

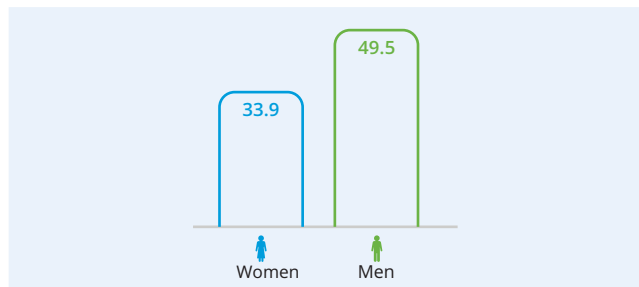
EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER IN GEORGIA

Women make up the majority of Georgia’s economically inactive population, have lower-paid jobs and are underrepresented in the formal employment sector. It is therefore important to explore the obstacles to women’s economic participation and whether the existing employment structure considers women’s interests.

Employment dynamics and gender in Georgia

Men are employed at a higher rate than women in Georgia. In 2020, the employment rate gender gap stood at 15.6 percentage points (p.p.), as seen in Figure 1.¹

FIGURE 1
Employment rate in Georgia, by sex, 2020 (percentage)

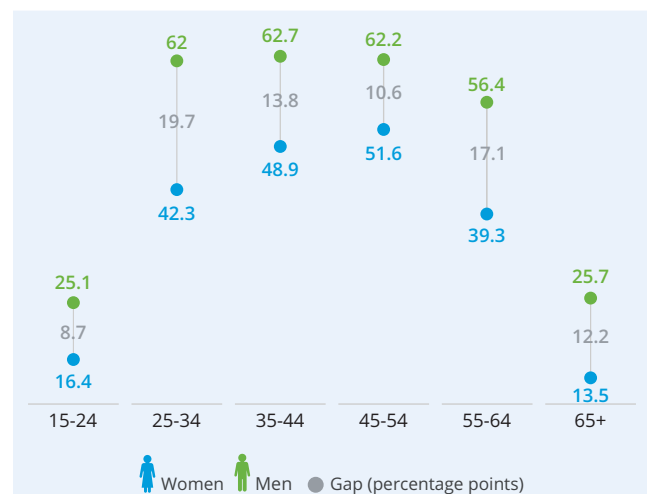


Source: Geostat 2020.

At first glance, it may seem that this discrepancy in employment can be explained by the fact that women enjoy a longer life expectancy (77.7 years for women, 69.1 for men) and an earlier official retirement age (60 for women, 65 for men). However, a closer analysis reveals that the gap in employment is widest for the population aged 25–34 (19.7 p.p.) and narrows among the population aged 65+ (12.2 p.p.) (Figure 2).² It is likely that this pattern is driven by the gender division of care work, which is especially pervasive at the peak of women’s reproductive

years. Alongside the unequal distribution of domestic work, the lack of public childcare opportunities, weak social protection and significant wage disparities can, in part, explain the lower female participation rate.³

FIGURE 2
Employment rate, by sex and age (percentage); and corresponding gender gap (percentage points)



Source: Geostat 2020.

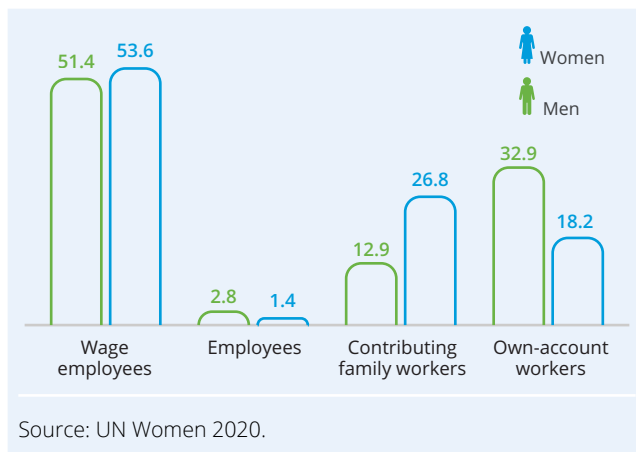
The employment structure in Georgia is such that a significant share of employed women and men are engaged in vulnerable employment. While wage employees and employers are not considered to be in vulnerable employment, self-employed workers, such as own-account workers⁴ and contributing family workers⁵ are considered vulnerable. In Georgia, similar shares of women (45.0 per cent) and men (45.8 per cent) are engaged in vulnerable employment. However, men are more likely to be own-account workers, and women are more likely



to be contributing family workers, with no pay or control over productive assets (Figure 3).⁶

