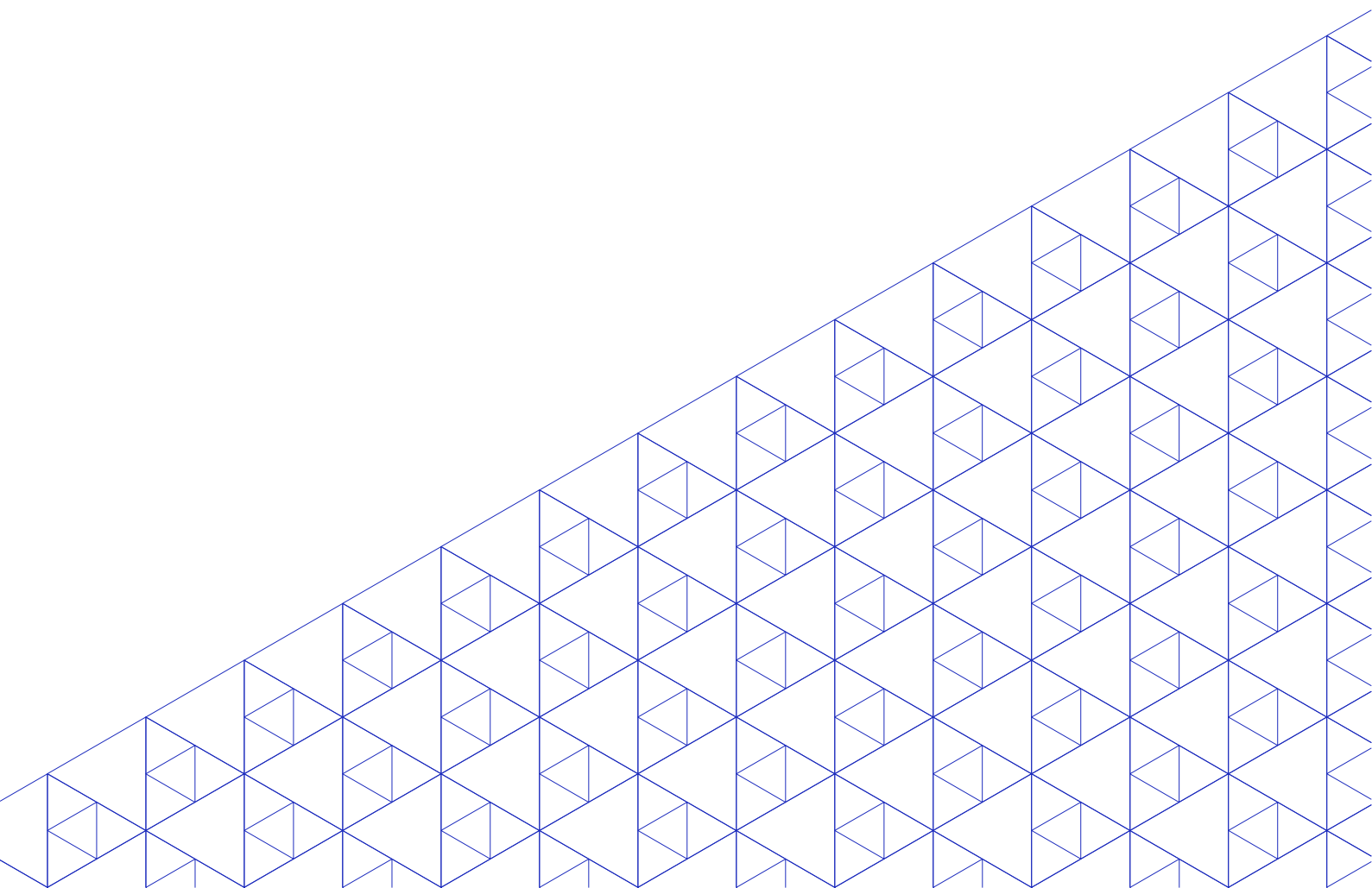


Gender and youth employment in CIS countries

**ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office
for Eastern Europe and Central Asia –
Employment Country Reports Series**





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The “Gender and youth employment in CIS countries” report was commissioned in the context of the ILO project “Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS” implemented by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia with financial support of the Russian private company LUKOIL. Report was submitted for discussion during the sub-regional annual meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) network for youth employment promotion policies, held in July 2019, Kazan, Russian Federation and updated early in 2020. The report was prepared by Niall O'Higgins, ILO Senior Employment Research Specialist.

Foreword

The “Gender and youth employment in CIS countries” report was commissioned in the context of the ILO project “Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS” implemented by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ILO Moscow) with financial support of the Russian private company LUKOIL. The study covers selected CIS countries; namely, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Armenia, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. It provides a deeper dive into NEET and the school-to-work transition in the Russian Federation and Armenia.

The report reviews significant gender gaps in the labour market and youth labour market in the region, and assesses country differences in terms of extent and nature of the gaps. Factors underlying such gaps include issues with the application of legislation, the perseverance of traditional attitudes to women’s role in society, as well as, related to this, the strong predominance of women in unpaid care work in the family, and the obstacles this may place in the way of the effective participation of young women in the labour market – an issue emphasised by the ILO’s recent global research on gender disparities in the labour market (ILO, 2019). The report provides evidence that young people face a daunting task in seeking to enter the world of work today, and existing gender gaps among young people in labour market outcomes tend to become larger with age.

The ILO, addressing the persistent youth employment crisis, has called upon robust actions based on broad partnerships and innovative mechanisms of policy formulating and multiplication of efforts. As a significant step in this direction, the report aimed at supporting its constituents in tackling youth employment challenge through a coherent and sound approach to employment policies, employment, skills development and other relevant issues. Consequently, the report was submitted for discussion during the sub-regional annual meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) network for youth employment promotion policies, held in July 2019, Kazan, Russian Federation.

The CIS annual meeting held in Kazan, July 2019, gathered tripartite representatives from Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) countries, China, ILO Moscow, ILO HQ and international experts. The following EECA countries were represented: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Participants from the Russian Federation included partner regions: Astrakhan Region, Kaliningrad Region, Republic of Komi, Perm Territory and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region. The agenda focused on the gender dimension of youth employment, discussed policy recommendations and good practices promoting young women access to productive employment, facilitated peer-to-peer learning and enhanced the national capacities to design and implement employment programs for young women.

The report on “Gender and youth employment in the CIS” was prepared especially for the CIS meeting by Niall O’Higgins, ILO Senior Employment Specialist, and benefitted from the excellent research assistance of Francesca Bonomelli, Fidel Bennett Ramos and Luis Pinedo Caro as well as from further technical support from Johannes Weiss and Mariela Dyrberg. Luis Pinedo Caro also co-authored section 4.3.

The “Partnerships for Youth Employment in the CIS” project team lead by Ramiro Pizarro, coordinated consultations with national partners, provided early recommendations and observations, and conducted the sub regional meeting. The ILO Moscow gave overall impetus to this initiative, supervised by Mikhail Pouchkin, ILO Senior Employment Specialist; Lejo Sibbel, ILO Senior Labour Standards and Labour Law Specialist, revised country progress on key ILO conventions; Vladimir Curovic (ILO Specialist for Employers’ Activities) and Gocha Aleksandria (ILO Specialist for Workers’ Activities) ensured fluent communications with employers and workers organizations.



Executive summary

1. The economic situation

- Promoting and hence establishing gender equality has an intrinsic value in and of itself. However, the arguments in favour of equalizing the opportunities and outcomes of women and men in the labour market go well beyond issues of fairness and basic human rights, important as they are. More equal societies operate more efficiently.
- Prior to the independence of CIS countries considered here, the equal employment status and rights of women and men in the region were guaranteed by strictly applied and unified labour laws; whilst much of this legislation has remained in place, **evident gaps have emerged between the labour market situation of women and men throughout the region**. Both the existence of protective labour legislation and its application has often weakened over time in CIS countries.
- Although they vary in size, there is clear evidence of gender gaps in youth and adult labour markets throughout the region.
- As with countries in other regions, gender disparities amongst the young people in the region are relatively small. At the same time, choices made and trajectories established during youth are likely to have lifetime consequences. The source of divergence in adult labour market outcomes will depend much on what happens during men and women's youth. Policy interventions adopted towards young people can influence this.

2. International framework on gender equality

- Gender equality and women's empowerment are important elements of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2015. Of specific here are:
 - Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life; and
 - Target 8.6: By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- There are six ILO conventions of direct relevance to gender equality at work:
 - [Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#)
 - [Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#)
 - [Employment Policy Convention, 1964 \(No. 122\)](#)
 - [Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1983 \(No. 156\)](#)
 - [Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 \(No. 183\)](#)
 - [Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#)
- All countries included here have ratified the two fundamental ILO conventions on equal remuneration and discrimination and most have ratified ILO Convention 122 on employment policy. Relatively few of the countries have ratified the family responsibilities and maternity conventions, however, most have legislation protecting these rights too. On the other hand, there are clear issues regarding the application of such protections.

3. Economic and Social Context

- The countries in the region have had rather mixed growth performances in the last decade or so, varying from 1-1.5 per cent per annum in Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Russian Federation to almost nine per cent per annum achieved in Turkmenistan. In consequence, working poverty has fallen in the region – sometimes quite markedly – since the turn of the millennium.
- Substantial gender gaps are visible in employment and unemployment rates, as well as in monthly and hourly pay. These vary in size and relative importance across the region, but they are present all countries.
- There is evidence of occupational and sectoral segregation in employment with women concentrated in agriculture and services whilst men are more often to be found in industrial occupations.
- Amongst countries for which data is available, the gender based gap in labour income – composed of differences in employment rates, hours of work and hourly wages – is largest in Tajikistan and smallest, albeit still substantial, in the Russian Federation

4. Youth and Gender in the labour market

- Although gender based labour market gaps tend to be smaller amongst young people than adults in the region, they are by no means insignificant.
- In comparison to similar countries in other regions, CIS countries have a high level of educational participation with relatively small gender based differentials in overall attainment. However, there are substantial differences between young men and young women in terms of the subjects they study while in education. In particular, young men are much more likely than young women to study STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) subjects. This has visible consequences when they enter the labour market. Such difference do appear to be declining, however, the lack of data impedes a full regional picture.
- For the most part, the unemployment rate of young women is higher – sometimes much higher - than the unemployment rate of young men. Of even greater concern, in some countries – such as Armenia and Azerbaijan – the prevalence of long-term unemployment amongst young people has reached worrying levels (over 40 per cent and over 70 per cent respectively) and in the latter country there is also a substantial gender gap so that nearly 85 per cent of young unemployed women have been so for over one year.
- NEET rates amongst the young are very high in the region and display even greater gender imbalances. In Armenia, NEET rates are above 30 per cent and in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan over 40 per cent. In all of the countries for which there are data, female NEET rates are well above male NEET rates. NEET rates are typically well above unemployment rates and this is accounted for by the fact that most young NEETs are economically inactive.
- The persistence of NEET amongst young men and women is also different; young female NEETS will typically remain so, posing problems for their longer term re-entry into the labour market.
- Gender differences in labour income are smaller amongst young people than amongst adults, but in so far as data is available to assess the phenomenon, they are still substantial, although in the Russian federation at least, they tend to fall with educational attainment.
- There is substantial evidence to suggest that a major obstacle for women in accessing employment concerns traditional attitudes towards women's work. In Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, under 70 per cent of men think it acceptable for women to work outside of the home if they wish.

5. Policy issues and recommendations

- Significant gender gaps in the labour market and youth labour market exist in all countries in the region, although with differences in terms of extent and nature of the gaps. Factors underlying such gaps include issues with the application of legislation, the perseverance of traditional attitudes to women's role in society, as well as, related to this, the strong predominance of women in unpaid care work in the family, and the obstacles this may place in the way of the effective participation of women in the labour market – an issue emphasised by the ILO's recent global research on gender disparities in the labour market (ILO, 2019).
- All the countries in the region have ratified the fundamental ILO Conventions on labour market discrimination and all have labour legislation in place which prohibits it. However, there appear to be some serious problems with the practical application of such protections.
- Whilst gender disparities in the prevalence of informal employment are not significant in most countries, the existence of extensive informality in CIS countries in itself impedes the application of anti-discriminatory regulatory measures.
- Promoting gender equality in youth labour markets requires a multi-faceted approach. As with youth employment policy itself, it clearly makes sense to develop a comprehensive strategy towards promoting gender equality in youth labour markets which take into account the likely effects of specific policy initiatives and their interaction. Gender issues can be mainstreamed thereby making them an integral part of any approach aimed at promoting decent work for young people.
- Sectoral and occupational segregation amongst young women and men is also evident in the region. In part this depends on traditional attitudes mentioned above. There is clearly room to promote a more egalitarian view of the role of (young) women in the labour market.
- Policy instruments to combat gender Sectoral and occupational segregation amongst young women and men should start from the macro-level; for example, by using fiscal instruments to reduce imbalances. This might include income taxes being applied to individuals rather than couples; for example, if male and female incomes are jointly taxed and women earn on average less than men, then women will typically face higher marginal tax rates than they would under individual based taxation. In this case, household based income tax may discourage female labour force participation.
- Approaches need also to include efforts to change attitudes amongst the youngest members of society by removing and/or challenging gender based stereo-types at school. Once young people enter the labour market, an effective way to combat negative attitudes to female employment is to promote specific measures which facilitate the entry of young women into traditionally male dominated positions.
- Targeted interventions seeking to promote the entry and re-entry of young women into employment are also likely to bear fruit, although more impact evaluations of specific interventions are needed to determine specific approach to adopt given local circumstances. Numerous ALMPs have been implemented to promote youth employment in the region, but rarely have these been used to redress the additional obstacles to decent work faced by young women. One such form of intervention regards payments to single parent families. For example, in order to reduce disincentives to return to work for the long-term young NEET women, payments for childcare and/or the provision of free childcare may be offered in addition to work placements. Such an approach has been piloted in Armenia, for example.
- Whilst gender gaps in educational attainment are not – typically – a major issue in the region, the subjects studied by young men and young women are. Specifically, there is a need to increase the involvement of young women in STEM subjects. Forms of intervention which may be helpful in this regard is the removal of gender stereotypes from textbooks, raising awareness regarding the career and earnings consequences of particular fields of study.

► Gender and youth employment in CIS countries

- There also appears to be a lack of connection between vocational education and training on the one hand, and labour market needs on the other, although steps have been taken in some countries in the region seeking to rectify this in recent years. This is compounded by the lack of sufficient and accurate careers advice to young people whilst in education systems; especially young women in the region might benefit from a better understanding of the long-term economic implications of the educational choices that they (and their families) make
- Another area which may support the engagement of women in particular in the labour market, but which is also likely to benefit also men, is in the introduction of more flexible working hours practices which are relatively rare in the region. In particular, providing incentives for, and/or reducing disincentives to, part-time employment may encourage the integration of young women into the labour force.



1. Introduction and overview: Gender and youth labour markets

Young people face a daunting task in seeking to enter the world of work today. All the more so if they happen to be female. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has served to increase further the obstacles facing young people in general and young women in particular, seeking to find their place in today's labour market. To be sure, gaps in labour market outcomes tend to become larger with age, yet significant gender gaps do exist also amongst young people – even in the countries considered here which during the last century were characterized by over seventy years of systemically established gender equality in all walks of life. Globally, one out of every five young people is neither in employment, education or training (NEET); for young women, the proportion is one in three. In the countries covered by this report, NEET rates are invariably higher for young women than young men. In some cases, such as in Tajikistan, the NEET rate of young women is as high as fifty per cent or one out of every two young women aged between fifteen and twenty-four.

Gender inequalities are expensive...

Gender equality – and its absence – matter. Promoting and hence establishing gender equality has an intrinsic value in and of itself. The arguments in favour of equalizing the opportunities and outcomes of women and men in the labour market, however, go well beyond issues of fairness and basic human rights. More equal societies operate more efficiently and gender inequality is expensive. Eurofound (2016) estimates that in 2013, the total cost of the lower female employment rate in the European Union was €370 billion, corresponding to 2.8 per cent of EU GDP. Moreover, OECD (2018) provides ample evidence that increases in women's economic participation in the Nordic countries have greatly benefited economic growth. Indeed, in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, increases in women's employment alone accounted for the equivalent of about 10-20 per cent of average annual GDP per capita growth over the past 40-50 years. Similarly, Aguirre et al. (2012) estimate that raising female employment to male levels could have a direct impact on GDP, increasing it by ten per cent in South Africa, nine per cent in Japan, 34 per cent in Egypt, and 12 per cent in the United Arab Emirates.

The ILO (2017a) estimates that reducing the male-female labour force participation gap by just one-quarter would raise Global GDP by 3.9 per cent (or US\$5.8 trillion) – equivalent to raising Global economic growth rates by one-half of a percentage point over the next eight years. Recent research by the IMF has further suggested that taking into account composition effects associated with increased female labour force participation – specifically, considering the greater diversity of skills, competencies and preferences as well as the sectoral re-allocation effects of increased female participation in the labour force – would further increase the aforementioned estimated gains, calculated as they are purely on the basis of the increased numbers of persons in employment (Ostrey et al., 2018).

