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COUNTRY GENDER PROFILE ARMENIA

EU4GENDEREQUALITY
REFORM HELPDESK

AUGUST 2021



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EUROPEAN UNION FOR ARMENIA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGP	Country Gender Profile
CLIP	Country Level Implementation Plan
CSO	Civil society organisation
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
EUD	European Union Delegation
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
CGP	Country Gender Profile
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICT	Information and communications technology
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISS	Integrated Social Service
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
NAP	National Action Plan
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NSC	National Statistical Committee
NSS	National Security Service
RGA	Rapid Gender Assessment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WPS	Women, peace and security



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Country Gender Profile (CGP) of Armenia was developed in the framework of the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project, funded by the European Union and implemented by NIRAS. It addresses the main areas of the European Union's Gender Action Plan III 2021–2025 (GAP III). The goal of this assessment is to provide the European Delegation to Armenia with comprehensive information and recommendations to guide decision-making with regard to the development of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), in line with the GAP III.¹

Main findings

There are relatively **more extremely poor women than men in Armenia**. The poorest households in the country are households headed by these women and households with children under 6 years old. There are more women-headed households among extremely poor households (2.3%) than households headed by men (1.1%). Gender differences exist in child poverty, as there are more girls (2.8%) among extremely poor children than boys (1.8%).

Women's political participation remains low. There are no women among members of core executive authorities and Armenia has only **one woman minister**, the Minister of Health.

Social attitudes toward gender roles remain rigid. Despite some positive changes in societal attitudes towards women's leadership, social stereotypes persist about women's role in the politics. For example, relatively more people can envision women holding the positions of deputy minister (68%) or minister (64%) than being the head of a community (63%) or the administrative head of a village (55%). Fewer than half of Armenians (46%) can envision a woman holding the position of prime minister.

A major reason for women's absence from the labour market is their engagement in unpaid household activities. According to the World Bank, the largest gap in economic activity occurs among the age group which is between 25 and 34 years old, coinciding with childbearing among women. This situation is complicated by low levels of pre-school attendance, especially in rural areas, where just 17.2% of children attend pre-school.

¹ All of the sources for the data included in this executive summary are presented below in the body of the report.

In terms of their employment activity status, more women are considered 'inactive', while more men are considered 'unemployed'.

Marital status plays a role in employment opportunities. Among all groups of women, divorced women represent the majority of employed women in Armenia. Among men, married men are the group most involved in the labour market. The greatest discrepancies are apparent among couples with children. The number of children that a woman has affects her labour market-related activities, but the number of children that a man has does not affect his activities in the labour market. **Mothers of two children have a non-participation rate in the labour market that is six times higher than the rate for fathers of two children.** This situation is also clearly reflected in social perceptions, as 66% of Armenian women, and 75% of Armenian men, believe that pre-school children are better off when their mother does not work.

Armenia has a **high level of informal employment**. In 2017, 48% of the labour force was engaged in the informal sector, most prominently in agriculture, a sector in which women are more likely than men to work informally. Informal employment excludes women from social protection and labour protection measures, as well as from trade unions. Informal workers would benefit from being brought into the formal sector. Rates of injury and disease are reportedly higher in the informal sector. Precarious, often temporary work and the lack of consistent pay puts informal workers in a vulnerable position, both from a financial and a health-related perspective. These factors could explain why so many women are dissatisfied with their jobs. According to the Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, 74% of women are 'very dissatisfied' with their current jobs.

Overall, there is **both horizontal and vertical segregation** in favour of men in the labour market. Horizontal segregation refers to segregation within certain professions and specialisations, while vertical segregation refers to segregation among the positions occupied. For example, among production and operations managers, there are almost twice as many men (68%) as women (35%). Similar trends are apparent among the managers of small enterprises (73% of whom are men, while 27% are women). Moreover, 60% of women work in sectors that are not particularly lucrative, including agriculture, education and health. Fewer women than men are employed in technical fields, such as manufacturing, transportation and storage, construction, mining, and the electricity, gas and steam sectors. These technical sectors tend to pay higher wages than agriculture, education or health care, the sectors in which women are concentrated.

There is a **large gender gap in favour of men among employers** in Armenia, as 86% of employers are men, while only 14% are women. Women were almost twice as likely to be engaged as contributing family workers (65% of whom are women, while 35% are men).

Girls' enrolment in vocational and professional education remains low. Three times more boys than girls are enrolled in preliminary vocational education. Manufacturing and production is the only area of preliminary vocational education in which more girls are enrolled than boys.

More women than men obtain bachelor's and master's degrees in Armenia. In 2019, twice as many women were enrolled in master's degree studies (67% of students were women, while 33% were men), more women students are currently receiving master's degrees (68% are women and 31% are men), and more than **twice as many women than men received master's degrees in 2019** (72% were women and 28% were men).

Among the greatest challenges that women and girls face to exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights is the **absence of comprehensive sex education** in Armenia. In Armenian schools, the sexuality education programme is called 'Healthy Lifestyle' and is taught as part of physical education studies for grades 8 to 11.

Between 2010 and 2020, at least **83 women were killed by a current or former intimate partner, spouse or other family member in Armenia**, according to women's rights organisations. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia does not contain special provisions for distinguishing femicide from other types of killing. Therefore, the Criminal Code does not outline any specific guidelines for qualifying cases or punishing crimes which involve domestic violence. Armenian courts do not consider aggravating circumstances in terms of an abuser's liability and punishment in cases of femicide. Gender stereotypes and victim-blaming practices are prevalent in Armenia's criminal justice and judicial systems when addressing cases of femicide.

According to the 2021 Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, **relatively fewer stereotypes exist in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector** due to open work environments, young staff, and opportunities for remote work. Despite this favourable environment, only 11% of leaders in the ICT sector are women. A considerable gender pay gap also exists in the sector, as women earn 63.8% of what men earn, on average. This is slightly higher than the median gender pay gap in the country (34.7%).

Overall, there is a **lack of sex-disaggregated data** on the shadow economy, multidimensional poverty, and the impact of recent crises on the lives of women and men in Armenia.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context and justification

For the Republic of Armenia, 2020 was an extremely challenging year. The difficult situation continued in 2021, marked by political instability and tensions, both on its borders and inside the country.

In the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution of 2018, the Government of the Republic of Armenia launched a series of innovative reforms. In the past decade, the country has undergone reforms that aim to uphold the principles of democracy, human rights and free market relations. Several improvements are apparent in terms of gender equality. Nevertheless, challenges remain with regard to establishing comprehensive national gender equality and anti-discrimination policies.

The timeline of reforms in Armenia has experienced setbacks, resulting in the course of action taking much longer than originally planned and anticipated. The two main reasons for delays are the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Both have impacted all aspects of life, prompting new political, economic and psycho-social challenges, while exacerbating past and ongoing problems. Multiple crises continue to affect women's rights and escalate the intensity of challenges to achieving gender equality.

Online violence against women and girls remains a major problem in Armenia. This reality itself is a symptom of a deep-seated gender inequality in society at large, as well as the result of impunity surrounding online end-user abuse. A more recent and disturbing phenomenon that disproportionately affects women in politics, as well as women's rights and human rights activists in Armenia, is cyberbullying and online sexism. Whereas attacks on men target their professional opinions and capacities, women are more likely to be subject to sexist and sexualised abuse. These types of online attacks on high-profile women in Armenia, as in many other countries, undermine their rights to express themselves and to serve their constituents, while limiting their rights to free movement and assembly. Without exception, women leaders are targeted far more than men because of their gender.

In the context of the current climate, it is important to acknowledge the possibility of regressive setbacks to women's empowerment, rather than steady progress, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on women's collective voice and agency.

Various relevant datasets exist on previous economic crises, which show that society at large could witness a return to more conservative gender norms and deepening gender inequality. Therefore, it is crucial to focus not only on a discussion of the topic of gender inequality at the individual level, but also to employ a holistic approach to improve policies that affect the lives of women and girls, including those from marginalised communities. They include women and girls living in poverty, women and girls with disabilities, women and girls from the Yezidi community of Armenia, women living with HIV/AIDS, and women in the LGBT community.

1.2. Goals and objectives

The **goal of this Country Gender Profile** is to provide the European Delegation to Armenia with comprehensive information and recommendations to guide decision-making with regard to the development of the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), in line with the EU Gender Action Plan III 2021–2025 (GAP III). The specific **objectives of this Country Gender profile** are:

- To inform the EU Delegation of Armenia's national context, as well as the legal and institutional framework for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).
- To provide gender analysis on a sector by sector basis.
- To update information on the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- To provide information on good practices related to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- To present key findings and develop recommendations for further action on gender equality and women's empowerment covering the new thematic areas of engagement included in the GAP III. These are climate change, the gender-related aspects of the digital transformation, and women, peace and security (WPS).

1.3. Methodology

This Country Gender Profile was developed in the context of the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk project, funded by the European Union and implemented by NIRAS. The methodology of this Country Gender Profile is based on a thorough desk review, including of existing research, statistics, state programme documents and reports, as well as data from the National Statistical Committee. It also incorporates data from recent country gender profiles prepared by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, alongside sectoral analyses by civil society organisations. It further uses data from the mapping of reforms performed by the EU4 Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk earlier in 2021. It is important to note the data limitations that affect this assessment. Armenia lacks sex-disaggregated data on the shadow economy, multidimensional poverty, and the impact of recent crises on the lives of men and women.



2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1. Gender aspects of the demographic situation

As of the beginning of 2020, women comprised 53% of Armenia's population, while men accounted for 47%. The average age of the population is 36.9 years, and 64% of the country's population is urban. Average life expectancy is 73.1 years for men and 79.7 years for women.²

According to data obtained from the National Statistical Committee, the fertility rate (aggregate birth rate) in 2019 was 1.599 children per 1,000 women and girls of reproductive age (15-49 years old), compared to 1.572 in 2018. This is significantly lower than the fertility rate of 2.150 required for the reproduction of the population.³ In 2019, the gross reproduction rate of the population was 0.760, while the net reproduction rate was 0.730.⁴ The average age of a mother at childbirth was 27.6 years, and the average age at the time of a mother's first childbirth following her first conception was 25.2 years in 2019, compared to 27.3 and 25.1 years, respectively, in 2018. In terms of the sequence of births following initial childbirth in 2019, third and subsequent births comprised 25% of the total number of live births in the country, reflecting an increase of 2.4 percentage points compared to the previous year.⁵

The mean age at marriage for men was 31.7 years in 2019, compared to 28.0 years for women. In the same year, 32% of live births were to non-registered marriages (including extra-marital births). Moreover, the number of deaths increased by 1.7% in 2019 compared to the previous year. The mortality rate in urban areas is relatively higher than in rural communities.

The average number of household members in Armenia is 3.6. The sex ratio remains skewed in favour of boys (1.10), a figure which rises to 1.29 in the Gegharkunik region.

² Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *The Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2347>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

2.2. Gender-sensitive country poverty profile

Armenia has a poverty rate of 26.4%. In 2019, the estimates for upper, lower and extreme poverty lines were AMD 53,043 (USD 110.3), AMD 35,054 (USD 72.9) and AMD 23,763 (USD 49.4) per adult equivalent per month, respectively.⁶

Among all of the regions of Armenia, the **two poorest regions are Aragatsotn and Shirak** (51% and 48%, respectively), while the least poor region is Syunik (12%). Most extremely poor people live in the regions of Aragatsotn and Gegharkunik.⁷

Among Armenia's adult population (aged 18+), **there are more poor people in the 35–39 age group**. The poverty rate increases with the number of members in a household. There are more poor and extremely poor people among households composed of seven or more members. Households with three or more children are poorer than households with one or two children.⁸

People who have not completed their secondary education are the poorest people in Armenia. There are twice as many people with only elementary or primary education among the extremely poor than among any other group.⁹

Since 2016, the Statistical Committee of Armenia has calculated the rate of **multidimensional poverty** in the country, albeit without sex-disaggregated data. Nevertheless, some trends shed light on the intersections between gender, economic status and vulnerability. More individuals living in households that are considered multidimensionally poor reside in rural areas (29%) than in the capital city of Yerevan (18%) or other urban areas (22%).¹⁰ Multidimensional poverty indicators reveal that the most significant deprivations in Armenia are related to: 1) decent jobs, 2) a dignified life, with the funds to buy, when necessary, food and/or clothes, 3) healthy heating (i.e. households which use wood, carbon or other sources as their primary source for heating), and 4) centralised sanitation and garbage disposal.¹¹

Regarding the subjective assessment of poverty, only 1% of the population consider themselves to be extremely poor, and 0.1% consider themselves to be rich. According to data on the subjective measurement of economic status, USD 991 is the per capita income required for living 'very well', USD 329 for living 'well', and USD 140 for survival.¹²

⁶ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Armenia – Poverty Snapshot over 2009–2019*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2019, available at: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2020_e_2.pdf

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

In terms of the **gender dimension of the subjective assessment of poverty**, far more women than men describe themselves as very poor (85% of women, compared to 15% of men).¹³ Moreover, women are less ambitious than men when it comes to a minimal monthly income for a normal standard of life. Thus, 77% of women, compared to 23% of men, think that USD 250 or less is the minimum they need to maintain a normal standard of life.

Similarly, 62% of women, compared to 38% of men, believe that USD 251–400 is the minimal monthly income required for a normal standard of life in Armenia. More women than men (61% compared to 39%) report that the economic situation of their household is so dire that they lack enough money to purchase an adequate supply of food. Some 60% of women, compared to 40% of men, report that they have only have enough money for food, but lack sufficient funds to purchase clothes.¹⁴ It is also important to note that almost three times more men than women have credit cards (12.6% vs 4.2%). The percentage of men who conduct online transactions is also higher than the percentage of women who do so (19.2% vs 12.2%).¹⁵

From the early 1980s, researchers began a discussion on the gendered aspects of poverty. Many surveys at the time showed that women were more vulnerable and at-risk of poverty than men. Women, especially single mothers and women-headed households, suffer from more severe poverty than men, leading researchers to coin the term ‘the feminisation of poverty’. The acceptance of the feminisation of poverty involves acknowledging how poverty affects women and men in different ways, and acknowledging that gender is a factor in terms of both the level of poverty that women and men experience, as well as in women’s and men’s perceptions of poverty.

There are relatively more extremely poor women than men in Armenia. The poorest households in Armenia are households headed by these women and households which include children under 6 years old. There are more women-headed households among extremely poor households (2.3%, compared to 1.1% of households headed by men).¹⁶ Gender differences also exist in terms of child poverty, as there are more girls among extremely poor children than boys (2.8% and 1.8%, respectively).

2.3. Country ranking on international gender indices and ratings

In recent years, Armenia has made some progress on the **Global Gender Gap Index**, which is calculated each year by the World Economic Forum.

¹³ Caucasus Research Resource Center, Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kemp, S., *Digital 2021: Armenia*, Kepios 2021, available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-armenia>

¹⁶ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Social Snapshot and Poverty in Armenia 2019*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2019, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2217>

Armenia rose from 102nd position in 2016, to 97th in 2018, and then to 98th in 2019 and 2020. However, according to data in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, Armenia has fallen to 114th place on the index.¹⁷ Key changes have occurred in terms of the sub-index of economic participation and opportunity, where Armenia fell from 78th place in 2020 to 96th place in 2021.¹⁸ This may be explained by the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In terms of the ranks held by countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Armenia ranks 25th among 26 countries.¹⁹

According to the **Women in Politics Report 2021**, Armenia ranks 98th among 189 countries in terms of the percentage of women in parliament, and 182nd among 182 countries with regard to the percentage of women in ministerial positions.²⁰

In 2020, Armenia's **Human Development Index** (HDI) value was 0.776,²¹ placing it in the 'high human development' category and ranking 81st among 189 countries.²² Armenia's Gender Development Index (GDI) value is 0.982. This is considered fairly high, and is higher than the average for Europe and Central Asia (0.953). In 2019, Armenia ranked 54th of 162 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), with a GII value of 0.245, compared to an average of 0.256 for Europe and Central Asia.²³

The **Multidimensional Poverty Index** (MPI) includes three dimensions: health, education and living standards. Armenia's MPI value is 0.001, and the intensity of deprivations in the country is 36.2%.²⁴ The most recent publicly available survey data used to calculate Armenia's MPI value are from 2015/2016. In Armenia, 0.2% of the population (6,000 people) are multidimensionally poor, while an additional 2.7% are vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (80,000 people).

Armenia ranked 86th on the **World Happiness Report 2021**, reflecting an improvement of 30 places since 2020, when the country ranked 116th.²⁵

Armenia's **Women, Peace, and Security Index 2019** value is 0.72 and the country ranks 82nd of 167 countries on the index.²⁶

¹⁷ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Index 2021*, Cologny, WEF, 2021, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Women in Politics: 2021*, UN Women, New York, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/women-in-politics-map-2021>

²¹ United Nations Development Programme, *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report: Armenia*, UNDP, New York, 2020, available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/ARM.pdf

²² Ibid.

²³ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2020, The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene*, UNDP, New York, 2020, available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Helliwell, J., et al., *World Happiness Report 2021*, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN), New York, NY, 2021, available at: <https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2021/WHR+21.pdf>

²⁶ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 'Women, Peace, and Security Index 2019', GIWPS, Washington, DC, 2019, available at: <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index>



3. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. International and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment

In September 2019, Armenia submitted its **State Report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, followed by reports from civil society. In January 2020, the United Nations Human Rights Council conducted Armenia's most recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The council's report included several recommendations for Armenia, including recommendations on ratifying the Istanbul Convention without further delay, strengthening anti-discrimination policies, and criminalising all forms of torture and ill-treatment.

In December 2020, the Republic of Armenia submitted its report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In June 2021, several human rights organisations submitted a list of issues for the upcoming civil society report on CEDAW in 2022.

3.2. National legal framework on gender equality and women's empowerment

Armenia's legislative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment are relatively strong. The **Women's Global SDG Database** accords Armenia a score of 82% for its overall legislative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, and 42% for its legislative frameworks on gender-based violence. It receives a score of 80% for its legislative frameworks on employment and economic empowerment, and 82% for its legislative frameworks on marriage and the family.²⁷

²⁷ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

In June 2020, amendments were made to the **Armenian Criminal Procedural Code**. These introduced a mechanism for conducting victim and witness interviews using telecommunication technologies. This is particularly important for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence.²⁸ In January 2021, amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code entered into force. Accordingly, the guardians or trustees (legal representatives) of minors and ‘incapable persons’ should not participate in criminal procedures if they have a kinship relationship with, or are personally dependent on, the suspect. This is particularly important for underage victims of sexual violence who have been subjected to violence by their father or stepfather, and their mother is involved in the case as their legal representative.²⁹

In May 2020, amendments to the Armenian Criminal Code entered into force. These criminalise public calls for violence and the public justification of, or propaganda on, violence towards a person or group based on their sex, race, skin colour, political or other views, or other characteristics. This is especially significant in the context of widespread public calls for violence against human rights defenders in Armenia, particularly women human rights defenders.³⁰

In 2019, a working group on improving amendments to the **Law on Political Parties** was created in the National Assembly. Draft provisions include the requirement for at least 40% representation of each sex in the executive bodies of political parties. If this requirement is not met, political parties that may have received financing from public funds as a result of elections will be deprived of these funds.

In January 2021, amendments to the Law on Political Parties entered into force. As such, targeted state financial assistance for political parties now depends on the number of women in leadership positions within a political party. If women hold more than 40% of leadership positions in a political party, it will receive only half of the state-provided financial assistance it would have otherwise been eligible for. If women hold 20–40% of leadership positions, the party receives one-quarter of the financial assistance it would have been eligible for. If women hold fewer than 20% of leadership positions, the political party does not receive financial assistance.³¹

In September 2020, Armenia’s Parliament ratified the **Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, which allows access to an individual complaint mechanism.

²⁸ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Amendments in the Armenian Criminal Procedure Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, available at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143338>

²⁹ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Amendments and Changes in the Armenian Criminal Procedure Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, available at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=143341>

³⁰ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Law on Changes in the Armenian Criminal Code 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, available at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=141919>

³¹ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Changes in the Political Parties Law 2020 (in Armenian), 2020, available at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=149243>

In 2020, the Armenian Parliament also ratified the **Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**, also known as the Lanzarote Convention.³²

The **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**, also known as the Istanbul Convention, has not yet been sent to Armenia's Parliament for ratification. The Government of the Republic of Armenia signed the Istanbul Convention in 2018.

A comprehensive summary of Armenia's legal frameworks and international commitments is presented in the Country Gender Equality Brief prepared by UN Women.³³

3.3. National gender policies, strategies and action plans

In 2019, the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted the **National Action Plan 2019–2021 for the Implementation of the Provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security**. In September 2019, one of the earliest actions taken by the Government was the adoption of the **National Strategy and Action Plan 2019–2023 for Gender Equality**. The **Law on the Prevention of Violence within the Family, Protection of Victims of Violence within the Family and Restoration of Peace in the Family** was also amended. Among other guarantees, this law ensures preventive and protective mechanisms for survivors of domestic violence, as well as guarantees of social assistance.

The following strategies that include references to women's rights and gender equality have also been adopted:

- The Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of the Republic of Armenia 2019–2023 and related Action Plans.³⁴
- The National Strategy for Human Rights Protection 2020–2022 and its Action Plan for 2020–2022.³⁵

³² Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (in Armenian), 2020, available at: <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=142871>

³³ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

³⁴ Government of the Republic of Armenia, On Approving the 2019–2023 Strategy for Judicial and Legal Reforms of the Republic of Armenia and the Action Plans Deriving Therefrom, 2019, available at: https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/Gov.25_09_2019_ENG.pdf

³⁵ Government of the Republic of Armenia, National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and the Action Plan, 2020, available at: <https://www.moj.am/en/page/575>

The Government has also introduced **key changes in social protection mechanisms** that aim to ensure comparably greater access to the labour market for women. New proactive policies and social protection measures have also been introduced to support mothers and families. The most notable are supportive care policies, which include remuneration-related changes.