FIGURE 3

Type of employment, by sex (percentage of the employed population)



Self-employed workers reside predominantly in rural areas and are less likely to have access to quality training and decent employment opportunities.⁷ It is worth noting that the majority of the self-employed population work in agriculture. Although women spend 80 days more per year than men on agricultural work, their work is unproductive and invisible since they are mainly engaged in subsistence farming or work as contributing family workers.⁸ This suggests that the Georgian economy is not creating enough employment opportunities in high-productivity sectors to absorb the unemployed, which in turn compels people to remain in low-productivity jobs.⁹

As for non-agriculture employment, according to the National Statistics Office (Geostat), the level of informal employment constitutes 31.7 per cent of all non-agriculture employment in Georgia.¹⁰ Women's informal employment made up 26.2 per cent of the women in the non-agriculture sector, while men's informal employment made up 36.4 per cent of the men in the non-agricultural sector (SDG indicator 8.3.1).¹¹

A wide variety of service provision (20 per cent) and paid domestic work (14 per cent) makes up a significant share of non-agriculture informal employment for women.¹² A 2018 UN Women study found that women who have children are 10 per cent more likely to be in informal

employment than men who have children.¹³ Since self-employment, contributing family work and informal employment are outside of labour regulations, such workers do not have the same labour rights and social protections that are bestowed upon those in formal employment.

Some aspects of gender discrimination in Georgia's formal labour market

The gender pay gap, which is a measure of the difference in pay between men and women wage employees, is one of the major causes of economic inequality between the genders. According to the estimates published by Geostat, raw monthly gender pay gap in Georgia was 32.4 per cent in 2020.¹⁴



In 2019, average hourly earnings were GEL 5.40 for women and GEL 8.50 for men.¹⁵ (SDG indicator 8.5.1)

A UN Women study revealed that women spend fewer hours on paid work each month than men. However, this does not mean that women work less in general but only that they work less for remuneration, which is greatly precipitated by women's disproportional burden of unpaid household work. The UN Women study also found that women have better labour market characteristics and, moreover, that unemployed women have better educational characteristics compared to unemployed men, as well as compared to employed men and women.¹⁶ This can be partially linked to horizontal segregation; women are mostly concentrated in the education, health and social work sectors, and these career paths generally require higher education.

When it comes to horizontal gender segregation—manifested in occupational and sectoral segregation—a UN Women study found that about a third of female and male employees would need to switch places across job categories for their distribution to become identical in Georgia.¹⁷ This is considered a moderate magnitude of horizontal segregation. Education, health and social care are dominated by women, but manufacturing and especially construction are more 'masculine' sectors. As for vertical gender segregation, the data are limited—the analysis documented it for some high-ranked professions (e.g. senior government officials) but not for others, such as judges.¹⁸ However, the margin of error for the above-mentioned analysis is substantial.



Therefore, conclusions should be made with caution. The identification of horizontal and vertical segregation requires additional research based on a high-quality establishment-level survey.

