

WHO PAYS THE HIGHEST PRICE?

**The impact of Covid-19 on women's
employment in Kosovo**



Democracy for Development
Demokraci për zhvillim
Demokratija za razvoj

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employment in Kosovo**

Prishtina, January 2021

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Abbreviations

KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
LFS	Labor Force Survey
EARK	Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
COVID-19	Infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
D4D	Democracy for Development Institute
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of the Republic of Albania
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of the Republic of Montenegro
ILO	International Labour Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
PP	Percentage Point
Q	Quarterly
UN	United Nations Organization
MLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

Who pays the highest price?

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Executive Summary

In this research of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market and women's employment in Kosovo, D4D has placed a particular focus on the disproportionate impact of the health, social and economic situation in Kosovo on the lives of women and men. This has further deepened the gender gap in the labor market, and has increased gender inequality. According to official data, and those collected from the survey conducted for the purposes of this study, some of the main findings include:

Globally, more women than men have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 impact on the labor market. Therefore, the situation with the pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of women, increasing the number of inactive women, reducing the opportunities to provide for their families, a burden multiplied as a result of preventive measures, etc.

In Kosovo, measures taken against the spread of COVID-19 have had an adverse impact on women's lives and employment. The research found that from Q1 2019 to Q1 2020:

1. participation of women in the labor force has increased by 4.02%
2. women's employment increased by 5.83%
3. unemployment dropped by 3.21%.
4. the percentage of inactive women decreased by 0.99%.

These figures, calculated in real terms, indicated that numbers of unemployment and inactive women have also increased. Only 3.3% of women are employers, and 85.4% of employed women are workers. 11.2% of women have unstable jobs, while 5.3% of women in family businesses are not paid. From 2015 to 2020, the percentage of inactive women in the labor market decreased

by only 2.44% (from 81.90% to 79.90%).

From March to October, 81,875 new job seekers (38,343, or 46.81% women, and 43,586, or 53.21% men) were registered in the Employment Agency.

From April to October, around 53,000 inactive people in the labor market were reactivated, of which around 24,000 women and 29,000 men. In the period January-June 2020, MLSW has registered only 2572 job vacancies, indicating that employment opportunities during this period were optimal.

D4D found that 5.3% of women and 2.6% of men had their employment contracts terminated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, 26% of women were sent on unpaid leave, with 19.5% of them not receiving full pay during the pandemic months.

As a result of the measures taken by state institutions to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic, the burden on women grew bigger, due to the closure of businesses, closure of educational institutions, suspension of public transport, and other restrictive measures. D4D found that the main burden for home care, and the care of children and the elderly has fallen on women. During the full and partial quarantine, 33.8% of women spent 2-4 hours a day on household chores, compared to 23% of men, 12.7% of women spent 6-8 hours a day, compared to 1.5% of men, while only 3.3% of women did not experience an additional burden during this period, compared to 23.5% of men.

In childcare, 5.8% of women carried the full burden, 24% carried the main burden, and only 28.1% of women and men shared equal responsibilities.

In relation to women's employment from March to July 2020, 86.9% of women had no contact with employment centers, 0.8% consider it to be the first address for job

search, and 8.9% of women consider that in case of losing their job, employment centers are the place to address their concern.

The study also clearly shows a lack of gender-sensitive policies at the central level, including gender mainstreaming in preventive measures, as well as economic recovery safeguards. D4D found that 61.1% of women did not benefit from any measure of the Kosovo government during the pandemic, with 18.5% listed as beneficiaries of the payment of 170 EUR for April and May. Women were beneficiaries of other measures only in optimal percentages.

Methodology

This study strives to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the employment of women in Kosovo, and uses as a basis a comparison of the situation with gender equality in the labor market in the period prior to March 2020, described as the pre-pandemic COVID-19 period, until October 2020, when all factors and indicators of possible changes are more than noticeable. The study also presents the existing findings regarding the impact of the pandemic situation on the well-being of women in Kosovo and the region, an analysis of institutional responsibility for the economic crisis in Kosovo, created by the health emergency, and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main database used for the study is that of KAS and EARK, supplemented with other secondary data from researches of international organizations in relation to the impact of the pandemic on the lives of women and men in the Balkan region. This is done to establish a clearer comparative plain regarding the participation of women in the labor market and the employability of women in the period prior to and during the pandemic. The study applied a combined methodological approach for the collection and processing of data. Initially, an analysis of LFS data of the first quarter of 2020 was conducted, and then compared with the LFS data of 2019, to reflect the change of the labor market in terms of gender. The lack of LFS data for the second quarter has been supplemented with the data available from other reliable sources, in order to present a clearer picture of the impact of the pandemic on women's employment, taking into account factors and indicators as presented in this study.

The study outlines the practices in several countries in the Balkan region with regards to the labor market, the impact of the pandemic, and the gender focus of state policies in

response to the crisis in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. National agencies of relevant countries and published institutional documents were used as main sources of information, as well as the data from the research of international organizations in the period March-October 2020.

To further complete this study, in July D4D conducted a survey, through the Omnibus Instrument, in order to present a more detailed outlook of the impact of the pandemic on women's employment in Kosovo, from women who are employed to those who have lost their jobs or are looking for work. In addition to examining the impact of the pandemic in women's employment, the seven questions of the survey included topics related to the gender dimension of fiscal emergency packages and the impact of government's preventive measures in the allocation of family responsibilities on a gender basis, adding in the equation the unpaid work for men and women, as well as the care for the elderly and children during this period. The age of the respondents is from 18-65+ with nationwide distribution, divided into urban and rural settlements proportionally. All data from the survey and official sources are presented in their original form, processed, to present the real situation of the labor market and employment of women in Kosovo during the COVID-19 pandemic and in order to meet the objectives of this research.

Introduction

From the first appearance of COVID-19 cases¹, in addition to the health consequences and losses in human lives, the world was also shaken by other long-term effects that had a direct and indirect impact on the well-being and the global economy. Since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, the normal life cycle has been disrupted in more than 200 countries.² The global economy and healthcare were suddenly facing a risk, as well as drastic and unknown changes. Both developed and developing countries have suffered huge economic losses, mostly visible in countries with more fragile economies and in humanitarian crises.³

Similar situations of pandemics throughout history have shown that vulnerable social groups suffer the most from major socio-economic changes and social inequalities, and gender inequalities, in particular, are further deepened. Past practices show that in a situation where health and socio-economic factors deteriorate, women, as a global vulnerable category, are among the first to pay the price of the new consequences. Women are the first to suffer from business closures, and more than men have struggled to make a living lost their jobs or experienced multiple burdens as a result of measures taken by world governments to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ Therefore, the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the lives of women and men, increasing the number of inactive women, and reducing the opportunities for women to provide for their families. They also had limited access to physical and psychological health services, which raised concerns about the well-being of women globally.

In addition to the direct and immediate consequences, women faced a higher risk of domestic violence and gender-based violence, during the partial or full quarantine. This has further highlighted the importance of gender

mainstreaming in the measures taken to combat the pandemic, and considering how different social groups are affected particularly vulnerable groups.

Kosovo was among the last countries to see its first cases of COVID-19. However, the emergence of the global economic crisis had already been felt in Kosovo, before the first measures were taken by the Government, and declaring a state of public health emergency. The high level of unemployment and low participation of women in the labor market has been a feature of Kosovo's labor market for many years, before the pandemic and the global health crisis. KAS Labor Force Report for 2019 shows that the unemployment rate in Kosovo is significantly higher among women than men, and that the low representation of women in the labor force and labor market is an issue that reflects the gender inequality in Kosovo. Since 2015, D4D has reported on the issue of the high gender gap in Kosovo's labor market. In addition to the high level of women's unemployment, the high percentage of inactive women has been another major concern, which is an additional obstacle to Kosovo's economic development.⁵ The high rate of inactive women also indicates a longstanding systematic discouragement of women to be part of the labor market, and implies that women are not necessarily inactive, but rather their work and contribution in the family and society are unnoticed and unpaid.

