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# Underrated economy

“Women have no time to change the nation: they are busy with housework”





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“Women have  
no time to change  
the nation: they  
are busy with  
housework”

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# Abbreviations

<b>KAS</b>	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
<b>LFS</b>	Labor Force Survey
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>OECD</b>	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>SSO</b>	State Statistical Office
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organizations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>FES</b>	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
<b>D4D</b>	Democracy for Development Institute
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>MCC</b>	Millennium Challenge Corporation
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agricultural Organization

# Executive summary

The economic sectors part of the care economy include paid and unpaid work in childcare, elderly and health care, and are the fastest expanding economic sectors globally. Besides comprising approximately 70% of employment in OECD countries, ILO predicts that the care economy will increase from 206 million employed in this sector to 358 in 2030.

A large portion of care work is performed without pay, and often by family members. Research has shown that care work is usually performed by women, thus the work conducted by women continues to be devalued, unrecognized and goes invisible, and not counted as a contribution in national economies. The Western Balkans continues to be characterized by deep segregation of the labor market, with unequal participation of women in the labor force, where Kosovo accounts for the lowest percentage of active women at only 21.2% while 78% of women remain inactive. According to the MCC time survey, 32.2% of women are inactive because they look after children, 16% don't believe there is a job for them, and 2.2% look after elders.

The labor market indicators in Kosovo show that 89.3% of women are workers, while only 3.8% are employers. Less than 10% of businesses are led or owned by women, and 46.9% of women have unstable jobs. In parallel, women spend 7.2 hours in household and care compared to 2.5% of men. Women mostly are busy cleaning (47%), cooking (21%), and taking care of children (21%) while only 4.5% of women would not be engaged in housework compared to 39% of men, according to the D4D survey. The patriarchal mentality has a high prevalence among women and men. While the majority of the respondents in the D4D survey consider that both women and men equally should share the housework chores, women do not believe men should be responsible, while women continue to believe that childcare and housework are women's work.

Although Albania has the highest women's participation rates in the labor market according to RCC, 22.8% of women perform unpaid family work compared to 13.1%. According to causes of inactivity, women remain out of the labor force mostly because they are busy with unpaid work at home (18.8%), or are attending school (20.9%). On the other hand, only 0.6% of men declare homework as the reason behind their inactivity, while 25.7% are students or pupils. Women perform 5.46 hours per day in unpaid work, while the gender division of unpaid work is 21.74% of women and only 3.47% of men. Meanwhile, although over 95% of women and men believe that both women and men should share the household duties and childcare, men more than women continue to believe that it is women's work.

In North Macedonia, the time use survey shows traditional gender roles in the division of work. While women dedicate only 7.3% to paid work and 15.6% to domestic activities, men spend 13.5% of time time in paid activities and only 5% on domestic chores. Women continue to be concentrated in the

manufacturing sector, wholesale and retail, health and education sectors as well as agriculture, while men are concentrated in construction, mining, administration and defense, and other professions deemed as “appropriate” for men. The research survey data show that 42.4% of respondents are mainly concentrated in cleaning and 18.2% in childcare. Women are concentrated in cooking, cleaning, and childcare, while the data show that male respondents do not engage at all in childcare and elderly care. 93.9% of respondents believe that both women and men should do the housework, while 6.1% think this is women’s duty. None of the respondents believe that housework are man’s duty.

According to Montenegro data, 15% of women spend more than 4 hours taking care of children and family needs. The monetary equivalent of the unpaid care and domestic work done by women in Montenegro is estimated to amount to €122.3 million for only three months of 2020 while the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and domestic work done by men amounts to €63.5 million. This means that women did 90% more work in the domain of unpaid care and domestic work than men. If these data are projected over 12 months, it is possible to conclude that women generated the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and domestic work of €489 million or 10% of GDP, while men generated €254 million or 5% of the GDP of Montenegro for 2019.

In Serbia, labor market indicators show gender segregation of economic sectors, while women spend less time in paid work (2.23 hrs) than men (3:37). The research survey data on who should do the housework, 2,5% responded women, 0% said males and 97,9% said they should do both. When asked who cares for children, 1% said fathers, 20% mothers, and 79% said both. When asked who should take care of the children, 0% said fathers, 1% said mothers, and 99% said both. Meanwhile, qualitative data highlight the need for young generation education on the impact of gender stereotypes in economic development.

## Which household activity do you do the most?

		Cooking	Cleaning	Childcare	Elderly Care	None	Other
Kosovo	W ↑	21.3%	47.2%	21.3%	4.5%	4.5%	5.6%
	M □	4.3%	4.3%	34.7	0	39.1%	8.7%
Albania	W ↑	34.2%	39.4%	21.2%	4.14%	0.5%	0.5%
	M □	26.3%	15.7%	15.7%	10.5%	26.3%	5.2%
North Macedonia	W ↑	4.16%	41.7%	29.7%	4.16%	16.6%	4.16%
	M □	37.5%	50%	0	0	12.5%	0
Montenegro	W ↑	25%	35%	15%	0	25%	0
	M □	13.3%	0	13.3%	6.6%	66.6%	0
Serbia	W ↑	9.7%	24.2%	26.9%	1.4%	3.7%	33.9%
	M □	14.2%	14.2%	21.4%	3.5%	10.7%	35.7%



## Who should do the housework?

	Women	Men	Both	
<b>Kosovo</b>	W ↑	2.3%	0	97.7%
	M ↓	21.7%	0	82.6%
<b>Albania</b>	W ↑	2.3%	1.16%	96.5%
	M ↓	28.5%	0	71.4%
<b>North Macedonia</b>	W ↑	4.16%	0	95.8%
	M ↓	12.5%	0	87.5%
<b>Montenegro</b>	W ↑	0	0	100%
	M ↓	13.3%	0	86.6%
<b>Serbia</b>	W ↑	2.3%	0	97.6
	M ↓	0	0	100





## Who takes care (should take care) of children?

	Women	Men	Both
<b>Kosovo</b>	 9%	0	89.7%
	 21.7%	0	78.2%
<b>Albania</b>	 8.1%	1.16%	90.7%
	 21.4%	0	78.6%
<b>North Macedonia</b>	 8.3%	0	91.6%
	 0	0	100%
<b>Montenegro</b>	 20%	0	80%
	 20%	0	80%
<b>Serbia</b>	 22.3%	1.3%	76.2%
	 7.14%	0	92.8%



# Methodology

The collection of data and their analysis in this research is conducted by all partner organizations participating in this research. An in-depth analysis of the existing situation on the care economy and the unpaid work of women in each respective country is conducted, where desk research and legal review of laws, policies, and regulations on unpaid work, and an economy of care are analyzed.