...and gender based labour market inequalities are pervasive throughout the region

Female disadvantage in terms of employment, hours of work and pay rates is evident in all the countries reviewed here, although the extent and nature of that disadvantage varies greatly across nations. Table 1 reports the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Economic Forum (WEF) rankings on gender inequality. As one may observe, CIS countries do not fare particularly well according to these criteria. The best performing CIS country (Belarus) in each case is only 27th out of 161 according to the UNDP ranking and 29th out of 153 for the World Economic Forum (WEF). Moreover, five of the eight countries rank below the median (78) for the WEF and two of the three which do make it into the top 50 per cent of countries, only just scrape in, being ranked below 70th position. To be sure, the UNDP and WEF gender disparity classifications use different criteria and there is a certain amount of disaccord between them, but there is a clear similarity in the two rankings.¹ The analysis outlined below provides a broadly similar picture regarding gender inequalities also in youth labour markets. In contrast, the table further makes evident the relatively good performance regarding gender disparities in overall educational attainment in the region which will be further examined below. Six of eight countries for which the index is available, are above median rank and the Russian Federation has achieved perfect gender parity according to the index.

¹ Thus, for example, the Pearson rank correlation coefficient for the two CIS countries in the two classifications is 0.66.

Table 1. CIS country rankings based on UNDP and WEF gender inequality indices

	UNDP Gender inequality index	Relative ranking	WEF Gender inequality index		Relative ranking (educational ranking)
			Overall index	Educational attainment	
	Ranking out of 161 countries		Ranking out of 153 countries		
Armenia	57	4	98	45	7 (4)
Azerbaijan	70	6	94	60	6 (5)
Belarus	27	1	29	39	1 (3)
Georgia	75	7	74	29	3 (2)
Kazakhstan	46	2	72	63	2 (6)
Kyrgyzstan	87	9	93	82	5 (7)
Russian Federation	54	3	81	1(=)	4 (1)
Tajikistan	84	8	137	123	8 (8)
Uzbekistan	64	5	–	–	–

Note: Ranking for Turkmenistan is not available for either index. The last column reports relative rankings according to the overall WEF index and, in parentheses, according to the educational index.

Sources: UNDP (2019) and WEF (2020).

Gender disparities in labour market outcomes are, to be sure, relatively small amongst the young, tending to increase over the life cycle (OECD, 2018). At the same time, the foundations of the persistent gender gaps observable amongst prime age adults are to be found in the early (and pre-) labour market experiences of young people. Choices made and trajectories established during youth have lifetime consequences. The source of divergence in adult labour market outcomes will depend much on what happens during men and women's youth. Clearly, policy interventions adopted towards young people can influence this.

Promoting gender equality requires a multifaceted approach...

As with youth employment policy itself, it clearly makes sense to develop a comprehensive strategy towards promoting gender equality in youth labour markets which take into account the likely effects of specific policy initiatives and their interaction. Gender issues can be mainstreamed thereby making them an integral part of any approach aimed at promoting decent work for young people.

...and mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of laws must be implemented

The promotion of gender equality requires supportive institutions. Prior to the independence of CIS countries, the equal employment status and rights of women and men were guaranteed by strictly applied and unified labour laws which included numerous guarantees to women workers such as fully paid maternity leave and partially paid leave for care of child under 18 months old (ILO, 2017b). Since that time, although much of the structure of labour laws protecting equal rights remains in place, evident gaps have emerged between the labour market situation of women and men. More generally, both the existence of protective labour legislation and its application has often weakened over time in CIS countries. Some countries such as Georgia and Armenia have abandoned the State labour inspection function entirely. The ILO's Committee of Experts has noted a number of specific examples (box 1).

Box 1. ILO Committee of Experts recommendations regarding the improvement of legislation on gender discrimination and equal opportunity

Absence of legislation concerning equal remuneration for work of equal value – Georgia. For a number of years, the ILO Committee of Experts has been raising concerns regarding the absence of legislation giving full expression to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. In particular, the Committee recalls that the Labour Code (2006) only contains a general prohibition of discrimination in labour relations; and that the Law on Gender Equality (2010) prohibits discrimination and provides that “equality in evaluating the quality of work performed by women and men shall be maintained without discrimination”. Further, the Committee noted that the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, adopted on 2 May 2014, while including a general prohibition of discrimination based on sex, does not refer to the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value

Special measures of protection on the basis of sex - Russian Federation. Since 2002, the Committee has been requesting the Government to revise section 253 of the Labour Code (prohibition to employ women in arduous, harmful or dangerous conditions) and Resolution No. 162 of 25 February 2000, which excludes women from being employed in 456 occupations and 38 branches of industry. It recalls that the Labour Code contains specific provisions with respect to women who have children under the age of 3 years (or 1.5 years), particularly with respect to working time (overtime, night work, work in shifts, etc.) However, the Committee notes with concern that the Government does not consider that the above-mentioned provisions amount to discrimination, as they merely reflect the State’s particular concern for persons in need of greater social and legal protection. Finally, the Committee notes from the 2017 concluding observations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) that there is an ongoing discussion to review the list contained in Resolution No. 162 of 25 February 2000 (E/C.12/RUS/CO/6, 16 October 2017, paragraph 28). In this regard, the Committee recalls that a major shift over time has occurred from a purely protective approach concerning the employment of women to one based on promoting genuine equality between men and women and eliminating discriminatory law and practice. Provisions relating to the protection of persons working under hazardous or difficult conditions should be aimed at protecting the health and safety of both men and women at work, while taking account of gender differences with regard to specific risks to their health. Moreover, with a view to repealing discriminatory protective measures applicable to women’s employment, it may be necessary to examine what other measures, such as improved health protection of both men and women, adequate transportation and security, as well as social services, are necessary to ensure that women can access these types of employment on an equal footing with men.

Workers with family responsibilities – Uzbekistan. Measures applying to persons with family responsibilities are only available to women, and to fathers only in exceptional circumstances for example, where the mother has died or is hospitalized long-term. The Committee, therefore, once again emphasizes that when legislation reflects the assumption that the main responsibility for family care lies with women or excludes men from certain family-related rights and benefits, it reinforces stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in the family and in society. In order to achieve the objective of the Convention, measures to assist workers with family responsibilities should be available to men and women on an equal footing.

....but attitudes must also change

The application of equal rights depends inter alia on prevailing attitudes and beliefs of people regarding the appropriate roles of men and women in society. Attitudes, which – notwithstanding previous traditions – tend to be less supportive of the equal roles of women and men in the labour market than before. Thus, gender differences in labour market outcomes – to some extent at least – are likely to reflect negative attitudes towards the participation of women in the labour market. OECD (2017) notes a strong correlation between gender gaps in the labour market and attitudes towards women’s work across a wide range of countries. A similar pattern is discernible amongst CIS countries. First, on average, in Central and Western Asia,² only 81 per cent of adults (76 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women) think it is acceptable for women to work outside the home. The corresponding percentage for Eastern Europe is 87 per cent (85 per cent of men and 89 per cent of women) whilst for Northern, Southern and Western Europe it is 97 per cent for both women and men (Gallup and ILO, 2017). Clearly, there is some distance to travel in changing attitudes and the related gender stereotypes, and these are – like the corresponding and clearly observable gender gaps – generally more pronounced in Central Asia than in the European countries included here.

Approaches aimed at changing attitudes often begin with shirting attitudes of the youngest members of society by removing and/or challenging gender based stereo-types at school. Moreover, one way

² Central and Western Asia as defined by the ILO contains most of the countries considered here; specifically, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in addition to Cyprus, Northern Cyprus, Israel and Turkey. The other countries – Belarus and the Russian Federation, are included in the Eastern Europe sub-region.

to combat negative attitudes to female employment which has proved effective is to promote specific measures which facilitate the entry of young women into traditionally male dominated positions. These may take different forms; incentives for young women to enter specific occupations, and/or through establishing minimum quotas of women in specific positions. That is, change is sought not so much by seeking to change attitudes directly but indirectly by expanding the opportunities available to young women.

Occupational segregation should be combatted...

There are clear signs of gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation in the region. Women are typically concentrated in services and/or agriculture – depending on the country, whilst men are relatively speaking – much more likely to be employed in industry and construction as broadly defined. This gender pattern, observable amongst workers generally, is replicated amongst young labour market participants as least as regards industry and service sector employment is concerned.

Orienting sectoral development strategies so as to favour female dominated occupations may simply serve to reinforce gender based occupational and sectoral segregation. Fiscal policy instruments, such as individual (rather than household) based income taxation and/or tax relief on the use for child care facilities are likely to be more effective in this regard.

....And informal employment reduced

Rates of informal employment are relatively high in the region and they are much higher amongst young women and men, than amongst their older counterparts (ILO, 2018). Extensive informality is likely to impede legislative efforts to eliminate discrimination and other barriers to gender equality since, by definition, informal workers typically do not have access to such protections. Many initiatives to combat informality have been employed in different parts of the world (O'Higgins, 2017, chapter 7). Three broad types of strategy have been adopted: those increasing the benefits of formalisation, those reducing the costs of formalisation and those strengthening enforcement mechanisms. Typically effective approaches include elements of all three types of strategy (ILO, 2013).

Gender labour market gaps are not simply the result of disparities in educational attainment...

With the exception of Belarus, all the countries included here do much better for the ranking based on gender disparities in education than they do on the overall WEF index. In this case, six out of eight countries are **above** the global median, and four of these are in the top quartile.³ Gender disadvantage manifesting itself in terms of labour market outcomes, such as hourly wages, hours worked, employment rates and overall labour income, cannot be explained by a lack of basic education amongst women. Tajikistan has both the biggest gender-based discrepancy in labour incomes as well as the most favourable relation between female and male (secondary) education attainment.

....But they do depend very much on subjects studied at school

More important, are the concentrations of young women and young men in different subject streams. In particular, young men tend to be concentrated in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects whilst young women are heavily concentrated in non-STEM subjects. Clearly, STEM related careers are more remunerative and this may well play a part in the evident occupational and sectoral segregation which appears to be well established in many countries in the region.

In many countries in the region, there is a major issue with young women exiting the labour force, becoming and remaining inactive NEETs. Globally, one of the main causes of low employment rates amongst women – and, by extension, also impeding career advancement – is the disproportionate involvement of women in care activities; looking after children, husbands and relatives (ILO, 2019). Amongst young people this manifests itself inter alia in the greater permanence of NEET status amongst young women compared to young men. Whilst for young men, being NEET is a relatively transitory state, with NEET rates falling off sharply after age 25, for young women, the opposite is true. Interventions, such as active labour market programmes (ALMPs) containing elements aimed at removing barriers to the entry and re-entry of young women into the labour market can be a key element for promoting decent work for young women. For example, subsidising access to care facilities as part of such programmes can be central to efforts to redress imbalances.

³ The corollary is that countries in the region tend to do relatively badly in terms of gender disparities in political empowerment.

► Gender and youth employment in CIS countries

In the next section, the SDG and international labour standards frameworks established to promote gender equality in the labour market are outlined. This is followed by a review of the aggregate economic and social context in the sub-region. Gender differences in aggregate labour markets are then discussed before examining youth labour market gaps in more detail. Finally, policy implications and recommendations arising from the situational analysis are outlined.

► 2. International frameworks on gender equality

2.1. Sustainable Development Goals

Gender equality and women's empowerment are important elements of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2015. Sustainable Development Goal 5 is explicitly concerned with gender equality and states that countries should seek to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, whilst under SDG 8, countries should promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men.

As regards the labour market related targets and indicators adopted, worthy of mention is SDG target 5.5:

- **Target 5.5:** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

And its labour market related indicator (5.5.2):

- **Indicator 5.5.2:** Proportion of women in managerial positions.

The focus in this review is of course young people. In this regard, of particular relevance are SDG targets 8.5 and 8.6 and their related indicators:

- **Target 8.5:** By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
 - **Indicator 8.5.1:** Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities.
 - **Indicator 8.5.2:** Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities.
- **Target 8.6:** By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
 - **Indicator 8.6.1:** Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)

All of these indicators are discussed further below, however, particular attention is focused on the last of these: the proportion of young people who are neither in education, employment or training – the youth NEET rate. This SDG indicator, by which progress towards decent work in youth labour markets should be measured as a whole, is of particular relevance also because it is an indicator where the labour market disadvantages of young women become all the more evident.

2.2. International Labour Standards

The ILO has long been active in promoting equal rights at work for all irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs and so on. As regards young women, the ILO has established six conventions of direct relevance to gender equality at work; two of the ILO's fundamental Conventions,

- [Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#)
- [Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1960 \(No. 111\)](#)

The ILO's convention on Employment Policy,

- [Employment Policy Convention, 1964 \(No. 122\)](#)

along with two conventions which directly impact on the ability of young women to fully participate in labour markets.

- [Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1983 \(No. 156\)](#)
- [Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 \(No 183\)](#)

Most recently, in June 2019 the International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted a new Convention concerning violence and harassment in the world of work,

- [Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 \(No. 190\)](#)

As yet, no countries - here or elsewhere in the world - have yet ratified Convention No. 190, however, it is noteworthy that the Outcome Document of the second Eurasian Women's Forum held in St. Petersburg on 19-21 September 2018, in addition to calling upon States to eliminate discriminatory obstacles and barriers to women's full participation in economic life, also made explicit reference to, "...the elimination of all forms of violence against women and children.."

Table 2. Ratification by CIS countries of four gender related conventions

	C100 Equal pay	C111 Discrimination	C122 Full employment	C156 Family responsibilities	C183 Maternity protection	C190 Violence and harassment
Armenia	X	X	X			
Azerbaijan	X	X	X	X	X	
Belarus	X	X	X		X	
Georgia	X	X	X			
Kazakhstan	X	X	X	X	X	
Kyrgyz Republic	X	X	X			
Republic of Moldova	X	X	X		X	
Russian Federation	X	X	X	X		
Tajikistan	X	X	X			
Turkmenistan	X	X				
Uzbekistan	X	X	X			

Source: [ILO NORMLEX database](#) consulted 11/03/2020

Table 2 summarizes the position regarding ratification of the six conventions by the countries under review. As can be observed, all of the countries have ratified the two fundamental ILO fundamental conventions on equal pay and discrimination and almost all have ratified ILO Convention No. 122 on employment policy which includes an explicit clause on equality in employment. Indeed all of the countries have legislation protecting the rights of women and other groups in this regard, however, only a few of the countries have ratified the family responsibilities and maternity conventions. Despite this, ILO (2017b) notes that countries in the region generally have legislation protecting these rights too. However, the aforementioned report on the situation notes that there are issues in the application and observance of such legislation.

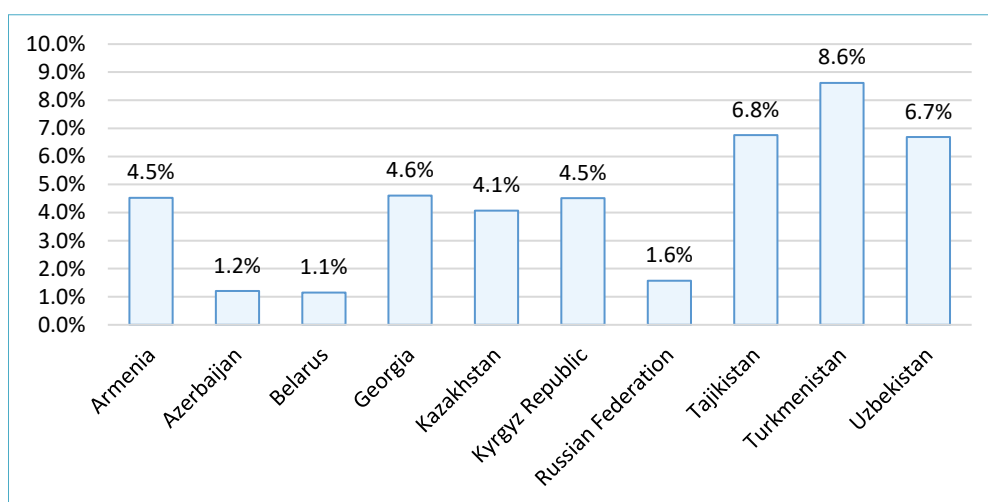
3. Economic and social context

In this section, some of the general economic trends that impact and/or reflect the situation of women and young women in the labour market are reviewed. Economic growth remains the cornerstone of any employment promotion strategy and appropriately targeted growth policies can do much to improve the situation of young women in the labour market.

3.1. Economic context

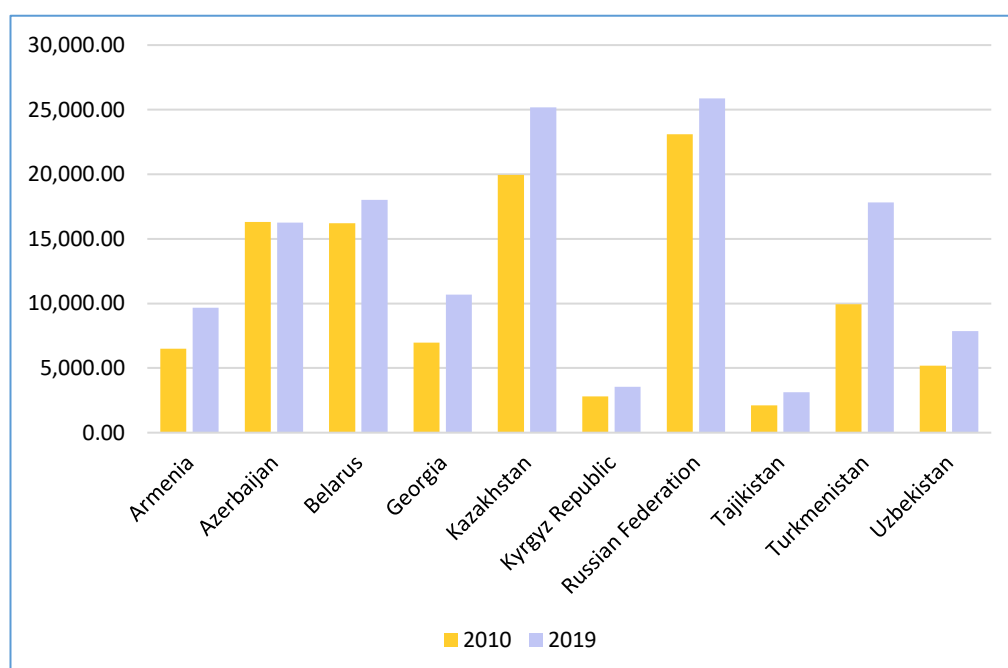
The countries in the region have had rather mixed growth performances in the last decade or so (figure 1). These vary from average growth rates of less two per cent in Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Russian Federation to the remarkable almost 9 per cent rate of average real growth achieved in Turkmenistan.

