



Young people in Azerbaijan: The gender aspect of transition from education to decent work

Marina Baskakova

Working Paper No. 5

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**ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and
Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

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Preface

The primary goal of the ILO is to contribute to the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. This goal is embedded in the 2008 ILO Declaration on *Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*,¹ which has now been widely adopted by the international community.

In order to support member States and social partners in reaching this goal, the ILO pursues a Decent Work Agenda, comprising of four interrelated areas: respect for fundamental workers' rights and international labour standards, employment promotion, social protection, and social dialogue. Explanations of this integrated approach and related challenges are contained in a number of key documents: in those explaining and elaborating the concept of decent work², in the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) and in the Global Employment Agenda.

The Global Employment Agenda was developed by the ILO through tripartite consensus of its Governing Body's Employment and Social Policy Committee. Since its adoption in 2003 it has been further articulated and made more operational and today it constitutes the basic framework through which the ILO pursues the objective of placing employment at the center of economic and social policies³.

The ILO is fully engaged in the implementation of the Global Employment Agenda, and is doing so through a large range of technical support and capacity building activities, advisory services and policy research. As part of its research and publications programme, the ILO promotes knowledge-generation around key policy issues and topics conforming to the core elements of the Global Employment Agenda and the Decent Work Agenda. The sector's publications consist of books, monographs, working papers, employment reports and policy briefs.⁴

This working paper is a joint initiative by the Employment Sector and the Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. It is intended to encourage exchange of ideas and to stimulate debate around a vital issue of the gender dimensions of the school-to-work transition by young women and men.

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¹ See http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dgo/download/dg_announce_en.pdf

² See the successive Reports of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference: Decent work (1999); Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge (2001); Working out of poverty (2003).

³ See <http://www.ilo.org/gea> and in particular: Implementing the Global Employment Agenda: Employment strategies in support of decent work, "Vision" document, ILO, 2006.

⁴ See <http://www.ilo.org/employment>

Foreword

Giving young people the chance to obtain a decent job is essential to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development. For young women and men, making decent work a reality is quite compelling, since they are more exposed than their adult counterparts to deficits in terms of both quantity and quality of jobs.

Youth is a crucial time in life, as it is the time that young people start fulfilling their aspirations, assuming their economic independence and finding their place in society. In many countries, there are clear differences between the transition to work of young women and young men: young women tend to be less present in the labour market than their male counterparts. Once in the labour market, they are more likely to become unemployed than young men.

In 2009, the key indicators of the youth labour market of the Republic of Azerbaijan did not show significant differences between young women and men. Labour force participation was equal between the two sexes, while the employment rate was higher for young women (about 31 per cent compared to 28 per cent for young men) and the unemployment rate lower (19 per cent for young men and around 10 per cent for young women).

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned indicators are slightly more favourable towards young women, they do not differ significantly compared to young men, highlighting differences in terms of transition to decent work. One of these differences is the move to inactivity during transition to adulthood.

A more in-depth analysis highlights greater differences in the quality of jobs. Gender stereotyping is still found in many occupations. This is also due to the different paths taken in relation to vocational education and training. Another important challenge in the labour market relates to the gender wage gap. Participation by women and men in different occupations is normally one of the many causes for this disparity.

While in rural areas and small towns the traditional views on gender roles are entrenched in the local society and economy, this has been gradually changing in large cities. In general, this paper concludes that young people in Azerbaijan lack knowledge of labour laws, including legislation on gender equality in employment and occupation.

Although gender equality legislation exists in Azerbaijan, its enforcement still remains a challenge. This is compounded by institutional barriers or practices that do not ensure respect for gender equality principles (e.g. gender biased recruitment practices).

This working paper contains country-specific information and analysis, however it could still be relevant for other countries of the sub-region that are facing similar challenges in the labour market and are seeking to develop and implement gender-sensitive programs.

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to identify gender differences in the position of young women and men in education, employment and the labour market, and to reveal and assess the gender-related features of the transition of young women and men from education to decent work in the Republic of Azerbaijan (also referred to in this document as Azerbaijan).

The study focuses on the gender aspects of employment of young people in the 15–24-year-old age group (young age according to international standards). But it also considers the special position of Azerbaijan (which includes those aged between 15 and 29 in the youth category) and so also covers the gender aspects of employment of young women and men aged 25–29.

In Azerbaijan, as in most countries, young people comprise one of the most problematic and vulnerable population groups in the sphere of employment and the labour market. When seeking a decent job, young people face somewhat different difficulties, problems, and obstacles than those faced by adults. Young people are a quite specific contingent within the labour market. On the one hand, they generally lack work experience, which makes them by no means always attractive to employers. This is, in fact, the basic reason for the high level of unemployment among this population group—while it is hard to get a job without work experience, it is hard to gain experience if employers will not employ you. Furthermore, young people at the start of their career often lack both work experience and experience in jobseeking.

On the other hand, however, Azerbaijani youth generally have a more modern outlook, are more versatile, and sometimes have higher levels of education (including vocational education) than the older population whose human capital was largely lost during the post-Soviet period of the country's development. Besides, modern young people are typically more mobile (in both a territorial and professional sense), while adapting themselves more easily to new conditions and technologies. In that respect, they offer greater promise for new production and new markets.

At the same time, young people constitute a diverse population. Those who reside in cities and villages, or those who have or do not yet have an education, face different difficulties and obstacles (or differing degrees of difficulty, and greater or lesser obstacles) in their search for a decent job. This is despite the fact that, by law, young people have equal opportunities to gain decent employment after graduation, irrespective of their gender and place of residence. The differences in those obstacles and difficulties as faced by young men and women depend mainly on differences in gender roles adopted in Azerbaijani society.

Due to the differences in gender roles, young women find themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation in the labour market. Although, by law, men and women have equal rights and discrimination is banned, the perception of gender roles in society in Azerbaijan remains traditional, on the whole. It downgrades the importance of professional employment for young women and makes them unreliable and “second-rate” in the eyes of employers. As a result, young women seeking employment are subject to double discrimination: by gender and by age. Another important factor is that the prevalence of gender stereotypes substantially limits the range of occupations for which young women seek to be educated and in which

they seek to work, which further restricts their employment opportunities and perpetuates sectoral and occupational segregation in the employment sphere. For young women in rural areas and small towns there is sometimes an additional obstacle to obtaining a decent job: their lower territorial mobility compared with young men.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan is at present paying serious attention to the problems of young men and women in the labour market. Suffice it to say that both topics are included in the National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2006–2015). The Azerbaijan Youth State Program (2005–2009) envisaged measures to ensure occupational training and employment of youth (in general). The State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs is implementing a state policy of gender equality. However, *the gender component of the state youth employment policy* is only beginning to be developed.

This study is based on the analysis of two types of information: first, state demographic and gender statistics as well as labour and education statistics; second, the results of nine group interviews (with 70 persons in total) conducted between 19 and 30 April 2010 in three types of communities in the Republic of Azerbaijan: in Baku, the capital; in Ismaili, a small town; and in the rural villages of Ivanovka and Lakhych. In addition, data from earlier published studies have been analyzed.

Using a wide spectrum of information made it possible to present the position of young men and women in education, employment and the labour market, give a qualitative assessment of that position, and indicate the vector of gender asymmetry and the peculiar difficulties and obstacles confronting young people seeking employment (in some cases the asymmetry is in favour of men and in other cases in favour of women).

This study may provide the basis for the development and implementation of concrete national plans and measures to help young women and men overcome barriers and problems that accompany their entry into the labour market, and achieve decent employment.

Section 1. Gender roles and stereotypes widespread in Azerbaijani society and among Azerbaijani youth

In the Republic of Azerbaijan, despite the equality of men and women under the law and the declared policy of gender equality, the distribution of roles and duties between men and women still remains largely traditional. Accordingly, men are considered to be the “breadwinners” of the family, in charge of its stable, sheltered, and secure existence, whereas women are “housewives, custodians of the family hearth, mothers”. And although, nowadays, many women are forced to work to support the financial condition of the family, professional work is secondary in their life. For women, paid employment has only minor individual value, despite the high pressure they bear to fulfill household responsibilities. Therefore, the most important and traditionally “female” quality of a woman is still considered to be dependence (first on her parents and then on her husband).

The “secondary nature” of professional employment for the majority of women and girls makes them unreliable, “second-rate” workers in the eyes of employers. As a result, during employment women suffer from gender discrimination, and young women suffer from double discrimination: on the basis of gender and of age.

For the purposes of this study it is also significant that the prevalence of traditional gender roles in Azerbaijan reveals marked differences between regions and types of human settlements. In rural areas and small towns families adhere to the traditional mode of life, whereas in the metropolitan regions egalitarian relations are gaining ground. Interviews have also shown that modern young men hold traditional ideas about the distribution of gender roles more frequently than do young women.

Therefore, the dilution of traditional patriarchal gender roles makes little difference to the professional ambitions of young men (who, regardless of their place of residence and social status, think of themselves as “breadwinners”), but it does make a difference to the ideas of young women (and their family members) regarding their professional careers. Although not a single young woman interviewed as part of this study declared that she does not want to work, the value ascribed to education and employment varied widely among young women. That, in turn, left an imprint on their behaviour in the labour market (including the amount of effort they put into jobseeking, what they require of a workplace, the level of wages they seek, etc.)

Furthermore, the research has shown that a proportion of young girls, particularly those living in the countryside, lacked any career aspirations, professional employment as such having a very low priority in their life values system. At most, they evaluated their work as support for the family, with many declaring directly that having a professional career was out of the question in their life. As a matter of interest, there are girls in both rural areas and small towns who have managed to receive a high level of education and decent work, demonstrating that the place of residence and the environment have no fatal influence on young women’s professional opportunities.

Distinctive among the young people interviewed was a group of young women who had earlier completed training abroad (i.e. short-term training of 1–2 years). As a rule, those young women seek a high-level education of good quality (including that abroad), employment in their specialist field and promotion.

At the same time, mini-questionnaires and interviews have shown that, irrespective of their own career-seeking and place of residence, young women consider the work associated with decision-making and big business to be “more appropriate for men”, while often keeping for their own consideration small business and own-account work. Young men showed solidarity with them in their responses.

Section 2. Demographic factors in the development of employment and the labour market

The Republic of Azerbaijan today has a growing population and a growing number of young people. According to official data, young people presently account for 29 per cent of the country's population.

On the whole, the gender composition of youth in the Republic of Azerbaijan is asymmetric. In 2009, the 15–29-year-old age group included 1,315,700 young men and 1,289,200 young women (i.e. women account for 49.5 per cent).

The ratio between young men and women varies in different youth age groups: the older young people are, the more women are among them. In 2009, females accounted for 49.1 per cent of those aged 15–17, 49.3 per cent of those aged 18–24, and 50.1 per cent of those aged 25–29. The increased proportion of women in the older youth age groups is mainly due to the higher mortality rate among young men. This mortality rate is caused by both biological factors (i.e. the relatively lower resistance of the male body) and social, economic, and cultural factors, along with the interaction of these factors with gender-stereotypical views of behaviour (i.e. that boys and young men should be active, strong, and independent, whereas girls and young women should be passive and obedient, thus increasing the possibility of a casual death for young men, and decreasing that risk for young women).

However, another factor will tend to change this gender asymmetry in the coming years. Analysis of demographic statistics shows that one should expect the proportion of young men in Azerbaijan to increase, due to the entry into the youth age group of children born in the last 15 years or so, when national statistics have registered an increased proportion of males among newborn babies. Whereas in 1979 there were 104.4 boys per 100 girls in the first year of life, in 1989 there were 107.2 boys (both years reflecting the “demographic norm”). In 1999, however, there were 112.5 boys, in 2005, 117.2 boys, and in 2009, 116.4 boys per 100 girls.

National and international experts explain this trend in terms of the growing number of selective abortions in the country. The problem emerged with the increasing practice of limiting the number of children in Azerbaijani families, associated with widespread access to ultrasonic fetus research. In these circumstances, with the possibility of choosing the gender of a future child, some couples prefer boys, since their “value” is considerably higher in traditional families.

Until recently the total youth population group has been increasing considerably. The number of young people in the 15–29-year-old age group was 2,033,800 in 1999 and amounted to 2,604,900 in 2009 – an increase of 28.1% over 10 years. However, one should expect a slowdown in the rate of increase in the number of young people in the coming years because of the country's falling birthrate, which will relieve the pressure on the labour market.

Today, more than half the country’s youth (54.2 per cent) live in cities. The number of urban young people is growing faster in both absolute and relative terms. Over the past decade, the number of young people aged 15–29 living in cities increased by 389,600 (or 38.1 per cent), whereas the number in rural areas increased by a mere 181,500 (or 17.9 per cent). The growth is mainly attributable to an increase in the number of urban youth, which attests to the high level of migration of young people from rural to urban areas.

On the whole, there is no great difference between the proportions of young women in the cities and rural areas at present. Women account for 49.4 per cent of young people in the cities and 47.7 per cent of young people in rural areas. The gender composition of the various age groups of urban and rural youth differs only slightly (see table 1), which indicates the lack of significant gender asymmetry in the migration of young people from rural to urban areas.

Table 1. Number of young women per 1000 young men by age and place of residence (2009)

Age group	Number of young women per 1000 young men of the same age	
	City	Countryside
15	952	977
16–17	961	969
18–19	955	980
20–24	964	986
25–29	1006	1005

Source: *Families in Azerbaijan: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Baku.

Section 3. Gender issues in the education system

3.1. Preschool institutions

The system of preschool education in Azerbaijan is particularly important in studying problems in the employment of young women, for two reasons.

First, for many young women a well developed and accessible network of preschool institutions is a factor that enables them to pursue their professional careers, since, traditionally, women are supposed to mainly perform duties of caring for and raising children. Second, because the system of preschool institutions provides workplaces mainly for women, any reduction in the number of preschool institutions automatically reduces employment opportunities for women.

But there is yet another reason why development of the system of preschool education must be included in studies of youth. As a rule, attending preschool has a positive impact on preparing children for school, and therefore on their development and socialization.

The government kindergarten in our place was shut down 10 years ago and I have nowhere to work. In the old days, they sent their children to kindergartens. Now, if a young woman works and has a child, the child lives with her parents. Why don't we have a private kindergarten? Because those who work here earn so little that their wages are not enough for anything, let alone a private kindergarten. In Baku the wages are high. Those who work there can afford it.

Unemployed young woman, Lakhych

Over the last two decades, the system of preschool education in the Republic of Azerbaijan contracted significantly, from 2,195 centres in 1990 to 1,612 in 2009 (a reduction of 26.6 per cent).

These reductions took place in the state preschool system. In the new millennium, private preschool institutions have been established, helping to solve the problem of provision to some extent, but so far the private sector is tiny. According to official statistics, there were three such institutions in 2005, and five in 2008 and 2009, together catering for 200 children. They offer a wider range of services than do state institutions, and charge more for these services. According to official data, non-state preschool institutions do not exist at all in rural areas. Meanwhile, according to Ministry of Education data, informal preschool institutions are increasingly being set up without a Ministry licence, and such institutions frequently fail to maintain sanitary standards for children. Fifteen such institutions were identified in Baku alone, although they are considerably less evident in the regions.⁵ Over the last 20 years, other forms of childcare (e.g. the “extended day” at school and extramural leisure institutions) have been significantly depleted, which has had an extremely negative impact on the possibilities for young women to be fully employed.

⁵ Seimur Mamedov: “Preschool institutions in Azerbaijan: Who do we entrust our children to?”, in *Day. Az* (January 12 , 2010).