Although the Law on Gender Equality (2010) prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex and allows women to combine motherhood and work, the latter still remains a challenge for women. Even though extended maternity leave is available for employed women in Georgia, such leave is not adequately compensated for the employees of the private sector and some public organizations. The reason lies in the fact that there are two regimes regulating labour relations in Georgia. The first, which is defined by the Labour Code (amended in 2020), refers to all employees, while the second, established by the Law on Public Service (2015), is limited to public servants. However, not all public organizations are covered by the Law on Public Service. Therefore, a considerable number of public sector employees do not enjoy the status of a public servant. The labour protection standards for public servants are higher than those stated in the Labour Code in terms of guaranteeing paid maternity leave for 183 days.¹⁹ This issue remains despite amendments made to the Labour Code in 2020, which improved a number of protections for mothers, including the assurance that women can return to the same job they had after taking maternity leave.²⁰

Some obstacles to women's employment

Due to the gendered division of household labour, homemaking responsibilities prevent women from engaging in economic activity. Women and men allocate different amounts of time to unpaid work in Georgia: women spend 45 hours each week on homemaking, compared to men's 15 hours.²¹ Indeed, 49 per cent of women report household work responsibilities as the main reason for not working in Georgia.²² The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the differences between men and women in this regard, with data suggesting women spend time on 1.18 more domestic or care-related activities on average following the pandemic.²³ The presence of children in the household is associated with a significant reduction in women's economic participation and, conversely, increased male labour force participation.²⁴ Moreover, women who are forced out of the labour market due to their unpaid care responsibilities and the lack of child-care opportunities are less likely to return to work or find a job. As a result, they constitute a higher share of the

long-term unemployed and are more likely to be classified as economically inactive unless they are employed.

Aside from affecting the amount of unpaid care and domestic work women were engaged in, the pandemic had a number of other impacts on women's employment. The World Bank's gender assessment (2021) found that 66 per cent of workers who were laid off prior to June 2020 were women. This number has grown to 75 per cent of the workers laid off since.²⁵ A rapid gender assessment conducted by UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women suggested that 26 per cent of employed women and 36 per cent of employed men had reduced working hours as a result of the pandemic.²⁶

In addition to structural factors such as the lack of investment in care and social protection, inadequate labour regulations with regard to maternity, paternity and parental leave fail to support the reconciliation of paid labour with domestic care and maternity.

Finally, structural factors such as the absence of adequate programmes providing job-search assistance, unemployment compensation and counselling to help the long-term unemployed, including women after childbirth, to return to work appear to be a key barrier to women's labour force participation. Thus, a gender-sensitive approach to tackling unemployment will particularly help reduce women's long-term unemployment.²⁷

Key takeaways

Women in Georgia are significantly less likely to be employed in Georgia. Those who are employed earn less, work fewer hours and are more likely to be contributing household workers. There is a moderate level of segregation in the Georgian labour market in terms of the professions that men and women enter. Key barriers to women's participation in the labour market include the gendered division of labour and the lack of gender-sensitive employment programmes. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the gendered division of labour, and women were significantly more likely to lose employment during the pandemic. The issues discussed in this brief call for investment in care and social protection programming, improved labour regulations with regard to maternity, paternity and parental leave, gender-sensitive job-search assistance, and counselling to help the long-term unemployed, with an emphasis on women who left the labour market after childbirth.



ENDNOTES

- 1 Geostat 2020
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 UN Women 2020.
- 4 According to the World Bank, “own-account workers are workers who, working on their own account or with one or more partners, hold the types of jobs defined as ‘self-employment jobs’ and have not engaged on a continuous basis any employees to work for them. Own account workers are a subcategory of ‘self-employed.’” A fuller discussion on this definition is available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/jobs/series/SL.EMP.OWAC.ZS>.
- 5 According to the World Bank, “contributing family workers are those workers who hold ‘self-employment jobs’ as own-account workers in a market-oriented establishment operated by a related person living in the same household.” A more extensive definition is available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/millennium-development-goals/series/SL.FAM.WORK.MA.ZS>.
- 6 UN Women 2020
- 7 IMF 2018.
- 8 UN Women 2018a.
- 9 IMF, 2018.
- 10 Geostat 2020.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 UN Women 2018b.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Geostat 2020.
- 15 Geostat 2019.
- 16 UN Women 2020.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 UN Women 2021.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 UN Women 2018b.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and CRRC 2021.
- 24 IMF, 2018.
- 25 World Bank 2021.
- 26 UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and CRRC 2021.
- 27 World Bank 2016.

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