

# GENDER-INCLUSIVE PART-TIME WORK POLICIES

## ADVANCING EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE LABOUR MARKET

January 2025



Gender disparities in labour force participation persist in Southeast Asia, as in many parts of the world. Women tend to have lower labour force participation than men, and this gap is more prevalent in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> **Low female labour force participation hinders progress toward women's economic empowerment and gender equality**, which are crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive development. Among various strategies to address this disparity, **promoting quality part-time work emerges as one promising avenue for change**.

This brief provides a snapshot of part-time work policies in selected Southeast Asian countries and discusses key opportunities to improve part-time work policies and legislation to support women's labour force participation. It draws from the report "Comparative Study on Gender Inclusive Part-Time Work Policies: Advancing Equity and Empowerment in the Philippines' Labour Market" prepared by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at the Australian National University (GIWL-ANU) in partnership with Investing in Women, an initiative of the Australian Government.

### Opportunities and benefits of part-time work

Care work in Southeast Asia is largely unpaid and predominantly carried out by women within households.<sup>2</sup> In this context, **part-time work offers women a viable way to remain in the labour force** while balancing paid employment and family obligations.

Currently, part-time work options are concentrated in the informal sector. **There is an opportunity to expand and encourage take-up of part-time opportunities in the formal economy**, where workers have greater access to basic entitlements, social protection, and job security.

**Quality part-time work is beneficial to both employers and employees.** It can enable employers to respond to changing labour demand, especially in service-oriented economies, and access a wider pool of talent.

**Comprehensive regulations are essential to ensure quality part-time work.** These include (a) stronger measures against discrimination based on working hours, (b) policies allowing employees the right to request part-time and other flexible arrangements, and (c) provisions ensuring the right to return to full-time work.

Part-time employees can enjoy greater flexibility and work-life balance, contributing to increased productivity. Expanding part-time work arrangements can also benefit many groups, such as working students, the younger work force, senior workers, and persons with disabilities. **Providing job opportunities to a broader range of demographic groups is critical to sustaining inclusive economic growth.**

Strengthening part-time work policies is only one approach to improving women's economic participation in the region. **Complementary policies**, such as gender-neutral carer's leave, parental leave, and broader flexible working arrangements, **are crucial to support people of all genders in balancing work and care responsibilities while challenging entrenched gender norms.**

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Halim, Michael B O'Sullivan, and Abhilasha Sahay, "[Increasing Female Labour Force Participation](#)," World Bank Group Gender Thematic Policy Notes Series: Evidence and Practice Note (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023)

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2024), [SIGI 2024 Regional Report for Southeast Asia: Time to Care, Social Institutions and Gender Index](#)



INVESTING IN WOMEN, AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, FOCUSES ON ACCELERATING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ACROSS SOUTHEAST ASIA.

## Comparative analysis of part-time work policies

To gain insights into how part-time work can help support women’s economic participation, a non-exhaustive list of part-time work policies and legislation were compared across the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam (Southeast Asian countries with similar economic growth trajectories) and Australia and Netherlands (best practice countries with comprehensive legislative frameworks and a high take-up of part-time employment by women).

### PART-TIME WORK STATISTICS

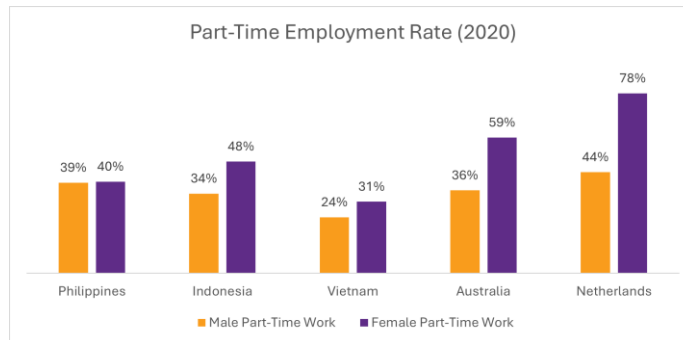



Figure 1. Part-time employment rates in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, and Netherlands, disaggregated by gender (2020).

**Those working in the informal economy often have weaker protections and poorer working conditions – which would also impact on part-time workers.**

Among the five comparator countries, the Netherlands had the highest part-time employment rate of women, followed by Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam (2020).<sup>3</sup> Most women working part-time in Australia and the Netherlands are employed in the formal economy. In contrast, most women working part-time in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam are in informal employment, a type of employment not covered by these countries' labour regulations.