3.2. Access to education

Equal access for young men and women to all stages of education is one of the main prerequisites for making women more competitive in the labour market and for achieving real gender equality in the sphere of employment.

In present-day Azerbaijan, despite the law that grants equal rights for young men and women to acquire an education at all levels, parity between young men and women at all levels of general and professional education has yet to be achieved.

On the one hand, certain groups of parents, who still embrace outdated attitudes and traditions, feel that education is less important for young women than for young men. An extreme manifestation of such sentiments is the increasing number of cases in which the parents of teenage girls forbid them to attend high school. (According to expert opinion, these cases are most frequent in rural areas in the south of the country.)

There are also grounds for believing that some modern Azeri families, influenced by the same outdated sentiments, more readily pay for the education of their sons than their daughters.

On the other hand, however, it should be pointed out that there is a growing awareness among some parents and girls themselves of the importance of education if they want to find employment.

Opinions of young women and men regarding the need for education for young women

I am not thinking of studying anywhere, because I would not need education in my family life.

Young woman

Education is more important to young women than to men, because young men can pick up any job, including a manual one, and girls can't; therefore education is more important to girls.

Young woman

Earlier, some 15–20 years ago, girls from our collective farm didn't need education at all. They finished school and then got married. Nowadays everything is different, and girls need some education: elementary, vocational training, accounting courses – in order to get a job, just in case. And generally, every man should have official evidence of having a qualification.

Young man

These trends warrant a closer look at the gender composition of students at both general and vocational schools.

3.3. Dynamics of the student population in general education schools

Girls are a minority among the pupils of general education schools (at the compulsory education level). Their proportion of the school population has been falling, if slowly, over the past 10 years. The proportion of girls was 47.7 per cent in the 2000–01 school year and 46.4 per cent in the 2008–09 school year.

The low and falling proportion of girls among schoolchildren is due, above all, to the gender asymmetry of school-age youth (as mentioned in section 2 in connection with the gender imbalance among newborn babies). However, this goes only part of the way in explaining the low proportion of girls among schoolchildren, because that proportion is still smaller than that of girls among all children in that age group.

It should be noted that the proportion of girls among schoolchildren in rural areas consistently exceeds that among schoolchildren in cities (see table 2). This is largely because of lesser asymmetry in the gender composition of youth in rural areas (the proportion of girls among school-age youth in rural areas is 48.6 per cent and in the cities 47.6 per cent). Another very obvious factor causing such asymmetry is the different strategies used by young men and women in receiving vocational training. (The experience of other countries in the region is that young men, more often than young women, prefer to receive vocational training as part of general secondary education, whereas young women prefer to receive a full secondary education first.)⁶

The above data further attest to the *absence of any significant differences in the accessibility of general education for girls in urban and rural areas.*

Table 2. Proportion of girls among students at general education schools in urban and rural areas (2000–09)

Location	%						
	School year						
	2000–01	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Urban	48.4	48.0	48.0	47.3	47.5	47.1	46.6
Rural	48.4	48.1	47.9	47.9	47.9	48.0	47.6

NB: No data available for 2002–03

Source: <http://www.azstat.org>

3.4. Vocational training

In vocational training schools, the degree and nature of gender asymmetry differ substantially between levels of education, while the asymmetry remains stable over time.

Thus, **primary vocational training**, which, as a rule, provides the possibility of having a blue-collar occupation, is the least extensive and least dynamically developing level of vocational training. According to Ministry of Education statistics, 25,600 students attended primary vocational training institutions in the 2009–10 school year; the number of students increased by 11.6% over the previous decade. This is predominantly a “male” training context (the proportion of girls among students of vocational training schools and colleges has hovered around 30 per cent for many years).

⁶ Marina Baskakova: *Some aspects of youth education, gender equality and employment in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Moscow, ILO, 2007).

Of note is the development, in both urban and rural areas, of a network of paid and free short-term courses where young people can acquire basic computer skills, begin (or continue) to study foreign languages, or acquire elementary medical first-aid skills and work skills (e.g. hairdressing, sewing, etc). Some young people see such courses as their first and last opportunity to learn a trade. However, as interviews have revealed, having taken such courses is often of no use when seeking employment in the trade because the level of skills acquired is insufficient.

In the school year 2009–10, 52,800 students attended **secondary specialized schools** in Azerbaijan. Over the last decade the number of students in such schools increased by 23.8 per cent. As in many countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), this level of education is predominantly “female”: the proportion of girls among students at these education institutions is consistently 69–71 per cent, the highest among all CIS countries (see figure 1).

Box 1

Curricula implementation periods by stages and levels of education

Curricula implementation periods by stage and level of education have been defined in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Education” and on the basis of respective state education standards.

Preschool education

The term of training at this stage is three years. The period from age 5 to 6 years is considered to be a preparation stage for school.

General education

Primary education – four years (grades I–IV)

General secondary education – five years (grades V–IX)

Full secondary education – two years (grades X–XI)

Primary vocational specialized education

The term of apprenticeship for those enrolled on the basis of full secondary education comprises one year.

The term of apprenticeship for those enrolled on the basis of general secondary education, and receiving full secondary education apart from vocational training, comprises three years.

The term of apprenticeship for those enrolled on the basis of general secondary education, and receiving vocational training only, comprises one to two years depending on the complexity of the profession.

For those who have received general secondary or full secondary education, and have learnt a profession in the course of their work in production or elsewhere as commissioned by employers or private persons, the term of apprenticeship through professional training courses, further training, or retraining, is set at six months.

Secondary specialized education

For those directly enrolled in secondary vocational education on the basis of general secondary education, the normal terms of apprenticeship comprise three to four years, and for those enrolled on the basis of full secondary education, two to three years.

Higher education

The normal period of full-time higher education for a bachelor’s degree is four to five years, and for a master’s degree one to two years.

Source: <http://www.edu.gov.az/view.php?lang=ru&menu=299&id=2180>

Higher education is the largest and a rapidly growing sector of professional education in Azerbaijan. According to the Ministry of Education, 139,000 students were trained in higher education institutions in 2009–10, the student population in higher education having increased by 16.3 per cent over the last decade. The system of higher education is distinguished by having a high proportion of private institutions. At present, 16 of the country’s 52 higher education institutions are privately owned.

Furthermore, the number of “paid” places in the public sector of the higher education system has grown considerably during recent years. A side effect of the growth of the paid sector of higher education overall (i.e. both the growing number of paying students in state institutions and the students in private institutions) has been the “overproduction” of graduates in certain specialities (usually the humanities) and the growing differentiation among education institutions in terms of the quality of education services. As a result, according to experts, many graduates are unable to find a job in line with the training they have received. The situation is controversial, however, because while the graduates of “ordinary” education institutions have employment problems, the graduates of leading universities, on the contrary, are very much in demand among employers. This shows that well-educated specialists are still in short supply today.

For young people who study at good universities every day is an employment fair. Representatives of PricewaterhouseCoopers, oil companies, etc., come to the university as headhunters. Students are not asked about their standard of knowledge; all that interests the companies is “how they can work in a team”. Such students have no problems with employment. Almost all the fourth-year students work, with the exception of two or three young married women whom their husbands may forbid to work.

Official, Public Employment Service

Men comprise the majority of students in higher education institutions and at further levels of professional education (i.e. postgraduate, doctoral). The higher the level of education, the fewer women there are among the students. This pattern shows no signs of changing (see table 3).

Table 3. Proportion of young men and women among students at various levels of education (2003–09)

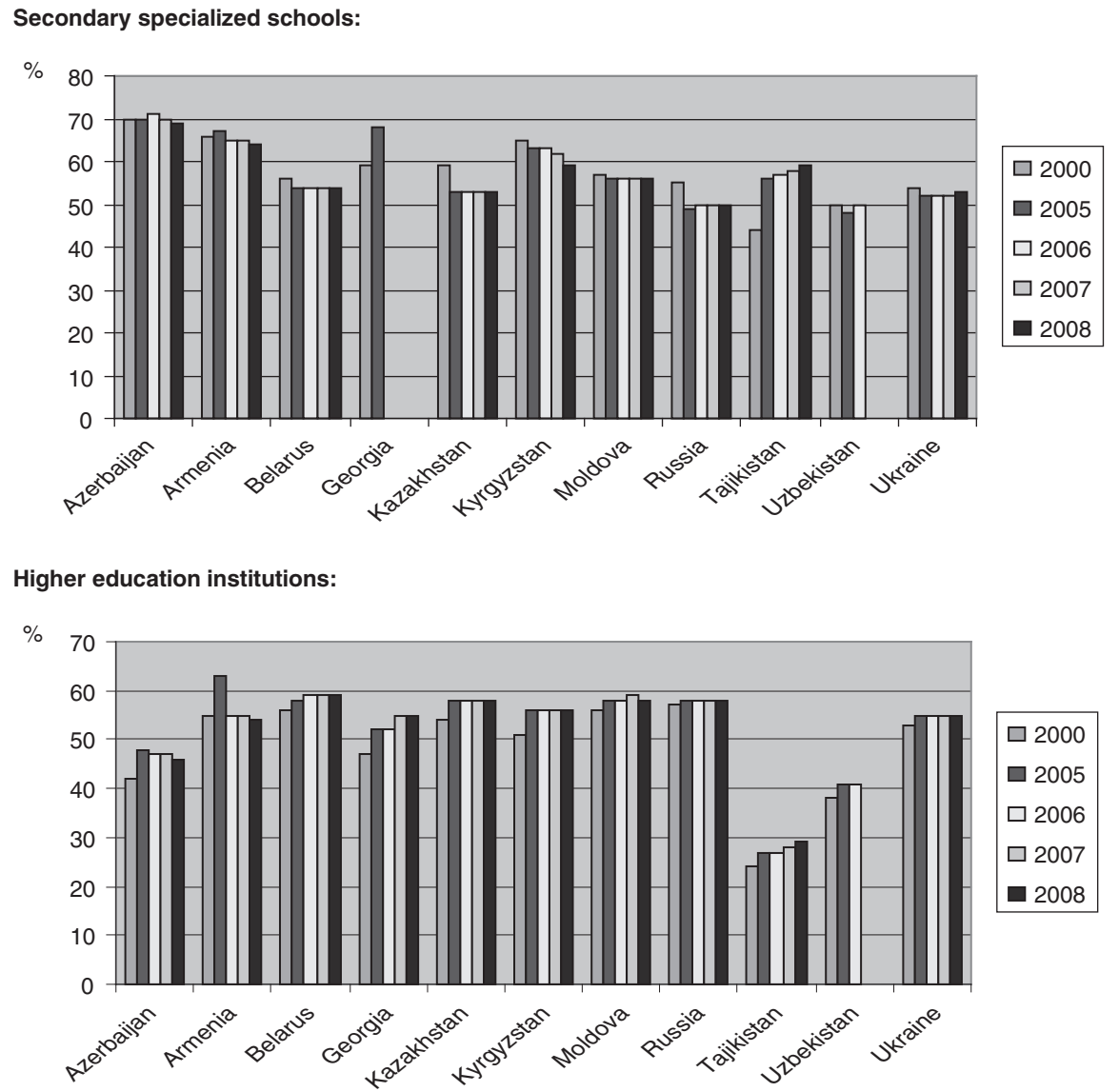
Level of study	%							
	2003–04		2006–07		2007–08		2008–09	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
General education institutions	48.0	52.0	47.5	52.5	47.3	52.7	46.8	53.2
Vocational training schools and colleges	30.5	69.5	28.7	71.3	29.6	70.4	30.4	69.6
Secondary specialized schools	69.5	30.5	70.7	29.3	70.3	29.7	69.0	31.0
Higher education institutions	46.2	53.8	47.4	52.6	46.9	53.1	44.5	55.5
Postgraduate studies	27.2	72.8	28.4	71.6	28.4	71.4		
Doctoral studies	21.1	78.9	27.5	72.5	27.5	72.5		

Source: *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

Compared with the majority of CIS countries, in Azerbaijan the proportion of young women among higher education students is very low (varying between 45 and 47 per cent in different years). Only the Republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have lower proportions (see figure 1).

The established ratio of young men to young women at different levels of vocational training reflects lower professional claims on the part of Azerbaijani women.

Figure 1. Proportion of young women among students at secondary specialized and higher education institutions in CIS countries (2000–08)



Source: *Population, employment and living conditions in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Statistical abstract* (Moscow, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2009), pp. 142–158.

The laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan do not contain any restrictions on men or women in training and employment by profession or occupation. The only exception is a limited list of mainly manual jobs with hard and hazardous labour conditions in which women's employment is banned (see Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, below).

Box 2

Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Approved by Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 618-IG dated February 1, 1999)

Article 241. Workplaces and jobs where female work is prohibited

1. Female work is prohibited at workplaces with difficult, hazardous working conditions, as well as in underground tunnels, mines, and other underground work.
2. As a rule, at certain times, women may be allowed to perform certain non-physical underground work, work in managerial positions, or provide social, sanitary and medical services, as well as the underground work, without carrying out the physical work involved in lowering and lifting.
3. It is prohibited to engage women in raising and carrying loads in excess of the established norm from one place to another.
4. The working function of women may only include work (services) involving manual lifting and carrying loads of a total weight limited by the following norms:
 - a) along with performing other work, manual lifting and carrying items to another place, weighing not more than 15 kg;
 - b) lifting items weighing not more than 10 kg to a height exceeding one and a half metres;
 - c) during a whole working day (or working week), manual lifting and carrying to another place of items under 10 kg;
 - d) transportation of items on loaded trolleys or other vehicles requiring the application of force not exceeding 15 kg.
5. It is prohibited to engage pregnant women and women with children under 3 years of age in performing the work envisaged in this Article.
6. The list of productions, professions (positions) and the underground work with hazardous and difficult working conditions where the use of female labour is prohibited, shall be adopted by the respective executive government body.

Decision by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 170, dated October 20, 1999:
"On adoption of the list of productions, professions (positions), and the underground work with hazardous and difficult working conditions where the use of female labour is prohibited"

For the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the Decree by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "On application of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on adoption and entry into effect of the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and related issues of legal regulation" No. 122, dated April 15, 1999, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan decides as under:

1. To adopt the "List of productions, professions (positions), and the underground work with hazardous and difficult working conditions where the use of female labour is prohibited".

However, young women at all levels of vocational training prefer to study an extremely small range of traditionally "female" professions and trades (e.g. teaching, healthcare, culture, social services, etc). This particular feature of young women's choice of trade in which to train is evident in all the CIS countries. It is explained by the fact that, in countries of

this region, work in these specialities is generally related to employment in the low-budget sector of the economy. Thus, on the one hand, it determines a relatively low remuneration level (which puts off many men) and, on the other, it provides a relatively high level of social protection for an employee (which is appreciated very much by women).

Girls in our town have nowhere to study. If they want to study they go to the regional centre or to Baku. Most of them choose teaching or specialities related to medicine. In our town young women usually work in healthcare, education, and also perhaps in the civil service.

Head of Ismailli municipality

Thus, for example, in the system of state specialized secondary education, 42.6 per cent of all female students major in “education”, 17.4 per cent in the humanities and social sciences, 12.3 per cent in “culture and the arts”, and 11.4 per cent in healthcare (only 16.3 per cent of all female students major in other specialities).

The situation in higher education is not much different. Of the female students in state higher education institutions, 31.9 per cent majored in humanities and the social sciences, 19.6 per cent in “education”, 15.3 per cent in the natural sciences, and 11.4 per cent in “economics and management” (only 21.8 per cent of all female students majored in the remaining 28 specialities).