Figure 1. Average real economic growth rate, years 2010 to 2019



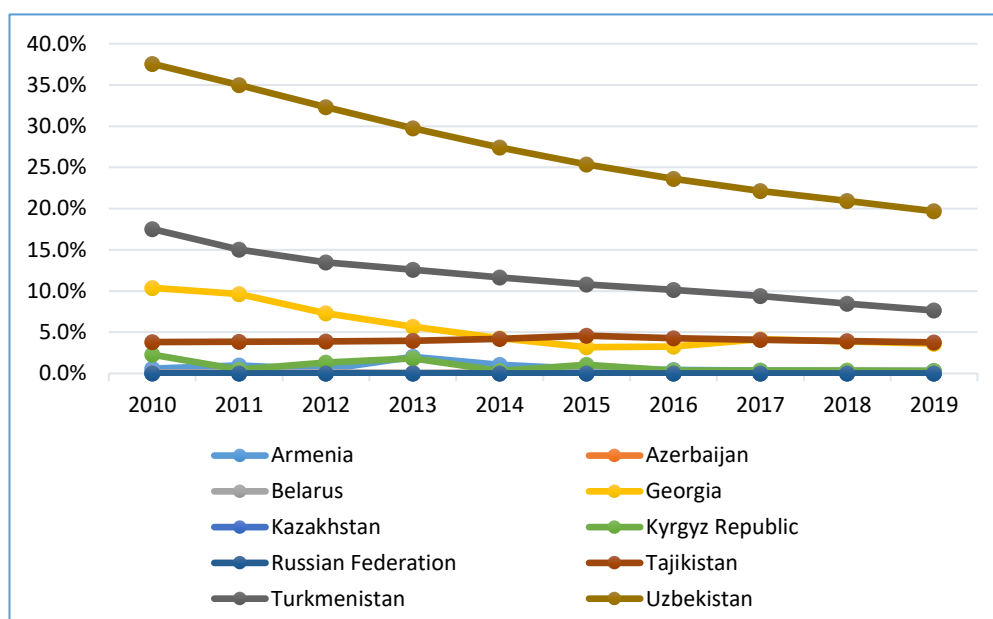
Source: author calculations on [IMF WEO database](#), October 2019.

Figure 2. GDP per capita (PPP), 2010 and 2019



Source: [IMF WEO database](#), October 2019

Figure 3. Extreme working poverty (earnings < USD1.90 per day), 2010-2019

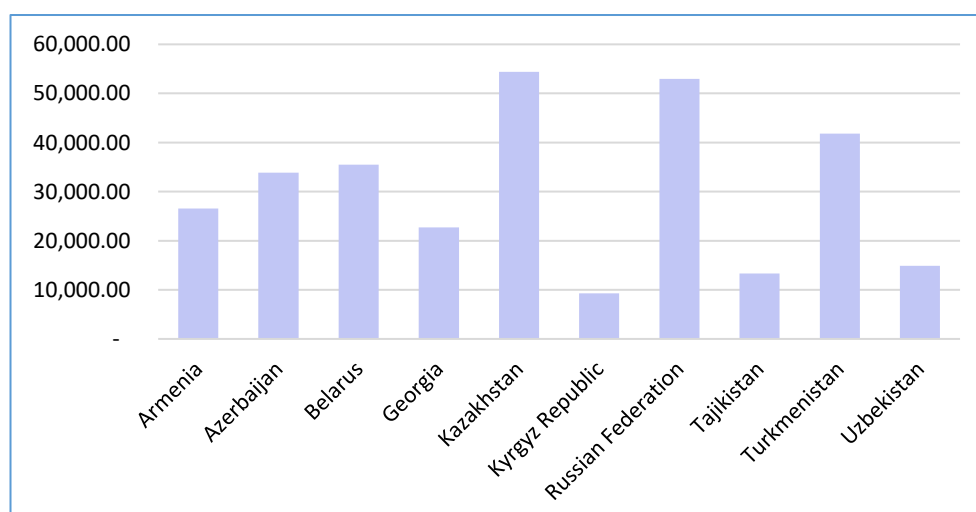


Source: [ILOSTAT database](#); ILO Modelled Estimates, (November 2019).

It is important also to put these differences into perspective considering the outcome - GDP per capita (PPP) - reported in figure 2. One may observe that – with the exception of Kazakhstan – the poorest growth performances were experienced in those countries which were the richest in the region in 2010. Inter alia, the remarkable growth performance in Turkmenistan has lead that country to almost double its per capita GDP (PPP) since 2010. Regarding the distribution of labour income, extreme working poverty is falling and/or low throughout the region, although it remains very pronounced in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan at close to eight per cent and still rather significant at close to four per cent of workers in Georgia and Tajikistan and (figure 3).

Still, working poverty rates have fallen quite markedly since the turn of the millennium when, for example, one could find working poverty rates of over 55 per cent in Uzbekistan, over 45 per cent in Tajikistan and over 40 per cent in Turkmenistan. On the other hand, Georgia stands out as a country which, despite an impressive growth record since 2010, has made relatively little progress in distributing these gains to the poorest workers than other countries in the region. Here, working poverty has fallen since the start of the new millennium, but 'only' from 10.2 per cent in 2000, to an estimated 3.6 per cent in 2019. Productivity also varies quite a bit across the countries considered here, varying from under 10,000 USD per worker in the Kyrgyz Republic to over 50,000USD per worker in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation (figure 4).

Figure 4. Productivity (GDP per worker), 2019 (USD; PPP)

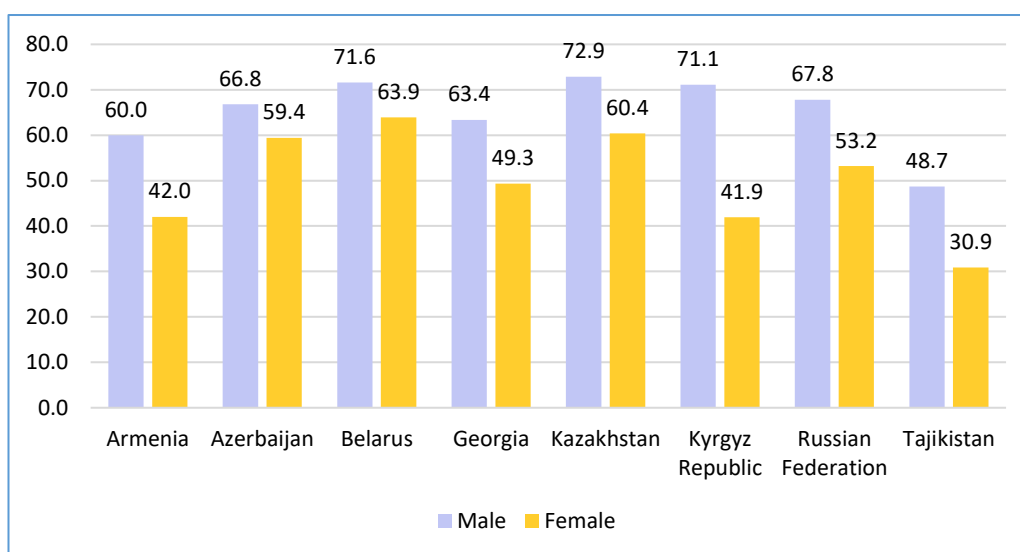


Source: [ILOSTAT database](#); ILO Modelled Estimates, (November 2019).

3.2. The labour market situation of women as a whole

Looking at the situation of women in the labour market as a whole, one may immediately observe that employment rates amongst women are invariably lower than for men (figure 5). This reflects a pattern to be found – to a greater or lesser degree – throughout the world and is related inter alia to the tendency of women to be the primary family care givers. Still the gap in many countries in the region is substantial; the (unweighted) average for the ten countries considered here is 15.2 percentage points. This is precisely equal to the global average for high income countries (15.2 percentage points) and a little below the corresponding average for upper middle income countries (18.8 p.p.). However, in Armenia (2013) and Tajikistan, the gap is not far from twenty percentage points, and in the Kyrgyz Republic, it is close to thirty.

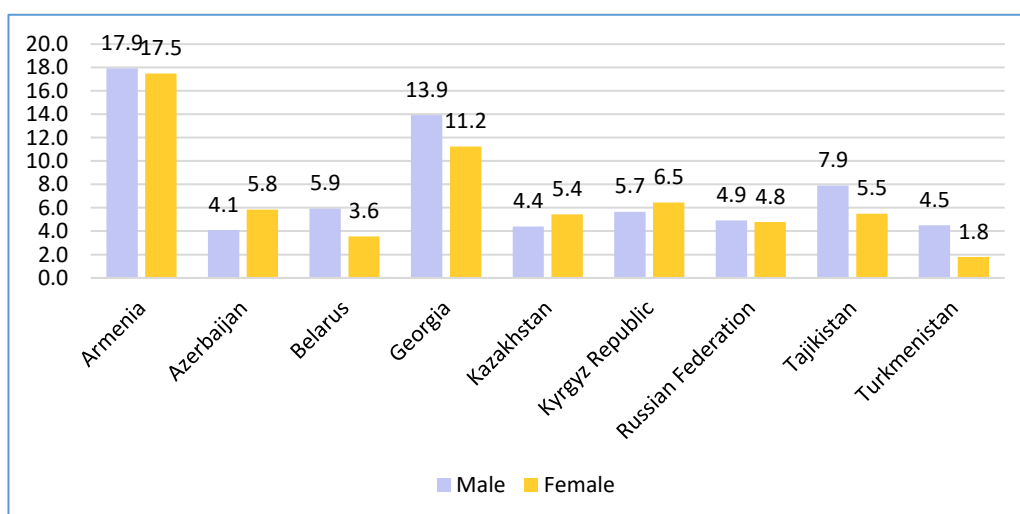
Figure 5. Employment rates (15+), latest year available by country



Note: The employment rate – also known as the employment–population ratio – reports the percentage of all people of working age who are in employment. The latest year available corresponds to 2018 in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation; 2017 in Kazakhstan; 2016 in Tajikistan and 2013 in Armenia. No data available for Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan.

Source: [ILOSTAT database](#), updated 22 January 2020

Figure 6. Unemployment rate (15+), latest year available by country



Note: The unemployment rate is defined as the number of persons who are unemployed as a percent of the total number of employed and unemployed persons (i.e., the labour force). The latest year available corresponds to 2018 in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation; 2017 in Kazakhstan; 2016 in Tajikistan; 2013 in Armenia; and, 2009 in Turkmenistan. No data available for Uzbekistan

Source: [ILOSTAT database](#), updated 22 January 2020.

On the other hand, gender differences in unemployment rates (SDG indicator 8.5.2) are more variable than differences in employment rates in the region (figure 6). In Turkmenistan, unemployment rates of men although low (for both men and women) are more than twice as large for men as for women, whereas in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz republic, unemployment rates are higher for women than for men.

Similarly, informal employment is generally (slightly) more prevalent amongst men than women; at least for the countries for which data is available (table 3).

Table 3. Share of informal employment in total employment

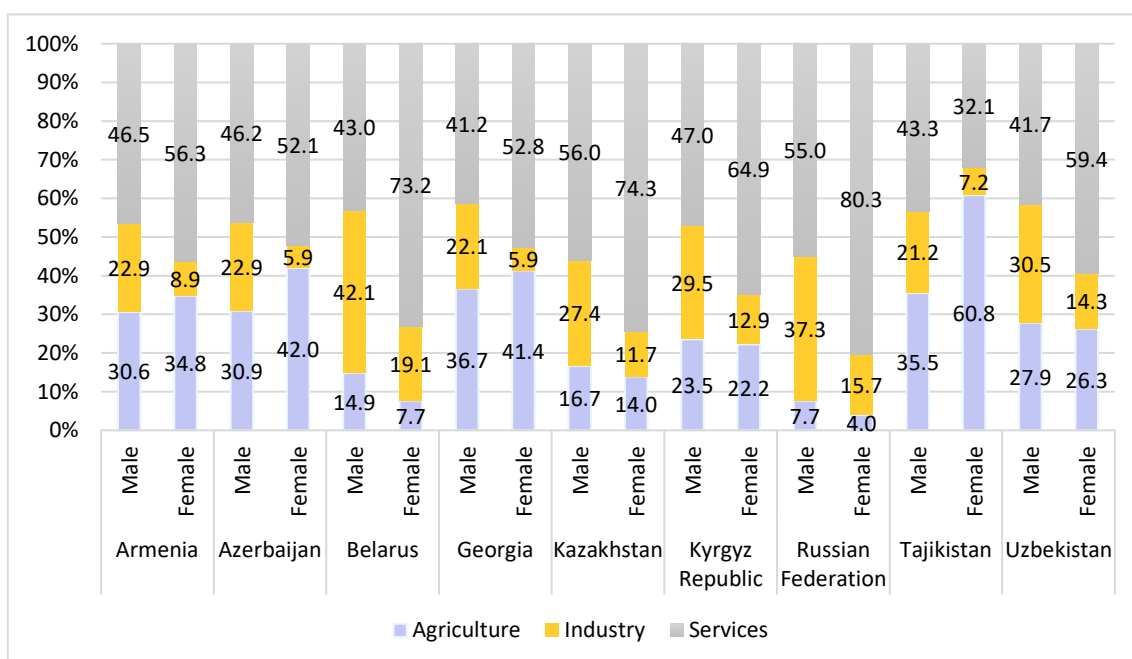
	Type of informal employment	Men	Women
Armenia	In the informal sector	44.2	33.8
	In the formal sector	1.2	1.6
	In households	7.5	16.1
	Total	52.8	51.4
Kyrgyzstan	In the informal sector	40.9	31.4
	In the formal sector	7.9	12.2
	In households	1.8	1.7
	Total	50.6	45.3
Russian Federation	In the informal sector	27.9	20.9
	In the formal sector	11.3	11.8
	In households	0	0
	Total	39.1	32.7
Tajikistan	In the informal sector	52.8	57.2
	In the formal sector	15.4	12.9
	In households	7.8	2.8
	Total	75.9	72.8

Source: ILO (2018) - p. 89

Employment by sector, on the other hand, shows some significant gender differences (figure 7). Men are more commonly employed in industry than women. In countries in which agriculture still employs a large proportion of its workforce, the agricultural share of female employment also tends to be high. This is true, for example, in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In other countries, the absence of women in industrial employment is accounted for by their preponderance in services, as one finds in Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan; it is not unusual to find the higher employment shares of women in both Agriculture and Services, as is the case in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Thus, even at the broad sectoral level there are clear signs of gender-based segregation in the region. Women are typically concentrated in services and/or agriculture – depending on the country, whilst men are relatively speaking – much more likely to be employed in industry and construction as broadly defined.

Figure 7. Employment by broad economic sector, males and females, latest year available



Note: The latest year available corresponds to 2018 in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan; 2017 in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz republic and Uzbekistan. No data available for Turkmenistan.

Source: [ILOSTAT database](#), updated 22 January 2020.

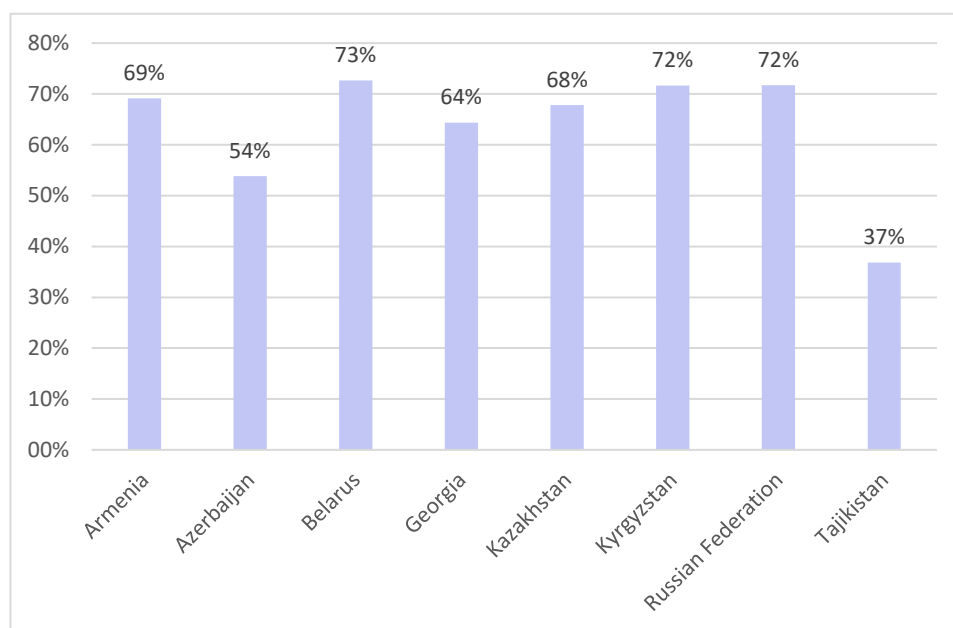
Gender gaps are very evident when one looks at monthly pay (figure 8). These earnings gaps have also been the center of attention vis-à-vis anti-discrimination efforts, and indeed gender based differences in hourly pay is SDG indicator 8.5.1.⁴ Invariably, gender differences in monthly earnings exceed 25 per cent; often it is much more. In Tajikistan, women workers receive an average monthly salary which is less than 40 per cent of average monthly male pay. To be sure, women also work (slightly) fewer hours than men;⁵ but, even adjusting for this, the gender wage gap ranges from just under 18 per cent of the average male wage in Armenia to over 56 per cent in Tajikistan.⁶ We will return to this issue below in more detail, but it is clear that there are substantial gender wage disparities which are an issue of concern.