### DEFINITIONS OF PART-TIME WORK

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	Adopted the International Labor Organization’s definition: “a single, regular or voluntary form of employment with hours of work substantially shorter than those considered normal in the establishment”; most common are 4 hours per day or 2 full days per week <sup>4</sup>	Employment that is less than full-time hours (less than 35 hours per week) <sup>5</sup>	Less than the usual hours (less than 40 hours per week) <sup>6</sup>	Work with a regular schedule of less than 38 hours per week <sup>7</sup>	Less than 35 hours per week <sup>8</sup>

**Including clear provisions on part-time employment in labour regulations reflects a government’s commitment to supporting diverse work arrangements while ensuring equal protection, opportunities, and quality for part-time workers.**

<sup>3</sup> Source: World Bank, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

<sup>4</sup> Source: Labour Code of the Philippines, DOLE’s Explanatory Bulletin on Part-time Employment


<sup>5</sup> Definition for statistical reporting purposes adopted by Statistics Indonesia (BPS), not enshrined in law

<sup>6</sup> Source: Labour Code of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

<sup>7</sup> Source: Fair Work Act 2009

<sup>8</sup> For statistical reporting purposes for Eurostat’s labour force survey

## WAGES

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	Pro-rata equivalent of full-time worker's wage; minimum wage based on daily and monthly rates	Higher hourly wage calculation for part-time workers	Hourly statutory minimum wage	Hourly statutory minimum wage; higher per hour pay ("casual loading") for irregular or casual employees	Hourly statutory minimum wage

### In all countries, part-time workers are entitled to a proportional adjustment of their wages comparable to full-time workers.


However, in developing countries, enforcement of these entitlements is usually weak, and the framework stipulated in the countries' main labour regulations tends to only cover formal sector workers, while the majority work in the informal sector.<sup>9</sup>

## ENTITLEMENT TO PAID LEAVES

Labour regulations in the five countries entitle employees to a range of paid leaves. However, clear pro-rata benefit entitlement for part-time workers is only found in the main labour regulations of the Philippines, Australia, and the Netherlands.

	Philippines	Indonesia <sup>10</sup>	Vietnam <sup>11</sup>	Australia	Netherlands
 Annual leave	✓ <sup>12</sup>	?	?	✓	✓
Sick leave	✓	?	?	✓	✓
Carer's leave		?	?	✓	✓
Maternity leave	✓	?	?		✓
Paternity leave	✓	?	?		✓
Parental leave	✓ <sup>13</sup>			✓	✓

## OTHER ENTITLEMENTS EXTENDED TO PART-TIME WORKERS

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	13 <sup>th</sup> month pay Social Security, Health Insurance,	13 <sup>th</sup> month pay Social Security,	Tet bonus <sup>14</sup> (not in law but in practice) Social Security, Health and	Health Insurance, Superannuation	13 <sup>th</sup> month (not in law, may be required by collective labour agreement)

<sup>9</sup> Gordon Betcherman (2021), "The Challenges of Regulating the Labor Market in Developing Countries," World Bank Blogs

<sup>10</sup> For Indonesia and Vietnam, while the relevant paid leaves are part of the respective countries' statutory provisions, clear and explicit pro-rata entitlement of paid leaves for part-time workers is not found in their main labour regulations

<sup>11</sup> See previous note


<sup>12</sup> Classified as service incentive leaves

<sup>13</sup> For solo parents

<sup>14</sup> A bonus usually awarded to employees in Vietnam before the Lunar New Year holiday

	Home Development	Health Insurance	Unemployment Insurance		Social Security, Health Insurance
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## JOB SECURITY

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	<p>Maximum Probationary period of 6 months</p> <p>Same termination rules for part-time and full-time workers (termination must be for just or authorised cause)</p>	<p>Maximum 3-month probation period for indefinite-term part-time workers, immediate employment rights for fixed-term part-time workers</p> <p>Same termination rules for part-time and full-time workers</p>	<p>Maximum probation period depending on type of job</p> <p>Same protection for part-time and full-time workers against unfair or illegal dismissal</p>	<p>Probation period typically between 3-6 months</p> <p>Same protection for part-time and full-time workers against unlawful termination</p>	<p>Maximum probation period of two months for permanent contracts; shorter for fixed-term contracts</p> <p>Same dismissal law for part-time and full-time workers</p>

## OTHER POLICY TOOLS TO BOOST ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION TARGETED AT WOMEN AND PARENTS

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	2009 Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710), Sec 22	Mother and Child Welfare Law 4/2024	Chapter X of Vietnam's Labour Code (provisions for female employees and promoting gender equality)	Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012	Parental leave for another person, such as a family member, to help raise child of single parent
	Solo Parents' Welfare Act		Tax Incentive for employers employing a large number of women	Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)	
			Incentives and support for set-up of childcare and pre-school facilities near workplaces	Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Bill 2023	Supplementary benefit (indirect support) for workers earning below social minimum during parental leave
				Parenting Payment Single and Partnered schemes	
				Additional protection for workers at risk of family violence (full protection for part-time or casual employees)	

*Broader gender equality policies and interventions should be in place, enabling people of all genders to share caring and economic responsibilities equally. These also help avoid unintended consequences, such as a more gendered take-up of part-time employment and perpetuating existing gender norms.*