3.4. Gender dimensions of national development strategies, gender mapping of national reforms, and gender-sensitive indicators

In 2019, the Post-Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Armenia approved a Programme which serves as the basis for ongoing government reforms. The Programme covers the following areas:

- Ensuring external and internal security.
- Fighting against corruption.
- Free, dignified, and happy citizens.
- A competitive, participatory and inclusive economy.
- Territorial administration, local self-governance and infrastructure.
- High technologies, digitisation and the military industry.
- The management of state finances.

It is important to note that the Programme is not gender-sensitive. Many ongoing judicial and legal reforms are underway in Armenia, as are reforms in the spheres of social assistance, health, education, public administration and self-governance. Reforms in the areas of labour rights, information and communication technologies (ICT), tourism, and small and medium-sized enterprises are also taking place. However, **most reforms are not gender-sensitive**. They require gender mainstreaming and capacity building for gender equality policy makers and gender focal points at various levels.

Armenia has adopted the methodology of **gender-responsive budgeting** (GRB).³⁶ Several ministries use gender-responsive budgeting in their strategies and programmes, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance. Gender-responsive budgeting considers the needs of women, including women who are part of vulnerable groups, such as the needs of displaced women from Nagorno-Karabakh. Reforms related to gender-responsive budgeting are fairly gender-sensitive and offer a good example for gender-responsive budgeting at the state and community levels. However, capacity building on gender-responsive budgeting is required for relevant gender focal points and policy makers across ministries and agencies.

³⁶ Based on conversations with representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

This need has been highlighted by the Head of the Division for Women's Issues at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In addition, the integration of a gender approach in the budget cycle and legislation which regulates budgetary processes should also be considered. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2019–2023 states that criteria for gender-sensitive budgeting should be introduced and implemented at all levels – namely the national, regional and community levels.³⁷

The recently adopted **Integrated Social Services** (ISS) reform is one of the fundamental systemic reforms of Armenia's social protection sector, which considers the needs of men and women from various groups. It integrates the pension system, state employment services, medical-social examination services and social support services which target any person or family facing difficult situations. Target groups include women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, persons who are not competitive in the labour market, migrants and internally displaced persons, among others.

The reform of Armenia's **State Educational Standards** has gender-sensitive elements, as it aims to bring educational-methodological materials into compliance, while ensuring the equal representation and balance of women and men in education. One of the eight competencies introduced by the reform is the importance of knowledge on women's labour rights.

3.5. Institutional framework/machinery

The Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men defines the country's national institutional mechanism for gender equality. This mechanism includes:

- The Council on the Provision of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, adjunct to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia
- The Department of Family, Women, and Children's Issues at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
- Permanent Commissions on gender issues established in each *Marzpetaran* (regional governing body).
- An Advisor on Women's Issues at the Office of the Human Rights Defender.

Since 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has emerged as the main government actor involved in promoting gender mainstreaming. In 2019, the Council on Women's Affairs was established, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, as a national mechanism that promotes women's involvement in democratic processes and works to ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women.³⁸ Yet, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war, the council has not yet achieved a great deal.

³⁷ Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Approval of the Strategy for the Implementation of the Gender Policy in the Republic of Armenia for 2019–2023 and the approval of the events programme (in Armenian), 2019, available at: <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=151906>

³⁸ Government of the Republic of Armenia, On the Establishment of a Women's Council and Working Group in the Republic of Armenia (in Armenian), 2019, available at: <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=102587>



4. GENDER ANALYSIS BY SECTOR

4.1. Women in decision-making and leadership

In recent years, there has been gradual, growing acceptance of women's role in public life in Armenia. While in 2000, only 3.1% of persons surveyed agreed that women should play a role in public life, just before the Velvet Revolution in 2018, 18% of persons surveyed believed that women should take part in public life.³⁹

Until snap parliamentary elections on 20 June 2021, **women accounted for 23% of the deputies in the National Assembly of Armenia**.⁴⁰ However, there are no women members of core executive authorities and the country only has one woman minister, the Minister of Health. Currently, women are deputy ministers in just five of 12 ministries. Overall, eight of Armenia's 40 deputy ministers are women.⁴¹

No services (committees) within the structure of ministries are headed by women. Tatik Revazyan is the sole exception, as she continues to chair the Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure.⁴²

None of the three bodies subordinate to the Prime Minister – the National Security Service, the police and the State Control Service – is headed by a woman. Moreover, none of the 11 bodies subordinate to the Government is headed by a woman.⁴³

³⁹ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

⁴⁰ New parliamentary elections took place on 20 June 2021.

⁴¹ Oxygen, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, Oxygen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf

⁴² Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

⁴³ Ibid.

Despite this, women comprise the vast majority of staff members in almost all of the ministries in Armenia, with the exception of the Ministry of Defence.⁴⁴

In general, women's participation in decision-making at the community level, especially in rural communities, is fairly low. The principal reasons for their limited involvement in community leadership include public opinion, men's lack of acceptance of women's leadership, women's fear of expressing themselves, and a lack of self-confidence among women.⁴⁵

As of 2019, **there is only one woman mayor among the 46 urban communities in Armenia.** Despite the reform of local governance structures in recent years, only one of the 52 heads of consolidated municipalities is a woman. Among all of the 502 communities in the country, only eight women are heads of communities. In addition, only 9% of all local municipal councillors are women. There are no women among community leaders in four *marzes* (regions) of Armenia: Aragatsotn, Tavush, Vayots Dzor and Syunik.⁴⁶ **There are currently no women governors,** and only two of the 12 deputy governors in the country are women.⁴⁷

Following the application of gender quotas for local self-government bodies, the **number of women in the municipality of Yerevan's Councils of Elders rose to 32%, and increased to 24% in Gyumri and Vanadzor.**⁴⁸

In the by-elections scheduled for 17 October 2021, 263 of the 727 candidates on electoral lists – representing of 17 political forces in six communities – were women (more than 36% of the candidates). Most of these women were included in the lists of political forces participating in Dilijan (40%), Gyumri and Meghri (37% each), Tatev, Goris and local women candidates (33% each).⁴⁹

Of the nine communities preparing for elections, women are represented in only three councils. In one of these councils (Gyumri), the representation of women was a requirement of the gender quota stipulated in the Electoral Code.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

⁴⁵ OxyGen, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, OxyGen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

⁴⁸ OxyGen, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, OxyGen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf

⁴⁹ WomenNet.AM, 'Only one of the 17 political forces participating in the local elections leads the list of women', *Women & Society Information Analytical Portal*, 22 September 2021, available at: <http://womennet.am/en/tim-yntrutyunner-oct17/?fbclid=IwAR0d8ekIVn6pzYhi2wRZa-yLy9ecVduYctmG-4St0FrIrdGEPmfykhVohC0>

⁵⁰ WomenNet.AM, 'How are women represented in community councils preparing for elections?', *Women & Society Information Analytical Portal*, 10 September 2021, available at: <http://womennet.am/en/women-tim-elections/?fbclid=IwAR1OprXG7cWv6y6Bowb9TXCbAieJI4so91sVxeM13Mvr6uEOZGipzsTXPz8>

In total, there are 244 judges in Armenia, 26.6% of whom are women, while 73.4% are men. The **percentage of women judges decreases among the higher ranks of the judiciary**, as follows:

- Among 183 judges of the first instance, 27.3% are women, while 72.7% are men.
- Among 44 judges of the second instance, 25% are women and 75% are men.
- Among 17 judges of the third instance, 24% are women and 76% are men.

There is greater gender imbalance in the specialised jurisdictions of First Instance Courts compared to First Instance Courts with general jurisdictions:

- Among the 147 judges of First Instance Courts with general jurisdictions, 29.9% are women and 70.1% are men.
- Among the 36 judges of First Instance Courts with specialised jurisdictions, only 16.7% are women, while 83.3% are men.

Among the 18 chairpersons of the chambers and courts, only two are women. This means that women occupy 11.1% of senior positions in chambers and courts in Armenia, while men occupy 88.9% of senior positions.

Among the 10 members of the Supreme Judicial Council, only one is a woman. Thus, women occupy 10% of positions on the Supreme Judicial Council, while 90% of positions are held by men. The only woman judge was elected by the General Assembly of Judges. There are no women among non-judge members elected by the National Assembly. Among assistants to judges, a gender imbalance exists in favour of women. Thus, among 257 assistants, 66.1% are women and 33.9% are men.⁵¹

Gender quotas have been established for the judiciary in Armenia. According to Article 109, Part 5, of the Judicial Code, gender balance must be taken into account when compiling a list of candidates for judges. Where the number of the judges of either sex is less than 25% of the total number of judges, up to 50% of the places in the list of contenders must be reserved for persons of the less represented sex. The Judicial Code also establishes a gender quota for the Supreme Judicial Council, particularly for the purposes of gender balanced representation among judges who are members of the Supreme Judicial Council, specifying that at least three must be of the opposite sex (Article 76, Part 3). The gender quota only applies to members of the Supreme Judicial Council who are judges, and not to members of the body who are elected by the National Assembly.⁵²

⁵¹ Council of Europe, 'Online discussion of the study "Gender equality in the judiciary of Armenia: challenges and opportunities"', 26 May 2021, available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/home/-/asset_publisher/KZTSm796kFrq/content/online-discussion-of-the-study-gender-equality-in-the-judiciary-of-armenia-challenges-and-opportunities-?

⁵² See (in Armenian): <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=146620#>

Women account for 80% of employees in the education sector. However, they tend to occupy low and medium-level positions. In the past 10 years, the number of women among the rectors and vice-rectors of higher education institutions has risen slightly, increasing from 134 women in 2009 to 200 women in 2018.⁵³

Since 2016, measures have been taken to put quotas in place to increase women's political representation in the National Assembly. An amendment to the Electoral Code increased the minimum quota for women's representation among electoral candidates from 20% to 25% for 2018. In 2020, the figure rose to 30%. **In the snap parliamentary elections of June 2021, women comprised 36.3% of candidates running for parliament.** Of the 26 political forces running, only two were headed by women.⁵⁴ In the National Assembly, women's representation stands at 33.6%. This marks the first time that women's representation in the National Assembly has exceeded the established quota.⁵⁵ Most women in the National Assembly are part of the Hayastan (34.5%) and Civil Contract (34%) factions.