⁴ In this first figure, we prefer to use monthly pay since it is the actual datum from which hourly earnings are estimated. The specific importance of hourly earnings in determining overall gender-based income gaps is considered further below.

⁵ Which in itself is an issue for concern. See below.

⁶ Author calculations based on ILOSTAT data on average monthly wages and average hours worked.

Figure 8. Gender monthly wage gap, latest year



Note: Based on monthly nominal wages; the gender gap is expressed as a percentage of the average male nominal monthly wage.

Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2018: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan; 2017: Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation; 2009: Tajikistan.

Source: Author's calculations based on [ILOSTAT database](#).

Gender inequality in access to employment is also reflected in a glass ceiling in the region (table 4). The share of women in managerial positions (SDG indicator 5.5.2) is significantly under 50 per cent in all the countries considered here. Belarus (46 per cent) and the Russian Federation (41 per cent) are above 40 per cent. However, at the other end of the spectrum, in Tajikistan, less than 15 per cent of women are employed in managerial functions.⁷

Table 4. Female share of employment in managerial positions, latest year

	Year	% share of women in managerial positions
Armenia	2017	28.7
Azerbaijan	2018	38.1
Belarus	2018	47.3
Georgia	2018	35.6
Kazakhstan	2017	37.0
Kyrgyzstan	2018	37.8
Russian Federation	2018	41.8
Tajikistan	2009	14.8

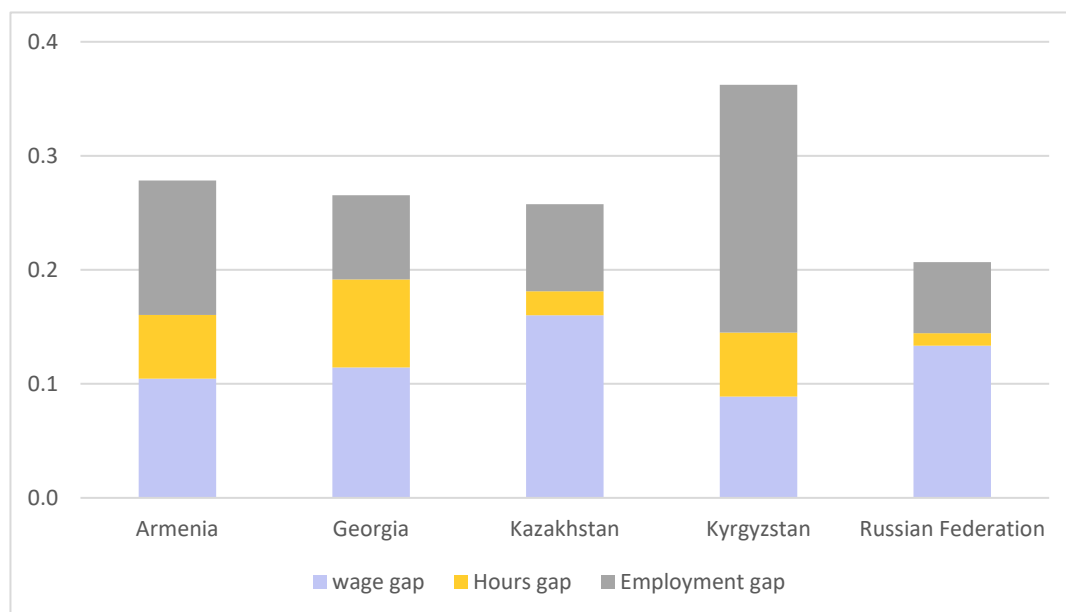
Source: [ILOSTAT database](#), SDG indicators (17 February 2020).

Putting gender differences in employment and earnings together, one may get a sense of the relative importance of gender gaps in determining net labour income outcomes. Simply stated, average labour income for women is the product of the female employment rate, average hours worked and hourly earnings; and, analogously for men. Dividing the latter by the former, one obtains the gender based labour income gap expressed as a percentage of female labour income. It is straightforward to decompose this into the (approximate) contribution of each of the components of labour income to the overall gender gap.⁸ The results of undertaking this exercise for the CIS countries for which data is available is reported in figure 9.

⁷ ILOSTAT SDG indicators, <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>

⁸ Specifically using ERF, Hf and Wf to stand for (average) female employment rates, hours of work and hourly wages respectively (and analogously for men), the labour income gap (LIG) as a percentage of female labour income is given by: $1 + LIG = \frac{ERm \cdot Hm \cdot Wm}{ERf \cdot Hf \cdot Wf}$. Taking logarithms and simplifying one obtains: $\ln(1+LIG) = \ln(1+ERG) + \ln(1+HG) + \ln(1+WG)$, where ERG, HG and WG are the gender gaps related to the employment rate, hours worked

Figure 9. Decomposition of gender gap in labour income, last year



Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2018: Kyrgyzstan; 2017: Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation; 2015: Kazakhstan.

Source: Author calculations based on [ILOSTAT database](#).

Amongst the countries included here, the wage gap is largest in Kyrgyzstan and Armenia; in both of these the largest part of the labour income gap is accounted for by differences in the employment rates of women and men.⁹ In contrast, in Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation where the LIG is a little smaller, this is primarily due to gender differences in hourly wages. In Georgia, the gap is fairly evenly split between the three possible sources, and is where the hours gap is largest of the countries included here. We shall return to these issues below; the main point being to suggest where policy interventions should focus.

and hourly wages respectively. Very roughly, this approximates to $LIG = ERG + HG + WG$ (given that $\ln(1+a) \approx a$ for small a). Unfortunately, the 'a' in question is not small at all, hence the roughness of the approximation. However, the decomposition does give a sense of the relative contribution of the different sources of the gender gap in labour incomes.

⁹ One hastens to add that it is precisely in countries where data is more scarce that the gender differences in labour income are likely to be largest. For example, calculations for Tajikistan based on 2009 data suggest a labour income gap of well over twice the size of that found in Kyrgyzstan.

4. Youth and Gender in the labour market

Although gender based labour market gaps tend to be smaller amongst young people than adults, gender gaps amongst young people in the region are by no means insignificant. Moreover, gaps established during youth are likely to become exacerbated over the lifetime.

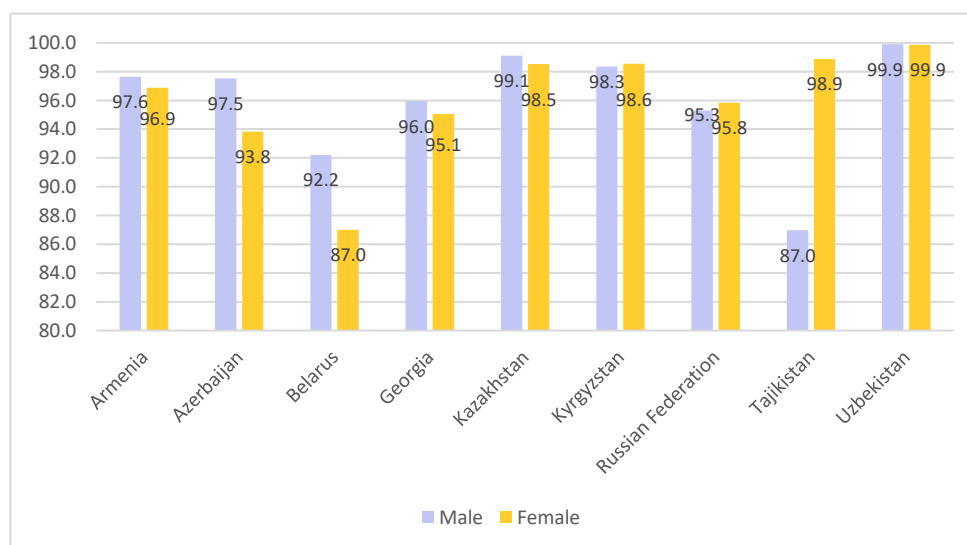
4.1. Education

One obvious potential source of gender based gaps in the labour market are the differentials which may exist in educational participation and attainment. Clearly, the type and level of education which young people participate in will have important effects on subsequent labour market outcomes. In OECD countries these days, young women are typically better educated than young men.

Generally speaking, CIS countries have a relatively high level of educational participation and attainment. Amongst the adult population (aged 25 and over), the vast majority – well over eighty per cent – of both women and men have at least some secondary education and, for the most part, the gender based differences are not very pronounced (figure 10). In six of the nine countries for which data are available,¹⁰ adult women have lower rates of secondary education attainment, however, for the most part, the gap is relatively small. The largest negative gap is to be found in Belarus, where ‘only’ 87 per cent of adult women have some secondary education, compared to 92.2 per cent of men. In Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation, adult women are marginally more likely to have secondary education than adult men, and in Tajikistan which stands out for the relatively large size of its gender based labour income gap (figure 9), adult women are significantly more likely than adult men to have achieved at least some secondary education. The difference of almost twelve percentage points is by far the biggest gender gap observable in the figure. In all countries considered here, however, the average educational attainment of the adult population of both women and men is well about the average for the Europe and Central Asia region as a whole where 78 per cent of adult men and 86 per cent of adult women have achieved at least some secondary education.

Clearly, gender disadvantage manifesting itself in terms of labour market outcomes, such as hourly wages, hours worked, employment rates and overall labour income, cannot be explained by a lack of basic education amongst women. Tajikistan has both the biggest gender-based discrepancy in labour incomes as well as the most favourable relation between female and male (secondary) education attainment.

Figure 10. Percentage of the population aged 25 and over with at least some secondary education, males and females, latest year



Note: Data reported is for the latest year available between 2010 and 2017.

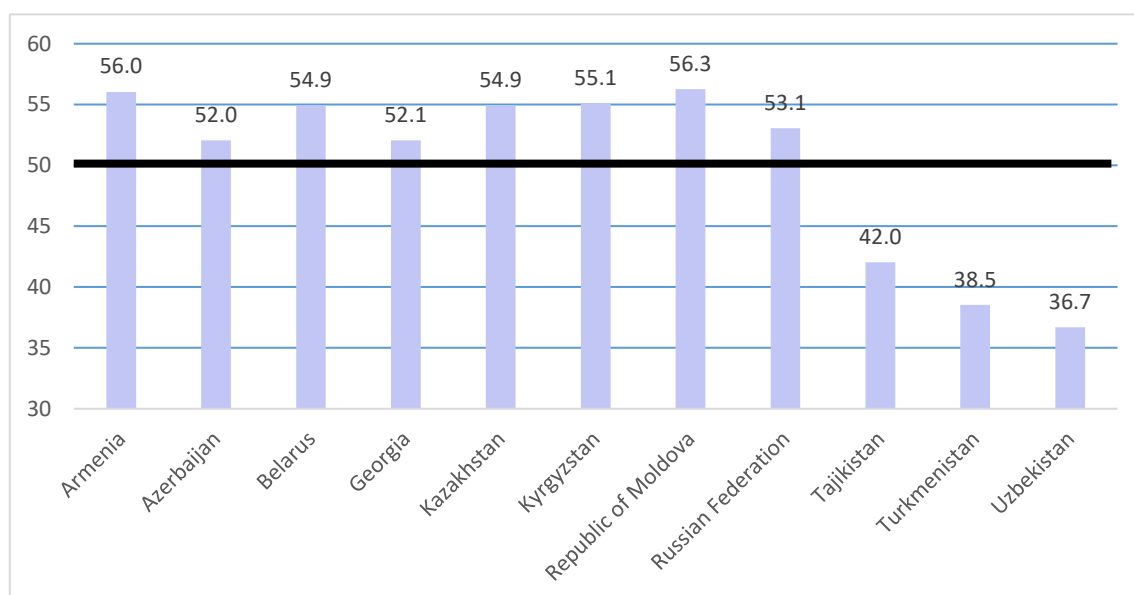
Source: UNDP (2018)

¹⁰ Turkmenistan stands out for the paucity of its data coverage on gender issues.

Secondary educational achievement in the adult population tells us something about the current situation amongst women as a whole. Another informative indicator of educational gender gaps more directly concerned with the current generation of young people is the female share of tertiary students. In this case, one can observe a similar pattern in CIS countries as is found in OECD countries. These days young women are more likely than young men to participate in tertiary education in most countries (figure 11). Only in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan women are still lagging behind, although there have been improvements in recent years. For instance, in Tajikistan the share of females amongst tertiary students has increased from 34 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2017. In Uzbekistan, on the other hand, the female participation rate in tertiary education has actually fallen (slightly) in recent years.¹¹

The generally high level of educational attainment of young women in the region bodes well for the future. However, as can be observed also in OECD countries, a disproportionately high participation of young women in higher education does not necessarily translate into advantage or even equality in labour market outcomes, but rather serves to redress – to some extent – other sources of imbalance. Although there is not a perfect correspondence, there is a fairly strong correlation between educational attainment as reported in figure 11, and the gender based labour income gap (LIG) reported above. The largest labour income gap is observed for Tajikistan which is also the country – amongst those for which data is available on the LIG – with the smallest female share of tertiary participation. Similarly, Azerbaijan has the second largest LIG and – again, amongst those seven countries – the second lowest female share in tertiary educational attainment.

Figure 11. Percentage of students in tertiary education who are female (%), latest year



Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2017: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; 2016: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; and, 2014: Turkmenistan.

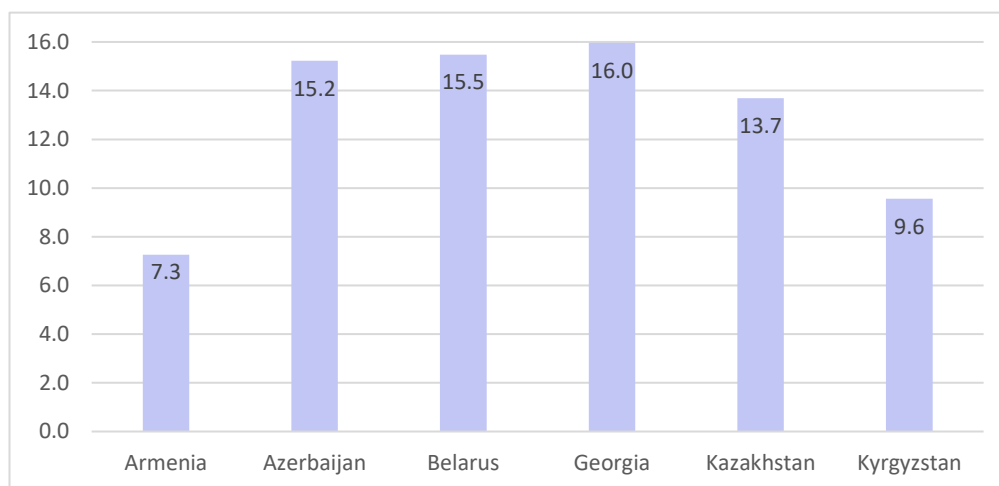
Source: UNESCO Educational statistics database, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

Perhaps more important in influencing gender differences in labour market outcomes are the subjects studied by young people. Here one does observe substantial differences between young men and young women. An important source of gender differences in labour market outcomes arise as a consequence of occupational and sectoral segregation – the tendency of men and women to enter different occupations and economic sectors. This in turn depends in part on subjects studied during education. Young men are much more likely to study and/or gain vocational qualifications in more 'scientific' fields. Thus, for example in Azerbaijan, although the share has been increasing in recent years, young women comprise under thirty per cent of vocational students studying either Economics and Management or Engineering and Technology (ILO, 2017a).

¹¹ A time trend for Turkmenistan is not available.

An even more stark difference is observable if we look at the proportion of female graduates in scientific subjects at tertiary level (figure 12). Data is certainly incomplete, however, amongst those countries for which data is available, the proportion of female graduates is very low. In this case, only three out of six of the countries examined here (and for which there is data) perform better than the average for Europe and Central Asia (14.2 per cent). In particular, Kyrgyzstan and, above-all Armenia report a very small proportion of graduates. In Tajikistan, gender imbalances in subjects studied is also specifically referred to in its voluntary National review of progress in attaining the SDGs (Tajikistan, 2017).

Figure 12. Female share of graduates in science, mathematics, engineering, manufacturing and construction at tertiary level, latest year



Note: Data reported is for the latest year available between 2007 and 2017.

Source: UNDP (2018).