## POLICY INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

	Philippines	Indonesia	Vietnam	Australia	Netherlands
	<p><b>To support at risk groups:</b></p> <p>Right to flexible work hours and additional parental leave for solo parents</p>	<p><b>To provide more flexibility to businesses and workers:</b></p> <p>Higher hourly wage calculation for part-time workers</p>	<p><b>To increase women's workforce participation:</b></p> <p>Tax incentives for firms that hire more women</p> <p>Provision of child care facilities</p>	<p><b>To promote quality part-time work:</b></p> <p>Required advance notice of change of working hours</p> <p>Right to request flexible working arrangements</p>	<p><b>To promote quality part-time work:</b></p> <p>Required advance notice of change of working hours</p> <p>Right to request part-time work and return to full-time work</p>

*In best-practice countries, regulatory frameworks allow employees of all genders to balance domestic responsibilities, like caregiving, and paid work. This can help to break down gendered assumptions that women are primarily responsible for providing care.*



### Key opportunities for improvement in part-time work policy and legislation to support women's labour force participation

While some policy challenges remain, regulatory frameworks governing part-time work in best practice countries, such as the Netherlands and Australia, have been largely successful in promoting women's participation in the labour market. Key legislation includes the Fair Work Act 2009 and Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 of Australia and the Netherlands' Prohibition of Discrimination by Working Hours Act 2012. Their experience in advancing part-time work policies **highlights key interrelated success factors** as follows:

- Framing of part-time work as an arrangement beneficial to *both* the workforce and employers;
- Extensive consultation with key stakeholders; and
- Translation from policy into action, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation.

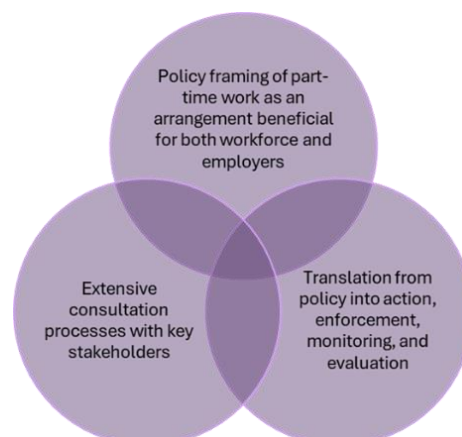


Figure 2. Success factors to advance part-time work policies.

**A combination of legislative frameworks governing part-time employment and structural changes in the economy and labour market has contributed to mainstreaming part-time work arrangements in best-practice countries, like Australia and the Netherlands.**

Learning from best practice, the following steps may be considered to promote quality part-time work as an effective avenue for increasing women’s economic participation and gender equality:

- **Ensuring no discrimination based on working hours**, both at the policy and implementation level;
- **Introducing more comprehensive part-time regulations**, including requiring advance notice of change to work schedules, granting a “right to request” reduced working hours, with provisions to return to full-time work, and options for higher hourly wage rates or casual loading for those in part-time arrangements; and
- **Leveraging other broader gender-equality tools** including gender-neutral carer’s leave and parental leave, broader flexible working arrangements, and provision of childcare facilities to support women’s participation while promoting more equal distribution of care responsibilities across all genders.

**In the Netherlands, extensive consultation, including voluntary agreements, allows stakeholders to stay ahead of legislative changes and become early adopters of proposed policies. It also allows policymakers to understand stakeholders’ concerns and respond with appropriate evidence and solutions.**

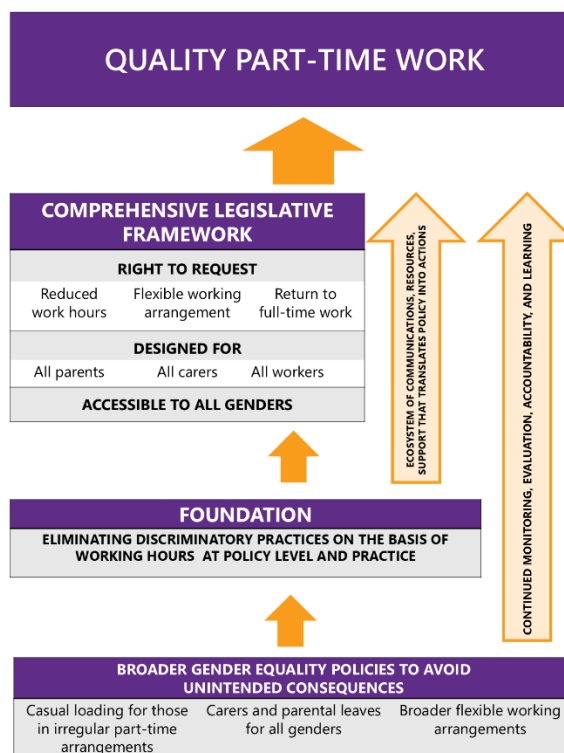


Figure 3. Key policy actions to enhance quality part-time work.

Read the full report here: [Comparative Study on Gender-Inclusive Part-Time Work Policies - Investing In Women](#)