In line with the changes to the Republic of Armenia's Electoral Code adopted in 2020, the quota requiring at least a 30/70 split in the proportion of women and men on party lists will be used in local elections, in addition to its use in local council elections in Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor. As such, the quota applies to local government elections conducted on the basis of the proportional representation electoral system in communities with more than 4,000 eligible voters.⁵⁶

Gender-sensitivity is lacking among political parties in Armenia. This is problematic, as political parties are the main gatekeepers of, and entry point into, the arena of politics. Research on the gender profiles of major political parties reveals that they do not have gender policies in place, and largely lack an overall understanding of gender-based discrimination.⁵⁷ The Women's Agenda project implemented by the OxYgen Foundation in Armenia aims to increase political parties' awareness of gender issues, while facilitating dialogue between politicians and civil society.⁵⁸

According to the latest survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in 2021, 80% of Armenians believe that women are not actively involved in political life because they are preoccupied with child care and housekeeping. Only 7% of women, compared to 14% of men, expressed an interest in running for political office. However, an equal proportion of men and women (15%) expressed an interest in joining a political party.⁵⁹

⁵³ OxYgen Foundation, *An Analysis of Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Armenia*, UNDP, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://ngocsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Beijing25_analysis-of-3-areas-of-concern_ENG.pdf

⁵⁴ Martirosyan, S., '36% Of Candidates Running for Armenian Parliament Are Women', *Hetq*, 2 June 2021, available at: <https://hetq.am/en/article/131649>

⁵⁵ WomenNet.AM, 'The representation of women in the newly elected parliament is 33.6%', *Women & Society Information Analytical Portal*, 22 July 2021, available at: <http://womensnet.am/en/women-in-parliament-2021>

⁵⁶ OxYgen Foundation, *Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia*, OxYgen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey on Women's Issues: Residents of Armenia*, International Republican Institute, Washington, DC, 2020, available at: https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens_political_participation_breavis_iri_results_presentation_final_07.01.2021.pdf

Some positive changes are apparent in society's attitudes towards women's leadership. Nevertheless, **social stereotypes persist about women's role in politics**. For example, relatively more people can envision women holding the positions of deputy ministers (68%) and even ministers (64%), compared to women being heads of communities (63%) or the administrative heads of villages (55%). Fewer than half of Armenians (46%) can envision a woman holding the position of prime minister.⁶⁰

A recent disturbing phenomenon that disproportionately affects women in politics, as well as women's rights and human rights activists in Armenia, is **cyberbullying and online sexism**. Whereas attacks on men target their professional opinions and capacities, women are more likely to be subject to sexist and sexualised abuse, as noted above. These types of online attacks on high-profile women in Armenia, as in many other countries, undermine their rights to express themselves and to serve their constituents, while limiting their rights to free movement and freedom of assembly.⁶¹

In 2016, the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) recommended that Armenia introduce a gender parity system for appointments and the acceleration of women's recruitment to senior positions in the public and private sectors. The CEDAW Committee also recommended applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. In the state/public sphere, several special measures have been adopted, including quotas for Members of Parliament and judges. However, a gender parity system has not been implemented for other state or private employees in terms of the appointment and accelerated recruitment of women to senior positions.⁶²

4.2. Gender and economic and social rights

4.2.1. Gender equality and employment

According to data from the National Statistical Committee, **50% of women are not employed and are not seeking employment** in Armenia.⁶³ However, according to the Caucasus Barometer Database, the number was slightly higher in 2019, as 66% of women respondents in Armenia mentioned that they do not have a job.

⁶⁰ Oxygen, **Women's Political Participation in the Republic of Armenia**, Oxygen, NDI and USAID, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Women-PP_ENG.pdf

⁶¹ United States Agency for International Development, *USAID Armenia Gender Analysis Report*, USAID, Washington, DC, 2019, available at: <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/USAID-Armenia-Gender-Analysis-Report-1.pdf>

⁶² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'UN Committee to review Armenia's record on women's rights', 2 November 2016, available at: <https://ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20814&LangID=E>

⁶³ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <http://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

Comparing the first four months of 2020 to the same period in 2021 reveals that **the number of men looking for work has increased, while the number of women looking for work has remained almost the same**. For example, in April 2020, 56,519 women and 29,361 men were looking for a job. In April 2021, 59,028 women and 31,400 men were looking for work.⁶⁴ Across all of Armenia's regions, with the exception of Lori, increasingly more people are searching for employment. Relatively more people are looking for work in the regions of Ararat and Kotayk in 2021 than in 2020.⁶⁵

A major reason for women's absence from the labour market is their engagement in unpaid household activities. According to the World Bank, the largest gap in economic activity occurs among the age group between 25 and 34 years old, coinciding with childbearing among women.⁶⁶ This situation is further complicated by low levels of pre-school attendance in Armenia, especially in rural areas, as only 17.2% of children attend pre-school. In terms of their employment activity status, more women are considered 'inactive', while more men are considered 'unemployed'.⁶⁷

Among persons who are between 25 and 34 years old, women report significantly more family-related responsibilities as the key reason that they are not employed. Married women are 16 percentage points less likely than unmarried women to participate in the labour force.⁶⁸

For men, employment reaches peak level for the 25 to 39-year-old age group, while for women employment reaches its peak among the 40 to 54-year-old age group.⁶⁹ This situation keeps women out of the labour market during their most employable years and puts them at a considerable disadvantage in terms of employment overall. Women tend to have fewer skills and less working experience, and employers are more reluctant to hire women who are over 40 years old.

Overall, **72% of men and 48% of women between 15 and 74 years old are employed or seeking employment in Armenia**. Most working women (62%) are involved in the fields of public administration, education, health and social work.⁷⁰

Armenia has a high level of informal employment. In 2017, 48% of the labour force was engaged in the informal sector, most prominently in agriculture, a sector in which women are more likely than men to work informally.

⁶⁴ See: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_04_21r_141.pdf

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ World Bank, *Armenia Country Gender Assessment: Poverty and Equality Global Practice*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2016, available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/250481491242159715/pdf/113990-WP-P157626-PUBLIC-Armenia-Gender-Assessment-2016.pdf>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

⁷⁰ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

High levels of informal employment exclude women from social protection and labour protection measures, as well as from trade unions. Informal workers would benefit from being brought into the formal sector. Conditions in Armenia's informal sector are a cause for concern. For instance, rates of injury and disease are reportedly higher in the informal sector. Precarious, often temporary work and the absence of consistent pay puts informal workers in a vulnerable position, both from a financial and a health-related perspective.⁷¹ These factors could explain why so many women are dissatisfied with their jobs in Armenia. According to the Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, 74% of women are 'very dissatisfied' with their current jobs.⁷²

There is a large gender gap in favour of men among employers in Armenia, as 86% of employers are men, while only 14% are women. Moreover, women are almost twice as likely as men to be engaged as contributing family workers (65% of whom are women, while 35% are men).⁷³

Armenia's unemployment rate is fairly high (16.6%).⁷⁴ This is the highest unemployment rate among countries that are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Women comprise 53% of the country's long-term unemployed population.⁷⁵

There are interesting gender differences in terms of perceptions about the factors required to secure a 'good' job. Almost twice as many women (65%) as men (35%) believe that education is the most important factor for getting a job. By contrast, more men than women (58% vs 42%) believe that useful connections and doing a favour for the 'right' person (64% vs 36%) are the most important factors for securing a good job. More women than men believe that age and appearance play the most important role in securing a good job in Armenia. Twice as many men believe that talent is the most important factor in securing a good job (68% of men vs 32% of women).⁷⁶

More women than men work part-time in Armenia (61% of women vs 39% of men).⁷⁷ **The gender gap in hours of work exists across all occupations in the country.**

⁷¹ Congrave, J. and A. Gomktsyan, *The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality*, UKAID WOW Helpdesk, London, 2020, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf

⁷² Caucasus Research Resource Center, Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets>

⁷³ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

⁷⁴ Oxygen Foundation, *Road Map for Ensuring Equal Labor Rights for Women and Men in Armenia*, Oxygen Foundation, Yerevan, n.d., available at: https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Labor-Market-Armenia-Road-map-main.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0X6C2ZDYuuuDygKXQ0_rN9OKTJqUXd5i6XyG2w_ZMB2qbmXvZm1hRtyBE

⁷⁵ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

⁷⁶ Caucasus Research Resource Center, Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets>

⁷⁷ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: https://armstat.am/file/article/gender_2020.pdf

However, this gender gap is more pronounced at the level of managers and professionals, as well as among men and women with lower secondary and tertiary degrees.⁷⁸

Marital status plays a role in employment opportunities. Among all groups of women, divorced women represent the majority of employed women in Armenia. Among men, married men are the group most involved in the labour market. The greatest discrepancies are apparent among couples with children. The number of children that a woman has affects her labour market-related activities, but the number of children that a man has does not affect his activities in the labour market.⁷⁹ **Mothers of two children have a non-participation rate in the labour market that is six times higher than the rate for fathers of two children.**⁸⁰ This situation is also clearly reflected in social perceptions, as 66% of Armenian women, and 75% of Armenian men, believe that pre-school children are better off when their mother does not work.⁸¹

Some geographical differences are apparent in employment opportunities for women and men. **Gender gaps in the rate of persons who are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) are higher in rural areas.** For example, 45% of women in rural areas are not in employment, education or training, compared to 19% of rural men. Similarly, women in rural areas have higher NEET rates than women in urban areas.⁸² Moreover, in the 15 to 29-year-old age group, 42% of men and 21% of women are not engaged in employment, education or training.⁸³

According to the National Statistical Committee, the **gender pay gap was 34.7% in 2020.**⁸⁴ According to data from the World Bank, women in Armenia earn 20% less than men.⁸⁵ Several factors exacerbate the gender wage gap, including:

- Women's age, since the gender wage gap is higher among women who are between 50 and 54 years old.
- Geography, since women from the regions earn less than men when compared to women in the capital city of Yerevan.

⁷⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analysis of the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the labour market in Armenia*, UN Women, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and United Nations Population Fund, 'EU 4 Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence Project, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, 2020, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/eu-4-gender-equality-together-against-gender-stereotypes-and-gender-based-violence#view>

⁸² Honorati, M., et al., *Work for a Better Future in Armenia: An Analysis of Jobs Dynamics*, World Bank, Yerevan, 2019, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/387401564380250230/pdf/Work-for-a-Better-Future-in-Armenia-An-Analysis-of-Jobs-Dynamics.pdf>

⁸³ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Rodríguez-Chamussy, L., N. Sinha and A. Alencio, 'Gender Wage Gap in Armenia', *World Bank News*, Washington, DC, 2018, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2019/03/07/gender-wage-gap-in-armenia>

- Education, since women with a lower level of secondary education earn less than men, compared to women with tertiary or post-graduate education.

According to the Caucasus Barometer 2019, nearly three times more women than men (74% vs 26%) earn a personal monthly income of USD 50. At the same time, almost two twice as many men as women have a monthly income of more than USD 400.⁸⁶ In general, weak financial incentives are a secondary driver of women's economic inactivity in Armenia's labour market.⁸⁷ According a report by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in 2018, a significant proportion of women in Armenia report that they are not active in the labour market because: 1) available jobs do not pay enough, 2) they left their job because of a low salary, or 3) they never looked for work because available jobs do not pay well.⁸⁸

Overall, there is both horizontal and vertical gender segregation in favour of men in Armenia's labour market. Horizontal segregation refers to segregation within certain professions and specialisations, while vertical segregation refers to segregation among the positions occupied. For example, among production and operations managers, there are almost twice as many men (68%) as women (35%). Similar trends are apparent among the managers of small enterprises (73% of whom are men, while 27% are women).⁸⁹

Moreover, 60% of women work in sectors that are not particularly lucrative, including agriculture, education and health care. Fewer women than men are employed in technical fields such as manufacturing, transportation and storage, construction, mining, and the electricity, gas and steam sectors. These technical sectors tend to pay higher wages than agriculture, education or health care, the sectors in which women are concentrated.⁹⁰ The effects of the glass ceiling are also prevalent across the labour market, with women unable to rise to senior positions.

As women are often unable to fully exercise their labour rights, they lack access to assets. Obstacles that prevent women from fully exercising their property rights and asset-related rights include:⁹¹

- A lack of collateral.
- A lack of business experience.