Data from the ILO's School-to-Work transition surveys (SWTS) provides a slightly more encouraging picture. In both Armenia and the Russian Federation, where SWTS surveys were carried out, there is also a sharp contrast in the subjects studied by young men and young women. In particular, young men are much more likely than young women to study STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) subjects (table 5). In both countries one can observe that the pattern of participation in STEM vs. non-STEM subjects is more or less reversed across the genders. Around three-fifths to two-thirds of young men study STEM subjects in Armenia and the Russian Federation whilst a similar proportion of young women study STEM subjects. Given the substantial difference in the returns to STEM vs. non-STEM (and more generally scientifically oriented) educations, a clear source of the gender pay gap clearly emerges.

Box 2. Examples of recommendations to take other measures to create equal opportunities for men and women

Need to address occupational gender segregation - Azerbaijan. For a number of years, the Committee has been requesting the Government to take effective measures to address the significant occupational gender segregation in the labour market, and to improve women's participation rates in sectors or occupations in which they are under-represented. The Committee notes the Strategy "Azerbaijan: Vision 2020", (Presidential Decree December 2012), pursuant to which the Government shall take measures to create equal opportunities for women and men in the labour market, promote women at work and expand their opportunities to occupy leading positions, and adopt a national action plan on gender equality. The Government indicates in its report that as a result of the State Programme for the Implementation of the Employment Strategy for 2011–15 (Presidential Decree October 2015, measures have been carried out to increase women's employability and to foster women's entrepreneurship and self-employment. The Government also indicates that from January 2014 to June 2015, 5,565 persons were enrolled in vocational training, of which 46.2 per cent were women. While welcoming these measures, the Committee notes, however, from the information made available by the State Statistical Committee, the persistent and growing occupational gender segregation in the labour market. It notes, in particular, that, in 2015, most women continued to be employed in low-paid sectors such as health and social services (76.6 per cent against 72.7 per cent in 2011) and education (71.4 per

cent against 67.2 per cent in 2011), and represented only 19.7 per cent of private entrepreneurs, as of 1 January 2016.

Need to address the gender pay gap - Kazakhstan. The Committee recalls that occupational gender segregation with women clustered in lower paying jobs or occupations or positions without career opportunities has been identified as one of the underlying causes of the gender pay gap. Historical attitudes towards the role of women in society along with stereotypical assumptions regarding women's aspirations, preferences and "suitability" for certain jobs have contributed to such occupational segregation in the labour market, and an undervaluation of so-called "female jobs" in comparison with jobs performed by men. The Committee asks the Government to provide detailed information on the measures taken or envisaged in order to reduce the significant gender wage gap. Noting the Government's indication that wage inequalities may arise due to the segregation of men and women into certain sectors and occupations, the Committee asks the Government to provide information on the measures taken or envisaged to improve the access of women to a wider range of job opportunities including into higher-level and higher-paid occupations, as well as in sectors in which they are currently absent or under-represented, with a view to reducing inequalities in remuneration that exist between men and women in the labour market.

One hastens to add, however, that Armenia and the Russian Federation are countries in which gender gaps in adult pay and, more generally, labour income are **relatively** modest compared to other countries in the region. Moreover, comparison between figure 12 which reports the situation vis-à-vis graduates and table 5 which refers to current students suggest that the situation, at least in Armenia, is improving. The two figures report data from different sources and use slightly different definitions, however, the big difference in the Armenian percentages – seven per cent of graduates Vs. 38 per cent of students – as well as casual observation do suggest that the proportion of women studying STEM subjects is rapidly increasing in that country at least. Clearly this is a trend to be encouraged.

Table 5. Distribution of male and female tertiary students by STEM vs. Non-STEM subject matter

	Gender	Non-STEM	STEM
Armenia	Male	40.4	59.6
	Female	62.0	38.0
	All	52.1	47.9
Russian Federation	Male	32.3	67.8
	Female	63.3	36.7
	All	48.4	51.6

Source: Author calculations on SWTS data

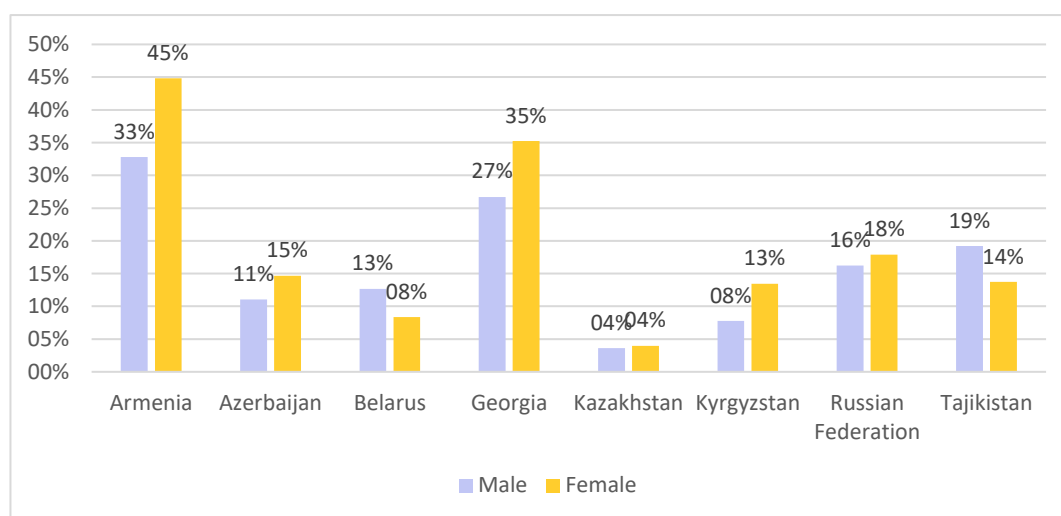
4.2. Youth labour markets: employment and labour force participation

As noted above, there are clear signs of gender-based segregation in the region. Women are typically concentrated in services and/or agriculture – depending on the country, whilst men are more likely to be employed in industry and construction. This gender pattern, observable amongst workers generally, is replicated amongst young labour market participants as least as regards industry and service sector employment is concerned. Whilst young people are generally less likely to be employed in agriculture than their older counterparts and the gender disparity is less marked if present at all in this sector, industrial occupations remain the preserve of men – whether younger or older, whilst (younger and older) women are more likely to be employed in services. Moreover, there are gender based differences in employment also within services; thus, for example, in Armenia, young women are more likely to be employed in health care, education, culture and other services, whilst young men are concentrated in the transport and trade sectors.

Given that a substantial proportion of young people participate in education through to tertiary level in the region, examination of employment rates per se amongst young people aged 15-24 does not tell us very much about their longer term labour market outcomes. Employment rates may fall because of an increase in unemployment which may be judged a negative development, but also as

the result of an increase in educational participation, which very likely is not.¹² In any event, the most widely used indicator of the health of youth labour markets is the youth unemployment rate. As noted above, gaps in unemployment rates by gender are explicitly recognized as a SDG target for action (SDG indicator 8.5.2). One can observe that in almost every country throughout the world,¹³ youth unemployment rates are higher than the corresponding adult rates. Moreover, the tendency towards higher unemployment rates amongst women observable in the labour market as a whole, is even more pronounced amongst young women in the region. For the most part,¹⁴ the unemployment rate of young women is higher – sometimes, as in Armenia, much higher – than the unemployment rate of young men (figure 13). The rate itself varies greatly across countries, as does the size of the divergence between young men and young women. In Armenia, the estimated gender divergence is largest, being 12 percentage points.

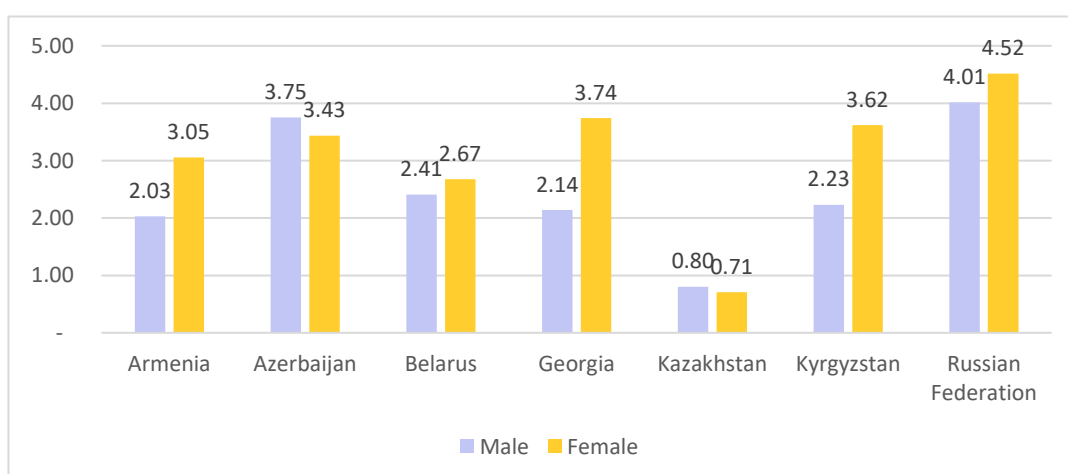
Figure 13. Youth (15-24) unemployment rates, 2018



Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2018: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; 2017: Armenia and Kazakhstan; 2009: Tajikistan.

Source: [ILOSTAT database](#).

Figure 14. Ratio of youth (15-24) unemployment rates to adult (25-64) unemployment rates, 2018



Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2018: Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; 2017: Armenia and Kazakhstan; 2015: Azerbaijan

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the ILOSTAT database.

¹² See also the further discussion of NEET vs. unemployment rates in the appendix.

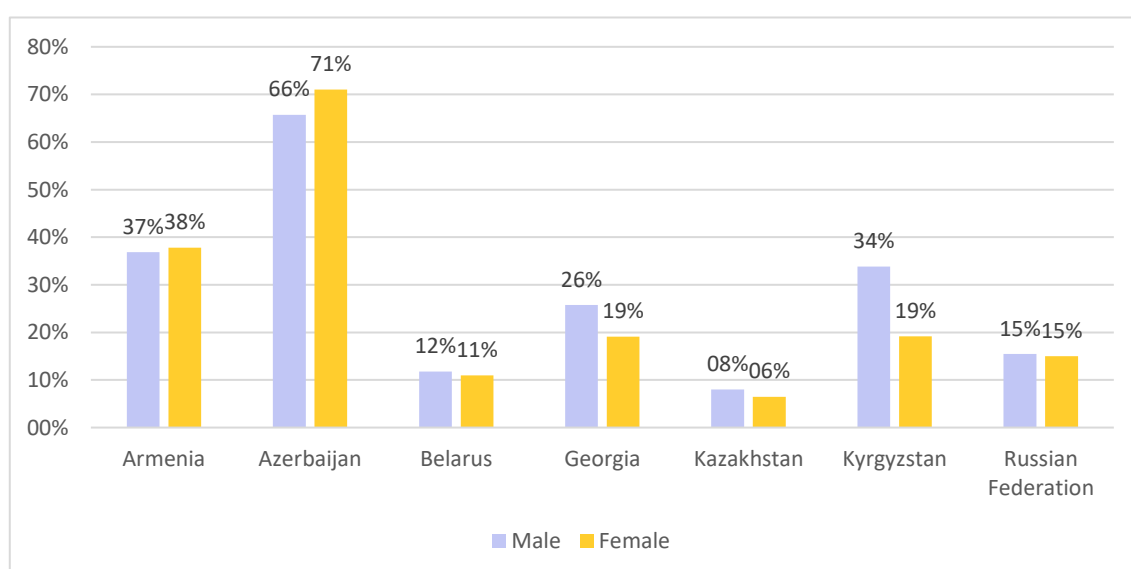
¹³ For reasons which are well known. See, for example, O'Higgins, 2001.

¹⁴ With the exceptions of Belarus, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

As noted above, the youth unemployment rate is typically significantly larger than the 'adult' (25-64) rate for both young men and young women; however, the degree to which this is true and the extent to which the ratio of youth to adult unemployment rates differs by gender varies substantially across the region (figure 14). Young women in the Russian Federation are four-and-a-half times more likely to be unemployed than their adult counterparts (compared to four times more likely for young men), whilst in Georgia, the ratio of just over two-to-one for young men (and nearly three –to-one for young women). Only in Kazakhstan is the unemployment rate actually lower for young people than for adults.

Nevertheless, as observed above, the unemployment rate of itself does not provide the full picture. Young people tend to have higher unemployment rates than adults for a number of reasons and there is much evidence to suggest that the negative consequences of unemployment increase more than proportionately with the duration of unemployment. It is not becoming unemployed per se which represents a major problem for young people – this is a relatively common occurrence – rather, it is the difficulties that may be faced by young individuals, and in particular, specific groups amongst them, in exiting unemployment quickly. Difficulties which tend to increase more than proportionately with the duration of unemployment itself. A longer spell of unemployment, once established, can itself become a permanent obstacle to obtaining gainful employment. Therefore, the prevalence of long-term unemployment amongst the young unemployed (figure 15) is at least as important as the youth unemployment rate.

Figure 15. Long-term unemployment as a proportion of total unemployment for young people, latest year



Notes: Long-term unemployment is defined as an uncompleted spell of unemployment which has lasted 12 months or more. Long-term unemployment is here reported as a percentage of total (age- and gender-specific) unemployment. Latest year available; specifically, 2018: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation; 2017: Armenia and Kazakhstan.

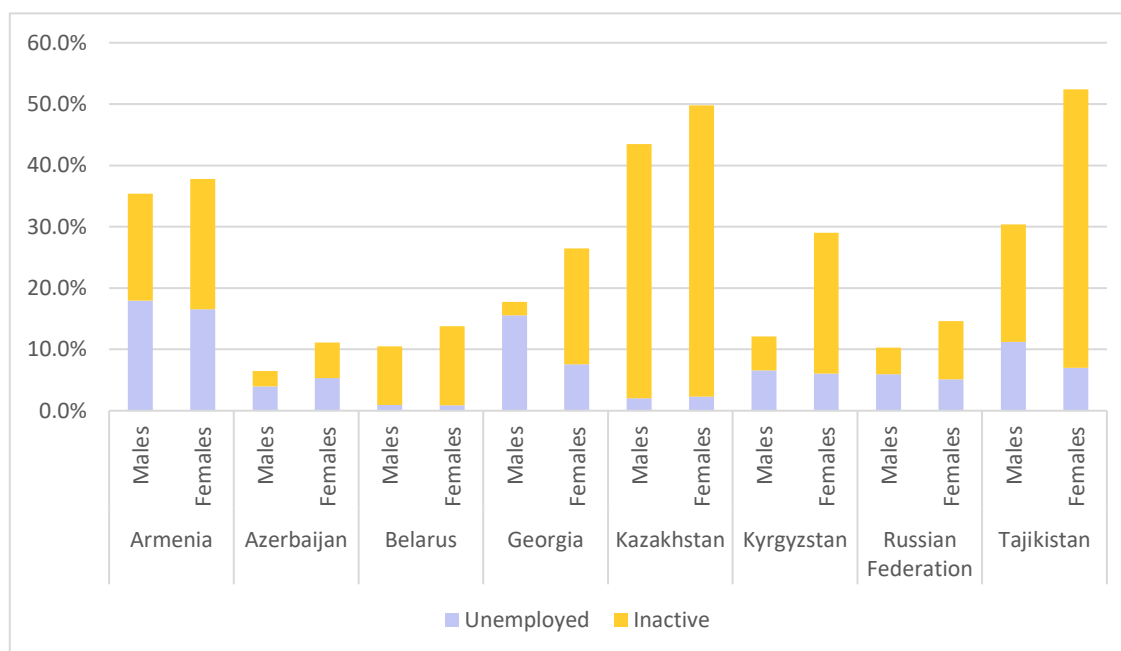
Source: [ILOSTAT database](#).

Of specific relevance here is the extent to which there is a gender imbalance in this phenomenon. One may observe that, for the most part, the duration of unemployment is relatively low amongst young people. With some notable exceptions, the prevalence of long-term unemployment is 50-150% higher amongst adult labour market participants than amongst young people. In most countries in the region, however, long-term unemployment is more prevalent amongst young unemployed women than amongst their male counterparts. Armenia stands out too, not so much for the gender disparities in this case, but rather for the facts that: a) it has relatively high rate of unemployment amongst both young men (31 per cent) and young women (46 per cent); and, b) a significant portion of this – over forty per cent – is accounted for by long-term unemployment. We will return to look in more detail at the situation below.

Concern has long been expressed as to the ability of the youth unemployment rate to be a meaningful indicator of youth labour market outcomes.¹⁵ In fact, the youth unemployment rate may fall not just because more young people find work but also, for example, because more young people become discouraged from looking for work due to the lack of available opportunities; moreover, since it is confined to labour market participants, a high rate of youth unemployment can involve a relatively small number of young people.¹⁶ Issues of this type have led to the adoption of a 'new' indicator which has gone under various appellations but which now is internationally recognized as the NEET rate. That is, the proportion of young people who are neither in employment, education, nor training.

As observed above, in 2015 a significant reduction in the youth NEET rate was adopted as Sustainable Development Goal target 8.6. As such, the youth NEET rate (Indicator 8.6.1) is the primary SDG indicator used to measure progress in youth labour markets. Under this indicator, improvement in youth labour markets may occur not just through a reduction in youth unemployment, but also with a fall in youth inactivity not accounted for by participation in education. Economic inactivity, outside of the educational system, almost invariably affects young women more than young men and it is of no great surprise that globally, three out of every four NEETs are young women. The gender imbalance in the NEET rate is most pronounced in emerging economies, although even in high income countries, over 55 per cent of young NEETs are female (ILO, 2017).