Therefore, the study's comparison of the pre-pandemic period and the impact of the pandemic on the employment of women in Kosovo is made taking into account the high level of gender inequality in the labor market prior to the emergence of the first effects of the health crisis. This study is of essential importance, as it allows us to have an initial overview of the impact of the pandemic on the lives of women in Kosovo and their participation in the labor market, and also show how different factors have

contributed to increasing gender inequality in Kosovo, in order for the steps taken and policies designed to be appropriate.

Overview of the COVID-19 impact on the global labor market

According to the UN, 2020 was going to be a jubilee year in terms of women's rights. However, with the spread of COVID-19, not only was there a limited progress in this regard, but the progress made in previous decades has been put at risk.⁶ The impact of the pandemic has shed light on the vulnerability of various social groups, the political and economic systems, and has further deepened the gap, particularly in terms of gender equality.

Complex economic impacts have been particularly noticeable among women who already earn less and have fewer savings opportunities, having an unstable living standard. Global level research has also expressed concern about the impact of socio-cultural norms, education, environment, and working conditions in the economies of various countries in women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the lack of a gender focus in the policies of developing and underdeveloped countries has highlighted a number of new challenges, initially an increased gender gap, a rise in the informal economy, and unsustainable employment.⁷

The World Labor Organization, in its latest analysis on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global labor market, found that in the first quarter of 2020 there was a decline in revenues and a gap in fiscal incentives to address the issue, risking a growing economic inequality between rich and poor countries.

Data indicate that the decline in revenues from the loss of paid hours of labor in early 2020 alone is quite high.

Loss of working hours by region and income level:	Q2 - 2020	Q3 - 2020
High-income countries	15,50%	9,40%
Upper-middle income countries	13,30%	10,40%
Lower-middle income countries	23,30%	15,60%
Low-income countries	13,90%	11,00%

Table 1. The decline in income from the loss of working hours during the first quarter of 2020. ⁸

Not only does this reflect a decline in the overall global well-being and a negative impact on households, but also an increased risk for vulnerable social groups, particularly women.

The World Labor Organization has analyzed the impact of the pandemic on the lives of men and women in many countries, particularly in employment, finding that the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on the lives of women and men, as a result of the restrictive measures shutting down a large number of businesses and severely hitting the economic sectors with a high representation of women.⁹

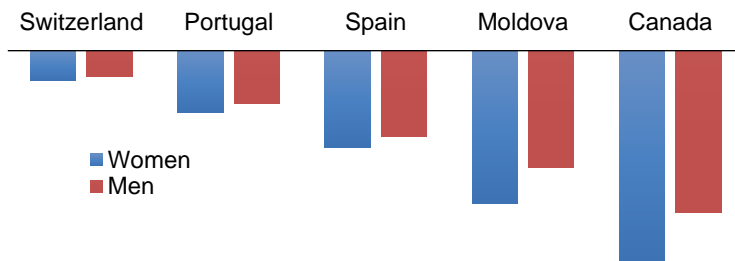


Figure 1. ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work, 6. ed.¹⁰

The gender gap in the global labor market was also observed prior to the COVID-19 crisis where 44.3% of women were employed in the overall global market, compared to 70% of men. During the COVID-19 crisis, WHO has identified the accommodation and food services, real estate and administrative activities, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail industries as those at most risk, with women representing 41% of jobs, compared to 35 % of men. ¹¹ Women in the informal economy, in particular, are considered the most at risk, as their access to social and health insurance, transportation and maternity benefits are more limited, and are therefore more affected by such crises. During this period, women have also faced an increase in unpaid work as a result of the closure of educational institutions and daycare centers, which has led to an increased burden for women, more than for men, with child and home care. ¹²

Share of women in the labor market before the COVID-19 Pandemic

Over the years, Kosovo's economy suffered significant losses and was unable to reach its full potential. One of the main factors to influence this situation was the lack of women in the labor market. This issue has been analyzed and researched by D4D since 2015, raising concerns on the high number of inactive women, gender discrimination, gender profiling of vocations in the Kosovo society, which mainly occurs due to the patriarchal mentality. The lack of equal opportunities for women and men in the labor market and other discriminatory factors have consistently prevented the active participation of women in the labor market and their inclusion in the country's economy. ¹³

Statistics indicate that the extent of inactivity reaches around 79-80% of women who are not considered unemployed, but who have not applied for a job in recent

years.¹⁴ This high percentage is due to the multiple burdens that women in Kosovo carry for home care, care of children and the elderly, unpaid work, lack of adequate transportation, and conditions for access to the labor market, as well as other discriminatory factors that reinforce the discouragement of women in Kosovo. This long-lasting situation perpetuates the issue to the extent it becomes a new norm in Kosovo. Women's discrimination is a daily reality, caused by a number of factors, such as the patriarchal social mentality regarding the position of women in the society and their place in the household, supported by the lack of sufficient institutional action to improve gender equality in the country. Moreover, the lack of institutional action to prevent and improve gender equality, the lack of sufficient incentives for the progressive realization of women's rights in Kosovo, and the lack of gender-sensitivity in state policies, have further discouraged these women and their participation in the labor market. These interacting factors and indicators are constantly reproducing gender inequality in the labor market, thus creating an unequal society that directly endangers the values of democracy in the country. Employment in Kosovo is associated with an emphatic lack of women in the labor market. In the first quarter of 2019 (Figure 5) the participation of women in the labor market was only 19.5%, compared to 57.6% of men, with only 13.3% of women employed, compared to 43.0% of men. A major remaining challenge is the overall inactivity of women in the labor market (80.5%), a category that is neither employed nor unemployed, and is not looking for work.¹⁵ This was not observed recently and is not based on any particular development or as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The high level of unemployment in Kosovo, where only 28.2% of the working-age population were employed, contributes to this situation.¹⁶

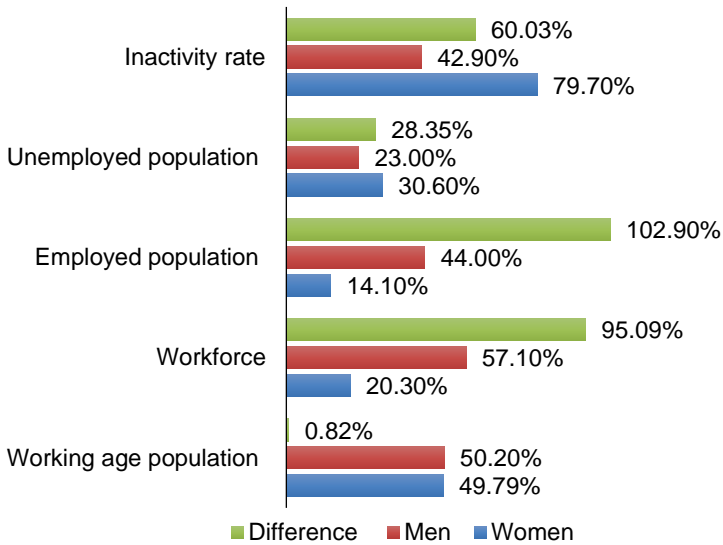


Figure 2. Key Labor Market Indicators for Q1 2020. ¹⁷

Q1 data of 2020, shown in Figure 4, indicate a visible decrease in the share of women in the category of indicators, which is characteristic of previous reports as well. While the ratio of the participation of men to the working-age population is only 0.82%, women are represented with 95.09% less the labor force, 102.9% less employed, and 28.35% more unemployed than men, as well as 60.03% more than men inactive in the labor market.

