

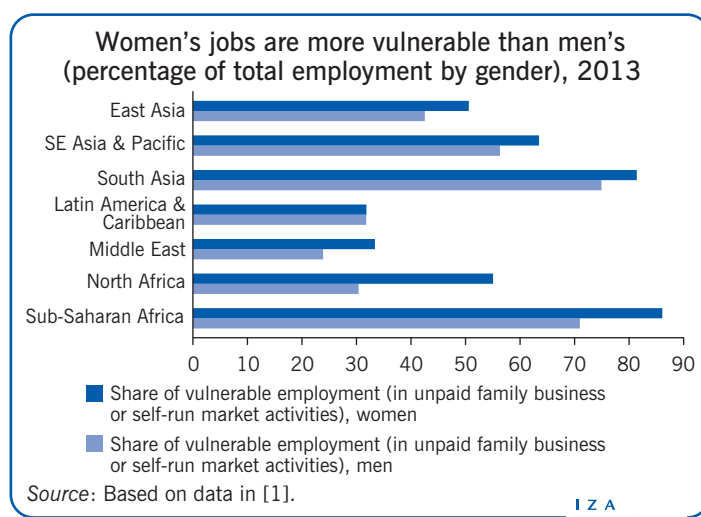
## Policies to support women’s paid work

### Policies in developing countries to improve women’s access to paid work should also consider child welfare

Keywords: female employment, paid work, vocational training, cash grants, child well-being

#### ELEVATOR PITCH

Engaging in paid work is generally difficult for women in developing countries. Many women work unpaid in family businesses or on farms, are engaged in low-income self-employment activities, or work in low-paid wage employment. In some countries, vocational training or grants for starting a business have been effective policy tools for supporting women’s paid work. Mostly lacking, however, are job and business training programs that take into account how mothers’ employment affects child welfare. Access to free or subsidized public childcare can increase women’s labor force participation and improve children’s well-being.



#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Pros

- + Job training and wage subsidies encourage female paid employment in the formal sector.
- + Business training increases female labor force participation and raises the income of low-earning women already in business.
- + In low-income households, access to free or subsidized public childcare increases women’s labor force participation.
- + Child health and nutrition may improve with female paid employment if the money spent on children rises.
- + Female paid employment improves child schooling.

##### Cons

- The positive effects of training and wage subsidies tend to disappear after one or two years.
- Business training increases profitability only in the short term and is only effective in starting subsistence businesses.
- The effects of childcare programs on female labor supply are not clear.
- When women work, children’s well-being can decline, since mothers have less time for childcare.
- Women in poorer households are more likely to work, but their labor income is not enough to increase school attendance of children.

#### AUTHOR’S MAIN MESSAGE

Training programs in developing countries have been effective in boosting female employment and earnings. However, the impact depends on whether the programs target younger or older women, new entrants or women with labor market experience, or women in rural or urban areas, as well as other factors. Policies to enhance women’s access to paid work and support their efforts to start a business should also consider any potential negative spillover effects on child well-being, since women still bear most of the burden of childcare. Integrating public provision of childcare with training programs can make it easier for women to engage in paid employment.