, the best safeguard against automation is skill acquisition. As OECD states, fewer than 5% of tertiary degree workers are at risk of automation. That is why G20 countries need to provide high quality free education for everyone, making sure no girl or woman is left behind. Also, they need to ensure that the new jobs to be created in light of the technological revolution are decent jobs. This is of utmost importance for women as they are overrepresented in the informal sectors.

Regarding the needed skills to become more active agents of development, there is a need to make STEM-related topics and careers more attractive to girls and women. Most of the decent jobs to be created in the future will come from these areas, and currently, women account for 30% of graduates in natural sciences, engineering and ICT. Existing education initiatives should consider the needs and interests of women and girls to make STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) areas more attractive. Initiatives should consider training gender perspective to teachers (in all levels of education) to reduce biases which discourage women and girls from studying STEM-related disciplines. Innovative ways of teaching these subjects should be promoted, enhancing the motivation and

retention of women. Governments should promote pedagogical approaches where STEM related careers are promoted and taught from a gender lens, while education prepares students for a more inclusive and diverse world. Countries should ensure that virtual and physical classrooms are technically well-equipped.

Recent research has shown that machine learning algorithms, used in a wide variety of applications (from customer recommendations, job searching, training platforms to credit-approval processes) are biased, perpetuating and even amplifying behavioral biases. Some of these biases are of extreme importance as they refer to how people are portrayed professionally and consequently, impact in their employability. G20 countries must develop mechanisms to ensure that platforms or applications reduce biases to the minimum, in order to guarantee that women and men are given the same information, can access the same opportunities and are evaluated equally.

In low and middle income countries, women are 14% less likely to own a cellphone than men, and 250 million fewer women than men have access to the Internet (that is, a 12% difference). Most G20 countries experience internet gaps in usage between men and women. In Turkey, it is 16%, in Italy 6% and in Germany 3%. Research has also shown that the gender gap grows larger as devices and services grow more complex. It is worth mentioning that in terms of use, women tend to have a more social use of technologies while men a more work-related and productive one.

The lack of relevant content for women also exacerbates this problem. ICT services and applications are frequently criticized for focusing mostly on men's priorities or paying less attention to women's needs. Biases are also present in the production of digital and software content. For instance, women worldwide only account for 8%-16% of Wikipedia content editors (Wikimedia Foundation - Wikipedia editor surveys, 2011). In terms of decision-making positions, at the top of the tech-industry, women make up 21% of technology executives. More women leading this dynamic sector would help to address this deficit in female leadership and provide much needed role-models for girls and women.

To have women make the most of technologies, G20 countries must set up an action plan to make them gain equal access to and use of ICT, and get more involved in their design, development and governance.

### Let's make sure regulations and don't leave women behind.

Laws and regulations still limit women's economic participation. Legal gender differences are estimated to decrease female labor force participation and undermine GDP growth. It is therefore essential to point out that at present, ten of the G20 countries have laws that impede women to enter specific sectors. The most common limitations to women's employment refer to dangerous or unhealthy tasks, such as loading or unloading shipments and transportation. Another important barrier refers to the fact that in 42% of G20 countries (not including the European Union) women are not guaranteed by law an equivalent position after maternity leave. Another aspect for concern are the laws that establish earlier retirement for women. As women usually have fewer earnings and fewer contributions to social security systems, early retirement can negatively affect their lifetime earnings, pension benefits and retirement savings, as well as their career growth prospects. G20 countries should end discrimination in employment based on sex by eliminating regulations that ban women from engaging in certain activities. They should guarantee that the same job, terms and conditions are kept for women when returning from maternity leave. G20 countries should ensure that people have the right to continue working if they wish to, and the right to retire in an affordable manner if they do not want to work anymore. In light of the increased rates in life expectancy, governments should find ways to find relevant and decent work alternatives for older people.

### Let's make sure, there is no violence in the workplaces of the future.

Gender-based violence at work is a human rights violation, which has also negative consequences on growth and development and directly affects women's participation and productivity in the labor market. ILO states that there are direct and indirect financial costs resulting from victims' absenteeism and turnover, illnesses and accidents, disability or even death. Indirect costs include the victims' decreased functionality and performance, quality of work, and timely production. The impact of violence can also negatively affect motivation and commitment among staff, loyalty to the enterprise, working climate, its public image, and even openness to innovation and knowledge building. Workers in low-paid, precarious, informal and unorganized jobs are at greater risk of experiencing violence and harassment in the world of work. Women are over-represented in these jobs. A recent study found that 29% of women working in G20 countries have faced physical or online harassment at work, and 61% of these have never

reported this. We call G20 countries to be accountable for gender-based violence in the workplace and create mechanisms to help identify and prevent violence and harassment in the world of work and provide adequate response and treatment for the victims.

