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What Happened to Shared Growth? A Cross-Country Comparison of Job Quality in the Rich World, 1979-2014

Since the late 1970s, U.S. economic growth has failed to translate into decent job growth, with job quality defined by the adequacy of wages and hours. This presentation updates results from a project designed to document and explain patterns of job quality over recent decades by demographic group (gender, age and education) and economic sector for five rich countries: the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and France. The guiding hypothesis is that at the root of national differences in the levels and trends in job quality is worker bargaining power, which is determined mainly by political choices and reflected in alternative institutional structures and policies. On a wide variety of job quality metrics, the US performs the most poorly, while France does the best, particularly for younger workers (18-34) with less than a college degree. The job quality results are not substantially offset by differences in the quantity of job opportunities.