

GENDER-INCLUSIVE PART-TIME WORK POLICIES

ADVANCING EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINE LABOUR MARKET

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Increasing women's participation in the labour force remains a critical policy goal for the Philippines. For over three decades, the country has faced a persistent gender gap in labour force participation, with women's participation rate at just 47% in 2023, significantly lower than 73% for men.¹ A range of policies and strategies are needed to close the gap – increasing access to quality part-time employment is one to explore.

This brief draws from the “Comparative Study on Gender Inclusive Part- Time Work Policies: Advancing Equity and Empowerment in the Philippines’ Labour Market,”² a research report led by the Global Institute for Women Leadership (GIWL) at the Australian National University (ANU), in partnership with Investing in Women, an initiative of the Australian Government. The report was prepared for the Philippine National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

Salient Points

Women in the Philippines carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, dedicating nearly three times (19%) as much time to domestic responsibilities as men (7%). In this context, **part-time work offers women a viable way to remain in the labour force** while balancing paid employment and family obligations.

Quality part-time work is beneficial to both employers and employees. It can enable employers to flexibly respond to changing labour demand, especially in service-oriented economies, and access a wider pool of talent. Part-time employees can enjoy greater flexibility and work-life balance, contributing to increased productivity.

Part-time workers in the private sector enjoy greater job security, social protection, and access to basic entitlements compared to informal workers. Expanding quality part-time opportunities can also benefit diverse groups, giving greater flexibility to working students, the younger work force, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

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

There is an opportunity to advance needed regulatory reforms. Successful policy change requires framing part-time work as mutually beneficial for employers and employees, engaging in extensive stakeholder consultations, and ensuring effective policy enforcement, monitoring, and evaluation.

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

¹ Based on World Development Indicators (2024) data, World Bank, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>

² The report compares the policy framework on part-time work in the Philippines to that of Indonesia and Vietnam, neighbouring countries of similar context, and Australia and the Netherlands, two countries with best practices in terms of comprehensive legislative frameworks and high take-up of part-time work by women.



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

Landscape of part-time work in the Philippines

The Philippines has one of the lowest women's labour force participation rates in the Southeast Asian region. Women's labour force participation in the Philippines has stagnated below 50% for over 30 years.³ COVID-19 significantly affected both men's and women's labour force participation rates. But the decline was temporary, with both rates returning to pre-pandemic level by 2023.

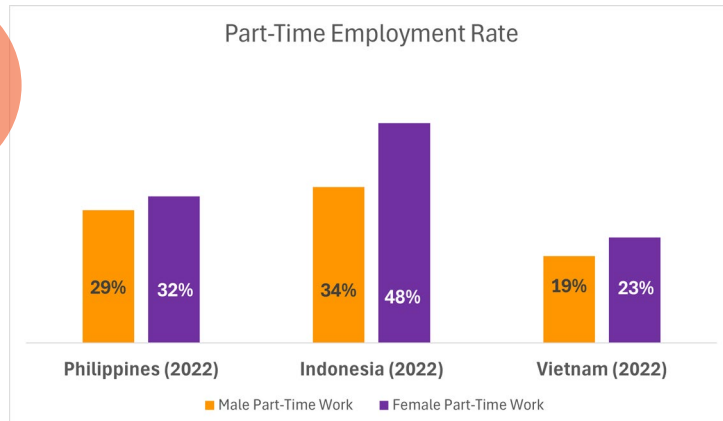


Figure 1. Part-time employment rates in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam (2022)

Part-time employment rates in 2022 in the Philippines were higher than those in Vietnam but lower than those in Indonesia. Women in part-time employment in the Philippines, on average, worked for 19.8 hours per week, while men worked for 22.5 hours (2022 data).⁴

With Filipino women having higher levels of education relative to men, and more highly-educated women favouring part-time arrangements for working mothers, there may be a latent supply of higher-skilled workers willing to work part-time.