⁸⁶ Caucasus Research Resource Center, Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets>

⁸⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Armenia, UN Women, Tbilisi, 2018.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analysis of the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the labour market in Armenia*, UN Women, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf

⁹⁰ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, Women and Men in Armenia 2020, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

⁹¹ Congrave, J. and A. Gomktsyan, *The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality*, UKAID WOW Helpdesk, London, 2020, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf

- High interest rates.
- The fear of taking risks.
- A lack of land and property ownership.
- A lack of legal literacy and knowledge about taxation.

Informal discussions and reports by women's organisations reveal widespread sexual harassment in the workplace. However, there is no comprehensive report which identifies the problem of sexual harassment in employment sectors in Armenia. It is important to note that the Armenian Labour Code does not include any references to the definition of sexual harassment. It does not contain a prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace, and ignores this issue in terms of regulating employment relationships.

Armenia's State Report, submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2020, states that the National Assembly is prepared to include a definition of sexual harassment in the Labour Code, as well as to introduce a criminal or other sanction for sexual persecution/harassment in the workplace.⁹² However, the National Assembly has been dissolved since May 2021, and no draft of the Labour Code that includes a definition or prohibition of sexual harassment in the workplace has been published or circulated. A draft Law on Ensuring Equality has been circulating for five years and has yet to reach Parliament. No drafts have been developed about a confidential and secure system for submitting applications on sexual harassment in the workplace.

4.2.2. Women in business

Women's economic empowerment is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations provides strong evidence that women lag behind men in terms of the number of women business owners, the size of women-owned businesses and women's access to economic resources. In Armenia, women-owned enterprises are smaller and more disadvantaged than enterprises owned by men in terms of access to credit, resources and assets.⁹³

Armenia's value on the Women, Business and the Law Index has been 82.5 for the past two years.⁹⁴ Among countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Armenia's performance on women's financial inclusion is assigned a score of 41%, compared to the minimum score in the region assigned to Azerbaijan (28%) and the maximum score assigned to Estonia (98%).⁹⁵

⁹² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Seventh Periodic Report submitted by Armenia under Article 18 of the CEDAW Convention, CEDAW/C/ARM/7, 1 April 2021, available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046192/N2108100.pdf>

⁹³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, *Women's Economic Inactivity and Engagement in the Informal Sector in Armenia: Causes and consequences*, UN Women, Tbilisi, 2018, available at: <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/womens-economic-inactivity-and-engagement-in-the-informal-sector-in-armenia>

⁹⁴ World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law Index*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35094>

⁹⁵ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 'Armenia's Performance on the Women, Peace, and Security Index', *GIWPS*, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia>

The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 highlights that **34% of all firms in Armenia have women co-owners, and 24% of firms have women as top managers**. An evaluation by the Asian Development Bank in 2018 reveals that women's share of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) ownership has increased since 2013, as more programmes to support women's entrepreneurship have been established. Self-employment or microenterprise activities are common for both women and men in Armenia, as 35% of women and 36% of men are self-employed. By comparison, 14% of women in Europe and Central Asia are self-employed.⁹⁶

Women are under-represented among business owners, although it is still difficult to obtain valid data on business ownership in the country. It is a common practice for men in Armenia to register a business in the name of a female family member.⁹⁷

According to a 2021 report by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on women's entrepreneurship, **women-owned businesses in Armenia are smaller and younger than businesses owned by men** (6 years of operation vs 8.5 years of operation). Most women-owned businesses are owned by widowed or divorced women.⁹⁸

There are no significant gender-related differences in the motivation for starting a business. The principal motivating factor for opening a business for both women and men is the desire to earn money. However, **there are notable gender differences in the initial sources of financing for businesses**. Men tend to rely on personal or household savings (69% and 53%, respectively), whereas women rely on loans from banks to start businesses almost twice as often as men (21% vs 12%, respectively).

Women are three times more likely than men to borrow money from friends and relatives to establish a business (12% vs 4%, respectively). In addition, more than half of the firms which apply for loans are women-owned businesses.⁹⁹

In terms of perceived challenges to starting a business in Armenia, twice as many men consider the lack of an educated workforce to be the main obstacle (42% of men vs 23% of women). More men perceive political instability in the country to be the principal challenge. Women consider that the main obstacles to starting a business are a lack of time and difficulties in maintaining work-life balance. More women than men believe that, if they start a business, they will work harder and have no time left for their personal life. Research by the International Finance Corporation and UK Aid suggests that the best levels of work-life balance exist in the regions of Gegharkunik and Syunik; however, this source provides no further explanation of this finding.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Asian Development Bank, *Armenia: Country Gender Assessment*, ADB, Manila, 2019, available at: <https://www.adb.org/documents/armenia-country-gender-assessment-2019>

⁹⁷ International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, *Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia*, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

As in many other parts of the world, social and cultural norms are among the greatest challenges to women starting and developing businesses. Societal discrimination against women who run businesses remains widespread, especially in Armenia's regions.

4.2.3. Households and living conditions

In 2019, most households in Armenia were headed by men (66%), while 34% were woman-headed households (38% in urban areas and 28% in rural areas).¹⁰¹ According to data collected by the Caucasus Barometer 2019, more women than men believe that a woman is the real breadwinner in most Armenian families (73% vs 27%) and that breadwinner responsibilities are distributed equally in households (64% vs 36%). More men than women believe that men are the main breadwinners in Armenian families (55% vs 45%). It is interesting to note that more men than women believe that a man should be the breadwinner in a household (54% vs 46%). Twice as many women believe that men and women should share breadwinner responsibilities equally (68% of women vs 32% of men).¹⁰²

According to the 2018 survey, *The Invisible Side of Everyday Life: Gender Stereotypes in Daily Routine*, **there are clear gender divisions in decisions-making at the household level**. These divisions are far more visible in rural areas. Women tend to take decisions on 'indoor' matters, while men take decisions on 'outdoor' matters. Men also take decisions on relatively large purchases, while women decisions about daily needs, such as food or small utilities, are usually only made by women.¹⁰³

Societal expectations about the gendered division of labour begin at an early age.¹⁰⁴ From the age of eight or nine, girls are expected to be involved in domestic work, such as setting the table, cleaning, fetching water if they live in villages, and so on.¹⁰⁵ Thus, in Armenian households, there tends to be a clear division between so-called 'indoor' and 'outdoor' work, with 'indoor' work associated mainly with women. This centres on care work, including cleaning, cooking and caring for children, including supporting their education.¹⁰⁶

Control mechanisms exist in the form of social rewards or punishments to ensure that household work is properly performed by women and girls. These mechanisms, often laden with discriminatory treatment, have the potential to impact the well-being of women and girls.

¹⁰¹ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Armenia – Poverty Snapshot over 2009–2019*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2019, available at: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2020_e_2.pdf

¹⁰² Caucasus Research Resource Center, Caucasus Barometer Database 2019, available at: <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets>

¹⁰³ World Vision and AM Partners Consulting Company, *The Invisible Side of Everyday Life: Gender Stereotypes in Daily Routine*, World Vision, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/AM%20Partners%20research%20English.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

The unequal distribution of care and domestic work, combined with discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls, make them especially vulnerable in crisis situations. Women and girls may become ‘scapegoats’, targeted with more physical and psychological pressure in situations where households experience stress, fear, social-psychological pressure, or financial difficulties.

More men (75%) than women (59%) are involved in family budget management.¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting that, compared to men, twice as many women believe that they manage the family budget alongside their spouse.¹⁰⁸

As noted above, society expects women to play a vital role in their children’s education – doing homework with them and making sure that they follow the instructions they receive at school. At the same time, fathers’ participation in decisions about children’s education is limited. Men tend to help their sons with chess or sport-related activities on a needs basis.¹⁰⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded these differences.

According to data collected by the National Statistical Committee, **women spend more than twice as much time on unpaid domestic work, caring for children, and caring for family members who are sick, elderly or have disabilities, compared to men.** Overall, UN data suggests that **women spend 58.5 hours each week on domestic care work, while men spend 28.4 hours** on such work.¹¹⁰ The high costs of child care pose a barrier to reducing women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid work. Moreover, child care benefits are only available to one working parent.¹¹¹

The time that women spend on unpaid domestic work depends on their status in the labour market. No such correlation appears to exist for men. In addition to the UN data cited above in terms of hours spent on domestic care work in general, data from the World Bank indicates an even greater divide. The World Bank reports that **employed women spend 27.5 hours each week on domestic work, compared to 37.5 hours spent by women who are not employed, while men spend 11 hours per week on care work irrespective of their employment status.**¹¹² Despite these discrepancies, most women report that they do not want to change their daily lives. Most men and women, especially in rural areas, believe that the division of work between men and women is ‘natural’ and, therefore, ‘unchangeable’.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Center for Insights in Survey Research, *Public Opinion Survey on Women’s Issues: Residents of Armenia*, International Republican Institute, Washington, DC, 2020, available at: https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens_political_participation_breavis_iri_results_presentation_final_07.01.2021.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Analysis of the gender pay gap and gender inequality in the labour market in Armenia*, UN Women, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://www.armstat.am/file/article/analysis_of_the_gender_pay_gap_armenia_en.pdf

¹¹¹ Congrave, J. and A. Gomktsyan, *The Armenia Good Governance Fund and Gender Equality*, UKAID WOW Helpdesk, London, 2020, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895766/Query-45-Armenia-Good-Governance-Fund2.pdf

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

4.3. Gender, agriculture and the green transition

According to the Asian Development Bank's Country Gender Assessment of Armenia in 2019, 90% of Armenian agricultural products come from farming and women represent the bulk of agricultural workers (53% are women, while 47% are men).¹¹⁴ The following major issues exist in the sector of agriculture:¹¹⁵

- There is a clear gap between legislation and the implementation of agricultural policies.
- Women are over-represented in informal employment and domestic work.
- Women lack access to technical knowledge on agricultural enterprise development.
- Women also lack access to information about financial instruments, modern technologies and marketing.
- Women have limited access to land ownership in rural areas due to patrilocal marriages, inheritance practices and registration practices that favour heads of households.
- Women have limited access to credit and entrepreneurship, and face difficulties in obtaining loans.
- Rural women often lack self-confidence, and are afraid to take risks or start businesses.
- Social and gender norms dictate attitudes toward women's role in rural areas. As a result, women's key role in the agriculture sector is not recognised.
- Women in rural areas tend to lack social capital and communication skills, a situation exacerbated by stereotypes that hinder their access to large markets beyond their villages.
- Women are often unable to drive.
- Insufficient infrastructural development and limited access to labour-saving technologies in rural households put more pressure on women compared to men.