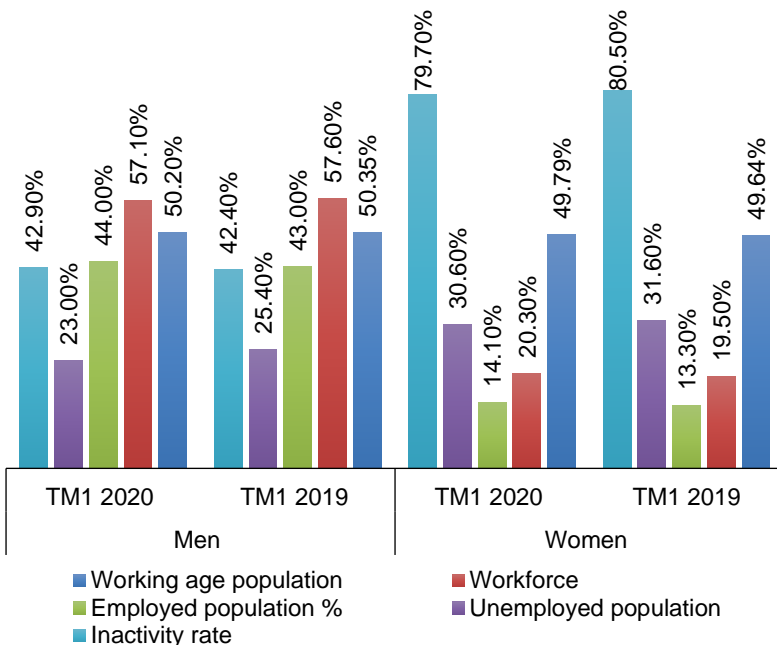


Figure 3. Comparison of key market indicators - Q1 2019 and Q1 2020. ¹⁸

Comparing LFS statistics for the first quarter of 2019 and 2020, Figure 5 shows that despite the high gender disproportion in the labor market, the situation remains approximately the same and progress is rather limited. However, comparing the difference in women's participation in the labor market in the first quarter of 2019 and 2020 in real numbers, we see differences in results.

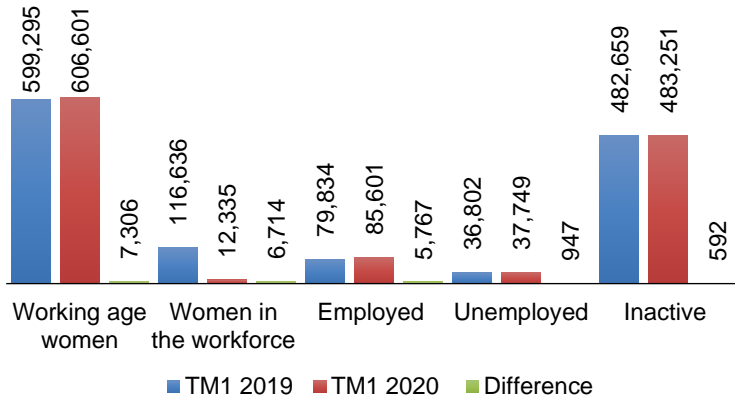


Figure 4. Share of women in the labor market - Q1 2019 - Q1 2020. ¹⁹

While the percentages show rather limited progress (Figure 5), particularly in the number of inactive women (a decrease of the percentage of inactive women by 0.99%), a comparison in real numbers shows that despite the higher numbers of women in the labor force and employed women, there is also an increase in the number of unemployed women and inactive women from Q1 2019 to Q1 2020 (Figure 6).

Employment of women by sectors

In addition to general statistics, discrimination against women appears in all other areas of employment. According to KAS, in Q1 2020 there were only 3.3% of self-employed women with employees, compared to 10.1% of men, and 85.4% of women are employees, compared to 71.8% of men. In 2020, around 9.2% of employees in Kosovo are without a contract, and 60.5% are on temporary contracts. Around 11.2% of women have unstable jobs, mainly in the handicrafts and retail sectors, while 5.3% of women who are part of family businesses are not paid for their work.²⁰ Comparing the employment status data by gender in Q1

2019 and Q1 2020, women's employment shows an increase in the share of working women by 2.52%, a decrease in self-employed women by 31%, and an increase in unpaid women by family businesses by 17.7%.²¹ Around half of the employed women are concentrated in education, trade, and healthcare, compared to men who dominate the trade, construction, and manufacturing sectors, where women have a minimum participation. There is a notable lack of women in mining, construction, real estate, agriculture, forestry, transport, and similar industries, ranging from 0.1% to around 0.8%. This gender disproportion in different sectors of the economy in Kosovo once again reveals the deep traditional division of professions, as a result of the patriarchal mentality, where vocation and work are divided into jobs for men and those acceptable to women. This can also be observed in the high concentration of women in education (21.1%), healthcare and social work (14.7%), and wholesale and retail (19.7%).²²

Women's inactivity in the labor market

In addition to the employment challenges women in Kosovo face, a bigger issue is the large number of inactive women. KAS defines inactive persons as those who are neither employed nor unemployed²³ and showing a lack of interest, or are highly discouraged, to join the labor market. One of the main reasons for such women's inactivity is the increased burden of caring for the family, the elderly and house chores which, according to the patriarchal mentality in Kosovo, are women's issues.²⁴ Thus, it should be said that the highest share of inactive women in Kosovo have their hands full with unpaid work to have the time to search for jobs.

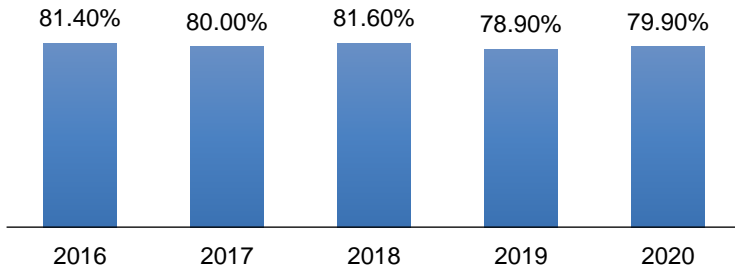


Figure 5. Percentage of inactive women in the labor market over the years (2015-2020).²⁵

From 2015 until 2020, the percentage of inactive women in the labor market was rather high. From 81.90% in 2015, it dropped to 79.90% in Q1 2020. One factor that led to a consistent situation with the inactive women in the labor market is the lack of institutional action to specifically address the situation which, in addition to reflective a deep gender inequality in Kosovo's society, has an adverse impact on the country's economy.

A study by the McKinsey Global Institute in 2015 found that if women and men participated equally in the labor market, the state budget would increase by up to 60% in developed countries, and much higher in developing and underdeveloped economies, where the discrepancy of gender representation in the labor market is higher.²⁶ In 2015 the D4D raised the issue of the adverse impact of the unused labor force in the country's economy, especially the large number of inactive women.