Further, each country has conducted its research on the care economy, collecting original data for this research. In each country interviews and Focus groups are conducted to support the online survey on the care economy, which aimed to collect information on the perception of women and men on unpaid work and economy of care. Using Google Forms, each country has distributed the same series of 10 questions.

Although the questionnaire aims to provide a snapshot of what people think and believe regarding shared work, unpaid work, who should conduct it, and who is responsible for it, in Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonian, Montenegro, and Serbia, this questionnaire also represents the **limitations** of this research, as the number of respondents is not equal in gender, age, education or in any other independent variable. Thus, it cannot be considered representative.

# Kosova

## Introduction

*...” If all the world’s care workers were one national economy, it would be among the largest, in hours worked, in the world. It would also consist mostly of women, and they would be mostly unpaid.”<sup>1</sup>*

What is care and what does care-work include in its framework has been a debate among scholars. According to England *et al* “work providing face-to-face services that develop the capabilities of the recipient”<sup>2</sup> including mental, physical, or emotional aspects of care work, while according to Folbre, it is the care provided to meet the dependent’s needs, something that they cannot do for themselves,<sup>3</sup> what would define the direct care work or nurturing care. However, there is a wider range of work such as cleaning, food preparation, or laundry that are part of care work and are considered as non-direct nurturing care.<sup>4</sup>

Based on these definitions, the care that parents or other caregivers give to the family, children, or elders, is an important part of the care economy, which is an important sector and a cornerstone of the social and economic life.<sup>5</sup> Thus care economy is an economic sector that is profiled in providing care to the current and future populations, and it includes child care, education, healthcare, personal care, domestic work, elder care, and other similar services in paid and unpaid forms, in the formal or informal economy.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, a large portion of care work is performed without pay, and often by family members. Moreover, this work is not included in the national GDP, which accounts only for the paid work in the market. According to Professor Jocelyn Olcott, care can be divided into care that is part of the market and the one that is not. As unpaid work is not part of GDP, nor counted in economic growth, we leave a large portion of economic activities out. According to her, “Care is not valued because it’s women’s work. Anything that women do is devalued”.<sup>7</sup>

The economic sectors that are part of the care economy, and which include paid and unpaid work, such as child, elderly, and health care, are the fastest expanding economic sectors globally. According to the OECD, it accounts for 70% of employment and GDP across OECD countries, while in middle-income countries it accounts for 60% of GDP.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, according to ILO, employment in the care economy will rise from 206 to 358 million in 2030, and even more, if the UNSDGs related to education, gender equality, health, and care are developed into policies. by world governments.<sup>9</sup>

While the Western Balkans have the lowest women labor force participation in Europe, Kosovo has the lowest participation % of women in the labor market. The last data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2022 show that only 21.2% of women are active participants in the labor market, 78,8% are inactive, and only 17,1% are employed.<sup>10</sup> Particularly the gender gap in labor market indicators is visible, as in the Labour Force Survey of 2022, only 22% of women are active participants in the labor market, compared to 55.5% of their male counterparts. As 78% of women are inactive, only 44.5% of men fall under the same category, and while 16.5% of women actively seek jobs but remain unemployed, that % is only 11% for men in Kosovo's labor market.

Although the legal framework in Kosovo guarantees gender equality in all spheres, the society continues to govern itself by patriarchal norms. In this regard, women are expected to assume their domestic duties and care roles, which become the main obstacle to women's engagement in paid work and the labor market. Therefore, women continue to be dictated by society on the expectations of women's life cycle. According to the FES Women Study in Kosovo, for 74% of women respondents, the most important value in life is to have children, while their least desire is participation in political life (7%).<sup>11</sup>

The use of Time Survey in Kosovo has lastly been conducted in 2018 on a wider national scale, bringing a deeper understanding of the situation of unpaid work in Kosovo. Meanwhile, other studies on women's position in the labor market unpaid work in particular periods have been conducted, such as the one by D4D in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, where the new reality created due to pandemic limitations revealed the multiple layers of marginalization of women and the amount of unpaid work and burden they carry.

This research aims to show that the large portion of unpaid work women do every day, keeps them away from the labor market and paid work, hinders their economic empowerment, women's equal participation in public life, but as well, their contribution to maintaining the cycle of life in social and economic aspects in Kosovo remains invisible and unaccounted for. Thus, women remain underappreciated and marginalized, as their contribution is part of the underrated portion of Kosovo's economy. To analyze the situation in Kosovo, the data from existing research will be used, from D4D and other CSOs and institutions, both domestic and international, data from online surveys conducted for this research, focus groups, and other qualitative research methods.

## Women's care work and their employment in the public and private sector

Women and girls globally contribute to more than 70% of the total hours spent in care, both paid and unpaid, while they do more than 75% of the time spent in unpaid care work. (2,3). According to the Wilson Center, if unpaid care workers were paid a minimum wage for their work, their contribution to the global economy would be approximately 11 trillion USD per year. (9) Meanwhile, a study conducted by D4D in 2015 showed that if half of inactive women in Kosovo were employed, it would increase the country's GDP by 30%.<sup>12</sup> In 2022, research has shown that the total value of unpaid care work in Kosovo is estimated at 33% of the country's GDP.<sup>13</sup>

Caregiving starts at birth. Meanwhile, care work performed by women is often left out of the economic analysis, and the contribution to society and its connection to other sectors of the economy is left out.<sup>14</sup> The care economy related to paid and unpaid work such as domestic chores, and care for households, children and elders impacts women's ability to grow economically, and gender equality and prevents them from earning more income. However, even for the low number of employed women in Kosovo, they are not paid equally to their male counterparts. Although there are no official data that support this claim, according to Gashi & Adnett women with the same education or work experience, earn 6.1% less per hour than their male counterparts.<sup>15</sup>

Labor market indicators show that women are discriminated against in all counts of their participation. As women are poorly represented in the labor market, data from 2022 from KAS show that 89.3% of women are workers while only 3.8% of self-employed women are employers. According to USAID, less than 10% of businesses in Kosovo are led or owned by women, while only 3% of business loans go to women, and due to social and cultural norms, women face more barriers to opening or sustaining a business.<sup>16</sup>

In Kosovo, 13.3% of employed people have unstable jobs, out of which, 6.9% are women. However, most importantly, 46.9% of women's unstable jobs are in services and sales workers, out of which 26.7% are unpaid family workers. In 8.4 % more, women with tertiary education work as unpaid family workers, while in difference of 14.7 % women with tertiary education are self-employed without workers compared to men.