Cooperatives are a proven tool for improving women's position in agriculture. Although special programmes and quotas for women exist in projects that seek to develop women's cooperatives, women in Armenia are not fully benefitting from these projects. According to a report by UN Woman in 2018, some husbands, fathers or sons are seizing benefits from the agriculture loans which women have taken out.¹¹⁶ All too often, male household members take major decisions, guide financial strategies, and receive and use loans, despite the fact that women are the target group of these funding opportunities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in Armenia*. FAO, Budapest, 2017, available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/i6737en/i6737en.pdf>

¹¹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, *Gender assessment of rural development and agriculture policies in Armenia*, UN Women, Tbilisi, 2018, available at: https://havasari-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/18_UN-WOMEN-gender-assesment-of-rural-and-agricultural-policies-in-armenia_ENG.pdf

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

4.4. Gender and health, including sexual and reproductive health

According to the results of Armenia's Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2015–2016, **one in every four women (25%) between 15 and 49 years old has had at least one abortion**. The probability of abortion rises with a woman's age and the number of living children she has. Women between 40 and 49 years old, on average, have had 1.3 abortions in their lifetime.¹¹⁸ Nearly half of these women (47%) have had more than two abortions. While abortions are legal in Armenia, the state has regulated women's right to seek abortions by requiring a three-day waiting period from the moment a woman first approaches a doctor to request an abortion.

Despite international and national principles that regulate women's right to safe and legal abortion services, women in Armenia face various impediments to exercising this right. This is particularly true for women in rural areas, who face difficulties in accessing medical services, which are few and far between in rural locations. In addition, meeting the costs of an abortion by a doctor may be challenging for rural women.¹¹⁹

Article 21 of the Government Order on Approving the Terms and Conditions of Abortion, No. 180-N, requires the provision of free medical and social support services on methods for preventing unwanted pregnancies immediately after an abortion. However, focus groups conducted with women by local women's organisations show that after obtaining an abortion, women often do not receive counselling or post-abortion services.¹²⁰

In 2016, amendments were made to the Law on Human Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights to ban sex-selective abortions. While this restriction may be well-intentioned, it has the potential to violate women's rights to life, health and bodily integrity.

In 2019, the number of induced abortions was 15.2 per 1,000 women, the highest number since 2000.¹²¹ **Abortion rates among rural women are twice as high as among urban women**. The number of abortions among women of reproductive age is highest in the regions of Yerevan and Lori, and lowest in the Vayots Dzor region.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

¹¹⁹ The average price for a medical abortion is USD 30–40, and USD 100–150 for a surgical abortion.

¹²⁰ Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

¹²¹ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

¹²² Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

Between 2016 and 2018, the three-tier programme, entitled ‘Ensuring Access to Modern Contraceptives for the Prevention of Unwanted Pregnancies’, was implemented to improve reproductive health and ensure access to and the availability of modern contraceptives. This offered women in Armenia the opportunity to receive comprehensive information on family planning and modern contraceptives.¹²³

Infant and child mortality has declined in Armenia in recent years. Maternal mortality rates are the same in both urban and rural areas.¹²⁴

Gender stereotypes and biases create a discriminatory environment in terms of sexual and reproductive health care. Discrimination is often perpetuated by health workers, who are responsible for providing services to all women, including women from socially excluded and marginalised groups. Many doctors display discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women living with HIV, women with disabilities, and LGBT persons. This negatively impacts the effectiveness of services, and reduces the willingness of women living in vulnerable situations to seek health care. As a result, many women avoid visiting gynaecologists, which endangers their well-being and prevents them from realising their right to health.¹²⁵

A lack of essential gynaecological care is also a problem for women from marginalised and vulnerable groups. The state does not ensure the accessibility of health services in remote rural areas, including emergency gynaecological care. Nor does the Government guarantee that health workers receive adequate and sustained training on sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a special focus on marginalised groups, including women living with disabilities, LGBT persons, and women living with HIV.¹²⁶

More than half of all women of reproductive age (57%) use contraceptives. However, the most common way of avoiding pregnancy is withdrawal.¹²⁷ Almost all (94%) married women surveyed consider this method the most widely-known traditional method of contraception. The most widely used modern contraceptives are intrauterine devices (IUD), birth control pills and condoms.¹²⁸

According to the data obtained in 2018 from the Armenian Ministry of Health, approximately 50,000 cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are recorded per year. The most common are trichomoniasis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Persons affected by such infections often do not seek medical assistance; most attempt to treat infections themselves.

¹²³ United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Human Rights Committee, Replies of Armenia to the list of issues in relation to its third periodic report on International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, CCPR/C/ARM/RQ/3, 16 March 2021, available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3906055>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ See the joint civil society Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/AMIndex.aspx>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Arab, C. and M. Abrahamyan, *Armenia country gender equality brief*, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Istanbul, 2019, available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/armenia-country-gender-equality-brief>

¹²⁸ Ibid.

It is important to note that 97% of women living with HIV in Armenia contracted the virus through heterosexual intercourse.¹²⁹ No data are available on persons living with HIV disaggregated by marital status. In 2016, Armenia successfully ended mother-to-child transmission of HIV.¹³⁰ According to the latest report submitted by the Government to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Committee), Armenia has been recognised as the fourth country in the world to have ended mother-to-child HIV transmission.¹³¹

Among the greatest challenges that women and girls in Armenia face to exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights is the **absence of comprehensive sex education**. Due to the general absence of comprehensive sexuality education, women – especially women in rural areas – lack awareness of contraception, family planning and preventing sexually transmitted infections. In Armenian schools, the sexuality education programme is called ‘Healthy Lifestyle’ and is taught as part of physical education for grades 8 to 11. To date, the Government has not taken sufficient measures to ensure that comprehensive sexuality education is implemented in schools.

Moreover, both teachers and parents tend to skim over themes of sexuality in a superficial manner, often linking discussions of sexuality with narratives on national and cultural values and identities. For example, most teachers of the Healthy Lifestyle course cover topics such as hygiene, healthy eating, HIV/AIDS and, very superficially, sexual behaviour.¹³² Most parents and teachers report feeling reserved or ashamed when discussing sexuality with adolescents.¹³³ However, in-depth interviews with parents and teachers reveal that at least half of them support the concept of high quality comprehensive sexual education, and believe that courses should be taught by professionals in this field.¹³⁴

4.5. Gender and education

In 2019, the Gender Parity Index value of general schools in Armenia was 1.04. **The ratio of female-to-male enrolment in primary and secondary schools is 102%.**¹³⁵ Average years of schooling for women in Armenia stand at 12.5 years.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Seventh Periodic Report submitted by Armenia under Article 18 of the CEDAW Convention, CEDAW/C/ARM/7, 1 April 2021, available at: <https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046192/N2108100.pdf>

¹³² Women’s Resource Centre and YSU Center for Gender and Leadership Studies, *Attitudes of Armenian teachers towards the sexual education course*, Women’s Resource Centre, Yerevan, 2018; Women’s Resource Centre and YSU Center for Gender and Leadership Studies, *Attitudes of Armenian parents toward sexual education of their adolescent children*, Women’s Resource Centre, Yerevan, 2017.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2020 Country Report – Armenia, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 2020, available at: https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_ARM.pdf

¹³⁶ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, ‘Armenia’s Performance on the Women, Peace, and Security Index’, GIWPS, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/armenia>

Girls' enrolment in vocational and professional education remains low. **Three times more boys than girls are enrolled in preliminary vocational education.**¹³⁷ Manufacturing and production is the only area of preliminary vocational education in which more girls are enrolled than boys.

More women than men obtain bachelor's and master's degrees in Armenia. In 2019, **twice as many women were enrolled in master's degree studies** (67% of students were women, while 33% were men), more women students are currently receiving master's degrees (68% are women, while 32% are men), and more than twice as many women received master's degrees in 2019 (72% were women and 28% were men). The situation changes somewhat at the post-graduate level, where 57% of post-graduate students are women and 43% are men. However, the opposite situation is apparent among doctors of science. In 2019, almost twice as many men received doctorate of science degrees (63% were men, while 37% were women).

Gender differences among science candidates have increased in the past 10 years. In 2008, women accounted for 38% of doctoral candidates and men represented 61%, while in 2019, 52% of doctoral candidates were women and 48% were men. Gender imbalance at the level of doctors of science has remained the same over the past decade (18% are women and 82% are men).

Although women's levels of enrolment in higher education are greater than men's, gender segregation persists in education in Armenia. Most girls and young women are enrolled in the fields of the arts, humanities and social sciences, whereas more boys and young men are studying engineering, industry and technology.¹³⁸

Despite women and girls high levels of enrolment in education, **the rate of women not in employment, education or training (NEET) remains high.**¹³⁹ A gender imbalance also exists in the NEET rate. While most young women in Armenia will not enter employment at all, or will become economically inactive after finishing school, most young men will secure or seek employment.¹⁴⁰

The latest report by the OXYgen Foundation notes that **the poor condition of inter-village roads and long distances to schools** are key reasons why girls drop out of education. Insufficient infrastructure in rural areas negatively affects the education of both genders. However, the location of schools, a lack of inter-village transportation and bad roads disproportionately affect parental decisions regarding girls' education.

¹³⁷ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, Women and Men in Armenia 2020, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Buitrago-Hernandez, P., et al., *Exploring the Diversity of Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET): The Gender Profile of NEETs in Georgia and Armenia*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2019, available at: https://havasari-fohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/15_WB_Gender-profile-of-NEETs-in-Georgia-and-Armenia_ENG.pdf

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Due to safety concerns and social norms, parents forbid their daughters from attending classes outside of their own village.¹⁴¹ Other **major barriers to gender equality in education in Armenia** include:

- The absence of education on gender equality in schools and higher education institutions.
- Stereotypes about masculinity, femininity and gender roles, as well as a lack of knowledge about human rights among teachers and professors.
- The fact that the State Pedagogical Institute's curriculum is not gender-sensitive.
- Strong gender differences in the career choices and career paths of male and female students.

In terms of women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, patterns are mixed and not well-studied. Women comprise only 10% of engineering students and one-third physical science students.

Agricultural science is a field of study that is almost exclusively dominated by boys and men. However, in certain STEM fields, most students are girls and young women, including mathematics, statistics, biological science and chemistry.¹⁴²

4.6. Gender-based violence, prevention and protection mechanisms, and access to essential services

Domestic violence remains widespread in Armenia. Over 700 cases of domestic violence cases are reported each year, and women's organisations' hotlines receive around 3,000 calls per year.¹⁴³ However, survivors of domestic violence do not receive appropriate support. There are no state-run shelters, and both law enforcement officers and judges are not properly trained to process cases of domestic violence.

Between 2010 and 2020, **at least 83 women were killed by a current or former intimate partner, spouse or other family member in Armenia**, according to women's rights organisations.¹⁴⁴ The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia does not contain special provisions for distinguishing between femicide and other types of killing.

¹⁴¹ OxyGen Foundation, *An Analysis of Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Armenia*, OxyGen Foundation, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://havasari-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/47_Beijing25_ANALYSIS-OF-THREE-AREAS_ENG.pdf

¹⁴² Asian Development Bank, *Armenia: Country Gender Assessment*, ADB, Manila, 2019, available at: <https://www.adb.org/documents/armenia-country-gender-assessment-2019>

¹⁴³ See: https://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/?fbclid=IwAR10mJ5KQf3YJfop6NZdugLvYX_3Bwm0j6DV32sRp2a3lhgkV8QTLhf2I3c and <https://www.facebook.com/csvwarmenia/>

¹⁴⁴ See: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=En&CountryID=8

Therefore, the Criminal Code does not outline any specific guidelines for qualifying cases or punishing crimes which involve domestic violence. Armenian courts do not consider aggravating circumstances in terms of an abuser's liability and punishment in cases of femicide. Gender stereotypes and victim-blaming practices are prevalent in Armenia's criminal justice and judicial systems when addressing cases of femicide.¹⁴⁵

In 2017, Armenia passed the **Law on Domestic Violence**, following heated debates between women's groups and ultra-nationalists. As a result, the wording of the law was changed to the law 'On the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection of Victims of Violence and Restoration of Peace in the Family'.¹⁴⁶ Due to the influence of conservative groups, many important elements of the legislation proposed by the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women were rejected. This umbrella organisation includes all women's organisations and other minority groups working on countering domestic violence and gender-based violence.