A snapshot of female part-time workers in the Philippines

Official data from January 2023⁵ showed that only 20% of female part-time workers are formally employed in private establishments. This is half the share of male part-time workers who work in private establishments (41%). In the private sector:

- 46% of female part-time workers are employed in elementary occupations⁶. 26% are employed in service and sales jobs. Only 12% are employed in higher-skilled occupations as managers, professionals, and technicians.
- Female part-time workers are mostly employed in the agriculture sector (32%), followed by wholesale and retail trade (17%) and accommodations and food services (13%).
- The share of female part-time workers is higher in Region IV-A-Calabarzon (16%) and relatively spread out across other regions.

³ Based on World Development Indicators (2024) data, World Bank, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

* Taylor Hanna et al., "Forecasting Time Spent in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work" (New York: UN Women, 2023), <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/forecasting-time-spent-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work>.

⁴ The indicator is based on part-time workers aged 15 and above, sourced from annual Wages and Working Time Statistics available from ILOSTAT, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>.

⁵ Labour Force Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority provides the following snapshot of part-time workers, individuals aged 15 years old and above who work between 1 to less than 40 hours per week, in the Philippines during the month of January 2023

⁶ Performing simple and routine tasks often requiring handheld tools and physical effort

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

Current regulatory frameworks on part-time employment

In the Philippines, part-time employment receives little mention in the country's Labour Code. It is only fully discussed in the Department of Labour and Employment's (DOLE) Explanatory Bulletin on Part-time Employment issued in 1996.

Wages

The legislative framework in the Philippines entitles part-time workers to a proportional adjustment of wages and benefits comparable to full-time workers. However, the entitlement in the Philippines is not always provided in practice and covers only formal sector workers.

While the Philippines currently provides statutory daily minimum wage rates, setting rates on an hourly basis could help ensure part-time workers, especially those working irregular hours, are paid fairly for actual hours worked. Part-time workers would benefit from the government providing guidelines for higher hourly wage rate calculations as in the case of Indonesia or casual loadings as in Australia.

Benefits entitlement

The Philippines has clear pro-rata benefit entitlements for part-time workers. These include service incentive leaves, overtime pay, 13th-month salary, and employer's contribution to the social security system. Part-time workers are also entitled to maternity and paternity leave, with additional leave for solo parents.

Job security and protection against workplace discrimination

Security of tenure for part-time workers in the Philippines is protected by labour regulations, granting regular employee status after a six-month probationary period. Termination requires just cause, proper procedures, and severance compensation.

Specific frameworks targeted to women and vulnerable groups

The Philippines promulgated the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710) in 2009, which seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, especially those from marginalised groups. Section 22 of the Act stipulates women's right to decent work, acknowledging the need to support women to balance their family and work responsibilities.

The Philippine Government also passed the Solo Parents' Welfare Act in 2000, granting solo parents the right to flexible working hours or varying arrival/departure times from work and additional parental leave. The 2022 amendment expanded the definition of a solo parent to include the spouse, family member, or guardian of children of low/semi-skilled Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)⁷. It also entitled solo parents from the low-income bracket to receive a monthly subsidy of PHP 1,000.



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

⁷ To qualify, the OFW must be away from the Philippines for an uninterrupted period of twelve (12) months

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

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

As more people in the Philippines seek or engage in part-time work,⁸ there may be increasing receptiveness among stakeholders to policy reforms that promote part-time work and other flexible work arrangements. The best practices of Australia and the Netherlands in terms of legislative frameworks and policies offer valuable lessons for the Philippines. These include providing **basic protection for part-time workers, ensuring quality part-time employment, and allocating resources to enforce, monitor, and evaluate their implementation.** Their experience in addressing resistance and generating support for part-time work policies highlights **key success factors**, including:

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

Moreover, the Philippines may consider the following areas for policy reform to promote quality part-time work as an effective avenue for increasing women's economic participation:

- Ensuring **no discrimination on the basis of working hours**, both at the policy and implementation level;
- Introducing **more comprehensive part-time regulations**, including a "right to request" reduced working hours, with provisions to return to full-time work; and options for casual loading with higher hourly wage rates for those in irregular part-time arrangements; and,
- **Leveraging other 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 a more equal distribution of care responsibilities across all genders.

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

⁸ Results of a 2023 survey by Agile Data Solutions, Inc. found 60% of people in the Philippines have engaged in some form of part time work with younger people in the Philippines having most experience. <https://www.agiledatasolutions.tech/post/full-research-rockin-raket>