The most concerning indicator in the labor market is the high level of inactive women, who are neither employed nor looking for a job. According to the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) time survey the main reasons for inactivity among women (32.2%) is looking after children, 16% believe that there is no work available, while 2.2% look after the elderly or other incapacitated adults.<sup>17</sup> Women spend 7.2 hours on family and household care compared to 2.5 hours spent by men.<sup>18</sup> Recent research in Kosovo shows that in 2022 women spend 6.2 hours in unpaid care work in Kosovo, 44% more than men.<sup>19</sup>

The overall, labor market besides instability, shows that women in Kosovo are mainly concentrated in education, wholesale and retail trade, and the health sector, while are almost absent from real estate activities, which shows a profound gendered labor market.

According to the World Bank (2017), the increased women’s economic vulnerability and inequality in the labor market is due to the high amount of time women spend taking care of children and family members.

## Legal framework and social factors

The legal framework in Kosovo concerning women’s rights and gender equality is in line with international human rights requirements. The Constitution of the country proclaims and guarantees the rights of women to be equal to men, and forbids discrimination based on the element of gender at all levels of society, institutions, and aspects of life in Kosovo. Additionally, the Law on Gender Equality ensures that women’s rights are promoted and protected. All legislation in Kosovo concerning employment is approximated with EU acquis, as a pre-condition for their adoption.

Nevertheless, Kosovo continues to have a large portion of patriarchy embedded in the social behavior. Society at all levels, to a large extent, does not possess gender gender-sensitive approach, meaning that elements of discrimination against women can go unrecognized, or are not “deemed” as dangerous and impactful.

An example of this approach is the importance of the Labor Law and its provisions on maternity leave that continue to allow the environment of discrimination against women in the labor market, particularly in the private sector. According to the Labor Law, 70% of the salary is paid to women on maternity leave for the first six months by the employer, and 50% of the average salary in Kosovo is paid to women on maternity leave should they continue their maternity leave for another three months, and an additional three months can be prolonged as unpaid leave. Civil society organizations in Kosovo for almost a decade continued their persistent advocacy to the Government of Kosovo to change these provisions and reflect an inclusive and gender-balanced approach including changes to accommodate parental leave to encourage equal care and equal responsibilities for both men and women as well as create the legal opportunity for women to transfer their leave to fathers upon their decision.

- Provide 8 months of maternity leave for mothers, in which 4 months would be covered by the employer (70% of the salary), 2 months by the government (50% of the average salary), and the possibility for additional 2 months of unpaid leave.

- Provide paternity leave where fathers would be able to have 1 month of paternity leave with 70% of their salary covered by the employer, 2 months with 50% of the average salary paid by the government, and the possibility for an additional 2 months of unpaid leave.<sup>20</sup>

This is one of the modalities that would provide the opportunity for mothers to return to the labor market much faster, and allow them to balance the work and life mode, which is also following EU directive 2019/1158. Meanwhile, D4D with other CSOs working on economic rights of women have designed an additional slightly modified model of parental leave as a shared model of parental leave to be taken

into consideration, organized as parental leave (6+3+3), 6 months of maternity leave, and 1 parental leave (non-transferable) covered by the Government of Kosovo; 3 months (2 months maternity leave and 1 paternity leave (non-transferable) paid by the employer, and 3 months of unpaid leave (2 months of maternity leave and 1 month of paternity leave (non-transferable)).

In addition, the change of governmental and institutional approach also helps to change the existing discriminatory social factors that associate all parenthood duties and obligations only with mothers. This social attitude besides discriminating against women in the long run, and pushing them towards inactivity, creates families where fathers are almost absent from the lives of their children, enforcing further patriarchal norms of gendered family duties. Particularly it is important to note that there is a willingness of men/fathers to be part of their children's lives if that was an opportunity provided and financially covered. According to a survey conducted by D4D in 2021, 30.5% of men responded that they would use parental leave if it would be entirely paid, and 19.4% responded that they would use their paternity leave even if it was only partially paid.<sup>21</sup>

The data from different research conducted over the years in Kosovo, and particularly by D4D (research conducted by D4D in 2017) have shown that the majority of the respondents (60%) consider that women are discriminated against in the recruitment process and consider that the patriarchal society (40%) and inappropriate maternity leave (26%) are the reasons for that. Women's unpaid work and their responsibilities to take care of children and elders are the main reasons for women's absence in the labor market.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Law on Gender Equality 05/L-02 of the Republic of Kosovo obliges all institutions to adopt strategies and action plans that promote gender equality according to the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, ensure gender mainstreaming of all policies and legislation, guarantee gender budgeting and allocate the necessary resources for initiatives that advance gender equality, the Sectorial Strategy 2018-2022 of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare did not have a cross-sectorial approach. The new Strategy of Employment of the current Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers of Kosovo has not managed to yet produce a new employment strategy that would address the current gaps and have a greater impact on the labor market concerning women's employment.

## Survey data analysis

In the survey conducted by D4D in March/April 2023 through online questionnaires distributed through Google Forms, 111 responses were gathered in total. This survey aimed to provide a quick overview of the unpaid work of women in Kosovo. Through 10 questions, the survey asked the respondents about their employment status, if the unemployed respondents were looking for a job and why, which household activity they performed the most, who they think should do the housework, who takes care (should take care) of children, and which activities they spent more time doing during the day.