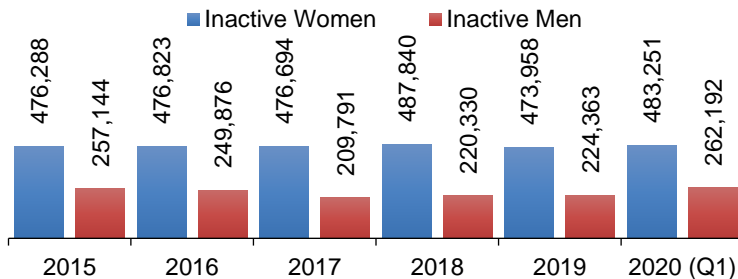


Figure 6. Number of inactive men and women in real numbers (2015- Q1 -2020) ²⁷

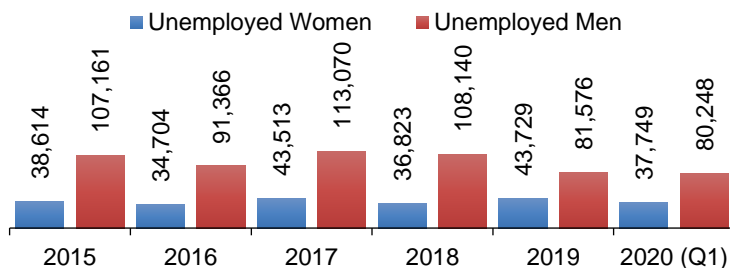


Figure 7. Number of unemployed men and women in real numbers (2015- Q1 -2020) ²⁸

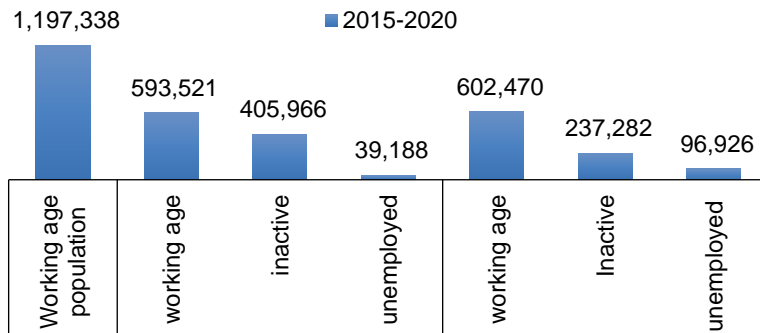


Figure 8. Average of unutilized labor force 2015- Q1 2020. ²⁹

From 2015 to Q1 2020, there were 799,362 men and women unutilized in the labor force, as unemployed and inactive, which is 66.76% of the average work age population from 2015 to 2020. 68.39% of women of working age are inactive, and coupled with unemployed women, from 2015 to Q1 2020, 75% of women were out of the labor market, namely 37.17% of the average working-age population in 2015-2020.

Men make up 50.31% of the working-age population, and there are around 27.91% of men not used by the labor force, while 55.47% of working-age men are inactive and unemployed. These figures reflect significant gender discrepancies in the last five years. Therefore, it is clear that gender inequality in the labor market in Kosovo, in addition to leading to a lack of social balance and having adverse effects, bears a high price for the country's economy.

Who pays the highest price: Women in the labor market during the COVID-19 pandemic

Gender implications in health emergencies in Kosovo

The closure of businesses during the pandemic months, mainly in early 2020, has had an immediate impact on the economic situation in Kosovo. International studies have shown that around 14% of the population in Kosovo have lost their jobs as a result of the measures to prevent COVID-19, and a significant percentage suffered from the reduction of paid working hours.³⁰ For another category of the population, particularly affecting women, working hours have been extended. This especially since the health sector has a higher concentration of women.³¹

First gender implications of the health emergency in Kosovo

were seen both directly, in terms of job losses due to the closure of businesses or positions, and unilateral terminations of contracts, as well as indirectly, in terms of an increased burden for women during this period. The effect of the pandemic has also been felt by men in terms of consequences in the labor market. Most male-dominated sectors of the economy and industry were closed due to the inability to adhere to the requirements of hygiene and distance, due to the specific nature of work.³²

Compared to countries in the region, where women reported more job losses, according to UN Women, 9% of men lost their jobs in Kosovo, compared to 5% of women, as of July 2020. At the same time, 65% of women saw a reduction in paid working hours compared to 64% of men. This percentage, according to UN Women, is the highest in the region for women.³³

As a result of the preventive measures, all businesses and institutions that were able to adapt to the new working conditions in full and partial quarantine moved to telework. However, this had a negative effect for women, as 23% of women in Kosovo were forced to take unpaid leave, 50% of women, compared to 20% of men, changed their workplace to home, of which 35% employed in education, and 10% in the public sector. In the period April-May 2020 around 49% of women living with their children have encountered difficulties in covering basic housing costs.³⁴ There is a significant lack of data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women employed in the private sector and the informal economy.

Employment of women during the pandemic

Women's employment was already an area where gender inequality was most visible. The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has further deepened this discrimination. It is the traditional and patriarchal approach

to women in Kosovo that in a situation of crises, it discloses and further increases the extent of inequality.

In the absence of official data for the second quarter of 2020, which would allow for an analysis of labor market change and a comparison of the periods January-March and April-June, data from existing researches, including from EARK and the KAS Bulletin, were used to reveal the employment of women during the pandemic period. EARK data on the number of jobseekers during the pandemic indicate that, as a result of job losses or a decline in household income due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy, the number of jobseekers in employment centers in the period March - October 2020 has increased in alarming figures, particularly in terms of new jobseekers.

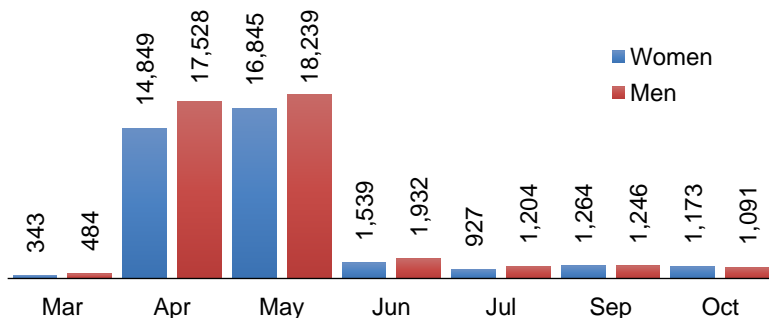


Figure 9. The number of new jobseekers registered in employment centers - March-October 2020. ³⁵

From March 1 to October 31, a total of 81,875 new jobseekers were registered in employment centers. Of this, 38,343 (46.81%) are women, and 43,586 (53.21%) men. There is an increase of both women and men jobseekers in April and May, as a result of the government measure, namely the payment of monthly assistance in the amount of

130 EUR for citizens in difficult social conditions, registered as unemployed in employment centers, and who are not beneficiaries from other Kosovo budget schemes, for the months of April, May, and June. This trend starts to fall from June, 2020. The largest number of women registered as new jobseekers is in May 2020, which is also the third highest figure of jobseekers from March to October, 2020. KAS data have shown that most jobseekers during the pandemic come from urban settlements, which raises concerns about the access of persons from rural settlements to employment centers, given that public transport was suspended during these months, affecting the ability of unemployed citizens from rural areas to register as jobseekers.