In 2018, Armenia signed the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). After the Velvet Revolution, the new Government of the Republic of Armenia intended to ratify the Istanbul Convention in 2019. However, **Armenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention was prevented by a strong anti-gender opposition movement, led by ultra-right nationalist groups and supported by the Armenian Apostolic Church.** This movement created considerable disinformation about the convention and subjected ratification to political manipulation. Ratification was eventually postponed, despite advocacy efforts by women's groups and the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women.

Following the Velvet Revolution, the new government committed to advancing gender equality at all levels of the state. However, it fell short of implementing concrete steps in different areas, although significant improvements were made in others. **Combatting domestic violence is one area where the Government of Armenia has made important progress**, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. In 2018, following a decree issued by the Prime Minister, the Government established the Domestic Violence Council,¹⁴⁷ which operates under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The council included representatives of different government agencies and civil society organisations. Their role is to support the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to develop necessary bylaws and procedural regulations to enforce the Law on Domestic Violence and ensure an effective multi-sectoral response to domestic violence cases. In March 2019, decrees¹⁴⁸ were signed to establish more shelters, develop regional crisis centres with clear guidelines, devise protocols to address cases in each province, and create a financial support fund for survivors.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ See: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a6b2e274.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Decree on Creation of the Council on Prevention of Violence in the Family Decree Number 1685-U, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a6b2e274.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Government of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 'New Decrees to Support Women Victims of Domestic Violence', 29 March 2019.

However, according to the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, the state still lacks a multi-sectoral approach and response to domestic violence cases at the state and community levels. Further amendments are needed to counter domestic violence and gender-based violence in a more systematic manner.

Persistent violence against women in the 'offline' world has become prevalent on online platforms as well. Women experience sexism, misogynist attacks, threats and sexual harassment on social media and while using the internet. Women are often attacked due to their gender – facing sexualised threats and sexist campaigns – while men are attacked for their opinions or capacities. Several cases of cyberbullying and online hate speech have been recorded against women leaders, such as the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Zaruhi Batoyan,¹⁴⁹ as well as women's rights activists. Law enforcement bodies have been unable to efficiently respond and protect victims. When these attacks go unpunished, they effectively restrict women's freedom of expression and their active involvement in the public digital world.

A survey of 750 information and communication technology (ICT) companies in 2018 by the Enterprise Incubator Foundation¹⁵⁰ shows that, although women are increasingly present in the ICT sector, they are less represented than men in technical positions (68% of which are held by men, while 28% are held by women). Women are almost entirely absent from internet governance processes in Armenia; as such, their needs are not included. The internet governance sector is dominated by men, and online harassment and gender-based violence are not priority issues. These issues are not discussed and are disregarded entirely in annual Internet Governance Forums.¹⁵¹ Gaps also exist in legislation. **Armenia has no national laws or regulations to protect women against online violence.**

Armenia needs to take concrete action to protect everyone, particularly women, from online abuse, cyber harassment and the gendered effects of cyberbullying. There is a need to update legal frameworks and judicial practices, while raising awareness among the private ICT sector. It is also crucial to include women and civil society in the country's internet governance processes to make them gender-responsive, aware and inclusive of the needs of vulnerable and high-risk groups who are systematically targeted by online abuse.

¹⁴⁹ UNDP, Republic of Armenia Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and OxYgen Foundation, *Manifestation of Sexism in the Public Spaces and Discourse*, UNDP, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://oxygen.org.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/%D5%81%D5%A5%D5%BC%D5%B6%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AF.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ Enterprise Incubator Foundation, *Armenian IT Industry Report 2018*, Enterprise Incubator Foundation, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.eif.am/eng/researches/report-on-the-state-of-the-industry>

¹⁵¹ See: <https://www.isoc.am/en/armenian-internet-governance-forum>

4.7. Women, peace and security

Based on the principle of equality between men and women, the **Government of the Republic of Armenia approved its first National Action Plan (2019–2021) for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325)** on 28 February 2019.

The development of the National Action Plan is also based on the Decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, dated 13 September 2017, which established an inter-ministerial commission for the development of a National Action Plan. Armenia's National Action Plan includes 18 main objectives, aligned with the four pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: participation, protection, prevention and recovery.

The National Action Plan clearly defines objectives and measures to achieve these priorities, timelines for implementation, performance indicators, responsible executors/co-executors and financial resources. However, women's groups working on peace-building report they were not directly consulted during the different phases of the National Action Plan's development. These women's groups were only included in some official meetings after the National Action Plan was adopted, in the context of a series of wider consultations.

On 23 April 2020, a Commission on the Implementation and Monitoring of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was established.¹⁵² The commission's activities are managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The commission includes representatives of the National Assembly, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, the Ministry of High Technological Industry, the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the police, the Human Rights Defender's Office, the Armenian Red Cross, some non-governmental organisations, and some international organisations, namely the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A recent assessment conducted by the head of the NGO Democracy Today, Gulnara Shahinyan,¹⁵³ addresses the new security realities of women displaced due to the Nagorno-Karabakh 44-day war, as well as local women living in the three border communities of Tavush, Syunik and Gegharkunik, who find themselves in a new political geographic situation. The assessment highlights: 1) the lack of any confidence-building programmes, 2) the issue of compensation, 3) limited state-funded programmes to provide psychological and rehabilitation support, and 4) the constant emergency and insecure state of the civilian population, as well as the lack of implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in border regions.

¹⁵² Decree 490A of 23 April 2020.

¹⁵³ Shahinyan, G., *New security realities for women in post-war Armenia: Assessment of security challenges for the displaced women from Nagorno-Karabakh in three border communities of Armenia*, 2021.

The assessment also mentions that security threats which specifically put women's human rights at risk – including gender-based violence, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) – are not being addressed in border regions or among affected communities. There is a need for the State Commission on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to monitor new realities and threats to women in border regions in light of the war and related changes.

4.8. Gender and digital transformation/ICT sector

Information and communications technology is one of the fastest growing sectors in Armenia. In 2018, software services and internet service providers accounted for 7.4% of Armenia's gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 12.4 billion, up from 3.6% of the country's GDP in 2013.¹⁵⁴

Women's involvement in the information and communications technology sector in Armenia (30%) is not considered low.¹⁵⁵ According to the 2021 Women Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia, **relatively fewer stereotypes exist in the information and communications technology sector** due to more open work environments, young staff, and opportunities for remote work.¹⁵⁶ Despite this favourable environment, **only 11% of leaders in the ICT sector are women.**¹⁵⁷ A considerable gender pay gap also exists in the sector, as women earn 63.8% of what men earn, on average. This is higher than the median gender pay gap in Armenia (34.7%).¹⁵⁸

The **main barriers to the equality of opportunities and outcomes in STEM** in Armenia include:¹⁵⁹

- Unequal access to quality education in rural areas.

¹⁵⁴ EU4Digital, 'How to ensure rapid development in the Armenian IT sector? EU4Digital highlights women as the key to growth', 14 August 2020, available at: <https://eufordigital.eu/how-to-ensure-rapid-development-in-the-it-sector-eu4digital-highlights-women-as-the-key-to-growth>

¹⁵⁵ Oxygen Foundation, *An Analysis of Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Armenia*, Oxygen Foundation, Yerevan, 2020, available at: https://havasari-infohub.am/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/47_Beijing25_ANALYSIS-OF-THREE-AREAS_ENG.pdf

¹⁵⁶ International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, *Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia*, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxF1z5j

¹⁵⁷ EU4Digital, 'How to ensure rapid development in the Armenian IT sector? EU4Digital highlights women as the key to growth', 14 August 2020, available at: <https://eufordigital.eu/how-to-ensure-rapid-development-in-the-it-sector-eu4digital-highlights-women-as-the-key-to-growth>

¹⁵⁸ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Women and Men in Armenia 2020*, Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, available at: <https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2322>

¹⁵⁹ World Bank, *Republic of Armenia – Leveling the STEM Playing Field for Women: Differences in Opportunity and Outcomes in Fields of Study and the Labor Market*, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2017, available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26766aGenderandSTEMReportFINAL.pdf>

- School fees for STEM-oriented private high schools.
- Cultural norms and cultural messages which portray men as more intelligent, and therefore, frame STEM careers as more appropriate for men.
- Gender segregation within STEM fields. Men tend to hold technical and professional-track careers at STEM firms, while women mainly hold non-STEM positions as accountants, human resource personnel, public relations personnel and administrative staff.
- The lack of widespread dissemination of success stories about women in STEM.
- Risks and unstable careers in the field, despite the well-paid nature of STEM employment in general.
- The lack of STEM workplaces in Armenia's regions.

4.9. Vulnerable groups and social inclusion

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people face harassment, discrimination and violence in Armenia. The Criminal Code does not recognise homophobia or transphobia as aggravating criminal circumstances in hate crimes.

Public debate around the ratification of the Istanbul Convention descended into hateful and derogatory speech against LGBT people by some public officials, who incorrectly suggested that the Istanbul Convention seeks to promote LGBT 'propaganda' and legitimise same-sex marriage.

PINK Armenia, an LGBT rights group, documented **12 physical attacks based on the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity between January and July 2020**, and 10 cases of threats and calls for physical and psychological violence. Police dismissed five of the 12 attack reports filed by survivors, claiming the absence of any crime. Three cases were suspended due to reconciliation between the parties involved.¹⁶⁰ In August 2020, the Court of Appeal ruled that a proper investigation was not conducted into a violent homophobic attack in 2018 against a group of LGBT activists, which left at least six activists injured. The court ordered a re-investigation.¹⁶¹

Physical obstacles and discrimination prevent women and girls with disabilities from exercising their sexual and reproductive health rights. Sensory and physical obstacles, alongside biased attitudes, and a lack of knowledge and skills among medical personnel, cause women and girls with disabilities to experience double discrimination in the sphere of reproductive services, especially in rural parts of Armenia.¹⁶² Other barriers include the lack of privacy, information and counselling services. Armenia also lacks guidelines and training for health workers on how to work with women and girls with disabilities who are seeking an abortion.

¹⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2021: Armenia*, HRW, New York, NY, 2021, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/armenia>

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The prevalence of child, early and forced marriages in Yezidi communities in Armenia stems from gender inequality. Women and girls are considered inferior to men and unworthy of respect unless they are married in these communities. Marriage is considered more important than education for Yezidi girls. Among 40,000–60,000 Yezidis, only a handful of Yezidi girls attend university.¹⁶³

Women living with HIV in Armenia face discrimination and violations of their sexual and reproductive rights by state and non-state actors, including health care providers. A lack of knowledge and misinformation about HIV transmission, post-exposure prophylaxis and anti-retroviral therapy remains widespread. The belief that women with HIV should not become pregnant or have children is prevalent in Armenian society. This leads to a culture of blaming pregnant HIV positive women. Women living with HIV in rural areas often avoid seeing a doctor during pregnancy for fear of information spreading about their HIV status.¹⁶⁴ Due to a lack of education among medical staff, HIV positive women are often forced to pay more than necessary for health services and to travel to the capital city of Yerevan to access medical services.