In the survey, 79.2% of the respondents were women, while 20.7% were men. 70% of the respondents lived in urban areas and 30% of them in rural areas. 24.3% of the respondents were between 15-24 years old, 38.7% or the majority between 25-32 years old, 23.4% between 33-45; 12.6% between 46 to 54, and only 1.8% between 54-65 years of age.

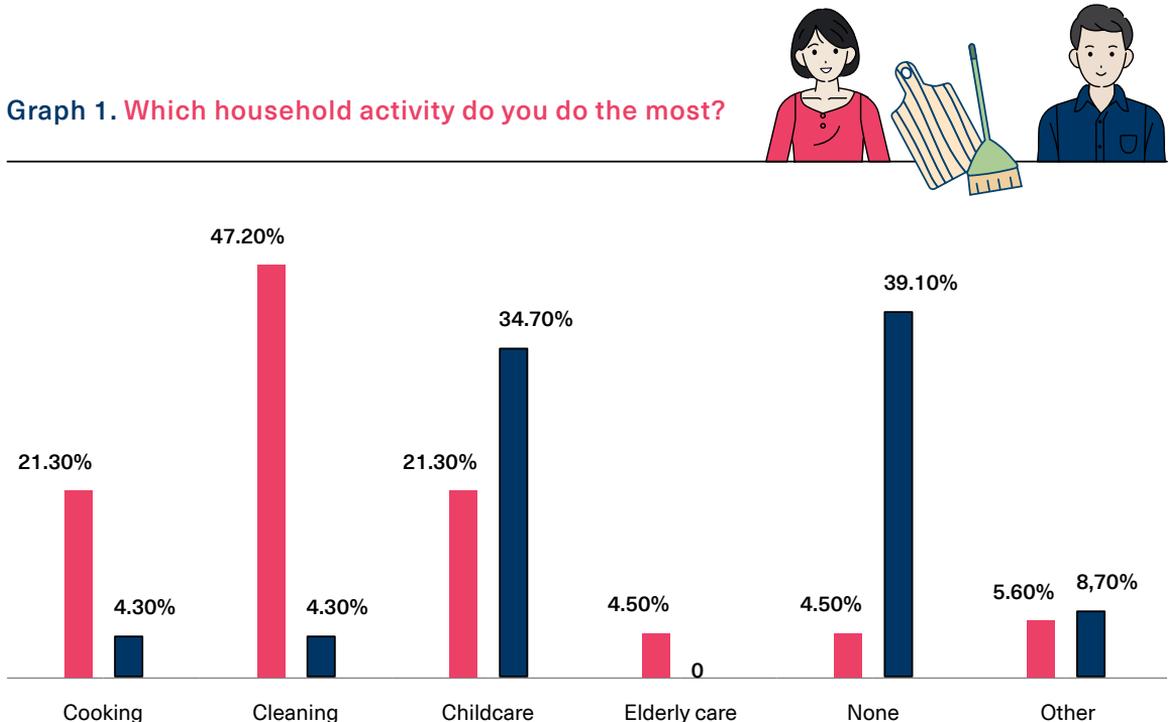
Out of 111 respondents, 68% were employed in the private sector, 2.7% in the public sector, 26.1% unemployed, while only 3.6% were unemployed and actively looking for a job. In the following question of why the unemployed respondents were not looking for a job, 50% declared that there were jobs but with low salaries, 22.5% said that there were no jobs while 10% declared that they did not have time to work because of the housework, childcare or elderly care. Meanwhile, 15% of the respondents listed the lack of transport as the reason why they cannot work.

In the question “Which household activity do you do the most” the majority of women (47%) listed cleaning as their most performed housework, followed by cooking and childcare (21.3%), elderly care (4.5%), and only 4.5% of women declared that they do not do any of the housework. Compared to women, the majority of men respondents (39.1%) declared they did not do any of the housework, while 34.7 listed childcare as an activity they perform the most, while none of the male respondents would care for elders as part of their household activities.

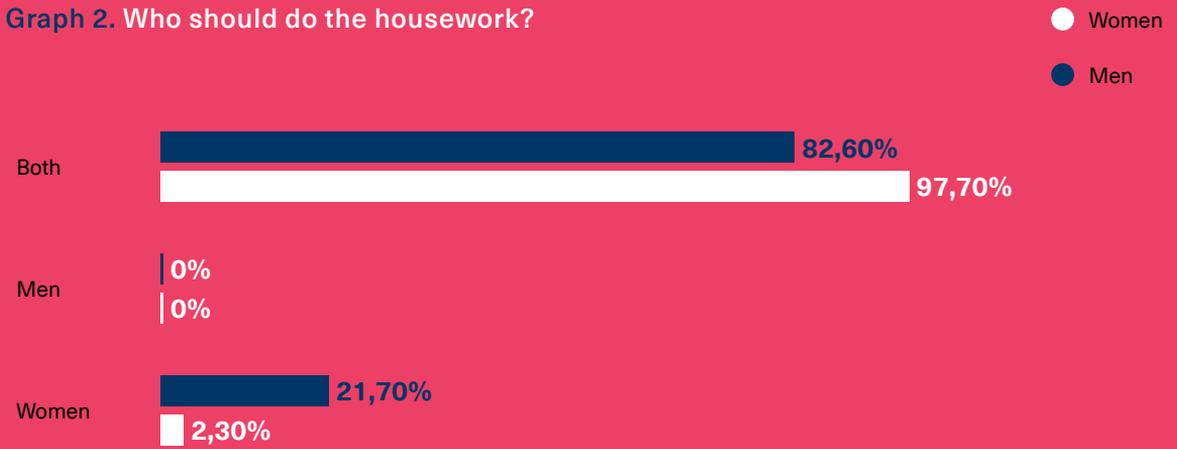
“We could do so many things, we could change the nation, but we don’t have time. We are very busy with housework”

quote from Focus Group

Graph 1. Which household activity do you do the most?