Figure 16. Proportion of young people (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET), latest year



Note: Latest year available; specifically, 2016: Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation; 2013: Azerbaijan; 2009: Belarus, Tajikistan.

Source: author calculations on labour force survey micro-data.

As yet, despite being a simpler indicator to measure than the unemployment rate, information on the NEET rate is incomplete for the region. In any event, for almost all of the countries in the region for which data is available, the general pattern is one in which female NEETs clearly predominate (figure 16). Tajikistan and Kazakhstan have the highest NEET rates in the region; the former country is distinguished by the fact that, in addition, the NEET rate for young women is almost double that of young men. In Kyrgyzstan, although the NEET rate as a whole is relatively low, young women are more than twice as likely to be NEET than young men; the gender difference is clearly attributable to the greater tendency of young women in that country to be inactive compared to young men.

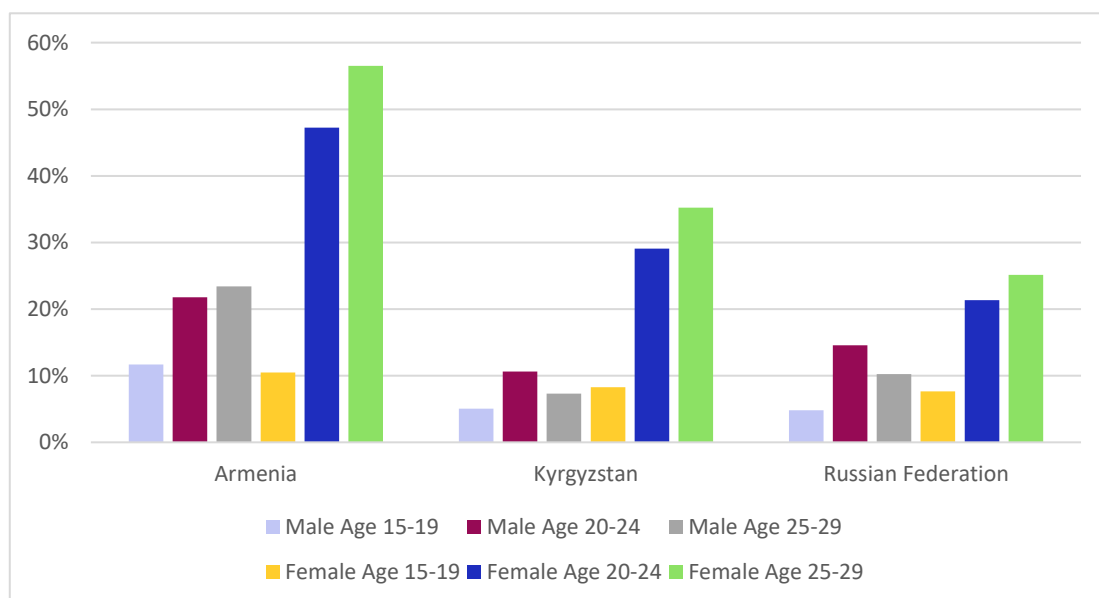
¹⁵ Author calculations on ILOSTAT database. The notable exceptions are Azerbaijan, where the prevalence of long-term unemployment is substantial for all men and women and is more prevalent amongst youths of both sexes than amongst adults; and, Tajikistan which, although it boasts a relatively small incidence of long-term unemployment, has a significantly more prevalent long lasting unemployment amongst young women, as opposed to adult women.

¹⁶ See, for example, O'Higgins (1996) and OECD (1996).

The other point which is of direct relevance is the relation between the youth unemployment rate and the youth NEET rate. In most of the region, the NEET rate is significantly above the youth unemployment rate, which means that substantial numbers of young people outside the labour force are also outside the educational system.¹⁷ Put another way, it implies that youth inactivity not explained by educational participation, is at least as big a problem as youth unemployment. Across all countries, as one might expect, the portion of NEET explained by the inactive is almost always larger for young women, although it varies across countries, and it depends largely on differences in gender stereotypes. This is confirmed by looking at the disaggregation between unemployed and ‘inactive’ (and not in education) NEETs. For instance, almost all NEETs – both young men and young women – are inactive rather than unemployed in Kazakhstan.

One potential explication for this substantial divergence between NEET rates of young men and women is the degree to which traditional female roles predominate. For example, there is a very strong correlation between both the female NEET rate and the ratio of female to male NEET rates on the one hand and young female fertility rates on the other.¹⁸ Where this is the case, national and sub-national institutions and regulations and/or the degree of their application are likely to reflect such prevailing attitudes.

Figure 17. NEET rates by gender and age group, years 2012-2015



Source: Author calculations on ILO-SWTS data

An important issue which arises here, as it did with youth unemployment, is the extent to which inactivity is a permanent or a transient state. As with unemployment, the longer the duration of inactivity, the higher the risk for young people to become permanently excluded from the workforce; even if they should wish to return to employment they may find it impossible to do so. In order to get a first impression on this phenomenon, NEET rates by 5 year age-group are reported in figure 17.¹⁹ Although based on cross-section information and not the direct tracking of individuals, a continuously rising NEET rate by age would suggest a strong degree of persistence in NEET. The issue will be returned to in more detail below.

In these three countries, as in the others on the region, NEET rates are significantly higher for young women than young men; one may additionally observe from figure 17 that both the female NEET rate and, consequently the gender difference in NEET rates tends to increase with age.²⁰ For young men,

¹⁷ Strictly speaking a youth NEET rate which is larger than the youth unemployment rate necessarily implies that the proportion of economically inactive (not in the labour force) young people who are not in education is larger than the proportion of young people in the labour force who are unemployed and vice versa. See the appendix for further details.

¹⁸ The two simple correlations are 0.78 (female NEET rate) and 0.77 (ratio of NEET rates) respectively. Author calculations based on UNDESA-PD (2017)

¹⁹ Based on data from the ILO's School-to-Work Transition surveys conducted between 2012 and 2015.

²⁰ One might also observe that the NEET rates for young men in Armenia clearly differ here to (and are significantly lower

the NEET rate either falls with age (Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation) or increases more slowly with age than the female rate (Armenia). Although based on a cross-section rather than longitudinal data, this does suggest that whereas NEET is a relatively transient state for young men, this is not the case for young women. Indeed, the fact that the NEET rate increases, usually rather sharply, with age amongst young women suggests that – at least in these three countries - NEET is a relatively permanent state for young women; certainly a more persistent state than it is for young men. This provides further motivation, if such were needed, to concentrate efforts in seeking to meet SDG target 8.6²¹ on reducing NEET rates amongst young women.

4.3. A deeper dive into NEET and the school-to-work transition in the Russian Federation and Armenia

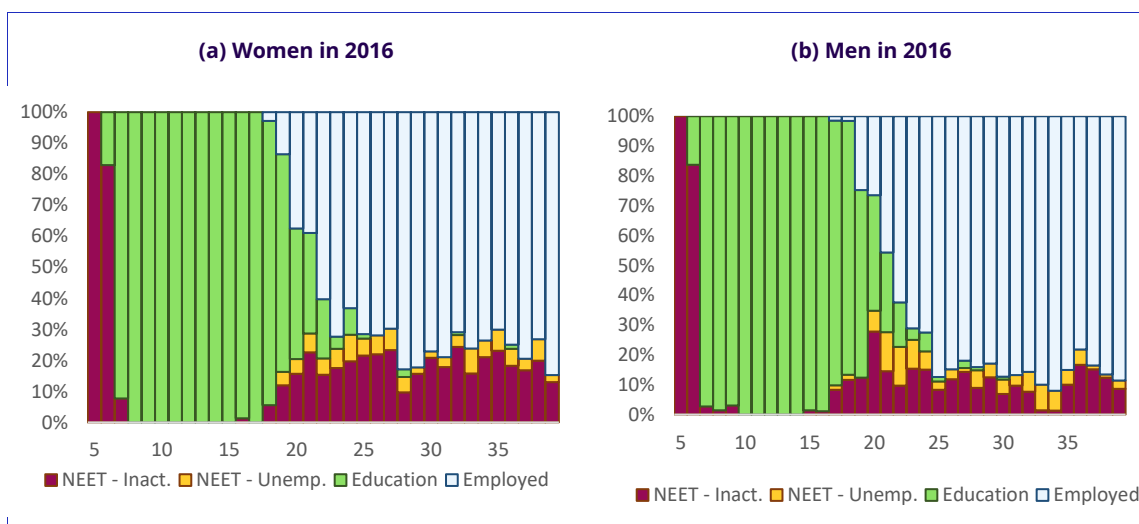
In Armenia and the Russian Federation, examination of longitudinal data allows us to take a closer look at the nature of NEET and how it manifests itself in two rather different countries in the region.

4.3.1. Inside and outside the labour market

Russian Federation

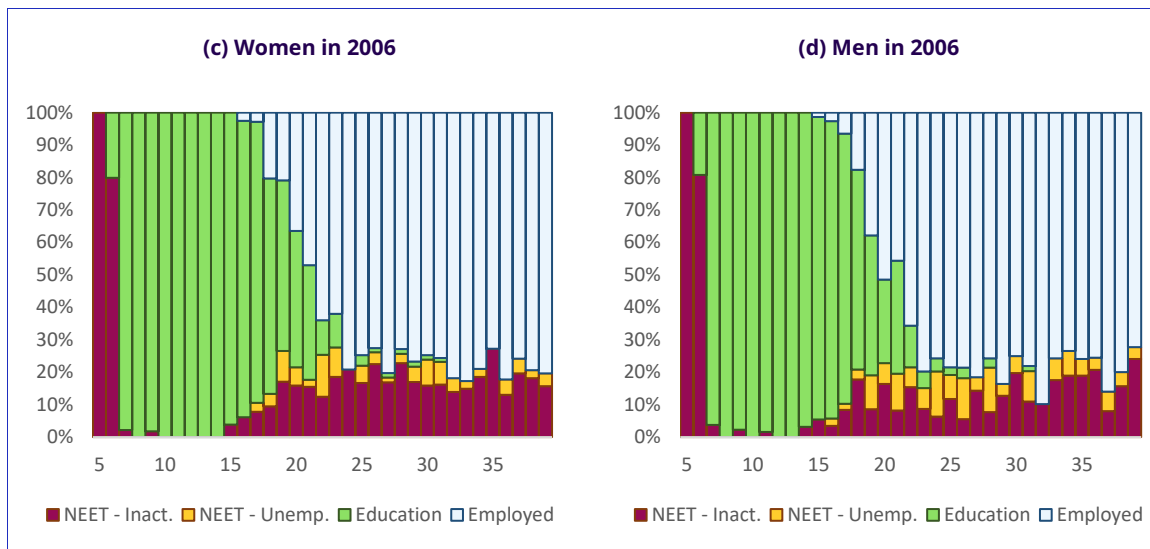
The NEET rate in the Russian Federation is rather below the global average (21.8 per cent, ILO, 2017b), and in contrast to most countries in the region, as noted above, it does not display such a strong gender imbalance. Further investigation of children and young(ish) people - aged between five and 39 years old - by single year age groups and status can shed more light on the school-to-work transition in the country and additional gender differences (figure 18). Young people are subdivided according to whether they are in education, employed, or 'neither in employment nor in education and training' (NEET). The last category is further subdivided according to whether the NEET is unemployed or economically inactive (and not in education). The figure reports the situation in both 2006 and 2016 separately for young women and men.

Figure 18. Labour market status in the Russian Federation by age, gender and year



than) those reported above in figure 16. This is due to differences in definitions. Although not identifiable in the survey data, Armenian NEETs evidently include amongst them young men who are undertaking compulsory military service. These are explicitly excluded from NEETs in the SWTS calculations. The issue is discussed further in the next section.

²¹ By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.



Note: Age, gender and year-specific shares of labour market statuses. Statuses include “employed” (currently working), “NEET unemployed” (not working, but has looked for a job during the last 30 days and is able to start employment immediately), “education” (currently studying and not working) and “NEET inactive” (economically inactive non-students).

Source: LFM v1.5 and author’s calculations

The (slightly) higher NEET rates of young women is evident in both years, as is the greater relative size of unemployed NEETs (as opposed to inactive NEETs) amongst young men. Between 2006 and 2016 NEET rates have also fallen a little for both women and men. What emerges clearly however, particularly with the extension of the ages under consideration, is the greater persistence of NEET – and particularly inactive NEET status amongst young women. When the focus of the analysis moves beyond the 24 years old threshold, as alluded to above, one can observe that whereas unemployment seems to be relatively transient state, tending to disappear amongst both young men and young women as they get older, inactivity is not and affects significant numbers of both men and women. On the other hand, as suggested by the figure above, young women have a stronger tendency than young men to detach from the active labour force as they enter their late twenties.

Armenia

As noted in the previous section/above, Armenia has a high rate of NEET; 36.6 per cent of young people aged 15-24 are NEET, and, unusually for the region, the unemployed and the inactive contribute more or less equally to the overall NEET rate for both young women and young men.

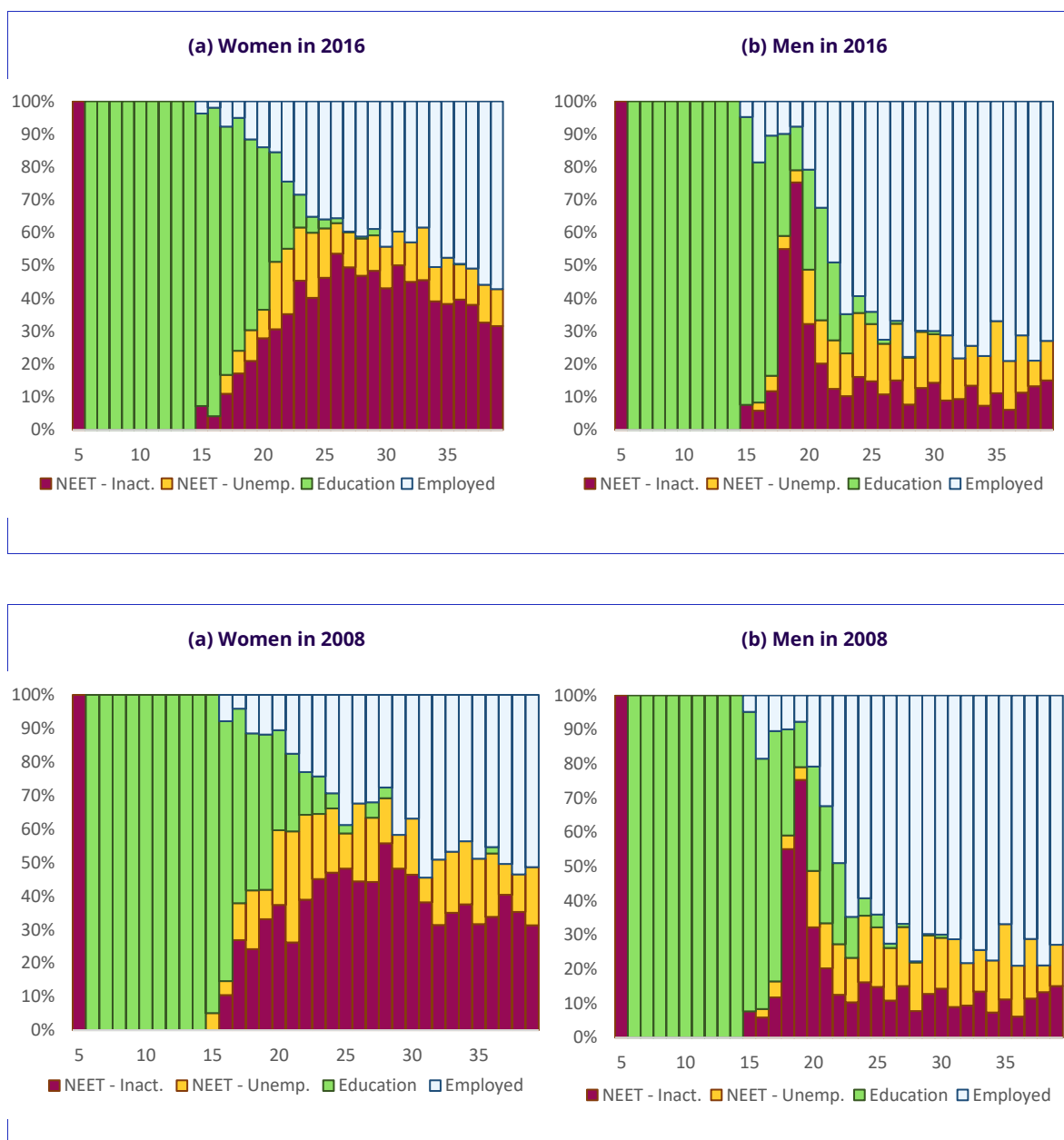
Once again, looking at the single year age-groups (figure 19), one can immediately see that the pattern of NEET amongst young men reported above in figure 16 is a little misleading. There is a spike in inactive male NEETs at ages 18 and 19 in both 2008 and 2016. This drives the apparent similarity in (inactive) NEET rates of young men and women aged 15-24 observed above. Leaving 18 and 19 year olds aside, it is evident that the NEET rate of young women and men is rather different. The NEET rates – particularly inactive NEET rates – are higher for young women and they clearly are more persistent. The 18-19 year old spike in male inactive NEETs can be attributed to Armenia’s compulsory military service.²²

More importantly, one can clearly see the greater persistence of inactive NEETs amongst young women moving into their late twenties and early thirties. Thus, once again, the figure suggests a greater persistence of NEET – and especially inactive NEET status - amongst young women.