¹⁶³ Women's Resource Center, *The Invisible Rights of Women in the Republic of Armenia: The Overall State of Reproductive Health and Rights among Various Groups of Women*, Women's Resource Center, Yerevan, 2018, available at: <https://www.moj.am/storage/uploads/101010verart.pdf>

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.



5. IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND OTHER CRISES ON WOMEN AND MEN

The economic situation in Armenia before the COVID-19 pandemic has been described as relatively positive. According to a recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), GDP growth averaged almost 7.6% per year over the past three years. Robust growth was accompanied by low levels of inflation, a declining fiscal deficit and comfortably low public debt.¹⁶⁵ The average wage in Armenia grew slightly in the past two years, reaching USD 400. The minimum wage also increased by 24%, rising to AMD 68,000, which is equivalent to 45.5% of the average wage in the country.¹⁶⁶

Despite developments in Armenia's labour market, **labour migration remains extremely common**. The usual rhythm of life in the country's villages has been to travel abroad to earn an income in the spring, before returning in the winter.¹⁶⁷ Armenia's pre-pandemic unemployment rate was also a concern, as some groups – most notably women and youth – were more affected by the chronically depressed domestic labour market than others. Only 38% of women of working age were employed, as were 27% of young people. Thus, the pandemic's impact on Armenia's overall economy and specific economic sectors is significant. According to some economic analyses, Armenia will only recover from the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ International Labour Organization, *Rapid assessment of the employment impact and policy responses of the COVID-19 pandemic on Armenia*, ILO, Moscow, 2020, available at: https://www.ilo.org/moscow/information-resources/publications/WCMS_762029/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁶⁶ National Statistical Committee, 'Labour Market', Government of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99521073.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ Harutyunyan, A., 'Migrant workers left in Armenia due to COVID-19 face unemployment', *OC Media*, 9 July 2020, available at: https://oc-media.org/features/migrant-workers-left-in-armenia-due-to-covid-19-face-unemployment/?fbclid=IwAR0gbUPbNeoSdP2sgjVI2dCB8Hr75qc6vGqPbzZSuYxVPogbO_gS7Dw44vU

¹⁶⁸ World Bank, 'Armenia: Recent Economic Developments', available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview#3>

According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021, *Gender Gaps in Eurasia: The daunting effects of COVID-19*, the pandemic has highlighted women's socio-economic vulnerability in the Eastern Partnership region. **Domestic violence has increased dramatically, women have taken on more unpaid work, flows of remittances to households have fallen, and labour market conditions have deteriorated.** Deteriorating conditions are particularly evident in sectors that rely heavily on women workers and are characterised by high levels of informality.¹⁶⁹

COVID-19 has created new economic risks for many people. However, the lockdown particularly affected women in different ways. Women-led businesses had already been experiencing challenges before the pandemic. In 2020, **smaller companies in Armenia, mostly owned by women, suffered disproportionately compared to medium-sized enterprises.**¹⁷⁰ Women-owned businesses with a yearly turnover of AMD 24 million or less were the most affected.¹⁷¹ Another possible reason why women-led enterprises were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis is their heavy concentration in the sectors hit hardest by the lockdown, including the hospitality and beauty sectors.¹⁷²

COVID-19 also took a severe toll on social enterprises run by civil society organisations. These social enterprises support home-based income generation activities which tend to engage women, marginalised groups and persons living in vulnerable situations.¹⁷³

Women-owned businesses are more uncertain and less optimistic about the recovery of their enterprises after the lockdown. More women-owned businesses do not know how long it will take to recover from the crisis, compared to businesses owned by men.¹⁷⁴

Workers who were in formal employment and who lost their jobs between 13 and 30 March 2020 were entitled to receive a lump sum payment, ranging from AMD 68,000 (USD 141) for workers without dependent children, to AMD 100,000 (USD 208) per child for workers with children. A similar amount was provided to pregnant unemployed women whose husbands lost their jobs between 13 and 30 March 2020. These payments were made in the form of automatic transfers. Workers in economic sectors that suffered during the lockdown also received half of their salary as a lump sum payment.

¹⁶⁹ Organisation for International Co-operation and Development, 'Webinar Proceedings – Gender Gaps in Eurasia: The Daunting Effects of COVID-19', available at: <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/2021-02%20OECD%20GRS%20Eurasia%20Gender%20Webinar%20Summary%20note.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ United Nations Development Programme, *Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Armenian Communities*, UNDP, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/socio-economic-impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-arm.html>

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ International Finance Corporation, UK Aid and British Embassy Yerevan, *Women's Entrepreneurship Study in Armenia*, IFC, Washington, DC, 2021, available at: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/fcee49ac-5516-4c6f-821b-541555cb36ba/WE_Diagnostic_Report_Eng.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=nxFlz5j

Self-employed workers can apply to receive a sum equivalent to 10% of their turnover in the fourth quarter of 2019. Informal workers are entitled to a lump sum payment of AMD 26,500 (USD 53), for which they have to apply.

Worrying trends became apparent in applications for government support during the pandemic. **More enterprises owned by men (48%) accessed government support than women-owned businesses (39%).** More women-owned businesses feel that they received insignificant benefits (57%) compared to businesses owned by men (29%).¹⁷⁵

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women reported an alarming increase in domestic violence. This coalition of civil society organisations, including organisations which provide services to women who experience domestic violence and their children, noted that direct reports of violence increased by 30% during the state of emergency in March 2020, and by 50% in April. This increase was also reported by the rapid assessment commissioned by UNFPA, conducted in April–May 2021. According to the assessment,

*“non-governmental organizations warned that by staying home women appeared in an even more vulnerable condition: many women called helplines for consultation related to violence or for social assistance. Child rights and disability rights organizations also indicated about the hidden but increasing violence cases against children and people with disabilities.”*¹⁷⁶

During the pandemic, there were no signs of the abuse of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. Nevertheless, certain barriers to accessing health services have been identified, including closed roads and a lack of transportation. According to surveys conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) during the lockdown, most women respondents in Armenia who needed to access gynaecological and obstetric care services did not face difficulties. In some *marzes*, however, women reported some challenges or major difficulties in accessing such services. In Ararat, Tavush and Aragatsotn, more than 7% of women respondents faced problems in accessing gynaecological and obstetric care. The main barriers they experienced included transportation shortages, the closure of main roads and the fear of becoming infected with COVID-19. Pregnant women, pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS, and women with disabilities undergoing treatment were affected.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme, and United Nations Children’s Fund, *Rapid Assessment: Government Response to Domestic Violence during COVID-19 Pandemic*, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://armenia.unfpa.org/en/publications/rapid-assessment-government-response-domestic-violence-during-covid-19-pandemic>

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Armenian Communities*, UNDP, Yerevan, 2020, available at: <https://www.am.undp.org/content/armenia/en/home/library/socio-economic-impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-arm.html>



6. RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING FOR THE EU DELEGATION TO ARMENIA

6.1. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming to enhance women's political participation

- Assist the process of introducing a gender party system for the appointment of women, and the accelerated recruitment of women, to senior positions in the public and private sectors.
- Support the organisation of awareness raising campaigns that address social norms related to women's leadership and political participation.

6.2. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming to support economic and social rights

- Assist the introduction of policies that foster more flexible work-life balance for women, and which address time poverty, the provision of child care and family support.
- Aid the implementation of policies that aim to expand care services and parental leave opportunities. For example, policies that enable women to work from home and provide flexibility in their working schedules.
- Support efforts to strengthen workers' unions and sensitise them on gender equality issues, including sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Promote gender equality in policies, strategies and actions with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship for growth.
- Implement successful methods/models to advance gender equality, with a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship for growth.

- Support the design and implementation of projects for groups of women who are most affected by the gender wage gap. These include women between 40 and 54 years old, women living in the regions of Armenia, women with secondary education, women working in services, and women sales workers.
- Support smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.
- Assist the Government's awareness raising campaign on the harmonisation of work, family and private life, the equal division of reproductive work, and men's active participation in parental responsibilities.
- Support the Government to develop gender-sensitive tools for foreign investors, and introduce conditionalities related to women's economic empowerment and investment policy.

6.3. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming to uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Support the Government to bring practices around sexual and reproductive health and rights into compliance with human rights standards.
- Assist the introduction of comprehensive and professional sexuality education in schools.
- Support capacity building processes for health care workers to enable them to become more gender-sensitive in terms of issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and sexual and gender-based violence.

6.4. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming in education, particularly STEM and ICT education

- Assist the development of digital literacy and global competency programmes for girls.
- Implement a project to support lifelong learning opportunities for women, including for the purposes of occupational transition.
- Increase investments in technology and innovation that support women's leadership in the information and communications technology sector.
- Assist the implementation of an awareness raising campaign to promote girls' and women's participation in STEM education.
- Promote women's STEM careers.

6.5. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming to combat gender-based violence

- Invest in projects that aim to combat gender-based online violence and sexism.
- Implement programmes that seek to raise awareness of women's human rights defenders.
- Facilitate Armenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

6.6. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming to advance the women, peace and security agenda

- Support efforts to adjust the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to meet the needs of Armenia's new post-war context.
- Document achievements and challenges in the implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Support programmes to increase women's leadership in peace-building and humanitarian action, as well as the effective implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in Armenia.

6.7. Recommendations for the National Statistical Committee

- Support the National Statistical Committee to calculate gender differences in Armenia's multidimensional poverty index value, to address intersectionality, and to understand how to support the country's most vulnerable groups.
- Assist the collection of gender-disaggregated data and analysis on the different effects of the tax system, as well as on the gendered aspects of unpaid care work and child care.
- Support the National Statistical Committee to comprehensively analyse the educational choices and career paths of male and female students.

6.8. Recommendations on cooperation with civil society organisations

- Support local civil society organisations to effectively implement the European Union's Gender Action Plan III in Armenia.
- Support civil society organisations that work with vulnerable groups and provide essential assistance to communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war.
- Strengthen the capacities of women's civil society organisations to monitor EU support and the Government's Economic Recovery Plan.

6.9. Recommendations on gender mainstreaming in economic recovery

- Support the Government to implement gender-sensitive impact assessments of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war, with a focus on tourism, hospitality, services and related sectors.
- Facilitate dialogue with civil society, especially local women's groups, to build active cooperation for the implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme, including through the Policy Dialogue Platform.
- Support gender assessments of the 13 state support programmes and the provision of additional privileges within the nine loan/leasing programmes in the agriculture sector.
- Support the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting at the state and local levels.
- Support the development of gender-responsive tools and procedures for monitoring the Economic Recovery Programme.
- Assist the Government to deliver capacity building for policy makers and stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme.
- Support analyses by the Government and civil society organisations of successful gender-responsive and socially-responsive economic recovery plans and related practices.



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