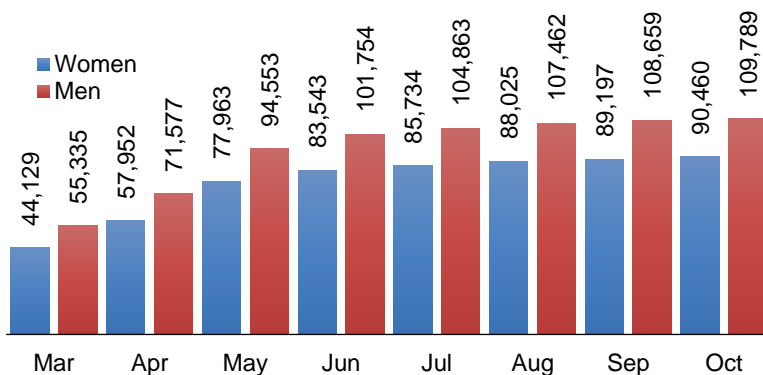


Figure 10. The total number of jobseekers: March - October 2020.³⁶

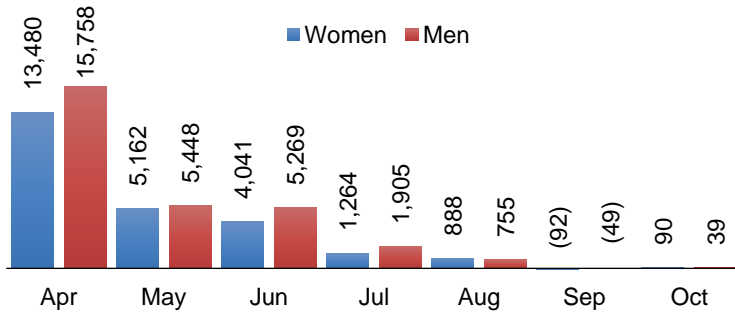


Figure 11. Table of inactive persons who were reactivated in EARK during the period April-October 2020. ³⁷

The total aggregate number of jobseekers (Figure 11) shows the number of jobseekers including those who have been inactive and have been reactivated during this period, but are not registered as new jobseekers from March 2020. For the purpose of this study, Figure 12 estimates the number of reactivated persons during April-October 2020. There were 53,952 people reactivated during these months, a figure which may be even higher if the previous months are taken into account. However, it is obvious that 24,833 women and 29,125 men were reactivated in the labor market, who were registered as new jobseekers before March 2020 but were not active jobseekers.

While the number of jobseekers has increased, employment opportunities during the period of January - June 2020 were rather limited. From January to June, MLSW has registered a total of 2572 job vacancies.³⁸ This number is about 3.5 times lower compared to the number of vacancies registered in the same period of 2019. In addition, a comparison of the number of new jobseekers with the number of monthly job vacancies by qualification, highlight that employment opportunities during the period March-May were very small.

	March		April		May	
	No. of vacancies	New jobseekers	No. of vacancies	New jobseekers	No. of vacancies	New jobseekers
No education	0	152	0	21,903	0	25,748
Primary school	73	210	19	3,882	16	4,836
Secondary vocational education	245	266	0	3,633	85	2,651
Secondary education	25	98	0	1,769	2	941
Bachelor	54	94	1	1,091	2	823
Master	4	7	0	99	0	85
PhD	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	401	827	20	32,377	105	35,084

Table 2. The number of new jobseekers compared to the number of vacancy announcements in the period March - May 2020. ³⁹

While the number of new jobseekers during April and May has increased by thousands, the number of vacancy announcements decreased significantly, compared to the same period of the previous year.

	Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
No education	83	69	10,224	11,679	12,678	13,070	751	920	457	556	729	994	257	220	240	233
Primary school	78	132	1,787	2,095	2,273	2,563	416	509	176	245	272	376	176	225	134	227
Secondary vocational education	84	182	1,423	2,210	1,011	1,640	179	295	122	242	184	307	314	412	274	314
Secondary education	33	65	721	1,048	381	560	89	126	87	104	118	110	321	303	269	216
Bachelor	62	32	633	458	455	368	95	69	78	54	97	49	182	76	243	93
Master	3	4	61	38	47	38	9	13	7	3	3	8	14	10	13	8
PhD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3. New jobseekers by professional qualification. ⁴⁰

Table 3 shows that more women than men with higher professional qualifications were registered as new jobseekers in the period March-October 2020. While the number of women jobseekers is generally lower than men, in the March-October period there was a particularly high number of women jobseekers with Bachelor and Master degrees. This outcome is an indicator of inequality in the labor market, particularly that women, even when they have a higher professional qualification than men, are less favored in the labor market, and disprove the myth that the inequality in the employment of women and men is a result of lower qualification of women.

Discrimination against women in the labor market is also evidenced by a survey conducted by D4D in July 2020, for a more detailed research on women's employment during the pandemic. A nationwide survey with 1065 respondents carried out through the Omnibus instrument, asked questions that are directly related to employment during the pandemic, the impact of preventive measures on the lives of men and women in Kosovo, and other relevant issues, giving a clearer understanding of the general situation. When asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected them in the workplace in Kosovo, 5.3% of women stated that their employment contract was terminated, compared to 2.6% of men. Also, 26% of women were sent on unpaid leave, with 19.5% of them not receiving full pay during the more critical pandemic months. According to the data from the Ministry of Finance and Transfers, 1,459 people applied as laid off during the pandemic period.⁴¹

The D4D survey also shows that only 3.3% of women, compared to 23.5% of men, have spent no hour on household chores, including cleaning and cooking. On the other hand, 33.8% of women, namely of women respondents, have spent 2-4 hours a day, compared to 23% of men, with homecare. These figures show an outline of the

reality of women in Kosovo, with 12.7% of women, according to the D4D survey, spending up to 6-8 hours a day caring for the family and household chores (compared to 1.5% of men), which is an underestimated work in Kosovo society, and not financially remunerated. During the pandemic, 5.8% of women carried the full burden of child care, compared to 1.6% of men, while 24% of women in comparison to 1.2% of men held the majority of the responsibility, while only in 28.1% of the cases, women and men shared equally the responsibilities. The multiple burdens on women in the household during the pandemic, unfortunately, was similarly high even prior to the pandemic, however, this situation was analyzed to show that times of crisis, such as the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, disproportionately affect the lives of women in Kosovo, and further complicate employment opportunities and their active participation in the labor market.

The efficiency of employment centers during the COVID-19 pandemic

EARK was established by MLSW to address the issues of employment in Kosovo and labor market administration. The objective of the institution is to ensure the improvement of the quality of employment services, reformation of due services based on the labor market demand, increasing the efficiency of the labor market in order for the employment centers to serve as intermediaries between employers and jobseekers.

Especially in situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when the number of jobseekers increased drastically, the role of this institution is important, as it provides alternatives, and answers to citizens who have been adversely affected by the pandemic. The D4D survey, with 5 questions about the impact of the pandemic on the employment of women in Kosovo, also includes one related

to the functioning and efficiency of employment centers during this period, gender sensitivity of employment policies followed by EARK, and the public's opinion on the sectors that should enjoy higher support after the pandemic, in order to reduce the gender gap in the labor market.

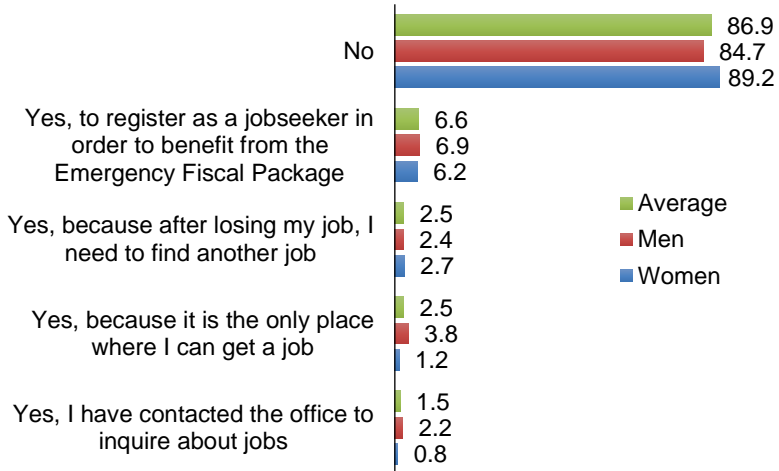


Figure 12. Question: Did you have contact with the employment office during the pandemic? ⁴²

D4D found that around 86.9% of women had no contact with employment centers. While only 0.8% of women consider the employment office as the place to obtain employment information, only 1.2% consider it is the only place that can provide jobs. In total, only 8.9% of women consider that in case of job losses, employment centers are the address to resolve the issue, or for registration as a jobseeker in order to benefit from the emergency fiscal package.