Among young men, the range of professions and training specialities is many times more diverse, including as it does new and cutting-edge professions and specialities for which there is demand in the modern labour market (e.g. informatics, electronics, radio engineering, telecommunications, energy, machine building, construction, geology, etc).

The persistently high level of segregation of students by training speciality and occupation is a prerequisite for continuing segregation (by industry and occupation) in the employment sphere as well. The high level of segregation of students by training speciality makes it much more difficult for young women to get new, highly paid jobs.

3.5. Paid education: Gender asymmetry

In recent years, the market for paid education services has been developing rapidly in Azerbaijan (due to both the increased number of fee-paying students at state education institutions and the existence of private education institutions). Information received in the course of this project doesn’t allow for a clear evaluation of the quality of education received at public and private education institutions. In the opinion of our respondents, quality education services can be provided by education institutions of all levels, offering both general and vocational training, and in any form of ownership.

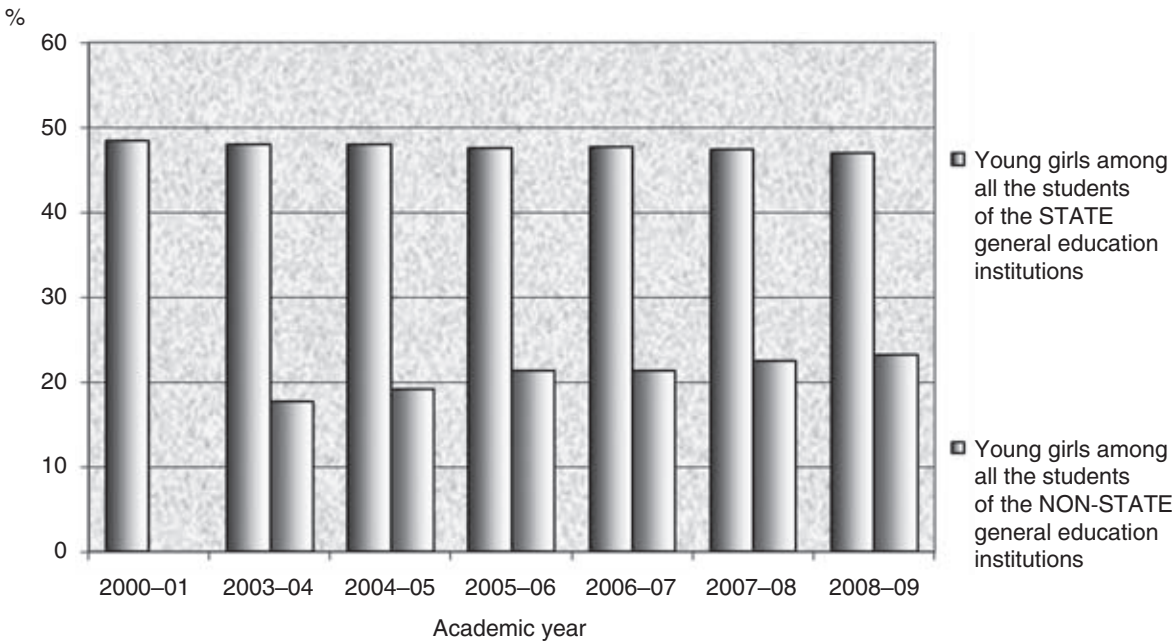
The prevalence of paid education services differs at different levels of education. At the general education level the proportion of paid services is small (in 2008–09 the country had only 17 private general education institutions with 7,200 students, or 0.5 per cent of the total number of students in full-time general education schools).

Among students at secondary specialized education institutions in 2008–09, 42 per cent paid tuition fees (40 per cent in state education institutions and 2 per cent in private institutions). In higher education the total proportion of students in paid education was greater than that of students in free education (in 2008–09, of the 116,000 students at state higher education institutions, 61 per cent paid for their education (as did 20,600 students in non-state education institutions)).⁷

The growing scale of paid education in a country with widely differing levels of income makes education less accessible for children from low-income families. Given low and even medium-level incomes, some families are unable to pay for their children’s education and have to choose which child they are prepared to pay for. In terms of gender it is important to note that, with a resurgence of patriarchal attitudes in society, there is a danger of low-income families dedicating more of their budget to educating boys: “Parents usually invest less in the education of girls than of boys because they believe that the returns on the education of girls are lower than its cost”.⁸

In Azerbaijan the hypothesis about a differentiated approach of families to the education of their boys and girls is only partially corroborated, that is, if one compares the proportions of girls among students at state and private general education schools.

Figure 2. Proportion of young women among students of state and private general education institutions (2001–09)



Source: <http://www.azstat.org>

⁷ Население, занятость и условия жизни в странах содружества независимых государств. Статистический сборник [Population, employment and living conditions in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Statistical abstract] (Moscow, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2009), pp. 142–158.

⁸ Lin Lean Lim: *More and better jobs for women: An action guide* (Geneva, ILO, 1996), p. 76.

As seen in figure 2, the proportion of girls among the students in paid education (i.e. in private schools, which offer a higher quality of education) is almost half of that among the students at state general education schools. Although the proportion of girls in the paid education sector is gradually rising, the rate of growth is very slow.

As for professional education institutions, according to government statistics the proportion of girls among students at private secondary specialized education schools and private higher education institutions is higher than among those at state education institutions of the corresponding levels. The proportion of young women among students at private secondary specialized education institutions is 83.3 per cent compared with 68.7 per cent at state ones; the proportion at private higher education institutions is 48.3 per cent compared with 45.2 per cent at state ones. However, data on the gender breakdown of students do not, unfortunately, provide the full picture as they do not reveal the gender composition of students at state education institutions who pay for their tuition (and these account for the majority of students in terms of the provision of paid education services).

3.6. Training costs

The system of paid education services in Azerbaijan has been formally established as gender neutral, since the amount payable for education is not differentiated by the gender of students. Other factors – the form of ownership and specialization of the education institution, the level of education received, and so on – are “external” to the characteristics of the students themselves.

The amount payable for education at state education institutions is set by the Tariff Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan after consideration of proposals by the Ministry of Education. Private education institutions set the amount payable themselves.

At the same time it may be assumed that, in reality, the average costs of paid vocational training are not the same for young women and men. On the one hand, costs are connected with differences in the amounts payable for vocational training according to the level of training (in general, the lower the level of training, the smaller the training payment), as well as the training speciality, form of ownership of the education institution, and so on. On the other hand, costs are associated with the segregation of students by those levels, specialities, forms of ownership, etc.

Unfortunately, it does not yet seem possible to assess actual differences between young men and women in the costs of receiving vocational training. State statistics based on such data are not available, the respective social research has not been conducted, and the data gained in the course of this project cannot serve as the basis for such calculations since group interviews involved a limited sample of young women and men who were trained in different years (during a period of accelerating training costs).

Section 4. Men and women in employment and the labour market in Azerbaijan

4.1. Legislative and programme regulation of women's and youth labour

National legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan reflects many fundamental principles and international labour standards, and the law has been developing in line with basic international legislation concerning the rights of women and youth.

Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees equal rights and freedoms to men and women. The Republic of Azerbaijan has ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111); Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156); Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183); and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Section 16 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (1999) stipulates the prohibition of any gender discrimination between workers (it is thereby envisaged that the provision of benefits, advantages and additional guarantees in the field of labour relations for women requiring social protection does not constitute discrimination).

Section 242 imposes restrictions on the employment of women with children under the age of 14 on night shift, overtime, or a weekend or holiday, or sending them on job-related travel. Section 243 envisages the possibility of transferring pregnant women and women with children under 1.5 years of age to easier work. Section 244 stipulates the possibility of providing breaks for breastfeeding during working hours for women with children under 1.5 years of age, while maintaining their average wage. Section 125 defines the temporal boundaries of maternity leave: in the case of the normal delivery and birth of one child, women engaged in non-farm production are entitled to paid leave of 126 calendar days (70 calendar days before and 56 calendar days after the birth). Section 127 stipulates the right of a parent or other family member to directly care for a child up to the age of 3, and to partially paid social leave (the corresponding benefit is paid at the rate specified by law). Sections 128–129 introduce the right of employees to unpaid leave for the urgent settlement of family, personal or other problems, to engage in education or scientific endeavour or for other reasons related to their age, etc.

In 2006, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Guarantees of Gender Equality” came into force, aimed at ensuring gender equality through the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender, and the provision of equal opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life. Article 3 of the Law prohibits discrimination, while specifying a list of gender differences and limitations which are not considered to constitute discrimination. Articles 6–10 define the responsibilities of the State and employers with regard to securing gender equality in employment. In article 15, the State guarantees the provision of equal opportunities for men and women to exercise the rights of ownership and to be involved in business activities.

The Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan introduces special regulation of the labour of young people under the age of 18. Thus, section 251 imposes a restriction on lifting loads by

workers under 18, and section 254 imposes a ban on their involvement in night and overtime work, work on holidays, and being sent on assignment. Section 250 defines jobs prohibited for persons under 18 (i.e. at workplaces with difficult and harmful working conditions, in underground tunnels and mines and other underground work; in nightclubs, bars, and casinos which could be detrimental to the development of their maturity; and in places where alcohol, narcotic components, or toxic materials are carried, kept or sold).

There are a number of further benefits envisaged in the Labour Code, designed for those, usually young, workers who are in education in tandem with work. Thus, section 123 introduces paid educational leave for such workers (e.g. to attend laboratory work, tests and examinations during semesters, or national examinations, or to write and defend their graduation project).

The study showed that current labour laws are violated quite often, especially in the informal sector (see section 4.2). However, neither the State Labour Inspectorate nor the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs receives complaints from the public concerning discrimination. And there are no trade unions in that sector of the economy in which the vast majority of labour rights violations and cases of discrimination based on sex and age have been occurring.

Government programmes focused on young men and women in employment and the labour market

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the formulation of public policies on youth and women in the labour market. Hence, the State Programme on Implementation of the Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2007-2010) envisaged activities to achieve gender equality in employment, increase women's competitiveness in the labour market, implement appropriate measures aimed at training and retraining unemployed and jobseeking women, develop national and applied folk arts with a view to increasing employment levels among women, conduct the necessary studies to identify the causes of the unemployment problem among women, etc.

Within the framework of the Decent Work Country Programme in Co-operation with the ILO 2006–2009, measures were envisaged to develop and implement special training programs for unemployed women, and to conduct pilot projects to promote self-employment among women and improve their business activity.

Issues related to youth in the field of employment and the labour market were taken up in the Azerbaijan Youth State Program (2005–2009), further envisaging the implementation of measures to provide for youth vocational training and employment. A special action plan was approved to implement the programme.

The Student Notebook programme is currently being implemented under the motto “Education is Our Future”. The purpose of this programme is to increase computer literacy among the country's youth.

The challenge in working to ensure equal access to decent jobs by young men and women has two key dimensions. On the one hand, government programmes aimed at improving the situation of women in employment and the labour market, and reducing discriminatory prac-

tices against women, lack an age dimension. This means that the specific problems faced by young women and girls are not considered. Moreover, since age groups are not among the programmes' target indicators, there is no evaluation by age group of the effectiveness of programme implementation.

On the other hand, there is no gender dimension to government programmes and activities in the field of labour and employment which are aimed at youth. Therefore, such programmes do not consider the gender-specific problems faced by youth in the labour market. And, since gender is not targeted, there is no evaluation of the effectiveness of programme implementation by gender.

The situation is aggravated by the insufficient development of national labour statistics (see section 6), which prevents evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes implemented for young men and women.

The study was based on qualitative methods of obtaining information (i.e. interviews with experts and focus groups). It therefore produced very limited information that does not allow definite conclusions to be drawn regarding the gender effectiveness of state efforts to address the issues raised. However, given the fact that the young women interviewed were generally less active in seeking work than young men, it can be assumed that, at least in rural areas, the programme of training or retraining young people, implemented by regional public employment services, is more in demand by young men than young women.

4.2. Employers' observance of labour legislation and its gender dimension

Employers in Azerbaijan do not represent a united community with regard to the hiring of women and men, including young women and men. They are segmented by their degree of commitment to the observance of national labour laws. The survey showed that this criterion quite clearly distinguishes two groups of employers.

The first consists of employers with a marked commitment to labour legislation. It includes the State (as the employer of public sector employees and municipal officials) and large domestic and foreign companies.

Much has been done in the public sector during recent years to achieve transparency and objectivity in hiring procedures. At present, the process of recruitment into the civil service is as gender neutral as possible, as attested by officials and by young people in the labour market who have experienced such procedures. The main issue for candidates is to pass the recruitment test well.

A key advantage of working as a civil servant is that laws are observed and employees receive a good social package. However, public sector salaries are very low (as noted by both young men and young women). Young women engaged in this sector do not seek to move to another job because their pay is low. However, young men, citing the low pay, regard their job as temporary and say they would like to have a better paying job. Obviously, if levels of pay in the civil service remain low and the regional labour market develops, the civil service may face an exodus of male employees and, accordingly, massive feminization of the workforce.

A special unit hires civil servants. To get a job you have to pass a test. That is all. If you pass the test you are employed. Everything depends on the candidate. We hired 11 people who passed the test in February, eight of whom are young women.

Civil service official

I am a civil servant, but I do not work in the speciality that I majored in at university. But that does not matter, passing the test is the main thing.

Working young man, Ismaili

I work as a piano teacher at a culture school. I have finished a musical secondary school. I passed the test to get my job. It's official. All the rules and laws are observed. If somebody takes maternity leave a temporary worker is hired to fill her job. When the woman returns after maternity leave she returns to her job.

Working young woman, Ismaili

According to officials, the reorganization of public recruitment has in fact solved two problems: discrimination by gender and age in employment, and the use of bribery to secure a post.

Public placement is nowadays managed via special services. It removed all discrimination problems for young women. In February alone we hired 11 people who passed the test, eight of whom are young women.

Head of the Public Employment Service

According to officials, several years ago foreign companies banned the employment of young women graduates, or hired them while offering lower wages than they offered to young men. However, such practices have changed during recent years.

A representative of an employment agency which recruits staff for major domestic and foreign companies stated that the agency was not currently receiving any applications for staff which contained any discriminatory provisions (e.g. indication of the preferred gender, age, marital and family status, etc., of a potential employee).

At the same time, a representative of the ILO-supported Career Center at the State Economic University, which recruits graduates through educational fairs, stated that they would hire young women in preference to young men in a range of jobs, for instance, in personnel departments. Such policy is evidence of the existence of indirect discrimination in practice (through the development of professional segregation). Rare examples of successful female careers, described by the representative, further demonstrated that the problem of vertical segregation in such companies has not yet been solved completely.

In general, however, domestic and foreign companies operate within the labour legislation framework, with social packages provided for workers.

The second group of employers constitutes representatives of private business who hire employees without formal labour relations arrangements. This group of employers fails to observe labour legislation in many regards, including recruitment. As one official pointed out, “Legislation is legislation. It is a separate matter. And the private entrepreneur knows for himself whom he would like to hire.”

Employers in this group frequently violate workers’ rights: social benefits granted by law are not provided; wages and the duration of employment are not guaranteed; employees have no right to a state pension on retirement, etc.

At first glance, these problems affect men and women equally (because they account for practically equal proportions of the total number of employees). However, for women, and especially young women, whose biology is connected with the reproductive function and motherhood, informal employment is fraught with greater risks than for men. Thus, young women who work without a formal employment contract have greater need for benefits in connection with pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, which are available by law for professionally employed women.