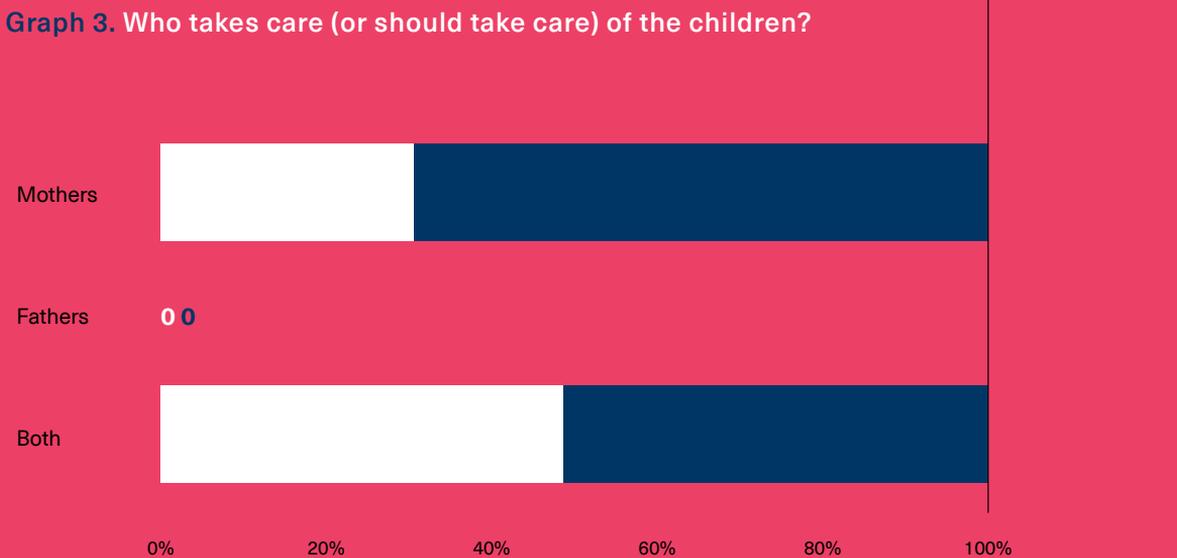


**Graph 2. Who should do the housework?**



Meanwhile, in the question “Who should do the housework”, none of the male or female respondents thought that men should do any of the housework. 21.7% of men think women should do the housework, and 2.3% of women agree with this response. Meanwhile, 97.7% of women and 82.6% of men consider that both women and men should be equally responsible.

**Graph 3. Who takes care (or should take care) of the children?**



Regarding the gender-divided responsibility in the family (who should take care of children) neither women nor men respondents that childcare is the responsibility of fathers. Meanwhile, 21.7% of men responded that women should take care of children while 9% of women respondents share the same opinion. Meanwhile, 89.7% of women and 78.2% of men believe that the responsibility of childcare should be equal for both mothers and fathers.

Women understand their rights differently

Educating women on their rights must go hand to hand with Educating men on women's rights

The concept of women's independence is understood differently by women

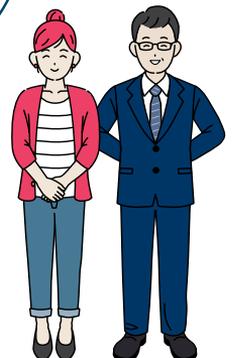
There is a greater respect towards women in the family since they started working

Care economy is the economy of subordination of women

Women are prejudicial towards themselves;

Women do not enjoy the respect of others when they do not respect themselves

Behind a successful woman there is a good man



## Conclusions

Gender equality as a concept and practical issue continues to face obstacles and challenges in Kosovo, at both societal and institutional levels. While society continues to practice and value patriarchal norms as important identifying social values, the position of women in the family, society, and particularly in the labor market continues to be unfavorable. Meanwhile, the legal infrastructure in Kosovo regarding gender equality is quite complete, the actions and measures to implement it in practice are quite scarce, reflected by low participation of women in the labor market, high number of inactive women, and low percentage of employed women. While more than 80% of women of working age are inactive, the research has shown that a large portion of them perform unpaid jobs every day, mostly childcare and elderly care.

It is important to note, not only for this research, but to address unpaid work as a discriminatory approach towards women, that the primary idea of addressing all aspects of unpaid work is not to declare childcare or family care as undesirable duties, but rather to address the issue of gendered work which continue to enforce and reproduce the patriarchal norms in the society, as well as the institutional approach towards work performed mainly by women as unappreciated and not accounted for as contribution to the state's economy. Thus, if the unpaid work of women and the care economy is not measured in all aspects, it will remain invisible. Meanwhile, as the COVID-19 pandemic situation has shown, unpaid care work just as paid work are important pillars of the economy which are important for its proper functioning, and without any of them the society would not be able to sustain itself.

## Recommendations

The economy of care in Kosovo is dominated by women, not by their choice. While generations of women re-live gendered imposed duties by the family, society, and the community as well as the lack of institutional actions to change the course of patriarchal reproduction is a twofold indicator: lack of proper strategy to change the lives of women and offer them alternatives, and the lack of interest to bring a solution for women and the society.

This research, through facts and figures, has briefly analyzed the issue of the economy of care, aiming to bring recommendations to all stakeholders in society, including women, men, families, society, and institutions, who are co-participants and co-beneficiaries in the re-direction of the care economy.

- Employment policies in Kosovo need to respond to the labor market situation. Women continue to be largely absent from the labor market, a situation that has dominated for more than a decade. Proper employment policies and employment opportunities for women need to be provided which respond to the level of education, skills, place of residence, etc.

- Labor Law of the Republic of Kosovo does not respond to the patriarchal environment in Kosovo. One of the four identified major obstacles for women's inactivity is their inability to return to the labor market

due to the improper maternity leave model offered in the Labor Law. While women have the right to 1-year maternity leave (non-transferable) with the model (6 months paid by the employer (70%), 3 months by the government (50% of the average salary), and 3 months of unpaid leave), paternity leave is defined in 2 days. This unchanged model in the last 13 years, conveys the message of institutional negligence towards women's heavy care burden, but also the creation of families where mothers and fathers are not equally participants in the child's life. Thus we recommend that the shared model of parental leave be taken into consideration, organized as parental leave (6+3+3), 6 months of maternity leave, and 1 parental leave (non-transferable) covered by the Government of Kosovo; 3 months (2 months maternity leave and 1 paternity leave (non-transferable) paid by the employer, and 3 months of unpaid leave (2 months of maternity leave and 1 month of paternity leave (non-transferable)).