Although employment centers (a network distributed throughout municipalities) are the closest address for jobseekers, the lack of information and poor public trust with this institution is a result of the lack of promotion of

EARK successes in mediation between jobseekers and employers. With a view to the employment of women in Kosovo, when drafting recruitment policies, MLSW should focus on the situation of gender inequality in the labor market, to take special measures conducive to the progressive realization of women's rights in Kosovo.

Gender orientation of national policies

On March 11, 2020, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo made a decision to take preventive measures to protect the country from the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴³ All such measures, similar to those taken by the countries of the region and Europe, had a direct impact on the well-being of citizens of Kosovo and hindered the normal life cycle.

In addition to the preventive measures, the Government of Kosovo also undertook a number of stimulus measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the country's economy and prevent deterioration of the living conditions of the citizens of Kosovo. Therefore, in March, the Fiscal Emergency Package was approved by the Ministry of Finance and Transfers, providing additional financial support to the beneficiaries of the social and pension schemes.⁴⁴ The Fiscal Emergency Package included the measures of dual payment, salary supplements, financial assistance to social scheme beneficiaries, financial support for businesses and companies, support for the private sector and salaries of private sector employees, support for specific economic and social sectors involved directly with combating the pandemic, as well as financial support for persons registered as unemployed.⁴⁵

Considering that the pandemic situation had a different impact on the lives of men and women in Kosovo, due to a multitude of factors, institutional actions have failed to take this into account in the state policies, including preventive

measures and economic recovery packages. The lack of institutional action was mostly seen in the lack of control of the labor inspectorate regarding the rights of workers, particularly in the private sector. A clear lack of gender mainstreaming was observed in the state policies, including the preventive and stimulus measures, as an essential element to tackle gender discrimination in Kosovo, particularly in crisis situations.

In addition, none of the preventive or stimulus measures taken in March 2020 address the further deepening of women's marginalization, special programs that specifically deal with the physical and psychological health of women, or the prevention of violence and other gender-based abuses that have shown a growing tendency during the full or partial quarantine periods. The gender gap was also observed with the beneficiaries of the fiscal package, as is the case with measure 14, the payment of 130 EUR for two months for new workers with a contract of at least 1-year duration, which shows, among others, a continuous decline in the employment of women.⁴⁶

State institutions have not ensured full implementation of measures, and that the vulnerable groups will enjoy the full benefits, as initially planned. The D4D survey also shows that only 1.4% of women have benefited from the dual payment of the social scheme amount, 9.0% from the supplemental payment in the amount of 30 EUR for the beneficiaries of the social and pension schemes, 18.5% from the 170 EUR wage for April and May, while women benefited from other measures in only small percentages, from 2% to 4%. About 61.1% of women indicated that they did not benefit from any measures of the Government of Kosovo during the pandemic period.

COVID-19 and the Western Balkans: practices of state measures combating the pandemic

The global emergency health situation created by COVID-19 has hit economies of countries of varying degrees of development indiscriminately, especially underdeveloped countries and those with fragile economies such as Kosovo.

According to the International Labor Organization, about 100,000 people lost their jobs in Q1 2020 in the Western Balkans as a result of COVID-19, a figure which rose to 810,000 in Q2, increasing the percentage of hours lost from 1.5 to 11.6.⁴⁷ Globally, research has shown that women, more than men, have unstable jobs, work without contracts, work part-time or with no regular working hours, and in small businesses that in crisis situations have less access to credit and opportunities to face the challenges. The research includes an analysis of state policies of the Western Balkan countries, and their approach to gender inequality in the labor market to prevent a further deepening of the gender gap in the labor market. Examples taken are North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia, briefly analyzing the approach of the respective governments to the impact of the pandemic on the country's economy and labor market, and the gender focus in state policies.

North Macedonia

The Government of North Macedonia has implemented preventive measures against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including full quarantine, between March 18 and May 31, 2020. The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been compared to the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, increasing the need for greater socio-economic packages, while increasing the need for public financial management and fiscal sustainability in the financing of

economic recovery packages.⁴⁸

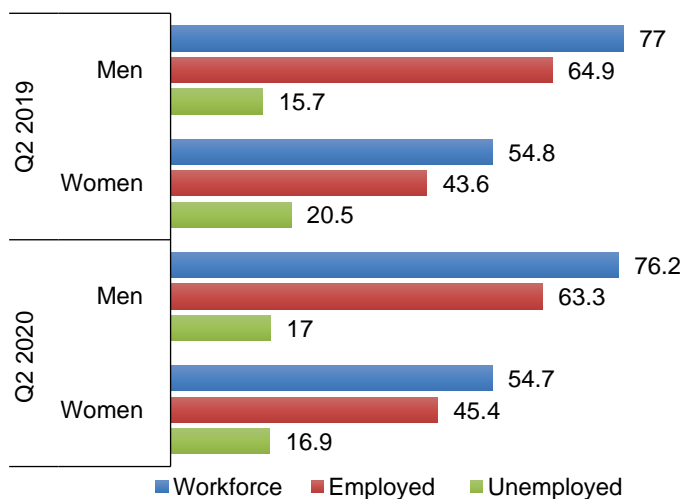


Figure 13. LFS in the Republic of North Macedonia - Q2 2019 - Q2 2020.⁴⁹

Women's participation in the labor market in North Macedonia is lower than men's, with one in six women working in the informal sector, positioned at the bottom of the chain, mainly in house and building cleaning, or as saleswomen of agricultural produce in open markets. The participation of women in the labor market is among the lowest in Europe. However, according to the ILO, this is similar to other Western Balkans countries.⁵⁰ Second quarter 2020 Labor Force Survey data shows that, in the field of employment, women are affected more than men by the COVID-19 pandemic effects. Mainly, this is because the preventive measures had a higher impact on the private sector and sectors where women have a higher representation. Women in the economy of North Macedonia have a higher presence in the textile, transport and gastronomy sectors, which have been affected the most by

the pandemic safeguards, aimed at protecting public health. Thus, women have lost more jobs than men. The number of women registered with the Employment Agency in April was very especially those coming from urban areas.⁵¹

The Government of North Macedonia approved four economic packages in response to the crisis caused by COVID-19. The contents of such economic packages were developed in consultation with the Economic Council, established for this purpose, and in cooperation with the business community, through chambers of commerce, economic experts from the Academy, and successful entrepreneurs, for more successful handling of the situation.

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Measures taken to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in the labor market include the support with 50% of the wage for workers for April and May, for companies affected by the crisis; support for sports, art, non-formal sector, subsidies for sectors affected by the pandemic, grants and financial support for tourism, gastronomy, day-care centers, and handicraft workers, in order to protect the stability of jobs. Measure 14 singles out, as it prevents the initiation of bankruptcy procedures by companies and businesses during the pandemic crisis, and 6 months following the crisis, as well as Measure 17, which reduces the payment of per diems for state institutions for employed people by 50%.⁵³ These two measures have a particular impact on women entrepreneurs, who were forced to close their activities during the pandemic as a result of the decline of economic activity.