Furthermore, due to the traditional division of domestic work, it is mainly young women who take advantage of benefits for employees with family responsibilities related to child-care. Therefore, in the vast majority of cases among employees who have not formally signed labour contracts, problems related to the non-provision of such benefits concern only young women.

I work at a carpet weaving factory without an employment contract. I have been working for three years and I haven’t had paid leave for three years. They pay us only for work done (you make a carpet and you get your pay).

Working young woman, Lakhych

When I studied, my family borrowed money to pay for my studies. I worked as a driver in Baku in order to pay off the debts. I found a job through a private employment agency. I had no employment contract (no sick leave pay). I had two days off a month and I worked from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. It was very tough.

Working young man, Ivanovka

It is also significant that there are no trade union organizations at such enterprises, thus considerably constraining workers’ opportunities to defend their labour rights.

Of late we have been carrying out intensive studies of the informal economy. All the problems we have are there: you cannot form a trade union, there are no employment contracts, no paid leave, sick leave, etc. The violation of all these rights – and all rights are violated – include the length of the work day and work schedules (until midnight without coffee breaks or lunch breaks and without days off). And yet, at present, 45–50 per cent of the economy is informal. And it employs a lot of young people.

Official of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation

The overwhelming majority of young people (both men and women) involved in interviews for this study are not unionized at present. Moreover, participants in one of the rural focus groups, when asked whether they were members of a trade union organization, responded with the question, “And what is that?”

It must be noted that, despite the reduced urgency of the problem of employers’ observance of labour legislation over recent years, it is still an extremely pressing issue since informal employment remains very widespread.

4.3. Economic activity of young people

There is comparatively high demand among modern Azeri youth for gainful employment, compared with youth in other countries in the region (see table 4). This is explained by their relatively low level of engagement in education (see table 5) and is reflected in the high indicators of economic activity by this group.

However, the demand for jobs and consequent economic activity is differentiated by both age and gender (see table 5). On the whole, two pronounced patterns can be noted:

- young women are less economically active than young men in all age brackets;
- the level of economic activity increases with age among both young women and young men.

The first feature is attributable to the prevailing social norms in Azerbaijani society regarding the education of young people. Between the ages of 15 and 19 the majority of young people study, either at general education schools or in the freshman year at professional education institutions, which limits their demand for jobs. For many, the age from 20–24 is the time to study in the middle and senior years at professional education institutions and to search for opportunities to earn on the side in a first job. Some young people complete their education at this time and enter the labour market as graduates. For both young women and young men, the period of maximum economic activity begins at age 25–29.

The second trend – the level of economic activity increasing with age – is a consequence of traditional ideas about the role of gainful employment in the life of a man or a woman.

Table 4. Level of economic activity of young men and women by age group in various CIS countries, by proportion of the corresponding age–gender group (2008)

Age group	Gender	%			
		Azerbaijan	Ukraine	Kazakhstan	Armenia
15–19	Female	32.1	15.6	20.2	32.1
	Male	35.0	18.2	25.3	35.5
20–24	Female	71.2	56.0	66.0	54.7
	Male	83.4	73.4	72.8	82.9
25–29	Female	83.3	72.7	88.4	61.4
	Male	95.1	91.4	95.6	96.5

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national and international sources.

The lowest level of demand for jobs is among 15–19 year-olds. In 2008, only one in every three was in work or actively seeking employment (32.1 per cent of young women and 35 per cent of young men). In the 20–24 age group, 71.2 per cent of young women and 83.4 per cent of young men were economically active. In the 25–29 age group, 83.3 per cent of young women and 95.1 per cent of young men were economically active (see table 4).

Table 5. Number of students in secondary specialized and higher education establishments (as at the beginning of the academic year), per 10,000 population (2000–08)

Country	Number of students in secondary specialized education establishments				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Azerbaijan	54	70	68	63	61
Armenia	89	96	96	96	96
Belarus	150	158	157	160	163
Kazakhstan	113	261	294	321	320
Kyrgyzstan	54	69	77	83	92
Moldova	55	75	84	87	92
Russia	162	181	177	170	158
Tajikistan	41	46	46	47	46
Ukraine	107	108	100	95	87
Country	Number of students in higher education establishments				
	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Azerbaijan	150	156	154	153	158
Armenia	189	304	328	348	348
Belarus	282	393	409	427	435
Kazakhstan	297	510	499	460	402
Kyrgyzstan	384	447	454	477	458
Moldova	217	351	357	344	322
Russia	324	495	514	525	529
Tajikistan	127	191	207	214	212
Ukraine	285	470	497	511	512

Source: *Population, employment and living conditions in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Statistical abstract* (Moscow, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2009), pp. 161–162.

The proportion of young women among economically active and employed youth declines after age 19, whereas the opposite is true of young men. Among the jobless and economically inactive the situation reverses: with rising age there is a rising proportion of young women and a declining proportion of young men (see table 6). The most probable explanation for these patterns is that in the youngest age group young women are less engaged in education, not

yet burdened with family responsibilities, and therefore more eager to have a job, which determines their high representation among the economically active and employed. Later on, once married and having to fulfill household and childcare duties, young women not only become less economically active (compared with young men) but also a less attractive workforce for employers, and thus, their high proportion among the unemployed is predetermined.

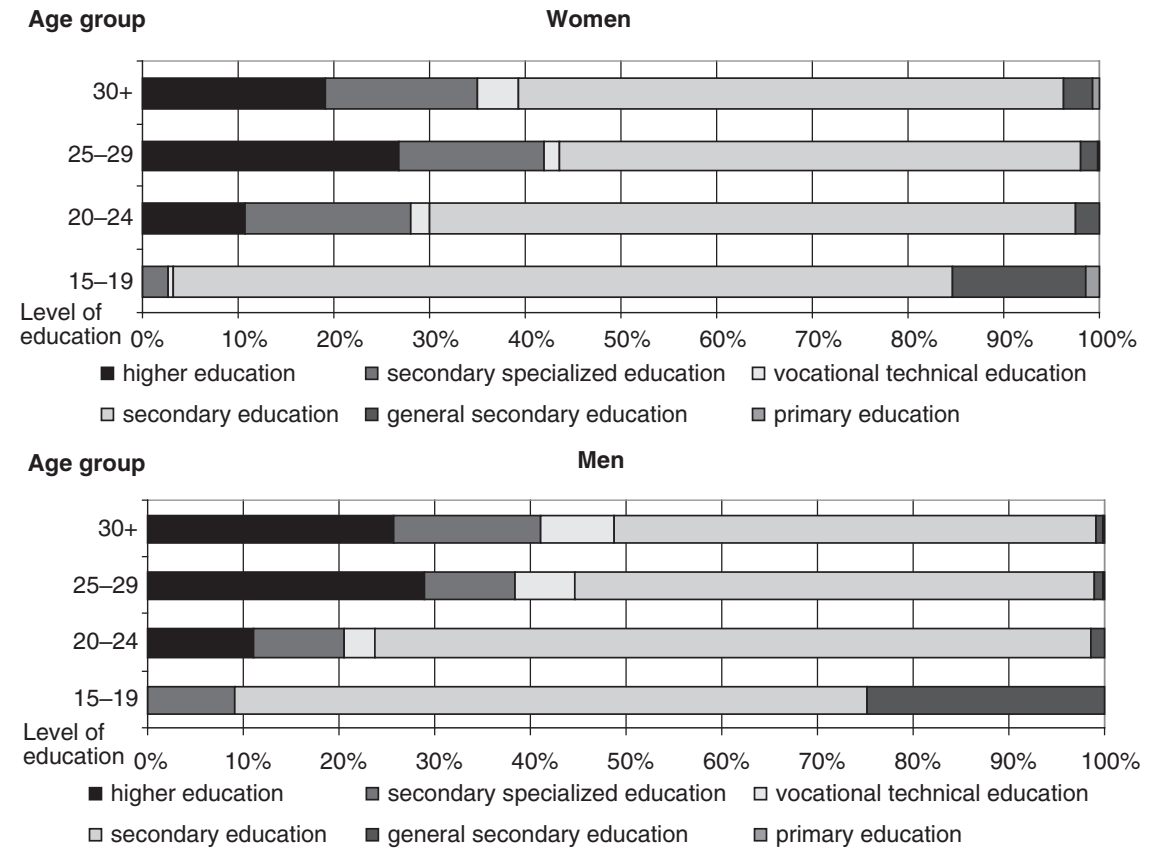
Table 6. Gender composition of economically active youth by age group (2008)

Age group	Economically active		Employed		Unemployed		Economically inactive	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
15–19	53.7	46.3	60.4	39.6	18.7	81.3	50.4	49.6
20–24	45.7	54.3	46.8	53.2	38.7	61.3	63.1	36.9
25–29	48.6	51.4	48.4	51.6	51.4	48.6	78.6	21.4

Source: *Labour Market: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

As a whole, young people (aged 15–29) have considerable input to Azerbaijan’s economic activity: in 2008, they accounted for 28 per cent of the country’s economically active population.

Figure 3. Breakdown of economically active population by educational level and age group (2008)



Source: *Labour Market: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

The level of education of economically active young men and women differs only slightly and on the whole reflects the gender asymmetry existing at various levels of education, as discussed above (see figure 3). In the younger age group (15–19) the proportion of young men who have general secondary education or secondary specialized education is larger than that of young women. In the 20–24-year-old age group the proportion of young men who have vocational technical education is also larger (due to the fact that young men drop out of education and the labour market for one to 1.5 years when they serve in the Armed Forces). At 25–29 years of age the education levels of young men and women tend to converge (there are noticeable differences only in the larger proportions of women who have secondary specialized education and men who have vocational technical education).

4.4. Employment among men and women, employment among young people

The concept of “employed population” is very broadly interpreted in Azerbaijan (see box 2).⁹ This goes a long way to explaining the high proportion of the population in employment. In 2008, 64 per cent of females and 69.9 per cent of males above age 15 were in employment.

Box 3

The Law on Employment of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Article 3. Employed persons

Employed persons shall include:

1. persons working for hire, including those who perform paid work full or part time under an employment contract as well as those holding other paid jobs (service);

2. entrepreneurs, persons engaged in individual labour activities and those who own land;

3. persons elected to, appointed to or approved for a paid position;

4. persons serving in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan and other armed units created under the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan;

5. persons temporarily out of work due to temporary disability, leave, upgrading of skills training, vacation, production stoppage or other reasons;

6. foreigners and stateless persons legally gainfully employed on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan;

7. citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan engaged in legitimate labour activities outside the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Levels of employment vary significantly by age group. There is a high level of employment among 15–24 year-olds. In 2008, 48.5 per cent of both young women and young men in this age group were employed (respectively 1.7 and 1.9 times lower than those in the 25–49 age bracket) (see table 7)¹⁰. In recent years, the level of employment of young people has been growing whereas for other age groups the dynamics are mixed.

⁹ Statistically, “employed population” includes those persons who are working for monetary reimbursement (who may have permanent, temporary, seasonal, or occasional work) as well as those working for free.

¹⁰ A valid comparison of these indicators is impossible because of the differences in the age scales used in calculating levels of economic activity and employment.

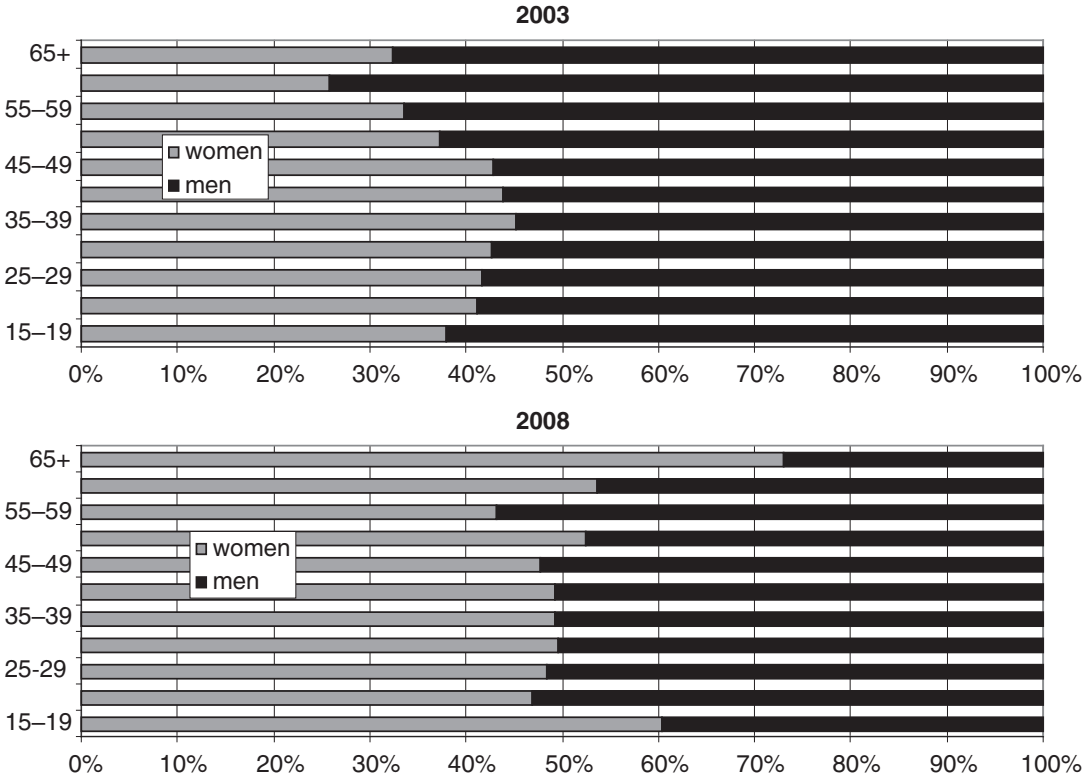
Table 7. Level of employment among men and women by age, estimated in accordance with ILO methodology (2008)

Age and gender	%
	Level of employment
Women	
15–24	48.5
25–49	81.9
50–64	60.5
65+	9.4
Men	
15–24	48.5
25–49	91.9
50–64	65.2
65+	4.0

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national and international (Eurostat) sources.

Among the total employed population, one in every four is a young person (young women aged 15–29 account for 26.7 per cent of all employed women and young men aged 15–29 for 26.6 per cent of all employed men). Among employed youth, men and women are about equally represented (there were 536,100 young women and 543,300 young men in employment in 2008).

Figure 4. Gender structure of employees (2003 and 2008)



Source: *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2004, 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

The gender composition of the professionally employed population varies substantially with age and is changing rapidly over time. As will be seen from figure 4, between 2003 and 2008 the proportion of female employees has grown significantly in all age groups, with the most dramatic changes (and highest growth) taking place in the youngest (15–19) and oldest (50+) age groups. In 2003 men outnumbered women among employees in all age groups. However, by 2008, although such gender asymmetry remained in the age groups 20–50 and 55–59, women became a majority among employees in the age groups 15–19, 50–55, and 60+. These changes may be due to external labour migration, but as yet this hypothesis has not been statistically confirmed.

A feature of the labour market in Azerbaijan is the low proportion of hired workers (i.e. formal employees) (34.8 per cent) among all those employed.¹¹ Women have such status much more rarely than men (only 30.4 per cent of all employed women are hired workers compared with 39.4 per cent of men). In the last 10 years the proportion of hired workers among all those employed has hardly grown at all.