- Address specific issues related to social and cultural barriers to women's participation in the labor market, by opening affordable day care centers, elderly homes, and affordable and frequent transport to allow women from rural areas to have equal access to working opportunities, enforce the implementation of law by enforcing the monitoring institutions and mechanisms;

- A national survey assessment on women's participation in the informal economy needs to be conducted by responsible state institutions;

- Equal pay for Equal work. As research and practice have shown that women of the same professional background and qualifications, for the same type and amount of job, are paid approximately 6% less than men, undertaking any means necessary to eliminate this phenomenon is strongly recommended. The gender pay gap is a classic form of discrimination, therefore institutional actions are required to address and eliminate, a bottleneck for women's equality in the labor market and society.

# Albania

## Introduction

While Albania ranks among the first countries in the region for women's labor market participation (RCC, 2022), gender inequalities continue to be present and prevalent in Albanian society. The latest Women and Men report published by INSTAT shows that the employment rate for the population aged 15-64 was 68.2% for men and 53.8% for women in 2021. While the rate of employment was back to the 2019 level for men, it continued to be slightly lower for women compared to 2019.<sup>23</sup> The labor force participation rate for men in 2021 was 77.3 compared to 61.4% for women, a 15.9% difference, compared to a 14.4% difference for employment rate. The structure of employees shows that 43.3 % of women in the labor force are employed in paid positions while 22.8 % of them engage in unpaid work in the family business. For employed men, these figures are respectively 41.6 % and 13.1 %. However, a significant % of men—namely 33.3 % in the labor force are self-employed, compared to 21.5 % of women.<sup>24</sup> According to causes of inactivity, generally speaking, women remain out of the labor force mostly because they are busy with unpaid work at home (18.8 %), or are attending school (20.9 %). On the other hand, only 0.6 % of men declare homework as the reason behind their inactivity, while 25.7 % are students or pupils.<sup>25</sup>

The recession shadowing the COVID-19 pandemic has been frequently labeled a “shecession,” implying disproportionately negative economic effects for women, relative to men. Gender gaps vary across countries, but, on average, cross-national OECD and global estimates indicate that women's hours worked, and women's employment rates declined at a greater rate than men's in the early months of the pandemic.<sup>26</sup> While data from Albania showed that slightly more men than women were impacted by job losses, women were disproportionately impacted by loss of income, especially for those self-employed. Additionally,<sup>27</sup> women saw an increase in time spent on unpaid and care work with a 10% difference compared to men.

Albania is long overdue for conducting a Time Use Survey. The last one was conducted in 2011 and is the only point of reference for understanding the magnitude of unpaid care work in the country. The 2011 TUS shows that Albanian women (aged between 15 and 64) spent 2 hours and 20 minutes on paid work, and 5 hours and 46 minutes on various unpaid work per day. Most of the unpaid work is domestic work (food preparation, cleaning, laundry, etc.) but they include childcare (47 minutes) and adult care (5 minutes).

On the other hand, Albanian men spent 5 hours and 12 minutes on paid work, and only 48 minutes on unpaid work including 3 minutes for child care and 1 minute for adult care per day.<sup>28</sup> According to a more recent study conducted by UN Women and UNICEF in 2022, “the proportion of unpaid work per day is 21.74 percent for

women and just 3.47 percent for men, meaning that women do almost one-quarter of their work, be it at home or in the workplace, for free. Albanian women spend 21.74 percent of their day doing unpaid work, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and family members. This has significant financial and economic impacts for women and society at large.<sup>29</sup> Several estimates put the value of women’s unpaid work at 7.2% compared to 1.2% of GDP for men’s unpaid work.<sup>30</sup> Women occupy 85.8% of the total unpaid work. Unpaid work accounts for roughly 60% of GDP in Albania<sup>8</sup>. The value of this labor is US\$84 (EUR 71) based on an average monthly salary of US\$390 (EUR 330), and taking into consideration that 35% of the approximate 1.08 million women in Albania are employed, this equates to the Albanian economy missing out on a potential US\$ 32 (EUR 27) million every single month and staggering US\$ 385 (EUR 324) million a year.<sup>31</sup>

## Women in the public and private sector

There are significant gender gaps in the economic sector, stemming primarily from low labor force participation of women, high levels of informality, gender segregation of work, and low access to productive inputs. Occupational stereotypes limit women’s choices, with women working predominantly in sectors such as health and social work, education, manufacturing, and agriculture, which are characterized by lower salaries. Agriculture remains the primary sector employing women, with 41.6 percent of women compared to 32.3 percent of men.<sup>32</sup> While women may believe that they are socially and culturally included, property tends to not be in their name legally. In particular, women’s ownership status regarding agricultural land has deteriorated: only 14 percent of women declare to have any ownership of agricultural land, which is half the rate declared by men (28 percent).<sup>33</sup>

Other challenges impacting women involved in agriculture include a high level of informal employment, whereby a 2016 FAO report noted that only 19% of women from rural areas had received maternity leave, compared with 59% of their urban counterparts. In addition, childcare services are virtually absent in many rural areas, increasing the burden of care and workload of women and contributing to the reinforcement of the gender-based stereotype of reproductive activities as a “purely women’s role”.

Lastly, in family farming, there is a rigid gender-based distribution of tasks. Male gender roles are associated with tasks that involve control over agricultural assets, mobility, and decision-making and female gender roles are associated with manual work in agriculture and livestock, including pre-harvest and post-harvest activities, food processing, and household tasks. This distribution of labor has resulted in women’s limited access to and control over, agricultural assets and decision-making.<sup>34</sup> In 2019, informal employment in Albania as a % of total non-agricultural employment was 35.6 percent for men and 21.8 percent for women, showing a reduction of 4.8 percent for men but just 2.2 percent for women since 2015. When informal employment in agriculture is included, the rate of informality in Albania is 61.0 percent, representing more than half of the employed population.<sup>35</sup> When assessing informal employment, women’s participation is higher in the agriculture sector and unpaid family workers category, whereas men dominate informal employment in non-agriculture sectors. Despite its importance, this work continues to lack visibility and is underestimated and disregarded in the design of macroeconomic

and social policies. In addition to the feminization of unpaid care work, women are overrepresented in the field of paid care work, which is generally characterized by low wages and unstable conditions. A study in 2010 estimated that the country's informal economy was equivalent to 32.9 percent of its GDP. Other research has revealed that 40 percent of workers admitted that they are forced to compete with the informal sector. Even more alarmingly, the Albanian Government confirmed in 2015 that the informal economy makes up 50 percent of the GDP. Informal employment takes various forms. For example, 39.75 percent of employees stated they did not have a written contract with their employer, while 30.29 percent declared that they did not pay for social and health security benefits.<sup>36</sup>