Albania

The impact of the global pandemic has not spared the citizens of Albania and its economy. The labor market in Albania went through several changes as a result of the direct impact of the pandemic on the country's economy, especially in the tourism and hotel sectors.

According to INSTAT, the employment rate of the population in the second quarter of 2020 decreased by 3.6% compared to the same period in the previous year, and 2.6% compared to the first quarter of 2020.⁵⁴ Participation of the population in the labor force also dropped, further confirming the adverse impact of the pandemic on the economy and the lives of the citizens of Albania. The rise in the unemployment rate in the two quarters of 2020 was higher than the difference in the same period of 2019.

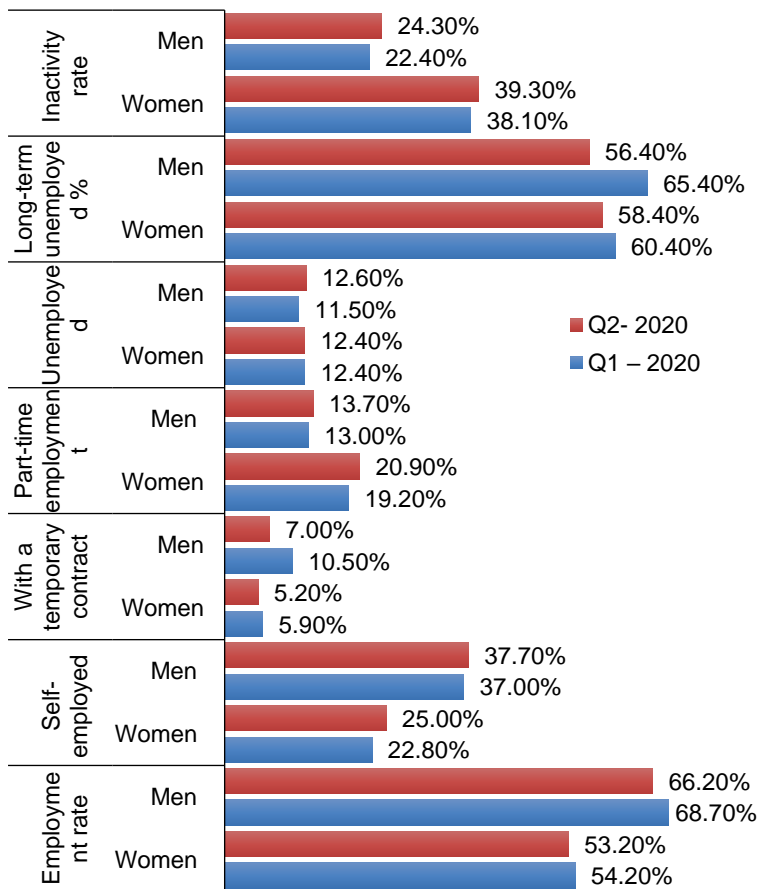


Figure 14. LFS - Q1 and Q2 2020 - Republic of Albania. 55

Women’s participation in the labor market in Albania does not differ much from other Western Balkan countries. Albania is also featured by the low participation of women in the labor market, compared to men.

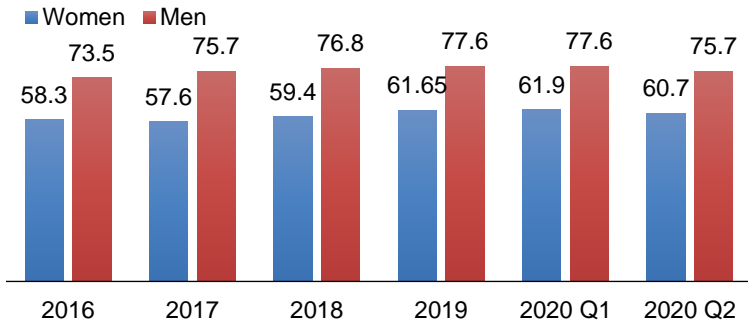


Figure 15. Labor force participation in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 by gender. ⁵⁶

The Government of Albania was noted by the rapid response and stronger restrictive measures to respond to the spread of the pandemic in the country, which undoubtedly changed the social and public lives of citizens. But how did these measures impact the lives of women and girls, taking into account the extent of gender discrimination in Albania, and the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the uncertainty in overall employment, and of women in particular?⁵⁷ Research by international organizations and of various human rights activist groups have raised concerns about the disproportionate gender impact of the pandemic, stating that institutional responses should pay attention to the increased vulnerability of specific groups, particularly women. In particular, gender-based violence and domestic violence have increased globally during health emergency. UN Women has called the violence against women and girls a “Shadow Pandemic”,⁵⁸ and the number of reported cases of gender-based violence during this period has decreased in Albania, compared to March 2019.⁵⁹ However, this has been considered to be an adverse effect, as reporting of violence by women was seen as a luxury, compared to the current state of survival. There was violence against Roma and Egyptian women in Albania,

especially against those who were the main providers in their households and lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic.⁶⁰

After the first cases of COVID-19 in Albania, the Government declared a state of natural disaster on March 23, 2020, which reduced about 50% of economic activity in the country. 38,702 businesses were closed as a result of the measures, and 65,115 employees, unpaid workers in family businesses, and self-employed were left without income. To support the citizens, businesses and enterprises that were directly affected by the COVID-19 preventive measures, the Government of Albania approved 3 fiscal packages:

Fiscal Package 1 was adopted to finance pandemic-affected businesses and individuals, initially through additional funding to the health sector, small business support, humanitarian assistance to those in need, and the sovereign guarantee fund for companies. Support Package 2 was earmarked for the lump-sum payment for employees of small businesses, and the loan fund for private companies, whereas in Package 3, the Government of Albania provided financial assistance to all employees laid-off until April 10 from sectors that were allowed to exercise their activities. Official data of the Government of Albania have not provided a gender breakdown of beneficiaries of government assistance; therefore, the gender difference of state financial support is yet to be defined.⁶¹

Montenegro

Due to the temporary measures imposed by the government of Montenegro to prevent COVID-19, in the recent Survey of Labor Force (Q2) 2020 MONSTAT indicated that the impact of the global crisis on the citizens' income was rather significant.

	Men	Women
Workforce	55,20%	44,80%
Employed	55,30%	44,70%
Unemployed	54,90%	45,10%
Inactive	42,30%	57,70%

Table 4. Labor Market Indicators in the Republic of Montenegro - Q2 2020. ⁶²

According to MONSTAT, in Q2 2020 out of the active population in Montenegro, the employment rate of men is 55.3% while among women is 44.7%. Montenegro reported a level of 15.2% in the total unemployment rate in June 2020, of which 54.9% men and 45.1% women. The inactivity rate is also high and comparable to the countries of the Western Balkans. Of 46.6% of the inactive population of working age, 57.7% are women and 42.3% are men.⁶³

Montenegro's economy was hit hard, as tourism is one of its main pillars of income, and one of the first sectors to globally decline as a result of the pandemic. As a result, the workforce participation, from 56,6% in Q1 2020, dropped to 53,4% in Q2 2020 and to 53,1% in Q3 2020.⁶⁴ In previous years, the main pillars of the economy in Montenegro were retail, tourism, agriculture, public sector and construction.⁶⁵ Around 42% of businesses suspended their operations, and

around 35% remained partially operational.⁶⁶ A large number of workers continued to work from home, or their working hours were halved, while some companies were forced to shut down and forced employees to take unpaid leave. Around 53% of small businesses closed, with 60% having no access to any financial resource, and 38% of large businesses continuing to operate.⁶⁷