Women who are not employees (e.g. are self-employed, workers of household plots of land, etc.) are mainly engaged in agriculture, retailing and real estate, renting and business activities, while their male counterparts are engaged in agriculture, retailing, transport and construction.

The employment sphere in Azerbaijan is heavily segregated by type of economic activity. The most feminized types of economic activity are healthcare and social services (where women account for 71.1 per cent of all employees), education (69 per cent) and retailing (68.9 per cent). The lowest proportions of women are in construction (9.3 per cent) and transport (14 per cent).

Table 8. Education level of employed men and women, per 1000 persons (2008)

Education level	Women	Men	%	
			Breakdown by gender	
			Women	Men
Higher education	19.1	24.0	43.9	56.1
Secondary specialized education	15.3	13.4	52.9	47.1
Vocational technical education	3.6	6.9	33.8	66.2
Secondary education	58.3	54.3	51.2	48.8
General secondary education	3.1	1.2	72.1	27.9
Primary education	0.6	0.2	76.5	23.5
Total (%)	100	100	49.5	50.5
Total (n=000)	2 007.7	2 048.3		

Source: *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

In Azerbaijan, women’s competitiveness in the labour market is greatly undermined by their lower level of vocational education compared with men. In 2008, only one in five (19.1 per cent) professionally employed women had higher education compared with one in four

¹¹ Statistically, “employees” are a group of the population that includes all persons who have signed a written labour contract on the terms of employment with the manager of an enterprise of any type of ownership, or with an individual person, or have reached an oral agreement, and who will be compensated for their labour in kind or in cash.

(24 per cent) men. The proportion of women who had secondary vocational technical education was 15.3 per cent compared with 13.4 per cent of men. Only 3.6 per cent of women and 6.9 per cent of men had primary vocational technical education.

4.5. Problems of unemployment

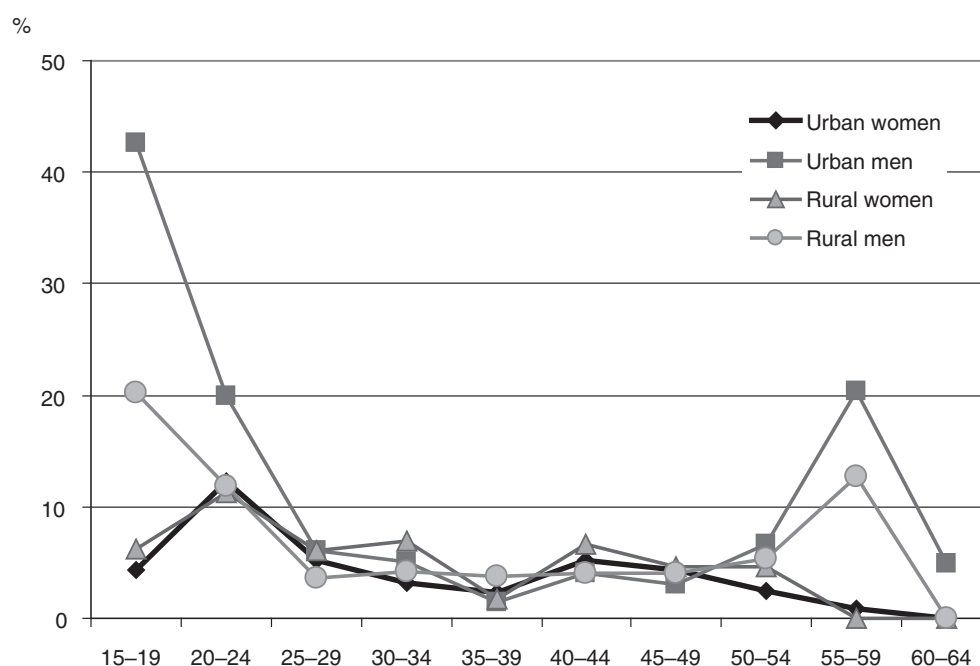
In the period prior to the financial crisis (later data are not yet available), the number of unemployed in Azerbaijan (estimated in accordance with ILO methodology) was declining. This was due to a fall in the numbers of both unemployed women and unemployed men. Between 2003 and 2008, the number of unemployed women dropped from 194,700 to 119,800, and the number of unemployed men from 206,200 to 142,400.

However, total unemployment levels (estimated in accordance with ILO methodology) reveal opposite trends among women and men in recent years. In 2006–2008, unemployment among women declined (the proportion of unemployed among economically active women reduced from 6.7 per cent to 4.9 per cent), while among men it rose (the proportion of unemployed among economically active men increased from 6.9 per cent to 7.1 per cent).

Young people bore the heaviest incidence of unemployment. Suffice it to say that, in 2008, young women (aged 15–29) accounted for 59.1 per cent of all unemployed women, while young men accounted for 54.9 per cent of all unemployed men.

The overall level of unemployment among young people living in both urban and rural areas is substantially higher than among those of middle and senior age (see figure 5). The only exception is men of pre-retirement age.

Figure 5. Overall unemployment level among men and women, estimated by ILO methodology, by age and place of residence (2008)



Source: *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2004, 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

The scale of youth unemployment, estimated by ILO methodology, has been decreasing fairly quickly in recent years (among both women and men) (see table 9). However, this level of unemployment, though diminishing, remains high overall and trends were conflicting. For example, unemployment among young men increased in 2006–07.

Table 9. Overall youth unemployment, estimated in accordance with ILO methodology (young men and women aged 15–24 as a proportion of economically active groups of respective gender and age) (2003–07)

Gender	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	No. of unemployed				
Women	81 700	71 000	71 800	58 100	36 200
Men	82 500	71 800	69 900	60 500	54 700
	%				
	Youth unemployment level				
Women	20.5	17.8	16.8	16.7	10.5
Men	19.0	16.4	15.7	15.7	18.2

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national and international (Eurostat and ILO) sources.

Box 4

The Law on Employment of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Article 4. Rules of Granting the Status of Unemployed

1. Able-bodied citizens of working age who have no work or income, are ready to start work and are registered with the corresponding executive body as jobseekers, are entitled to the status of an unemployed person.

2. A citizen, upon filing with the corresponding executive body in his place of residence an ID, the work book (or an equivalent document), and a document confirming professional skills or qualification (where necessary), shall be registered as a jobseeker. Those seeking employment for the first time shall present an ID and documentation of their education (where required).

3. If a citizen registered as a jobseeker is not offered an acceptable job, the corresponding executive body shall within 11 days of the submission of the relevant documents take the decision to grant that person the status of an unemployed person.

4. Rules for registration of unemployed persons with a corresponding executive body shall be approved by a corresponding executive body.

5. Citizens not entitled to have the status of an unemployed person include:

5.1. persons under the age of 15;

5.2. citizens entitled to a pension (with the exception of pensions granted to children in connection with the loss of a breadwinner);

5.3. persons who have failed to report, without a valid reason, to the corresponding executive body within 10 days after registration to seek an acceptable job, or who have turned down two acceptable jobs offered during the said period (one and the same job may not be offered twice);

5.4. persons seeking employment for the first time;

5.5. persons serving a prison sentence.

Matters stand quite differently with regard to registered unemployment. The registered unemployment figures in Azerbaijan, as in all CIS countries, understate, both in scale and level, overall unemployment estimated in accordance with ILO methodology. (ILO methodology is related to unemployment registration rules by the Public Employment Service which, as a rule, has a negative impact on both the incentive for the unemployed to register and the objective possibility of gaining unemployed status. For instance, there are restricted possibilities for rural residents – owners of land plots – or first time jobseekers, etc., to gain the status of registered unemployed.) Thus, in 2008, the number of registered unemployed women was 20,900 and the number of registered unemployed men was 23,600; the level of registered unemployment (i.e. the proportion of registered unemployed among the economically active population of respective gender and age) was 1.5 per cent among women and 1.1 per cent among men. It must be noted that in recent years this type of unemployment has acquired a pronounced “male” face, although until 2007 more women than men were registered as unemployed (see table 10).

Table 10. Persons granted unemployed status by the Public Employment Service (as at the end of the year), by gender and proportion of the total number of registered unemployed (2000–08)

Gender	%								
	Proportion of total unemployed								
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Men	44.1	45.0	45.3	46.6	47.7	48.4	48,9	50.0	53.1
Women	55.9	55.0	54.7	53.4	52.3	51.6	51,1	50.0	46.9

Source: *Labour Market: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Baku.

The proportion of young people among the registered unemployed is almost as large as among the total unemployed determined according to ILO methodology. In 2008, young women aged 15–29 accounted for 44.1 per cent of all registered unemployed women and young men for 48.0 per cent of all registered unemployed men. That proportion might have been greater but, under current rules of obtaining unemployment status, people seeking a job for the first time are not entitled to such status (or to respective unemployment benefits). They are, as a rule, young people. It is true, of course, that lacking unemployed status does not deprive a young person of the opportunity to take professional training or retraining at their chosen course at government expense.

4.6. Methods of jobseeking used by young men and women in Azerbaijan

Group interviews revealed that young people in Azerbaijan today take advantage of a very wide range of techniques of jobseeking, both traditional and advanced, some of which are barely accessible to the adult population. Moreover, the value of each identified method of employment differed for different sociodemographic groups of young people (e.g. men and women, graduates of vocational schools of various levels and degrees of “elitism”, young people living in different types of settlements, etc.). Each identified method of employment has its own history, dynamics and logic of development, and its “target audience” among both employers and young people. However, it does not yet seem possible to produce a quantitative

estimate of the intensity or scale by which these methods are used by young men and women. National statistics on the subject are not available, and the methodology of the current study does not involve quantitative analysis, only allowing us to state the existence of a particular method of jobseeking and employment of young men and women, and to make an assessment of alleged gender asymmetry in some methods of jobseeking.

Searching for hired work

Although, according to government statistics, the proportion of employees among the employed population of Azerbaijan is not large, the vast majority of young people who participated in the focus groups were either employed as hired workers, or sought this kind of employment.

Jobseeking and employment through vocational education institutions

Two decades ago, job referral (distribution) was the basic method of employment for the graduates of vocational education institutions and was considered “mandatory”. The emergence of a market economy has completely destroyed this Soviet system. In recent years, the State and education institutions have again begun to show increased interest in the employment prospects of their graduates. Today, this method of youth employment concerns a fairly narrow segment of graduates in Azerbaijan, but the attitude towards it and its essence have changed fundamentally. It is currently a voluntary form of employment of graduates, handled in accordance with applications from public institutions and/or private companies.

There is another, “reduced”, method of job referral for graduates, whereby they receive a special “job referral” after completing their studies at a vocational education institution. Despite giving no guarantee of employment, this method does allow a graduate to approach the authorities and “queue for a vacancy”.

I graduated from a medical college in Baku. When I finished, the college gave me a job referral. It helped with employment. When they give a job referral, and there is no job free, it allows you to “queue”. But when I came, one position was vacant. So, I took on the job.

Working young woman, Lakhych

Another method of employment, existing only for young people, is to visit specialized job fairs which are arranged by employment agencies and career services and set up in a number of vocational education institutions (mainly at higher education institutions). Although not a single person among those young people who participated in the survey could get a job this way, it generally seems that this method of employment is a promising one.

Every year we hold job fairs for graduates. This year, 48 companies visited the fair. There were both large public and private companies. When holding such a fair, we allocate a special room to each company where they talk about available vacancies and conduct interviews. In recent years such fairs have been visited by about 2,000 graduates. And not necessarily our graduates. At our fairs, some companies also recruit young people for day-to-day jobs (for little money).

Official, ILO-supported Career Center (State Economic University)

This kind of trade fair has been held by the State Economic University for several years. However, from 2010 the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population plans to hold job fairs for graduates of vocational education institutions, and for young men who have completed military service and are attending one of a number of higher education institutions (including Azerbaijan Technical University, Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, Caucasus University, Azerbaijan Tourism Institute, and several others).

A further channel of youth employment has been established in Azerbaijan in recent years, whereby employers approach a higher education institution in order to find suitable staff. In the main, employers approach a very limited number of elite higher education institutions, or those which train specialists in disciplines in which jobs are scarce. According to officials, such education institutions quite often receive offers from employers wishing to recruit students who have not yet completed their training.

Some companies ask for our students. We send the CVs of our best students. And it is for them to select and take the best.

Official, ILO-supported Career Center (State Economic University)

I did not have any problems finding employment. In fact I graduated from high school in the U.S. within a programme framework; two months after I returned I enrolled at the university and immediately went to work. We always receive job offers. I filed my documents with a company, and that's how I got a job.

Working young woman, Baku

Employment agencies

Contacting an employment agency (whether public or private) for the purpose of employment and/or training (or retraining) is another method of jobseeking for young people. And they take advantage of this method quite actively.

In 2008, young people accounted for 74 per cent of the 3,393 people who underwent vocational training, retraining or further training at public employment agencies. However, the extent of employment which is accessed through the Public Employment Service is not large. In addition, since the services themselves by no means hold the best available vacancies in their databanks, and vocational training is primarily conducted for the trades, it can be assumed that the Public Employment Service is primarily approached by young people who have graduated from non-prestigious and peripheral vocational education institutions. Indeed, the volume of approaches is in inverse relationship to the level of vocational education of young people.

In terms of the gender dimension of employment and vocational training through the Public Employment Service, at the regional office in Ismayilli young women undergo such training at significantly higher rates than young men, and the list of occupations in which they are trained is significantly shorter than that for young men. Young women are therefore taught in such “traditionally female” occupations as carpet weaving and handicrafts, while young men are taught in “male” ones (e.g. driver, tractor operator, etc.). However,

there are a number of professions in which both young men and women are trained, such as hairdressing.

When young people come in and say they want to learn, the Employment Service helps them. In 2008–09 alone we have trained 84 people in the trades, of which only 24 were young women. They generally learned carpet weaving. The choice of occupations for boys is more diverse. They were trained as tractor operators, painters, male hairdressers, window manufacturers. The main thing is to put them into a job after training. Currently, we are recruiting a group of girls for training in the “barber’s” profession. So far, seven girls have approached us. We have registered them. We are waiting for more to come, because the group must consist of 12 people, and then we shall start training.

Head, regional branch of the Public Employment Service, Ismaili

We have very few opportunities to help with employment – few vacancies. At present we have about 40 positions. These vacancies are in both low-budget organizations and private businesses. And these jobs are very low-paid. There are 878 registered unemployed; of those, 470 are young people and 39 of them are looking for a job for the first time.

Head, regional branch of the Public Employment Service, Ismaili

Employment through commercial employment services

At present, a whole network of commercial employment services has been set up in Azerbaijan. Some of them operate on the principle of charging employers for their services, and some charge those who are seeking jobs. In the vast majority of cases commercial employment services are concentrated in large cities. Therefore, the jobs on offer may be in either formal or informal employment. Interviews revealed that young people use the opportunities presented by commercial employment services when they are looking for a job.

When I was studying in Baku, my friend found a job through a commercial employment service. And they still needed people there. He recommended me, so we were working together.

Working young man, Ismaili

Job search through friends and relatives

Nowadays, reference to friends and relatives is a very popular strategy of jobseeking for young people in Azerbaijan. The study showed, however, that modern young people often have their own interpretation of the concept “friends and relatives” which is slightly different from the traditional. It includes, for instance, teachers and staff of higher education institutions, virtual friends from Internet forums, etc.

It is not possible to talk about the actual scale of employment by reference to friends and relatives without special studies having been conducted. However, the survey showed that many young people, especially those living in small towns and rural areas, believe that it is possible to get a good job only through friends, relatives or “money” (i.e. bribery).