One might also observe that high unemployment and inactivity rates have been a feature of the Armenian youth labour market for some time (Figure 19, panels c and d). However, the balance between unemployed and inactive NEETs has altered over time, with youth unemployment falling slightly and inactivity increasing – particularly amongst young women.

²² The differences in the spike between 2008 and 2016 are likely due to the timing of the labour force survey in the two years; the 2008 LFS information was collected in July while the 2016 all four quarters of the LFS are used and may be thought of as being continuous. Thus, due to the timing of the survey, in 2008 the spike is evenly distributed over the ages 18 and 19, whilst in 2016 it primarily affects 19 years olds.

Figure 19. Labour market status in Armenia by age, gender and year



Source: LFM v1.5 and authors' own calculations.

Note: Age, gender and year-specific shares of labour market statuses. Statuses include "employed" (currently working), "NEET unemployed" (looked for a job during the last 30 days and is able to start employment immediately), "education" (currently studying and not working) and "NEET inactive" (inactive non-students).

4.3.2. Transitions between states

Russian Federation

The Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS), a nationally-representative panel-type survey, including a labour market module, is used here to look with more detail into labour market states and transitions. This tool surveys individuals over time.

Labour market status

The analysis is based on the comparison of two cohorts of individuals, both aged 15-24, in 2000 and 2010 respectively. Individual work histories are followed for six years with the intention of

understanding the longer-term consequences of being in a specific situation at a given point in time.²³ Table 6 summarizes the labour market statuses held at the beginning and at the end of the six years journey; for example, it can be observed that only 45.6 per cent of young men aged 15-24 in 2000 were employed; this increased to 67.6 per cent by the time the cohort reached the age band of 21-30 in 2006. For young women aged 15-24 in 2000, compared to the corresponding cohort of young men, slightly fewer (37.2 per cent) were employed at that time, but a larger proportion (71.9 per cent) had obtained employment by 2006. A broadly similar trend can be observed for the second cohort (2010-16), with a similar percentage of young people in employment six years after. Consistent with the analysis mentioned above, the table suggests a much stronger degree of permanence of the NEET inactive state – as opposed to NEET –unemployed. Although this is true for both women and men, the higher overall prevalence of NEET-inactivity amongst young women leads to a greater permanence of young women into the NEET state, compared to young men.

Table 6. Distribution of young people's situation in the Russian Federation at two points in time, by gender

	Men				Women			
	2000-2006		2010-2016		2000-2006		2010-2016	
	15-24	21-30	15-24	21-30	15-24	21-30	15-24	21-30
In Education	34.5	7.1	33.6	4.8	36.5	3.5	37.3	3.0
Employed	45.6	67.6	44.4	70.4	37.2	71.9	40.6	70.1
NEET – Unemp.	11.8	7.8	9.0	9.3	10.4	6.3	7.4	4.6
NEET – Inactive	8.1	17.6	13.0	15.6	16.0	18.4	14.7	22.3

Notes: The table reports the age group-specific labour market statuses' shares of two cohorts of young Russians at two points in time. This exercise follows two cohorts of 15-24 years old individuals over 6 years, showing their situation when they were aged 15-24 and 21-30.

Source: Author's calculations on RLMS.

Long-term transitions.

By constructing six-year transition matrices we looked at the destinations of young people at a distance of six years subdivided according to their initial status at the time of the survey (in 2000 and 2010 respectively). The matrices are reported below separately for young men (tables 7 and 8) and young women (tables 9 and 10) and can be interpreted as the average conditional probability that that an individual in one state at the time of the survey was in that or other states six years later. Thus, for example, 51.6 per cent of young men (aged 15-24) who were studying in 2000, were into employment six years later; 61.9 per cent of young men (aged 15-24) who were studying in 2010, were into employment six years later.

Table 7. Six year transition probabilities, young men aged 15-24 in 2000

		Status in 2006			
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Inactive
Status in 2000	In Education	22.7	51.6	14.7	11.0
	Employed	1.8	79.7	8.5	10.1
	NEET-Unemp.	0.0	37.3	7.7	55.1
	NEET-Inactive	0.0	43.4	6.3	50.3

Notes: Gender, age-group and initial status-specific transition probabilities between each of the four available situations (in education, employed, NEET-unemployed and NEET-inactive) over the six year period from 2000 to 2006. For example, 51.6 per cent of young men (aged 15-24 in 2000) who were studying in 2000 were employed in 2006.

Source: Author's calculations on RLMS.

²³ Some individuals were dropped from the study as they did not appear in all six years of the survey.

Table 8. Six year transition probabilities, young men aged 15-24 in 2010

		Status in 2010			
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Inactive
Status in 2000	In Education	22.7	51.6	14.7	11.0
	Employed	1.8	79.7	8.5	10.1
	NEET-Unemp.	0.0	37.3	7.7	55.1
	NEET-Inactive	0.0	43.4	6.3	50.3

Notes: Gender, age-group and initial status-specific transition probabilities between each of the four available situations (in education, employed, NEET-unemployed and NEET-inactive) over the six year period from 2010 to 2016. For example, 61.9 per cent of young men (aged 15-24 in 2010) who were in education in 2010 were employed in 2016.

Source: Author's calculations on RLMS.

For young men in 2000, there is a fairly strong degree of persistence in both forms of NEET. Over fifty per cent of those who were NEET – whether inactive or unemployed – were NEET-inactive six years later. That is, the majority of the unemployed young men in 2000 exited the labour force to become NEET-inactive by 2006. The situation seemed to improve is different over the period 2010-16 with the vast majority of the unemployed finding work in the meantime, whilst the probability of remaining NEET-inactive is roughly the same as before.

Turning to transitions amongst young women, persistence in employment increases over time – as with young men – but for both cohorts the persistence in employment is greater for young women than young men. Once a young woman finds a job she is (slightly) more likely than young men to keep it. Exit from unemployment to employment was significantly better for young women than young men in 2000-2006, while becoming more similar in 2010-16. There was, however, also a significant increase in the likelihood of transiting from unemployment to employment. On the other hand, movement out of NEET-inactivity and in particular towards employment has fallen off for young women over time. Persistence in NEET inactivity is strong amongst women too in both periods, but became a (slightly) more permanent state for young women in the latter 2010-16 and discouragement (movement from unemployment to inactivity) also became more common.

Table 9. Six year transition probabilities, young women aged 15-24 in 2000

		State in 2006			
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Inactive
State in 2000	In Education	12.1	63.4	14.0	10.5
	Employed	0.0	85.6	4.4	10.0
	NEET-Unemp.	0.0	62.1	13.9	24.0
	NEET-Inactive	0.0	49.3	2.6	48.1

Notes: Gender, age-group and initial status-specific transition probabilities between each of the four available situations (in education, employed, NEET-unemployed and NEET-inactive) over the six year period from 2000 to 2006. For example, 63.4 per cent of young women (aged 15-24 in 2000) who were in education in 2000 were employed in 2006.

Source: Author's calculations on RLMS

Table 10. Six-year transition probabilities, young women aged 15-24 in 2010

		State in 2016			
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Inactive
State in 2010	In Education	6.9	65.8	7.8	19.6
	Employed	0.0	92.2	7.8	0.0
	NEET-Unemp.	0.0	70.7	3.3	25.9
	NEET-Inactive	2.3	23.7	19.6	54.4

Notes: Gender, age-group and initial status-specific transition probabilities between each of the four available situations (in education, employed, NEET-unemployed and NEET-inactive) over the six year period from 2010 to 2016. For example, 65.8 per cent of young women (aged 15-24 in 2010) who were in education in 2010 were employed in 2016.

Source: Author's calculations on RLMS.

The overall picture is one in which employment and NEET-inactivity are relatively persistent states for both young women and young men in the Russian Federation, although significantly more so for young women, making this all more problematic.

Armenia

For Armenia it is possible to look at short-term transitions by utilising the 2016 Armenian Labour Force Survey (LFS). We built a pseudo-panel using the labour market statuses reported during the reference week and three months before the survey was taken. Even though the available data provides a picture of short-term labour market dynamics, it has the advantage of being nationally representative, relatively recent, and, also due to its short-run nature, does not have any issues with panel attrition.

Information on transition probabilities in 2016 is presented separately for two cohorts of young men (tables 11-12) and young women (tables 13-14) according to educational attainment. There are very significant differences between young women and men in their transition probabilities particularly taking educational attainment into consideration.

In particular, young inactive NEET men with tertiary education are much more likely to exit that state than young men with secondary education; this is not the case for young women. The exit rate from NEET inactivity does increase a little from 8 per cent to 12.4 per cent for young women who move from secondary to tertiary educational attainment, although this is by no means comparable with the huge jump in exit rates, from 8.3 per cent to 44.6 per cent, from NEET inactivity observed for young men. Thus, whilst permanence in NEET inactivity is similar for young women and young men with secondary attainment levels, the benefits of gaining a tertiary education in this regard are completely unequally distributed. For young women, inactivity is a relatively permanent state irrespective of the level of education, whereas for young men this is not the case. Despite the fact that young women are at least as likely as young men to obtain tertiary educational qualifications, the advantages of higher educational attainments are not shared equally across genders.

The other element emerging from the tables is that finding a job takes longer for those with higher levels of education, regardless of gender. Here too, the difference between levels of educational attainment is more marked for young men, but it might be assumed that it is linked to the longer duration of unemployment for young women with secondary education than for equally educated young men.

Table 11. Three month transition probabilities, young men aged 16-24 with secondary education in 2016

		Last week				
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Other inac	Population share
3 months ago	In Education	89.2	2.7	0.8	7.3	0.37
	Employed	1.4	93.3	3.0	2.4	0.25
	NEET – Unemp.	13.5	15.7	62.9	7.8	0.10
	NEET – Other inac.	0.7	2.6	4.9	91.7	0.28

Note: The table reports the gender, age-group and educational level-specific transition probabilities to and from each of the four possible situations (employed, studying, unemployed, and other inactivity) over a three month period. For example, 93.3 per cent of those employed three months before the survey was taken were still employed during the reference week. Rows may not add up to 1 due to rounding. The population share reflects the proportion of the age, education and gender-specific population that fell into that category three months before the survey, for example, 37 per cent of young men aged 16-24 with secondary education were studying

Source: Armenia Labour Force Survey 2016.

Table 12. Three-month transition probabilities, young men aged 21-29 with tertiary education in 2016

		Last week				
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Other inac	Population share
3 months ago	In Education	61.7	27.4	1.9	9.0	0.04
	Employed	0.0	97.4	1.6	0.9	0.72
	NEET – Unemp.	0.0	21.4	78.2	0.4	0.17
	NEET – Other inac.	0.0	8.5	36.1	55.4	0.06

Note: The table reports the gender, age-group and educational level-specific transition probabilities to and from each of the four possible situations (employed, studying, unemployed, and other inactivity) over a three month period. For example, 97.4 per cent of those employed three months before the survey was taken were still employed during the reference week. Rows may not add up to 1 due to rounding. The population share reflects the proportion of the age, education and gender-specific population that fell into that category three months before the survey.

Source: Armenia Labour Force Survey 2016

Table 13. Three-month transition probabilities, young women aged 16-24 secondary education in 2016

		Last week				
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Other inac	Population share
3 months ago	In Education	94.9	0.8	0.8	3.5	0.50
	Employed	1.8	91.9	2.2	4.1	0.13
	NEET – Unemp.	12.9	6.0	70.9	10.1	0.10
	NEET – Other inac.	2.4	0.5	5.0	92.0	0.27

Note: The table reports the gender, age-group and educational level-specific transition probabilities to and from each of the four possible situations (employed, studying, unemployed, and other inactivity) over a three month period. For example, 91.9 per cent of those employed three months before the survey was taken were still employed during the reference week. Rows may not add up to 1 due to rounding. The population share reflects the proportion of the age, education and gender-specific population that fell into that category three months before the survey.

Source: Armenia Labour Force Survey 2016.

Table 14. Three month transition probabilities, young women aged 21-29 with tertiary education in 2016

		Last week				
		In Education	Employed	NEET-Unemp.	NEET-Other inac	Population share
3 months ago	In Education	82.8	3.6	10.3	3.3	0.03
	Employed	0.0	93.2	1.9	4.9	0.51
	NEET – Unemp.	0.0	15.1	77.5	7.4	0.13
	NEET – Other inac.	0.6	1.0	10.9	87.4	0.33

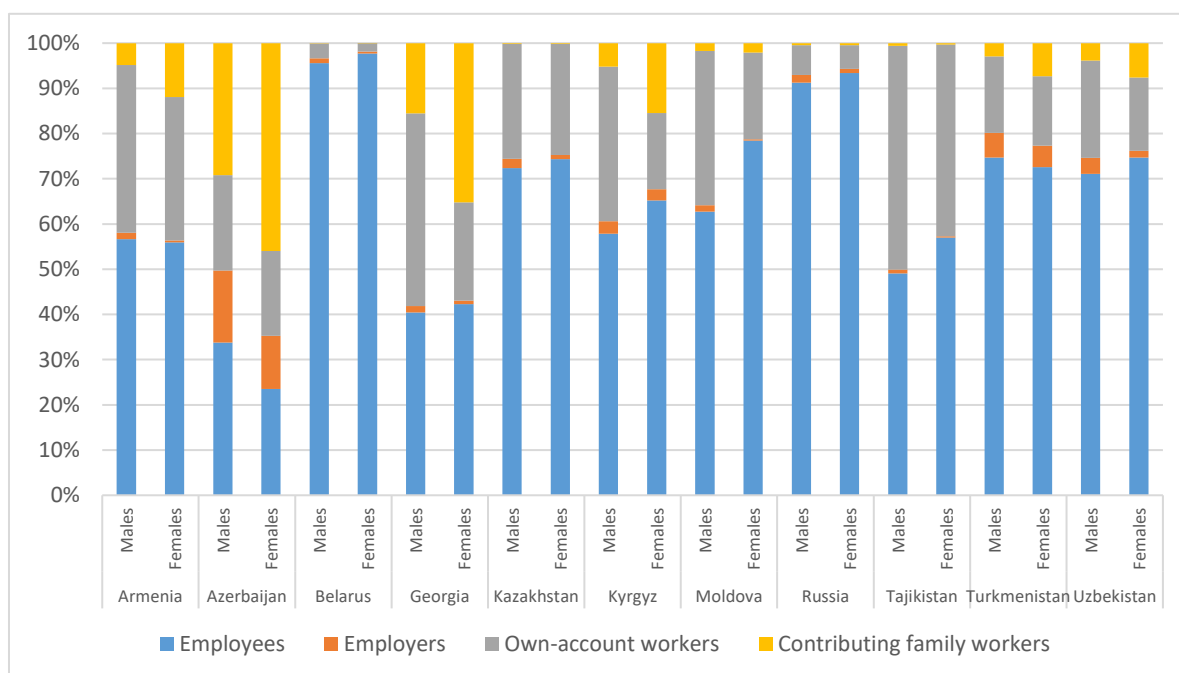
Note: The table reports the gender, age-group and educational level-specific transition probabilities to and from each of the four possible situations (employed, studying, unemployed, and other inactivity) over a three month period. For example, 93.2 per cent of those employed three months before the survey was taken were still employed during the reference week. Rows may not add up to 1 due to rounding. The population share reflects the proportion of the age, education and gender-specific population that fell into that category three months before the survey.

Source: Armenia Labour Force Survey 2016.

4.4. Youth labour markets: Job quality

Access to employment is an important factor in determining gender differences in labour market outcomes in CIS countries, but it is by no means the only source of gender divergence in youth labour markets. The type and quality of work can also be an issue. Whilst vulnerable employment (own account workers plus contributing family members) is not universally more common amongst young women than young men, young women are always more likely than young men to be contributing family members (figure 20).

Figure 20. Status in employment of young people, latest year



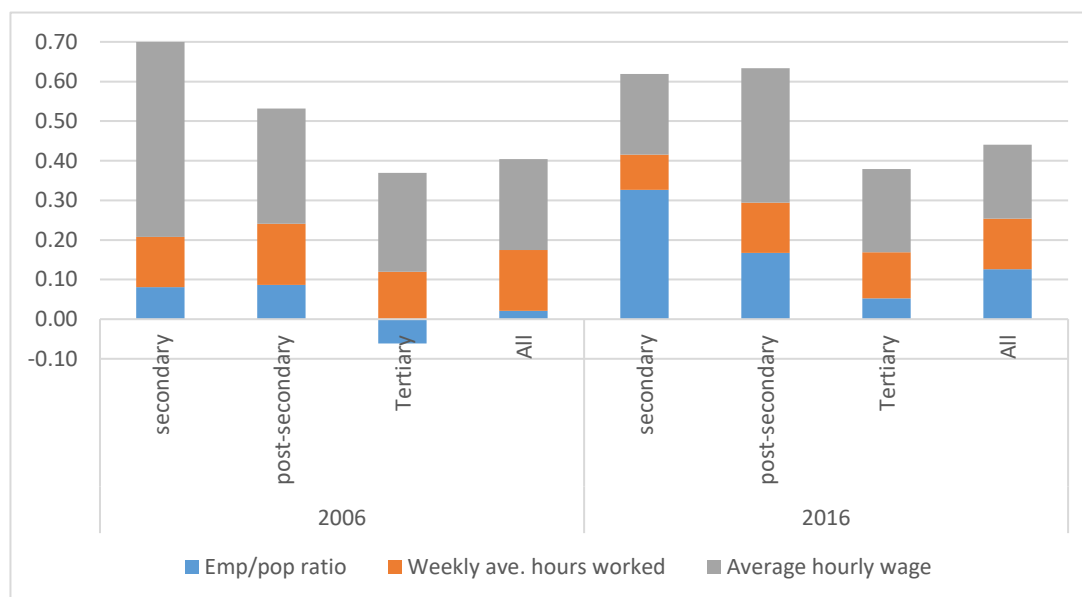
Source: Author's calculations based on data from the [ILOSTAT database](#)

A similar picture emerges regarding informal employment; young females are as likely to be involved in informal employment as young men. Available data does not allow us to look in more detail at occupational segregation and/or gender gaps in labour income in the region as a whole, however, data from the 2017 Russian labour force survey does allow us to derive the gender labour income gap for young people (in this case aged 25-34) in the Russian Federation.²⁴ In this case, we also look at how the labour income gap varies with educational attainment and over time (figure 21).