In Montenegro, women make up about 40% of the country's employment. 81% of workers in the health and daycare sectors are women and are at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 virus. Women also lead in numbers in the informal sector, the services sector and labor-intensive manufacturing. Moreover, in about 30% of the population working in the private sector, around 44% are women.⁶⁸ Thus, according to the Employment Agency in Montenegro, the number of unemployed has increased by about 4500 people from the beginning of the year to May 2020, with around 53% of them women. They can be seen as a vulnerable group, in terms of the ability to cover expenses, also taking into account cases when women are the only provider in the household. ⁶⁹ Montenegro has broken down the response to the economic crisis into three fiscal packages. **The first package** included the removal of excise duties on medical alcohol, the possibility to defer payments of taxes and social contributions, creation of a Development Investment Fund to improve the liquidity of entrepreneurs, deferral of payments for public and state property, payments for capital projects, a one-time allowance for beneficiaries of social schemes and pensions, as well as a 15% salary increase for health workers. **The second package** included wage subsidies for workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic, those who could not work as they had children under the age of 11, and people in self-isolation and quarantine. **The third package** includes long-term measures related to the financing of tourism, subsidies for the sectors of the

economy and industry affected by the pandemic, as well as long-term measures to finance the IT sector, ports, and fisheries.⁷⁰

Serbia

Before the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Serbia experienced the lowest unemployment rate in the last decade, at 10.4%, and employment had reached 49.5% in 2019. Average wages had increased by 10.6% and, by February 2020, the number of registered unemployed had decreased by 9.8%.⁷¹ However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Serbia entered an economic recession, and only in the first half of March, 168 companies were temporarily closed, and 5% of employees lost their jobs. Government data indicate that tourism and transport were hit the hardest. Official statistics indicate that in the second half of 2020, GDP fell by 9.2%, a crisis that was expected to deepen if the pandemic situation in Serbia continues at the same pace.

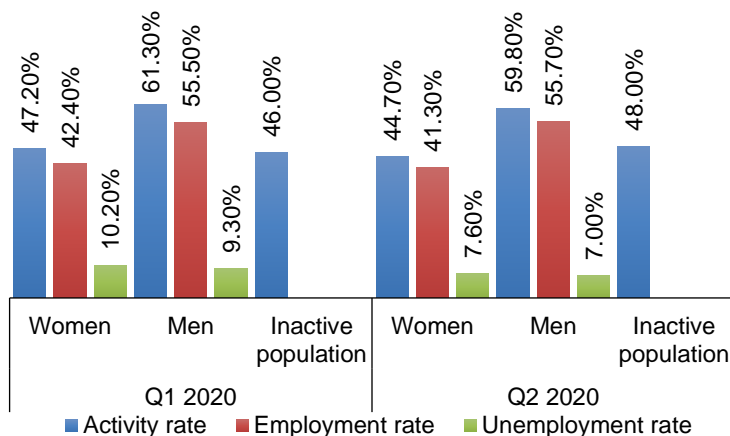


Figure 16. LFS - Q1 and Q2 2020 in the Republic of Serbia⁷²

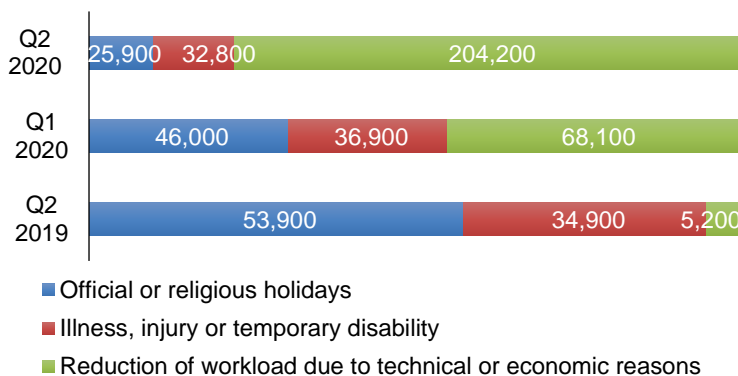


Figure 17: Number of workers missing at work by the reason of absence. ⁷³

In its Labor Force Survey for Q2 2020, the State Agency of Statics in Serbia listed the number of workers absent from work, to show the impact of the pandemic on the labor market. The data indicate that, as a result of the decline in work activity in Q2 2020, around 204,200 employees were laid off. Around 12.1% of people worked from home, an increase compared to the previous months and years.

The Serbian government took several economic and fiscal measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in the country. These were direct and indirect measures, such as:

Economic stimulus measures: (loans, facilitation of procedures for large businesses and compensation for damages caused by the state of health emergency, moratorium on debt repayment, and lower interest rates. financial support program for business loans, loans for entrepreneurs, corporations, small and medium businesses.)

Employment-related measures (financing of wages for business workers for three months, mainly for businesses or enterprises that did not reduce the number of employees by

more than 10%; For workers of larger entities, 50% of the minimum wage for workers on “mandatory leave” for April and May; Full minimum wage for workers of other businesses who work full-time or part-time.

Other measures (in April, the Government of Serbia adopted a decree approving the lump sum payment of EUR 100 for all citizens of Serbia aged 18 and over; Pensioners and social assistance beneficiaries are not required to apply for this measure)

Recommendations

The real impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Kosovo citizens is yet to be fully known. However, the multidimensional changes were seen thus far in Kosovo, as well as globally, indicate the direction that the world is taking as a result of the health crisis, which must set in motion all social and institutional mechanisms to ensure that preventive action is adequate and mitigates the adverse impact of the pandemic on the society, the economy, and other aspects of life.

Although the real figures of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market are still unknown, this study strives to show how women in Kosovo, who were subjected to discrimination before the pandemic, were the first to feel the impact and are paying the highest price. Despite the lack of official data on the impact of the pandemic on women's employment in Kosovo, the available data already indicate that women do not enjoy protection in the labor market and, consequently, are the first to suffer from reduced working hours, layoffs, and redundancies.

Therefore, the findings of this study point to the following main recommendations:

1. Gender mainstreaming in fiscal policies, both at the central and local levels. State and local institutions must focus more on incentives, including financial support for women in business and entrepreneurs, which had a significant gender gap before the pandemic.
2. Fiscal incentives and subsidies should be guided towards supporting women in business and helping them overcome the financial barriers they face as a result of the health situation in the country and globally.
3. The facilitation or exemption of municipal taxes and fees, and facilitation of policies and procedures for obtaining

loans should be considered as provisional supporting and incentivizing measures, until the current crisis is gradually overcome.

4. Gender mainstreaming in the development of measures and strategies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. State institutions should reflect, in detail, how preventive measures and all institutional responses to the pandemic affect the lives of women in Kosovo.
5. Institutional commissions tasked with policymaking, particularly those working in economic and social issues, drafting preventive measures, packages and laws related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have an impact on the lives of citizens, must have ensured gender representation.
6. the issue of unpaid work of women and men, especially after identifying the increased burden as a result of the closure of schools and daycare centers must be adequately addressed.
7. Relevant institutions must ensure that the Labor Law is strictly implemented, increasing the number of labor inspectors, and taking special measures to ensure that women benefit from private-sector financial support schemes, as envisaged by government decisions.
8. The issue of unilateral and unlawful termination of contracts, and the extended working hours without financial remuneration, must be addressed as a violation of women's labor rights, particularly in the private sector.
9. The issue of the large, and the growing number of inactive women in the labor market must be addressed.

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