Employment through friends and relatives is of particular importance to young women living in small towns and rural areas. Opportunities for their territorial labour mobility are extremely limited (see below) and so, apart from employment in public sector enterprises, they can only find work in the private sector through their relatives.

In Lakhych they work mainly in the public sector. There are only two girls in the private sector – as shop assistants. Private enterprises are very small and they are run mainly by family members. They employ very rarely.

Working young woman, Lakhych

If suddenly there is some sort of job, the manager employs only his relatives, or for money.

Working young man, Lakhych

It is only possible to be put into any good position if you have friends or relatives. Or, you have to pay.

Unemployed young man, Ivanovka

My friends knew that I was seeking a job. And once they sent a message that a company was looking for people. I found the site, opened it, looked them up, passed three interviews and got a job.

Working young woman, Baku

A particular feature of life in small towns and rural areas in Azerbaijan is a high degree of awareness among local people about everything that happens in their area. Therefore, when working young men and women living in small towns and rural areas were asked, “How did you find your job?” they quite frequently answered, “I just knew about this job.”

I graduated from the Institute of Culture, having trained as an arts manager. I work as a coach at the chess club. I found this job myself. I just knew about the vacancy.

Working young man, Izmailli

I graduated from a music college, I'm now working at the school of culture, teaching piano. I just knew about the vacancy.

Working young woman, Izmailli

I graduated from the Baku Pedagogical University, majoring in mathematics. Since graduation I have already been working at school for three years. It was simple for me to get the job here: I learned here, and I am working here now.

Working young woman, Lakhych

I have a (college) degree as a teacher of junior classes. But there is no job. Everyone knows that there are no jobs in Lakhych.

Unemployed young woman, Lakhych

Employment through the classifieds and job advertisements

During interviews with young people it was found that none of the participants had submitted advertisements offering their services. Theoretically, such a method of jobseeking is currently available only to residents of large cities (or residents of small towns and rural areas who seek jobs in big cities). There are no media outlets in small towns and rural areas which would publish such information (at least in those localities where the survey took place).

Jobseeking via the Internet, and gender differences in the use of computers and the worldwide web

The Internet is one of the newest, most promising, effective and rapidly growing channels for employment today because one can look for a job at a multitude of sites in minimum time and at minimum cost (compared with most other employment channels). Looking for a job on the Internet can be similar to the procedure using non-electronic media (e.g. placing a notice, sending a CV, looking for vacancies at the sites of companies and employment agencies, etc.). In some ways it may also be similar to jobseeking through “friends and relatives”, that is, through networks, fora, etc. For young people the Internet is bound to have particular significance because they are more conversant with new communication technologies and new methods of looking for information. Besides, computer literacy is a key competitive advantage for jobseekers in the modern labour market.

I earn a bit making translations, and I find orders mainly over the Internet.

Working young woman, Baku

I am unemployed, just looking for a job, including via the Internet. But so far there is no work.

Unemployed young woman, Ismaili

I used to work informally at the construction site in Baku. The job was hard, and I quit. And I have a profession – I’m an economist with a higher education background. I started to look for a job in my speciality and found a vacancy at a bank via the Internet. It is here, in our district. So I wrote to them, was invited, passed the first interview. I have working experience as an economist – I used to work as a cashier. If I succeed with the bank, then I will earn more than at the construction site.

Unemployed young man, Ismaili

Interviews undertaken during the project have shown that young people in Azerbaijan, both male and female, are active users of Internet resources in seeking a job and sending their CVs to employers. One reservation has to be made, however: there are differences between regions and communities in terms of the possibilities of using the Internet for employment. This is not only a question of young people’s access to the Internet (i.e. availability of the Internet and having sufficient skills to be able to use it to look for a job), but also of using Internet-based information in practice. On the one hand, the low level of territorial mobility in Azerbaijan forces people to look for a job mainly in local labour markets, but on the other hand, regional and community labour markets are differently represented on the Internet. The capital’s labour market is more fully represented on the Internet than, for example, the labour market

in the town of Ismaili. Internet services have proved to be practically inaccessible to young people living in rural areas, which has reduced their job seeking opportunities substantially.

For the purposes of this project it is important to note that, although young people in Azerbaijan are more computer literate than those in older age groups, there are significant gender differences in the prevalence of computer literacy (see table 11).

Table 11. Proportion of men and women who are computer users, by age group (2008)

Gender and age group	%
	2008
Men aged 16–24	58.5
Women aged 16–24	42.5
Men aged 25–54	33.6
Women aged 25–54	21.6
Men aged 55–74	13.4
Women aged 55–74	3.5

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national and international sources.

The survey conducted in 2008 (see table 11) revealed that a greater proportion of young men than young women were computer users, by a factor of 1.4 (58.5 per cent of young men compared with only 42.5 per cent of young women were computer users). This means that, in modern Azerbaijan, young women, in spite of their fairly high levels of computer literacy, have fewer opportunities than young men to look for a job on the Internet. It seems that the causes of gender differences in levels of computer skills should become the subject of special studies in the future.

Attempts to start one’s own business

A very small proportion of the young people involved in the study had considered the possibilities of employment outside the field of hired labour. Given the catastrophic scarcity of jobs in Azerbaijan today, starting one’s own business may be an acceptable employment strategy for some young people. Interviews have shown that both young men and young women would like to start their own business. However, young people’s readiness for this step is extremely low.

If my husband (I am not yet married) earns, and a lot, then he will help me open my own business. I would like to open my own enterprise in five to 10 years (depending on opportunities). But to do this, I need finances. I would like to work in the economic sector, and if my husband sponsors my idea, I will manage everything.

Working young woman, Baku

I work at school as a physical education teacher, but if I find a better job I will quit. It is also possible for me to open my own business, for instance in tourism, but it is complicated – large investments are needed. And there is no startup capital, no credit, no database of all tourist bases in the district. If somebody had a common site listing all tourist bases in the district, I would consider starting my own business.

Working young man, Ismaili

My father is a smith. He teaches me, and I will work as a smith and keep the family. And I do not want to continue studies. I will carry on my father's craft.

Unemployed young man, Lakhych

My father plays accordion, and I would also like to play it.

Unemployed young man, Lakhych

The gender aspect of the difficulties and obstacles facing those who want to start their own business consists mainly in the differences between the frameworks of economic activity in which a young man or young woman intends to start their own business or organize self-employment. Speaking about the prospects of starting their own business, young women more often than not think of the service sphere (thus, in Ismaili all the young women who said they would like to start their own business wanted to open their own hairdresser's salon). Among young men the range of proposed businesses is broader: the tourist business, transport, construction, etc.

I finished private, paid hairdressing courses. I worked at a hairdressing salon which I then quit because there was not much work there, few clients. I do not work now. I would like to start my own business, my own hairdressing salon. Where to get money from? When I work, I get money to start my business. I have no business plan, just a wish to start my business. Let it be.

Unemployed young woman, Ismaili

Female entrepreneurship has a fairly good future for women in Azerbaijan, but only within a limited space (beauty shops, sewing, cooking and washing). Men seldom start businesses in these spheres. Earnings are small and men are not attracted to these spheres. On the whole, women are risk averse, although banks offer easy-term loans.

Official, Ministry of Youth and Sport

The main obstacle that prevents these plans from being implemented is the same for both young men and young women, namely, the lack of funds.

While looking for a decent job, young people face somewhat different difficulties and obstacles than do adults. Young people comprise a very particular sector of the labour market. On the one hand, most lack work experience, which often deters employers from hiring them. Indeed, this is the main cause of the high level of unemployment among this population group (i.e. work is hard to come by if you don't have work experience, but experience is hard to come by

because they don't give you work). On the other hand, however, young people in Azerbaijan on the whole have a more modern, more diversified and sometimes higher level of education (including professional education) than older people whose human capital has largely been lost in the post-Soviet period. In addition, young people as a rule are more mobile (both territorially and professionally) and adapt themselves more easily to new conditions and technologies. In that sense they offer greater promise for new types of production and new markets.

At the same time, young people are a very heterogeneous group. Men and women, city and rural dwellers, those who have an education and those who have not yet acquired it, are confronted with different types of problems and obstacles (and "hurdles" of different heights), even though, by law, young people have equal employment opportunities and equal rights to decent jobs after acquiring an education, irrespective of their sex and place of residence.

The differences in these obstacles and difficulties for young men and women are due mainly to the different gender roles accepted in society. In Azerbaijan, in spite of the equality of men and women under law and the declared policy of gender equality, the distribution of roles and duties between men and women still remains largely traditional. Men are "breadwinners" while women are "housewives, custodians of the family hearth and mothers" (although low living standards force many of them out to work to eke out the family budget). The key "female" quality is still considered to be dependence (first on her parents and then on her husband).

For the purposes of this study, it is also significant that the prevalence of traditional gender roles in Azerbaijan reveals marked differences between regions and types of human settlements. In rural areas and small towns families adhere to the traditional mode of life, whereas in the metropolitan regions egalitarian types of relationships are gaining ground. Interviews have also shown that modern young men more frequently have traditional ideas about the distribution of gender roles than do young women.

Interviews have shown that the dilution of traditional patriarchal gender roles makes little difference to the professional ambitions of young men (who, regardless of their place of residence and social status, think of themselves as "breadwinners"), but it does make a difference to the ideas of young women (and their family members) regarding their professional careers. Although not a single young woman interviewed as part of this study declared that she "does not want to work", the value of education and employment varied widely among young women. That, in turn, left an imprint on their behaviour in the labour market (e.g. the amount of effort they put into jobseeking, their requirements of the workplace and level of wages, etc.).

The gamut of young women's pronouncements regarding their professional future:

"Everything depends on the husband. If my husband says, "You don't have to work", I won't work".

"One has to work, but the family comes first."

"My mother has never worked, but as a child I wanted my mother to work and have a career. I have wanted to work since childhood so that my children would say, "My mother works".

"I won't marry someone who wouldn't want me to work."

"I'll first build a career and then I may raise a family."

The gamut of young men’s pronouncements on whether their future wife should work:

In order to marry you have to stand up on your own two feet, and have a job and good pay so that your wife could afford not to work.

I am active and I will make my wife work. If she doesn’t work she will not be a match for me.

Lack of experience of working in a given field

The obstacle to employment most frequently cited by young people is their lack of experience of working in a chosen field. And this problem concerns both young men and women. (It should be noted that, in this particular case, we are primarily talking about graduates of professional education institutions of all levels.)

The practice of “on-the-job training” for students of professional education institutions should partially solve that problem. Appointments to on-the-job training are, as a rule, made by the education institutions. However, according to our respondents, not all such periods of training fulfill the task they require.

A student cannot count on a well-paid job. The justification for this is, “We do not need workers who have no work experience.” They need ready-made specialists. We had on-the-job practice while we were students, but the firms take a formal approach to this. They do not give us any real work to do, especially if 20 students are sent to one and the same place at once. That is extra load for the firm and for its employees. During internship you can only be an onlooker, and sometimes they just tell you to go home.

Young working man, Ivanovka

The issue is that employers are often unmotivated to provide quality on-the-job training and regard it as a burden. As a result, young people fail to acquire the knowledge of real production they hope for.

Under the law, senior-year students are sent for on-the-job training in summer under a contract. True, this is not usually regarded as “work experience”. One has to admit that not all companies take kindly to such practice. Most of the companies that accept students for on-the-job training are state owned, and very seldom private companies, probably because they are afraid of leakage of information. You usually need connections to be taken on as an intern by a private company.

Official, ILO-supported Career Center (State Economic University)

The problem of the “vicious circle” – when young people are turned down for a job because they have no experience and they have no experience because they can not get a job – is fairly old, but it is acute to this day. From the results of the interviews, however, we cannot claim that there is significant gender differentiation to this problem.

Widespread discriminatory practices in employment

The study has revealed that discriminatory practices in employment are widespread in Azerbaijan at all the stages of the employment procedure: in announcing vacancies, selecting candidates and hiring workers. All these irregularities are concentrated mainly in the private and informal sectors of the economy.

Vacancy notices

In Azerbaijan, as in all former Soviet Union countries, discrimination against women (including young women) in employment often begins at the moment the employer places a notice about a vacancy at his enterprise. Many such notices published in the media expressly state not only the gender of the prospective worker, but sometimes his (her) age and sometimes even the way the future worker should look. The latter requirement is stated only when the employer wants to hire a woman.

Box 5

Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Guarantees of Gender Equality”

Article 10. Announcement containing gender discrimination

1. It is forbidden to state varying requirements of men and women, to give preference to one or other gender in announcements of vacancies, or to ask jobseekers questions about their family status or personal life.
 2. It is forbidden to publish announcements of a humiliating nature that contradict the principle of equality between men and women.
 3. It is forbidden to announce job tenders only for representatives of one gender.
 4. The publication of announcements referred to in article 3 of this Law is allowed only if the worker’s gender is the key condition arising from the nature of the labour function or if the use of women’s labour in jobs referred to is forbidden under the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Examples of such announcements are vacancies published in the newspapers *Market* and *Exchange* given below.

Box 6

Examples of vacancy announcements in the media

Urgent! A construction company needs female workers for the job of secretary with work experience, aged 20–30, **good-looking**, with knowledge of Azeri, Russian and English, computer office programmes literate. US\$ 600–750. Tel. (012) 440-17-77; (012) 418-40-96; (050) 75248-15

An organization needs a **male worker not younger than 25** with a higher education and experience of work in information technologies. Salary: US\$ 650. Knowledge of Azeri and Russian languages required. Please send your CV by email: ean@gs1az.org

Wanted: **young women aged 18–30** to sell magazines at filling stations. Salary: US\$ 250. Tel: (055) 260-54-65

Source: *Market*, No. 15 (566), 20.04–26.04.2010, pp. 20-21.

In the above examples, every vacancy announcement contains at least two expressly discriminatory provisions. There are three such explicit provisions in the first example (discrimination by age; reference to appearance and sex). In the second and third examples there are two directly discriminatory provisions (reference to sex and age).

It should be noted that all three types of discriminatory provision are banned under the labour legislation and the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Guarantees of Gender Equality”.

As a rule, employers say that such announcements have been prompted by their wish to save jobseekers’ time.

Many employers believe that family duties depreciate female labour and prefer to employ men, not regarding that as discrimination. Yet even if an employer agrees to hire a woman, many prefer to hire women who are free from family obligations. In a typical situation, the employer asks a young woman seeking a job questions regarding her family status, whether she plans to have children in the near future, etc.

The traditional division of labour embedded in Azerbaijani society, whereby the woman does all the family chores, makes it impossible for the employer even to imagine that men could also avail themselves of some of the benefits connected with family duties. Therefore, young men say that they are not asked questions about their marital status when being interviewed for a job.

The pregnancy situation is frowned upon by employers. During an interview I was even asked if I had any plans in that direction and, if so, how would that impact on my work performance. They asked these questions although I think that such questions are not supposed to be asked during an interview. But they do get asked. And at a certain stage it influences the employer’s decision.

Working young woman, Baku

When I was being hired to work at the Japanese Embassy I was asked whether I was married or was going to marry. I said “No”.

Working young woman, Baku

During the interview I was asked several times whether I was married or not, but this is in my CV anyway.

Working young woman, Baku

Before 2005 a major company had a rule not to hire young women (for fear that they would marry, have children, etc.). If they hired a young woman they offered very low pay. The situation then changed. They realized that if they hired students (and they hired final year students and students working for an MA) all the young men would be conscripted to serve in the Army. Now the company readily hires young women.