The labour income gap is, as one might expect, rather smaller when considering the younger age-group. The gap is also more evenly spread across the three elements - employment, hours of work and pay - than it was for the working age population as a whole, recalling the findings reported in figure 9 above. The gap increased slightly between 2006 and 2016, however, one can also see that this was entirely due to an increase in the income gap amongst post-secondary qualified young people; the gap actually fell slightly for young people with secondary qualifications and remained roughly the same for those with tertiary educational attainment.

²⁴ In looking at the relationship between educational attainment and 'youth' labour market outcomes, it makes sense to compare young people across educational attainment levels once they have all completed education and, potentially at least, have entered the labour market; hence the focus on 25-34 year olds here. Comparing, for example, 15-24 year olds who have only secondary education with tertiary educated 15-24 year olds will obviously provide a very distorted picture, since the latter group will, by definition, be very different from the former for reasons not directly related to educational attainment per se. For example, the latter group will necessarily be on average both older as well as having entered the labour market more recently than the latter – both factors which will affect labour market outcomes independently of educational attainment hence distorting any such comparisons.

Figure 21. Decomposition of gender based labour income gap: Russian young people (25-34), 2006 and 2016



Source: RLMS and authors' own calculations.

One can also observe that between 2006 and 2016 differences in employment rates have emerged as an important source of the labour income gap. So much so, that it has become the main source of gender differences in labour income for those with secondary attainment. For other young people, and especially tertiary educated young people, the main issue regards pay rates. Not surprisingly, the returns to tertiary education are significantly greater for young men than young women. Certainly, this is an issue which would bear further investigation. This finding is also in line with the idea emerging above that differences in subjects studied, particularly at tertiary level, rather than educational attainment per se, may be a significant factor in driving gender disparities, in particular, at tertiary level where differences in labour income remain primarily associated with differences in the hourly wage rate.

4.5. Concluding remarks: Issues and challenges

We have seen that to a greater or lesser degree gender gaps exist in youth labour markets throughout CIS countries. More detailed analysis of the situation in a few specific countries provided further insights into the situation of young women and young men. Gender gaps have emerged in a number of areas.

For what concerns education, in a few countries there are still issues with differences in educational attainment. However, the main issue lies in the impact of educational attainment on pay level and employment opportunities. The evidence presented here suggests that both occupational and sectoral segregation play an important role in determining job conditions and employment status driven by gender based educational 'choices'. The subjects studied will affect future labour market outcomes; and, in particular, hourly wage rates. Clearly young women are strongly concentrated in less remunerative – non-STEM – subjects although there is evidence that, in some of the countries, this is beginning to change.

There is also a major issue in access to employment. Inactivity outside the educational system appears to be a major driver of gender based differentials. The ease with which young women access employment, and in particular, the ease – or lack of it – with which they return to the labour force after periods of inactivity seems to be an important issue. There is a suggestion too, that returns to education – perhaps linked to occupational segregation also play a role.

It is evident that some of the difficulties faced by young women in accessing the labour market and achieving inequality in it, as suggested at the outset, depend on traditional attitudes to women's role in society. In at least some of the countries in the region, negative attitudes are still held concerning women's right to work. Moreover, men's attitudes in particular, often seem to lag behind those of

women. The recent Gallup-ILO poll (Gallup-ILO, 2017) reports that, in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan only 63 per cent of men think it acceptable for women to work outside of the home if she wishes; in Turkmenistan the figure is 64 per cent, and in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reaches 66 per cent. With the only exception of Uzbekistan, this is in stark contrast to the view expressed by women in the same countries in the region. Typically over 80 per cent of women think it acceptable to work outside the home.²⁵ In high income countries globally, 95 per cent of the population – 94 per cent of men and 96 per cent of women – believe it acceptable for women to accept paid work. Even in the Russian Federation, the most progressive country in the region, only 85 per cent of men and 91 per cent of women think it is acceptable for women to work. There is clearly still room to promote a more egalitarian view of the role of (young) women in the labour market.

It is also clear that very different situations exist in the different countries in the region. Resolving gender based disparities will require more detailed analysis of the specific situation in each country and designing policy interventions appropriate to the specific environment. The next section considers some of the main areas where policy intervention is likely to have a positive impact.

²⁵ Uzbekistan is the outlier in this regard, in that only 72 per cent of women in the country think it acceptable for women to work outside the home.



5. Policy issues and recommendations

Significant gender gaps in the labour market and youth labour market exist in all countries in the region, although with differences in terms of extent and nature of the gaps. Hence there is no one-size fits all solution to the issues reviewed. This review has highlighted several areas where interventions may be aimed at improving the equality of labour market outcomes. In addition to the ubiquitous need to improve the collection and reporting of gender based labour market statistics so as to better inform policy decisions and to allow accurate measurement of progress, areas where action may be fruitful in narrowing gender gaps in youth (and consequently adult) labour markets are as follows:

Promoting gender equality in youth labour markets requires a multi-faceted approach. As with youth employment policy itself, it clearly makes sense to develop a comprehensive strategy towards promoting gender equality in youth labour markets which take into account the likely effects of specific policy initiatives and their interaction. Gender issues can be mainstreamed thereby making them an integral part of any approach aimed at promoting decent work for young people.

5.1. Rights and values for gender equality work

Effective implementation of labour legislation

As noted, all the countries in the region have ratified the fundamental ILO Conventions on labour market discrimination and all have labour legislation in place which prohibits it. A number of countries have also ratified the more recent ILO Conventions on family responsibilities and maternity protection, however, countries generally also have legislation in place including provisions for privileges and protections associated with childbirth and family responsibilities.

However, there appear to be some serious problems with the practical application of such protections. The issue concerns making anti-discriminatory legislation effective. On the one hand, some countries clearly lack the basis for the effective enforcement of such legislation. In Georgia and Armenia, for example, the labour inspection function has been abolished. More generally, the substantial gender gaps evident also amongst young people in these countries make it clear that such legislation is not being applied effectively. There is evidence, for example, of discriminatory practices in hiring – such as, through the use of recruitment questions regarding a jobseekers marital status and future plans for starting a family. Moreover, ILO (2017b) also identifies the widespread practice of non-provision of privileges and protections associated with maternity and family responsibilities. That report argues convincingly that: a) this generally takes the form of apparently voluntary, but actually induced, refusal of payments and rights to parental benefits and leave by women; and, b) the failure arises largely due to extensive informal employment in the region, but also to the transfer of responsibilities from State to employers for administering benefits. Thus, there appears to be, in some countries, a lack of willingness to effectively implement anti-discriminatory laws. This is sometimes compounded by a lack of knowledge of young (and older) women of their rights, and/or a lack of willingness to exert them. Some practical steps have been taken in recent years to reduce discriminatory practices; Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have curtailed – and the Russian Federation eliminated – the practice of publishing vacancy announcements containing discriminatory requirements.

Clearly, there is room for improvement in this area.

Changing negative attitudes towards women's participation in the labour market

As already observed, some of the difficulties faced by young women in accessing the labour market and achieving inequality in it, depend on prevailing traditional attitudes to women's role in society. There is clearly room to promote a more egalitarian view of the role of (young) women in the labour market. Approaches aimed at changing attitudes often begin with shirring attitudes of the youngest members of society by removing and/or challenging gender based stereo-types at school

Once young people enter the labour market, perhaps the most effective way to combat negative attitudes to female employment in practice is to promote specific measures which facilitate the entry of young women into traditionally male dominated positions. That is, change is sought not so much by seeking to change attitudes directly but indirectly by expanding the opportunities available to young women. One way of addressing this involves the adoption of minimum quotas of women in

specific positions, such as in management positions in firms, as has been adopted in Belgium where, since 2011, quotas have applied to listed companies in Belgium. By law, executive boards of listed companies (depending on their size and other particularities) must consist of a minimum of a third and a maximum of two-thirds of members of one or other gender.

5.2. Access to productive employment, social protection and care services

Developing gender sensitive national employment strategies

As noted above, there are clear signs of gender-based occupational and sectoral segregation in the region. Women are typically concentrated in services and/or agriculture – depending on the country, whilst men are relatively speaking – much more likely to be employed in industry and construction as broadly defined. This gender pattern, observable amongst workers generally, is replicated amongst young labour market participants as least as regards industry and service sector employment is concerned.

Whilst it is possible to orient sectoral development strategies in such a way as to favour female employment, it is not clear that this is an ideal approach. This may simply serve to reinforce gender based segregation. Rather, many countries, for example in Europe, have adopted fiscal policy instruments which are likely to reduce imbalances in the labour market. This could include, for example, taxing couples based on individual rather than joint earnings; if both partners in a couple work and – as is typically the case as evidenced above – females earn less, taxing couples on their joint earnings will mean that women pay higher marginal tax rates than they would if they were taxed as individuals. In this case, household based income tax may thus involve a disincentive effect to female labour supply. Similarly, sales taxes on specific products such as those involved in the provision of care may be helpful to women – particularly female headed households (Quinn, 2018). Similarly tax relief on the use of child care facilities may benefit women more than proportionately. More generally, introduction of the principles of Gender Budgeting into fiscal policy – now applied at varying levels of complexity and diversity in more than eighty countries (Kolovich, 2018) - establishes the principle that gender considerations can and should be part of economic policy decisions.

Combatting informality

The analysis has made clear that gender disparities in the prevalence of informal employment is not a major issue underlying female labour market disadvantage in the region; rates of informal employment are rather similar amongst young men and women. However, rates of informality are relatively high in the region and they are much higher amongst young women and men, than amongst their older counterparts (ILO, 2018). Extensive informality is likely per se to impede the application of initiatives promoting gender disparities since, by definition, legislation cannot be applied to informal workers. Indeed, one of the motivations underlying informal employment is the evasion of regulatory legislation.

Many initiatives to combat informality have been employed in different parts of the world (O'Higgins, 2017, chapter 7). Typically three approaches which are not mutually exclusive have been adopted: those increasing the benefits of formalisation, those reducing the costs of formalisation and those strengthening enforcement mechanisms. Typically effective approaches include elements of all three types of approach (ILO, 2013).

5.3. Facilitating effective transitions: measures to enhance the integration and re-integration of young women into the labour market

Promoting gender equality in education and training systems

With the exception of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the educational **attainment** levels of young women are good, with more young women than young men participating in tertiary education. At the same time, however, differences in the subjects studied by young women and men appear to be one of the factors underlying gender disparities in NEET rates and pay, promoting as they do gender based occupational and sectorial segregation, which manifest themselves in full as young people become adults.

In the case of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, action is also needed to promote the educational participation and attainment of young women. In recent years, Tajikistan has made progress in this regard, but further actions are required.

Perhaps more importantly, certainly more pervasively from a regional perspective, are the concentrations of young women and young men in different subject streams. In particular, young men tend to be concentrated in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects whilst young women are heavily concentrated in non-STEM subjects. Clearly, STEM related careers are more remunerative and this may well play a part in the evident occupational and sectoral segregation which appears to be well established in many countries in the region and which will be returned to below.

There is clearly room in CIS countries to increase the involvement of young women in STEM subjects. Forms of intervention which may be helpful in this regard is the removal of gender stereotypes from textbooks, raising awareness regarding the career and earnings consequences of particular fields of study (OECD, 2012). Students can also be given better information whilst in school of the career implications of the educational choices made. However careers guidance in schools is relatively rare amongst CIS countries, although positive steps have been taken in this regard in recent years. Career guidance may invite adult women who studied STEM subjects in school and are currently active and successful in the relevant fields as resources to students. Opportunities that allow young girls to actually see women working in STEM fields can encourage them to imagine their futures in such areas and prompt them to choose these subjects. Some civil society organizations have created similar opportunities for young girls.

Another, complementary approach, is to provide teachers with economic incentives to encourage greater gender parity in the choice of subjects. There is much evidence to support the notion that interventions at an early age are the most effective (OECD, 2016).

More generally, there also appears to be a lack of connection between vocational education and training on the one hand, and labour market needs on the other, although steps have been taken in some countries in the region seeking to rectify this in recent years (ILO, 2017b, 2017d). This absence of linkages is compounded by the aforementioned lack of sufficient and accurate careers advice to young people whilst in education systems; especially young women in the region might benefit from a better understanding of the long-term economic implications of the educational choices that they (and their families) make. However, careers guidance services in schools and in public employment services are relatively undeveloped, but there have been improvements in recent years. Armenia, amongst others, has introduced careers guidance functions in schools and public employment services, however, the scope and capacity of these services appears to be thus far limited. Careers guidance for secondary and tertiary students was initiated in 2014 in Kazakhstan and a similar service is currently offered by the public employment services in Azerbaijan (ILO, 2017d). Developing links between employers' organizations and educational institutions has also been found to be an effective way to improve information transmission between schools and the labour market.

Apprenticeships may also be employed to reduce gender gaps. Evidence from the OECD suggests that, even when young women do study STEM subjects, they are less likely than their male colleagues to pursue a career in a STEM related field. Apprenticeships may be an appropriate way to encourage young women to pursue careers in STEM subjects (OECD, 2016) providing a direct entry point into the relevant profession.

Promoting gender equality through Active labour market programmes (ALMPs)

In many countries in the region, there is a major issue with young women exiting the labour force, becoming and remaining inactive NEETs. In Armenia, for instance, this problem is particularly severe, despite the existence of a good labour market information base that would allow identification of appropriate interventions. One way to approach the problem is through a comprehensive ALMP, similar to the Youth Guarantee adopted in the European Union for young people. However, such a comprehensive policy, whilst evidently beneficial, also from a systemic perspective, is expensive and its effectiveness in improving the integration of young women into decent work will depend much on how well it is implemented. In the more immediate future, an approach employing targeted measures aimed at specifically promoting the entry and re-entry of young women into the labour market might be more effective in this case. For instance, in Armenia, mothers who are up to 30 years of age and are entering the labour market for the first time can receive vocational training at an employer and receive a scholarship to cover costs relevant for the training as well as for child-care expenses. The

development of small scale initiatives promoting the engagement of young inactive women in the labour market might be a fruitful approach.

Targeted interventions seeking to promote the entry and re-entry of young women into employment are likely to be a fruitful approach, although more impact evaluations of specific interventions are needed. The specific approach to adopt may depend on local circumstances. Public employment services can play an important role in profiling young people and offering job opportunities which may be outside their usual frame of reference and/or encouraging young women to participate in training opportunities for typically male dominated occupations.

Indeed, numerous ALMPs have been implemented in the region, but these rarely have a specific emphasis on redressing the additional obstacles to decent work faced by young women.

One area which has received much emphasis in recent years across a range of high, middle and low income countries concerns the development of measures to support and encourage young female entrepreneurship. In Sweden, for example, the 'Promotion of Female Entrepreneurship' programme (2007-14) provided support for female start-up activity and entrepreneurship (Eurofound, 2016). A project from the Astrakhan Region of the Russian Federation titled "My mother is an entrepreneur," which was piloted in 2017, targets women who left the labour market because of childbirth or childcare and currently have children younger than 18. It provides an intensive training programme in entrepreneurship, materials to start their businesses, and mentoring support from professional entrepreneurs. It also offers financial support to the winning projects among all participants of a yearly competition.²⁶

Another form of intervention regards payments to single parent families – The 'Inwork Credit' programme in the UK is one example. In order to reduce disincentives for the long-term unemployed with family responsibilities to return to work and simply involved a weekly payment for upto one year on entering employment so as to allow such parents to pay for childcare services which otherwise might constitute a major discouragement to job seeking. This is similar in intention, albeit a more targeted approach, to direct State support to childcare through free provision of such services by the State or subsidizing provision by private providers. It also corresponds – in intention – to fiscal policy measures mentioned above providing for example tax relief on payments for childcare services. Recent initiatives in Armenia have been adopted by Armenia, for example, and involve subsidizing employment for young mothers combined with subsidizing access to childcare.

Removing obstacles to young women's transitions

As noted above, the problems regarding labour market discrimination does not regard the existence of basic protections in law but rather their application. Certainly the encouragement of both the application and awareness of anti-discriminatory and protective legislation is to be recommended, however, this can be complemented by measures aimed at facilitating the return to work of women once they have had children. For example, the provision of subsidizing – or even free – child care services represents one such practical measure already mentioned.

Another area which may support the engagement of women in particular in the labour market, but which is also likely to benefit also men, is in the introduction of more flexible working hours practices which are relatively rare in the region. In particular, providing incentives for, and/or reducing disincentives to, part-time employment may encourage the integration of young women into the labour force.

²⁶ The project "My mother is an entrepreneur". Official website <http://mama-predprinimatel.ru/> (Accessed on 29/10/19)



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