## Legal and social factors

Since the fall of communism, Albania has taken decisive steps towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The legal framework is largely in line with international standards and human rights norms. There is a gender equality law since 2008, a law on protection from discrimination since 2010, and a law on combating domestic violence since 2006, which have all undergone significant revisions since their initial approval. As noted in the 2022 EU Report "Albania generally complies with international human rights instruments and has ratified most international conventions on the protection of fundamental rights. During the reporting period, some progress was made, notably with the adoption of a new and better-budgeted national action plan for LGBTIQ persons, a national strategy on gender equality, and a national action plan for equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania."<sup>37</sup>

The 2021-2030 NSGE contains a specific objective to address unpaid domestic and care work. Objective 1.1 states "Implementation of improved legal framework and policies enabling an equal division of unpaid domestic and care work between women and men, young women and young men, girls and boys."<sup>38</sup> Despite these provisions and general improvements in the legal framework about gender equality in Albania, challenges remain in effectively addressing the unequal distribution of burdens between men and women in the area of the care economy. The challenges around unpaid care and domestic work in Albania are intrinsically linked to social factors, societal attitudes, and traditions, manifested in the form of rigid gender roles, whereby women have to be the caretakers at home while men should provide for the family financially. In a recent article analyzing the concept of "nuse (the bride) of the house," Jaso argues that this discourse is "underpinned by moral considerations of what an Albanian woman should be: the "nuse (the bride) of the house" is always obedient, keeps the house clean without complaining, and does all the cooking.. She always puts the needs of her husband (and her in-laws) before her own and she is a dedicated mother who raises good children (preferably boys). These narratives take place within the context of the traditional Albanian family unit. Far from being a relic of the past, the "nuse of the house" idiom shapes and reproduces gender-oppressive relations in Albanian society today, dictating the moral conduct of many Albanian women inside and outside the private sphere."<sup>39</sup>

In line with this, women are disproportionately affected by childcare responsibilities and long-term caring for the elderly, which puts a heavy burden on them, regardless of their status of employment. Therefore, women in Albania need affordable childcare to be able to pursue decent work opportunities and increase economic resilience, equity, and security. However, spending on social care services is relatively low (at 3% of the overall social protection budget program). Reduction in pre-childcare and absence of social service structures designed for the elderly or disabled has led to an increase in the number of women of working age in unpaid care work who remain outside the labor market because of their domestic responsibilities for children or the elderly or disabled. Development of policies and programs establishing universal childcare, or social protection for the elderly and disabled, would both allow women's participation in paid employment activities and reduce poverty by enhancing the economic level of the household.<sup>40</sup>

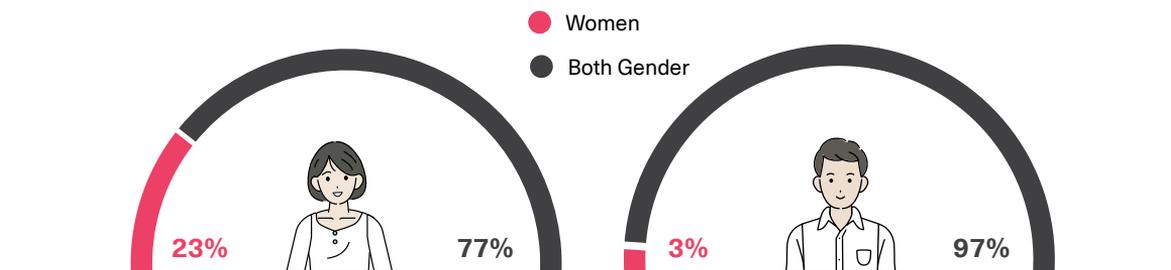
Despite some progress in the policy and legal domain to advance gender equality, there is generally a gap in policies regarding equal division of time and household responsibilities between men and women. The main initiatives for a more balanced lifestyle and alleviation of women from their child-rearing and caring responsibilities are undertaken in changes to the legal framework. In this regard, a revision to the Law On Social Security in the Republic of Albania dated 11.05.1993 and amended on 9.03.2017, has recognized the right of fathers to take paternity leave after 63 days mandatory period for mothers. Amendments to the labor code also allow each of the parents to request parental leave. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth has started the “Let's Do Homework” initiative, where students remain at school for an additional two hours after the school period ends to do their homework and other extracurricular activities. This initiative was established to provide an equal environment for children from different social-economic backgrounds to do their homework and increase educational attainment. Furthermore, it provides mothers and families with additional childcare, thus creating a more conducive environment for mothers in the labor market. Lastly, revisions to the Albanian “Labor Code” have made provisions for more flexible working arrangements to include telework and work from home. The law requires that this type of work has the same rights and working conditions as the same type of work that is conducted by other employees.<sup>41</sup>

Albania is still lagging in the long-term care services for the elderly, which is constrained by the low income of households and the elderly as well as by the limited financial capacities of the public budget and social insurance schemes.<sup>42</sup> Increasing access to quality childcare can have multigenerational impacts, improving women's employment and productivity, child outcomes, family welfare, business productivity, and the economy as a whole. Despite considerable evidence pointing to the benefits of child care for women's economic equality, economic growth, and children's development, many governments fail to recognize child care as a public good and adequately resource it. Parents are left struggling to manage childcare, millions of women are kept out of the workforce, and half of the world's children go without pre-primary education. A recent regional study on long-term care in the Western Balkans showed that a majority of respondents thought that some of the most significant barriers to care are due to cost (40%) and access and availability (27%).<sup>43</sup>

## Survey findings

To complement data collected through the literature review, an online survey was distributed in June 2023 through social media platforms, which was open for a period of 10 days. A total of 90 respondents completed the survey which was designed to better understand perceptions of unpaid care responsibilities within the home and how men and women spend their day *vis a vis* care responsibilities. The graphs below represent a summary of the findings from the survey responses and offer a small snapshot in time of how men and women view their roles within the home.