Official, ILO-supported Career Center (State Economic University)

The members of focus groups also mentioned another fairly common discriminatory requirement which employers make of young women seeking a job – “personable” appearance.

The main employment problem for young women is that they pay attention to your looks. Employers say so openly. Sometimes they ask you to walk across the room and sometimes offer to enter into an intimate relationship.

Unemployed young woman, Baku

Gender aspects of territorial labour mobility among young people

Huge differences between the standards of urban and rural employment, labour markets and education services; huge gaps between living standards in large cities and the provinces; and the high proportion of rural dwellers in the population, create considerable migration flows, both within the country and abroad. Young people, both male and female, are involved in these flows of educational and labour migration.

Group interviews have revealed that gender differences in the obstacles facing young men and women in the field of educational migration (including abroad) are much smaller than gender differences in the obstacles to their participation in labour migration (even inside the country, not to speak of labour migration abroad).

Patriarchal traditions, widespread in Azerbaijani society, allow young women to leave home to acquire an education, but are rather less tolerant of their labour migration. Rural families, for the most part, do not approve of young women moving to work in a city. The exception is when a young woman moves to another place to live with close relatives. (One has to bear in mind, however, that the group of young women who stayed in the cities after completing their education – some because they married and some because they found a job – was not included in the group interviews).

During group interviews many young women who were educated in large cities then returned home and failed to find a job, said they could not leave their home to seek a job because their relatives forbade them from doing so.

I have a degree as a primary school teacher. But I have no job. There are no work places in Lakhych. There are too many teachers. I didn't try to find a job in Ismaili because my parents forbade me to.

Unemployed young woman, Lakhych

After finishing school I did not work and did not seek work: there are no jobs in Lakhych, as everybody knows. It never crossed my mind to leave and seek a job in another place. This is frowned upon. If you are male you can leave to work. If you are a girl you can't. A girl can only go to another city to continue her education, but not to work.

Unemployed young woman, Lakhych

I study at university in Baku. When I finish my studies I will look for a job only in Ismailli. My relatives do not allow me to go to Baku, rent a flat and work.

Unemployed young woman, Ismailli

Sometimes young men, too, are forbidden by their families to go to work in another town. But that happens seldom and is usually connected with exceptional family circumstances.

I was offered an actor's job in a large city. But my parents forbade me. I stayed at home. (There are several sisters in the family, but he is an only son and has to be with his parents).

Unemployed young man, Ismailli

The high cost of renting living space in large cities is an important obstacle to labour migration among young people. Considering the small salaries that young people are typically offered, the high cost of accommodation makes a job on such terms economically meaningless.

It is also important to bear in mind that this barrier is of different “height” for young men and young women seeking a job. Women’s pay is, on average, much lower than men’s (as discussed in section 5), whereas the level of rent does not depend on the tenant’s sex. As a result, young women find it more difficult to pay for an apartment than do young men.

I graduated from a medical college in Baku. After studying in Baku I wanted to stay there to work, but I have nowhere to live. I cannot afford to rent a flat. A nurse's salary is small (US\$ 300–380 at most), not enough to pay for accommodation. Renting a one-room flat costs US\$ 250 a month, plus utilities. So I had to come back. Everyone who studied in Baku has come back home.

Working young woman, Ivanovka

I wanted to work in Baku where I had studied. I tried to get a job at a bank. But when they learnt that I had no flat and was renting one they turned me down. The bank representatives said they had some members of staff who rented flats, but they tended to be late for work. I don't think that is the real reason. The bank needs a worker who will stay and those who rent a flat and pay US\$ 120–130 for it, are unlikely to last long. They will quit.

Working young man, Ismailli

We have no work. They say there are vacancies in Ismailli, but pay is too small, about \$12 a day. And if you have to commute and pay for your flat, nothing is left. Of course, I have relatives in Ismailli. But you can live a day or two with them, but it would inconvenience them if I stayed longer.

Unemployed young man, Lakhych

There are also some difficulties and obstacles for young people seeking a decent job in which gender plays only a small part, or the gender aspect is not evident.

Conscripted service in the Armed Forces as a temporary obstacle to employment

Employment problems connected with conscripted service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan are experienced by a limited group of young men who study at higher education institutions but have not done their service and wish to find a highly skilled job. Employers take a guarded attitude towards such young men because filling qualified and highly qualified vacancies as a rule involves certain outlay for special training and retraining of the candidate. If the candidate, after such training, is drafted into the Armed Forces, it is by no means certain that he will return to his former job. And that spells further costs to the employer to look for and train a new candidate.

During focus groups many young men said that practically all potential employers, even in government institutions, have asked them questions about service in the Armed Forces. After this service, that obstacle to employment disappears. That is why some young men consciously put off the problem of employment until after they have done their service in the Armed Forces.

Section 5. Gender gap in pay

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Statistical Department, in the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2008 the average women’s wage amounted to 53.2 per cent of the average men’s wage.

In recent years the gap has been closing rapidly: while in 2005 women’s wages in the formal national economy averaged just 45.4 per cent of average men’s wages, they had already reached 50.8 per cent in 2007, and 53.2.8% in 2008.

Table 12. Ratio of women’s wages to men’s wages in selected CIS countries (2005–09)

Country	%				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Azerbaijan	45.4	46.5	50.8	53.2	
Georgia	48.9	49.1	50.3		
Kyrgyzstan		65.8	67.3	67.3	
Russian Federation	60.7		63.1		65.3

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national sources.

The differences in levels of pay between men and women are rooted in a whole system of economic, social and cultural factors, most of which have to do with the spread of direct or indirect discrimination against women, the traditional gender-based division of labour, and the low price of work done by women.

5.1. Gender segregation

One of the main reasons for the gap in pay between men and women is the significant gender segregation (by sector, occupation and vertically).

Sectoral segregation

It is typical of the present-day economy in Azerbaijan that the differences in the levels of pay of employees engaged in different types of economic activities can be huge (indeed, differing as much as tenfold). Thus, the lowest level of pay in 2008 was in the fishing industry (where the nominal monthly wage of workers averaged US\$ 130¹²) whereas the highest wage level (US\$ 1,260) was among miners. Women are engaged in low-paid economic activities much more frequently than men: 84.7 per cent of all working women were engaged in those types of economic activity which have lower than average pay (mainly agriculture, retailing, education, and healthcare and social services). The proportion of working men in such sectors is substantially lower (62 per cent).

¹² In April 2010, the average exchange rate was set at a level of 0.803 Manat to the US dollar.

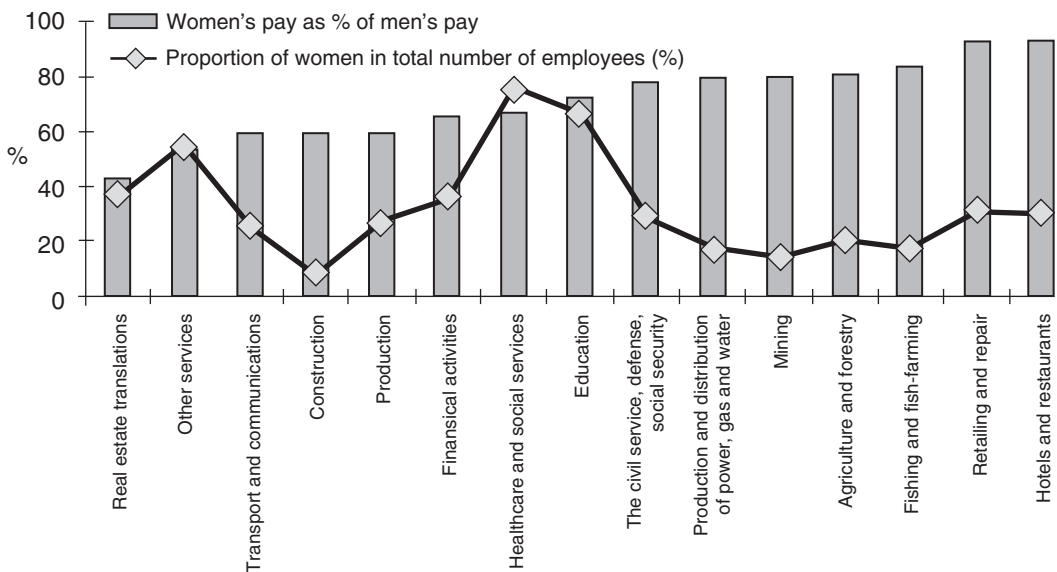
Occupational and vertical segregation

Within the same type of economic activity, women work in lower paid occupations and/or hold lower ranking positions (or skill categories) than do men.

Thus, women’s pay is lower than men’s pay in all types of economic activity, irrespective of the degree of their feminization, both where the majority of employees are women and where the majority of employees are men (see figure 6). Thus, in the financial sphere, for example, where the proportion of women employees was only 35.1 per cent, the gender gap in levels of pay was 36.6 per cent in 2008. In healthcare and social services the figures were 78.6 per cent and 32.8 per cent respectively.

The biggest differences in the average pay of men and women exists among those engaged in real estate transactions (the average pay for women was just 41.8 per cent of the average pay for men in 2008, with women accounting for 36.6 per cent of employees). The smallest gap exists among hotel and restaurant staff (with women receiving 93.8 per cent of the average pay for men and accounting for 29.9 per cent of employees).

Figure 6. Ratio of women’s average monthly nominal pay to men’s average monthly nominal pay (by type of economic activity and proportion of women employees) in selected types of economic activity (hired workers) (2008)



Source: *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.

Within certain occupations, men (as a rule, though not always) have higher pay than women. According to government statistics, this is the situation among “technological equipment operatives”, “operatives in the production of petrochemical industry”, “plasterers”, postmen and electricians. The situation is reversed among flight attendants, where women have higher pay than men.

Women also have higher pay than men in the civil service (in 2008, the average nominal salary of women civil servants was US\$ 540 compared with US\$ 490 for men). Being employed as

a civil servant offers women indisputable advantages in comparison with being employed in other sectors of the economy. First, approval for a position as a rule involves strictly defined procedures (which dramatically reduces the opportunities for discrimination in employment and makes women more competitive). Secondly, being employed in the civil service implies scrupulous adherence to all the labour legislation provisions, including all the privileges to which women are entitled in connection with their reproductive function.

5.2. Working hours

In many countries, an important factor behind the gender gap in pay is the significant difference in working hours between men and women. This is partly because women work short hours more frequently than do men. In Azerbaijan, women's working hours are shorter than men's, but the difference is relatively small, as evidenced by the very insignificant difference between the average hourly pay of men and women compared with differences between their average monthly pay. Thus, in 2008, the difference in average monthly earnings between men and women was 46.8 per cent, whereas the difference in average hourly rates was only slightly less (45.8 per cent) (see table 13).

Table 13. Differential between men's and women's average hourly and monthly pay (2008)

Basis of comparison	%
	2008
Women's average hourly pay relative to men's	45.8
Women's average monthly pay relative to men's	46.8

Source: UNECE Statistical Database, drawing on official national sources.

5.3. Direct gender discrimination in pay

One of the causes of the differences between pay rates for men and women is direct discrimination on the grounds of gender. The law in Azerbaijan forbids pay discrimination on any grounds, including gender. However, experts confirm that it is a problem that is concentrated in the informal sector and to some extent in private enterprises. The degree of direct gender discrimination contributing to the total difference in pay between men and women is unclear because relevant studies and assessments are lacking.

Today, unfortunately, Azerbaijan's official state statistics do not allow for age profiling of the differential between men's and women's pay. However, data available in the other CIS countries, including Russia, indicate that a difference in pay rates according to gender is typical for all age groups. However, in youth age groups these differences are smaller among juniors than in the most economically active age group. The biggest differences in pay rates are in the 25–29 year-old age group.¹³

¹³ *Gender Issues in modern Russia based on formal statistics* (Moscow, The World Bank, 2006), p. 65.

5.4. Gender differences in the social norms of remuneration and career ambitions (the problem of self-discrimination among young women)

As has been shown, the gender gap in remuneration in Azerbaijan is very wide. Part of the reason for this is the modest ambitions of young women when it comes to the issue of remuneration.

During focus group interviews conducted in the capital, a small town and a rural area, in every group women's ideas regarding what is "good pay" were 15–40 per cent lower than men's.

Similar results were obtained during the Selective Statistical Survey in Azerbaijan on Transition of Young People Aged 15–29 from Education to Employment, conducted in 2005. It revealed that among city dwellers the minimum monthly income below which young men would turn down a job was on average 14 per cent higher than that cited by young women. In rural areas the gender gap was still wider, 25 per cent.¹⁴

Thus, modern young women in Azerbaijan (regardless of their level of education and place of residence) a priori value their work less than do young men with a similar level of education and place of residence. Young women are prepared to settle for lower pay than young men and the level of income that would satisfy them is accordingly lower. Obviously, such a significant difference in the social norms of remuneration of young men and women is the result of the traditional division of gender roles, where the woman's income was at best thought to be an "addition" to the family income. Unfortunately, such "self-discrimination" of women often spawns their tolerant attitude to any discrimination on the part of the employer, including pay and pay rises.

¹⁴ Calculated from *Selective statistical survey in Azerbaijan "On the Transition of Young People Aged 15–29 from Education to Employment"*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2006, p. 253.

Section 6. Statistical issues arising from analysis of the employment situation of young men and women in Azerbaijan

At present, statistics on labour, education and gender issues in the Republic of Azerbaijan are at the development stage. However, despite rapid improvements in the national statistical base, it:

- does not allow many particular features of the situation of young men and women in the fields of education, employment, and the labour market to be characterized;
- limits the possibilities of carrying out necessary international comparisons on those issues;
- does not allow assessment of the efficiency of implementation of programmes, plans and authorities' decisions on youth employment, to enable identification of particular features of their impact on the situation of young men and women in this field.

Therefore, despite a survey of economic activity of the population having been carried out in Azerbaijan in accordance with ILO standards since 2003, the range of indicators describing gender aspects of economic activity by youth is still extremely limited.

Thus, for example, national statistical publications lack even such an important indicator as the employment level of the population (it is only present in the estimation option concerning the number of economically active persons in the population). This indicator, estimated in accordance with ILO methodology, is only available in the UN databanks. Unfortunately, however, this indicator of the employment level of the population is estimated using the age scale that does not correspond to the boundaries of the definition "youth" adopted in Azerbaijan (see Introduction).

Many available indicators characterizing the economic activity of the population have limited differentiation: either by gender only (generally by all ages), or by age only (generally without defining gender). Thus, they cannot be used for the analysis of gender issues in youth employment (e.g. the indicator of employment by the main place of work has gender differentiation only, whereas data on the referral of the unemployed to training or retraining are differentiated by either gender or age category).

There is an extreme lack of indicators describing employment quality which include categories for young men and young women. Completely missing are such important data as young people's employment status, working hours and type of labour contract (if any).

There is no information regarding the regional features of the situation of young men and women in the field of employment, or in the labour market, or jobseeking methods used by the jobless.

Statistics on registered unemployment are extremely poor, failing to reflect basic problems facing young men and women jobseekers, lacking even such an indicator as duration of

employment differentiated by gender, age and place of residence. Furthermore, available indicators also have limited differentiation: either by gender only (generally by all ages), or by age only (generally without defining gender).

A particular problem with statistical indicators calculated for small groups on the basis of the survey of economic activity is their instability. Thus, virtually all indicators by which the situation of Azerbaijani youth is evaluated in the field of employment and in the labour market show substantial time fluctuations (this problem primarily concerns overall unemployment indicators by young men and women of various ages estimated depending on their place of their residence). It seems that this situation stems from problems related to the lack of sufficient sampling during the survey.