Let's make sure women have the time to participate in the jobs of future.

Worldwide, there is a care crisis where the demand and requirements for care outstrip its supply. These responsibilities shrink women's productivity, intensify labor market segmentation and lead them to concentrate in low-paid, more insecure, part-time, informal and home-based work as a means of reconciling unpaid care work and paid employment.

For regions like Europe or Latin America, where the demographic bonus is almost over, the percentage of dependent, adult population is rising. The increase in life expectancy will result in a bigger amount of people suffering chronic illnesses and disabilities, increasing the demand for care. In other countries such as India, China, some parts of Central Asia and Africa, they will continue to experience a demographic boom. While this is good news in terms of the amount of productive population, it also means a sustained demand for youth and children's care.

Be it in the middle or after the demographic transition, all G20 countries need to invest in high quality, affordable and professionalized care services for children and adults to reduce women's care work. Governments should include care work in public accounts to recognize its value in the GDP and visualize the contribution women make to the economy. The redistribution of care responsibilities requires proactive government interventions to expand paid maternity, but especially paternity and parental leave schemes with the right incentives to redistribute care work.

Women carry out a disproportionate amount of informal, unpaid care work, and in many areas of the world they are more likely than men to work part-time. The growing spread of new forms of casual, on-demand work as part of the 'gig economy' can thus prove beneficial, by allowing women to have more flexibility with respect to their work life whilst supplementing their income. However, when this fragmentation and the increased fluidity of the labor market are left unregulated they can also pose serious risks for the socio-economic rights of women, as their protections are reduced and job and income security, discrimination, and exploitation worsen. Thereby, there is further entrenching of unequal power relations in the workplace, in

the family, and in society. To enable women to access decent work in the gig economy, G20 countries should implement best practices such as parental leave, affordable and accessible care services (child, elder, disability), flexible working time arrangements (while respecting working time regulations), social security, basic infrastructure, discrimination protections, equal pay, safe working conditions and pension (particularly in the informal sector).

### Let's make sure women are financially included.

Women in developing economies remain 9% less likely than men to have an account or access to financial products; however, the future can be brighter. Digitization and technological advances allow overcoming some of the barriers to access and use of the traditional financial system such as: costs of access and maintenance fees, distance to institutions, lack of collateral and privacy. Considering that 605 million unbanked women globally have a mobile phone, the potential for financial inclusion through digital services is worth analysing, especially for rural or isolated areas. Specifically, in G20 countries, the gap of SIM and mobile phone ownership is small providing an opportunity to improve the provision of financial services.

From street vendors and domestic workers to subsistence farmers and seasonal agricultural workers, women represent the main work force in the informal sector. These women generate their own income and run businesses but fail to comply with the requirements of the traditional financial system: lack of collateral, credit records and, in the case of migrants, lack of documentation. Financial digital innovation such as the use of biometric recognition, alternative data to improve credit scoring and mobile money, among others, holds great promise to expand access. Governments in G20 countries must enable the development of digital financial services, creating regulatory frameworks that, while enabling innovation, provide a safe environment that include data privacy and security.

The role of governments is essential. Currently, 60 million unbanked women globally receive government payments in cash. Transforming these payments into mobile money could entail opening the first bank account for these women. In rural areas, the opportunities are also clear: 115 million unbanked women globally receive cash payments for agricultural goods, including 60 million who have a mobile phone. Governments should digitalize payments of social programs to encourage greater access and use of financial services. To this end, it is necessary to have in place the appropri-

ate infrastructure, offer affordable and reliable connectivity, and to ensure adequate digital and financial education.

If the policies implemented to favor the job transition remove the aforementioned obstacles that women face to develop in the economy, the future of work for women could be exciting. Equal opportunities will drive us to a better world with strong competitive economies in a fair and sustainable planet.

## W20

Women 20 is an official engagement group of the G20 formed by an international network of women leaders from civil society organizations, the business sector, entrepreneurs and think tanks. Its objective is to influence decision-making groups in G20 to carry out policies towards gender equality, accompanying the goal of advocating for more prosperous and inclusive societies. This can be accomplished through more access to education, health and political participation, but also ensuring full participation of women in economic activities.

This document outlines the position of the W20 Argentina on the importance of addressing the issue of gender in the Future of Work. It provides a summary of the reasons why, unless G20 governments pay special attention to gender issues, the future of work for women will be worse than the present.