Serious improvements are required in the body of labour statistics used as a basis for evaluating remuneration levels among the employed population. Available data make it possible to assess the remuneration level of only every third person among those employed, and even for this limited group information on gender differences in remuneration is only available differentially by type of economic activity. It seems necessary to start drafting indicators characterizing gender differences in remuneration depending on a worker's age, position occupied, education level, etc.

A profound understanding of gender problems in the sphere of education requires that existing indicators be complemented with indicators that characterize the gender composition of students at general education schools by grade (or at least by the age of students). It is also practicable to introduce an indicator of the number of students who pay for their education at state professional education institutions of all levels (differentiated for men and women), and preferably by discipline of study.

It is also important to put in place a system of collecting statistical information on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of migration flows, including data on the involvement of youth in internal and external labour migration.

Therefore, considering that the problems facing young people differ greatly depending on their place of residence, it would make sense to differentiate all indicators on an urban/rural basis.

As yet, however, many specific problems encountered by young men and women in education, employment, and the labour market remain obscure due to statistical shortcomings.

Section 7. Conclusions

7.1. Main conclusions

The following conclusions may be drawn from the study:

- On the whole, the labour legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan meets international standards, without containing discriminatory provisions. In daily life, however, violations of this legislation, including the specific working rights of women, is nowadays a reality. The majority of such violations occur in the informal sector of the economy. Complaints from the population regarding discrimination are submitted to neither the State Labour Inspectorate nor the State Committee for Family, Women's, and Children's Affairs. Besides, the interviews with young people raised doubts about their having a high level of legal knowledge (at least in the field of labour legislation and gender equality legislation.)
- State programmes aimed at improvements in the status of women in employment and the labour market, as well as in state youth programmes, fail to target the equal access of young men and women to decent workplaces. The problem is that the former programmes lack the age component (they do not consider specific problems facing young women), whereas the latter lack the gender dimension (they do not consider the gender specifics of problems facing young people in the labour market).
- In modern Azerbaijani society, traditional patriarchal gender relations remain widespread, despite the fact that the law declares equality between men and women in all spheres of life and despite the government's gender equality policy. The prevalence of such attitudes varies greatly from region to region and from one type of settlement to another. In rural areas and small towns traditional attitudes more frequently persist, whereas in the capital region and in large cities egalitarian types of relationships are gradually gaining ground. Interviews have shown that the watering down of traditional patriarchal gender roles makes little difference to the professional aspirations of young men (who think of themselves as "breadwinners in the family" regardless of their place of residence and social status), but reveal substantial differences among young women (and members of their families) regarding their professional future. Young women are to a larger extent committed to ideas of gender equality and egalitarian relations within the family and (although less frequently among girls sensitized to a patriarchal way of life) are seeking a high level of qualitative vocational training and to secure an interesting and highly paid job.
- Analysis of demographic statistics shows that modern Azerbaijan is a country with a growing population and a growing number of young people. In the near future one should expect the growth in the number of young people to slow down and gender asymmetry to increase (due to an increase in the proportion of young men).
- Although Azerbaijan is committed to a policy of gender equality at government level, much attention is paid to the employment of young people, and a government employment strategy is being implemented, not enough attention is being paid to the gender aspects of the problems and obstacles young people face in the process of transition from study to work.

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- Economic activity by both young men and young women in Azerbaijan is relatively high (as compared with the youth of other countries in the region), due to the low accessibility of vocational training.
 - The existing system of state statistics on gender, labour and education does not fully meet the requirements of the State and society. The lack of statistical information regarding obstacles and difficulties facing young men and women when jobseeking and in the field of employment is one of the reasons for the insufficient inclusion of the gender dimension in state programmes and plans aimed at supporting youth.
 - Many parameters of the employment sphere in Azerbaijan and the position of women and men within it currently reveal significant gender asymmetry.
 - An important gender problem in employment remains the wide gap between the remuneration of men and women, which is attributable to a whole range of factors (e.g. the differentiation of pay in different types of economic activity remains significant while remuneration in the public sector, where women are predominantly employed, lags behind that in other sectors; there is significant horizontal and vertical segregation; etc).
 - The main problem young people face in the sphere of employment and the labour market is unemployment, which has a marked gender aspect, including problems and obstacles in the employment of young men and women (e.g. discriminatory practices that are observed at all stages of the hiring process – when advertising vacancies, selecting candidates and employing a worker; gender differences in the social norms of remuneration; the career ambitions and lower labour territorial mobility of young women; etc.).
 - At the same time, Azerbaijan has a practically gender-neutral mechanism of employment, i.e. the employment of civil servants through testing.
 - In addition, some problems and obstacles encountered by young people in employment are equally relevant for young men and women: a low level of legal literacy (i.e. poor knowledge of labour legislation); a failure to advocate working rights; poor knowledge of foreign languages which employers require of candidates for a vacancy; the ineffectiveness of on-the-job training provided by employers for students at professional education institutions; etc.
 - The de facto division of the professional education system in Azerbaijan into one system for the elite and another system for “others” results in the graduates of these education institutions, irrespective of their gender, having different levels of technological skill for seeking and maintaining employment, access to different labour markets, and different mediators in securing employment.
 - The study has also shown that young people in Azerbaijan make wide use of the Internet in looking for jobs. Young women are at a disadvantage in this compared with young men because they are less computer literate. Besides, this channel for jobseeking is practically inaccessible to young people in rural areas where there is no Internet.
 - Underdeveloped social and physical infrastructure, especially in rural areas (a traditionally female sphere), greatly complicates women’s professional employment, while private initiatives in the development of that sector are impeded by low living standards and, accordingly, a lack of actual demand for such services offered by private individuals.

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- In modern Azerbaijan, although the law proclaims the equal right of young men and women to education at all levels, there is still the problem of fair representation of young men and women at all levels of general and vocational education.
 - In vocational training, there is a persistently high level of student segregation by training speciality and profession, which is a precondition for the reproduction of existing segregation (both industrial and professional) in both vocational training and employment. Furthermore, the high level of student segregation by training speciality makes it much more complicated for young women to gain access to new, highly paid professions.
 - The study has shown that violation of labour legislation, including the specific labour rights of women, is mainly confined to the private sector of the economy. Furthermore, interviews with young people leave doubts as to the level of their legal knowledge (at least regarding labour legislation and gender equality legislation).

7.2. Recommendations

Improvement of government policy

The Ministry of Youth and Sport is currently developing a National Plan of Actions (NPA) in the field of youth employment. The previous Azerbaijan Youth State Program (2005–09), which envisaged measures to ensure professional training and employment for youth, had no gender dimension. The new NPA must be developed taking due account of gender differences in the problems and obstacles to employment faced by young people, and the position of young men and women in the employment sphere and in the labour market. The gender component must be introduced at all stages in the development of the NPA (i.e. review of the situation, identification of problems, development of policy options, development of political decisions, and implementation of decisions).

It would be expedient, for the purpose of developing and implementing the NPA, to combine the efforts of at least three agencies: the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population; the Ministry of Youth and Sport; and the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. This will make it possible to synchronize the efforts of these agencies to address the specific gender problems in, and obstacles to, the employment of young people.

Furthermore, development of the NPA should also include establishing assessment of the efficiency of implementation of activities envisaged in the NPA. Such assessment should, incidentally, have a gender component, i.e. it should make it possible to evaluate the effect of activities on young men and women separately.

Many proposed measures are formally gender neutral, i.e. they are designed for both young men and women. However, given the weaker position of young women in the labour market, the measures will most probably be more useful to young women in particular.

Despite the equality of men and women declared in the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in real life women, as a social group, suffer to a greater degree than men from violations of civil, social, economic, and family rights.

Areas of government activity that may contribute to greater gender equality and respect for the rights of working women

- Mandatory gender-based assessment of all state social programmes.
- Introduction of the gender component to all sections of state programmes dealing with youth.
- Propagation of egalitarian relations between men and women at both the family level and the level of society as a whole.
- Improvement of national gender statistics, including expansion of the system of statistical indicators characterizing particular features of women and men in all spheres of life.
- Regular specialized checks by the State Labour Inspectorate of compliance with the rights of working women at enterprises in all sectors of the economy and in all regions of the country.
- Publication and downloading of such check results at the website of the State Labour Inspectorate.
- Having gender experts on the staff of the State Labour Inspectorate.
- Introduction of gender issues to the educational standards of general educational and vocational training institutions, including the education (and further training programmes) of government employees.
- Raising pay in “female” public sector domains (education, healthcare and culture) to the average national level.
- Diminishing the segregation of students by training profession in vocational training at all levels.
- Development and institution of a mechanism of enforcing legislation that bans the publication of vacancy notices containing elements of discrimination on the basis of gender (in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Guarantees of Gender Equality”, article 10).
- Taking special actions to familiarize the Azerbaijan population with ILO Conventions Nos 156 and 183.
- Drafting schoolbooks and training programmes on gender issues to teach basic knowledge of gender issues at education institutions of all levels.
- In order to better comprehend the depth of problems facing young people in the field of employment, it would be expedient to conduct specialized research aimed at identifying the extent to which labour legislation is observed with regard to young people, and young women in particular, and the scale of youth employment (by gender) in the informal sector of the economy.

Areas of government activity that may relieve pressure on the labour market and improve the position of women in the employment sphere

- Development of a network of preschool childcare institutions (including private ones), especially in the provinces. That would fulfill the twin tasks of creating new jobs of

the types traditionally filled by women and of rationalizing the running of households, strengthening opportunities for women to be involved in paid employment.

- Organization of the training and retraining of young women returning to the labour market after maternity leave or a long break in employment.
- Official promotion of the more active participation of men in domestic labour and the care and raising of children.

Areas of government activity that may reduce gender asymmetry in problems in, and obstacles to, youth employment

- It is necessary to ensure a higher level of computer literacy among young people, especially young women, beginning in rural communities.
- Upgrade the status of foreign language study at general education schools, beginning in rural communities.
- Recommend that professional education institutions of different levels create centres for graduate employment which would organize internships during the period of study, help graduates find jobs, and monitor their career trajectories. This would enable education institutions to react in a more flexible manner to changing labour market demands.
- Develop a mechanism of stimulating employers to accept students for on-the-job training at their enterprises.
- Using the resources of the Public Employment Service, develop and implement a broader range of robust programmes to support youth employment, especially in rural areas. Introduce a special component in these programmes to assess their efficiency (differentiated for young men and women).
- Strengthen the interaction between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, and the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs in dealing with issues related to work and employment for youth.
- Set up a network of centers for the professional orientation of young people, with the purpose of reducing their segregation by education level and training speciality.
- Widen scientific research on gender issues.

Improving state statistics

The NPA should proceed from analysis of the youth labour market in Azerbaijan and the main problems of employment faced by young men and women.

Such an analysis would require, above all, a drastic improvement in state statistics on gender, labour, education, and the social sphere in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The necessary statistical database exists in Azerbaijan (largely based on the results of the “population employment survey”), but the question of developing **a system of statistical indicators** remains urgent, that is, a system that could, on the one hand, adequately reflect the problems facing young people in education, employment and the labour market (taking into

account the gender aspect to these problems), and, on the other hand, reflect the dynamics of those spheres. Thus, it would allow monitoring of the NPA and other government decisions aimed at addressing the problems of youth employment and achieving gender equality in the spheres under review.

Annex 1. Sources of information used in the study

The main source of information for this study was provided by **focus groups**.

In the course of the study, nine focus groups were held with young people aged 18–24 (both holding jobs and seeking jobs).

Because the study assumed the existence of substantial differences in employment opportunities for young people living in communities of different status, focus groups were held in three types of communities: the capital city, Baku; a small town, Ismaili; and the rural communities of Ivanovka and Lakhych. It should be noted that the small town and the rural community where the focus groups were held are situated in the northern regions of the country, i.e. where patriarchal traditions are considerably less widespread than in southern rural communities.

Focus groups were held separately for young people in employment and young people seeking employment. In rural areas, in consideration of national traditions, focus groups were held separately for males and females. The only exception was a group interview held in the village of Ivanovka – an area of compact Molokan settlement – which brought together young men and women, both employed and unemployed.

Thus, nine focus groups were held:

- Two focus groups in Baku (of working young men and women, and young men and women seeking employment);
- Two focus groups in the town of Ismaili (of working young men and women, and young men and women seeking employment);
- One focus group in the village of Ivanovka (of young men and women who work or seek work);
- Four focus groups in the village of Lakhych (of working young men, working young women, young men seeking a job, and young women seeking a job).

During research planning it was intended to hold focus groups with economically inactive young men and women. It was assumed that those focus groups would be held only in the small town and the rural community, i.e. where the labour market situation is particularly complicated, and where the unemployment rate is considerably higher than in major cities. However, coordinators failed to form focus groups of economically inactive young people during the preparation stage. In fact, they were not able to find a single young woman or young man, even in the rural community, with whom to conduct at least an individual interview, and who would admit that they were unemployed and that they were not seeking a job. Absolutely all unemployed young people (irrespective of their gender) whom it was possible to contact claimed that they wanted to work and were seeking a job (although in reality the intensity of jobseeking might be extremely low.)

The focus groups involving young men and women at the same time showed a gender balance among participants.

The education level of participants in the focus groups was sufficiently high (i.e. participants had at least full secondary education or primary vocational training).

Most young people who took part in focus groups in the small town and the rural community spoke only the Azeri language. The groups had to be conducted through an interpreter which impeded lively discussion among the participants. Work in groups was made more productive by switching to the group interview methodology.

Furthermore, to establish the adherence of the young people to the traditional or egalitarian view of the division of labour between men and women, and the prevalence of traditional attitudes among respondents regarding the place of men and women in the sphere of employment and the labour market and differentiation in the social norms of remuneration between young men and women, **mini-questionnaires** were distributed among the participants before the start of the focus groups. The questionnaire contained six questions; 70 questionnaires were collected.

In addition, the study included 15 **expert interviews**. Interviewees included officials of: the Ministry of Youth and Sport; the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (including the General Employment Department and Department of Employment Policy and Regulation of the Labour Market); the State Labour Inspectorate; the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs; Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation, Economic Department; the State Economic University (ILO-Supported Career Center); the Public Employment Service in Ismaili; representatives of a private employment agency; and the manager of the Ivanovka collective farm.

Other sources of information for this project were:

1. Statistical collections of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan:
 - a. <http://www.azstat.org/indexen.php>
 - b. *Families in Azerbaijan*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2009.
 - c. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan: 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku.
 - d. *Children in Azerbaijan*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2009.
 - e. *Labour Market*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2009.
2. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. UNECE Statistical Database (compiled on the basis of official national and international sources): http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/about_database.asp?lang=14_
3. *National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2006–2015)*. Baku, 2007.
4. *Birzha (Exchange)* (free public notices newspaper), No.16 (951), 23 April 2010.
5. *Market* (advertising and announcement newspaper), No.15 (566), 20.04–26.04.2010.

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6. *Survey of the Economic Activity of the Population in Azerbaijan: Survey Methodology and Analysis of the Labour Market*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2008.
 7. *The position of the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation on the issue of ratification of ILO Convention No.156 On Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunities for Working Men and Women with Family Responsibilities*. Baku, 2006.
 8. *Selective statistical survey in Azerbaijan “On the transition of Young People Aged 15–29 from Education to Employment”*. State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2006.

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