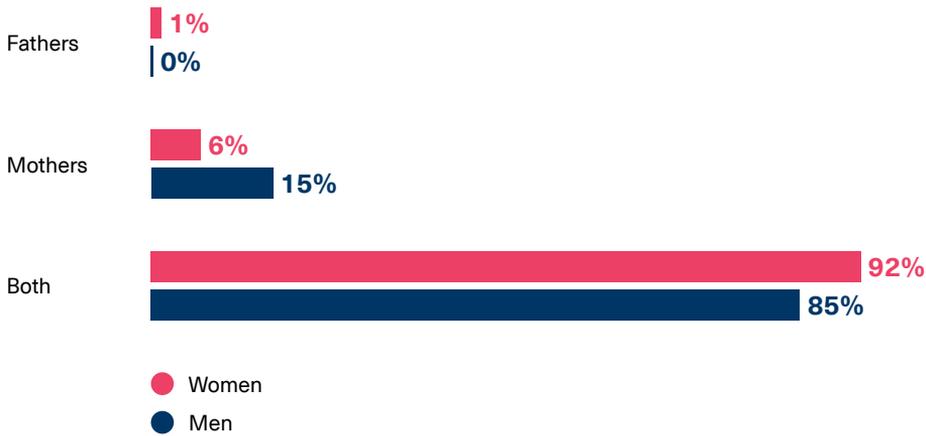
### Who should do house chores?



Graph 4. Division of house chores

Asked about who should be responsible for house chores, the vast majority of women (97%) responded that both women and men should share these responsibilities. This % is lower among men who responded to the survey, however, it is encouraging that almost 4 in 5 men said that both genders should share house chores and home responsibilities, while 23% said women should take care of them.

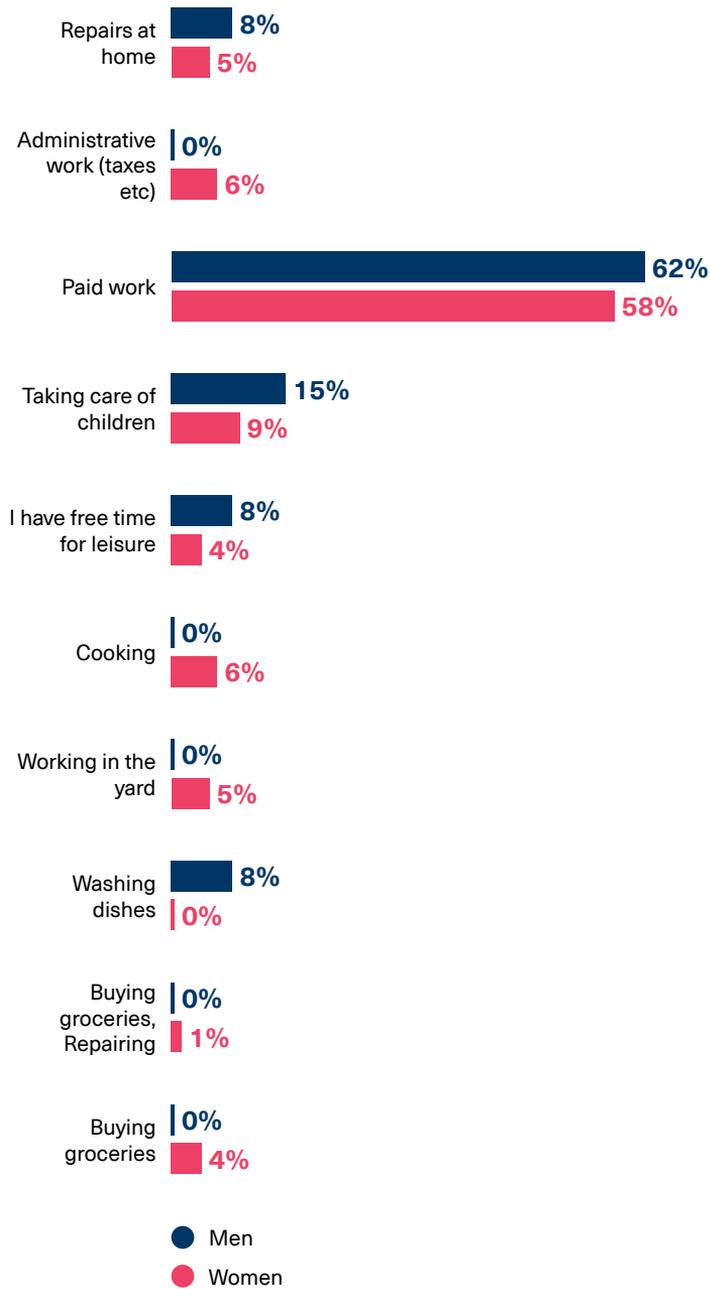
## Who should take care of the children?



Graph 5. Division of childcare responsibilities

Asked who should be in charge of caring for children, there is a slight difference between female and male respondents. It shows that none of the men surveyed selected fathers as the primary caregivers for children, while 15% of them thought that mothers should be the sole caregivers. On the other hand, it is also showing that more women said mothers should take care of children compared to women who said fathers should be in charge (6% compared to 1%). The vast majority of women (92%) and men (85%) think this should be a responsibility shared between both parents.

## Graph 6. Main daily activities



Asked how they spend the majority of their day, 62% of men and 58% of women reported that they spent most of their time in paid work. Additionally, a small %, double more men than women reported they spend most of their time on leisure activities in their day (8% compared to 4%). None of the surveyed men reported doing any cooking or buying groceries as their main activity, while women reported at a higher rate that they spend time taking care of children and washing dishes.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The survey findings above show that women continue to be overrepresented in the care economy, they carry the majority of the burden of care at home and other domestic responsibilities due to social and cultural understandings of the role of women and men. Even though there seems to be a slight advancement in the understanding of house chores to be equally shared for women and men, overall more women said mothers should take care of children compared to women who said fathers should be in charge. Further, none of the surveyed men reported doing any cooking or buying groceries as their main activity, while women reported at a higher rate that they spend time taking care of children and washing dishes. Even though national policies and legislation have made some progress in addressing this challenge, more is required to truly offer women the opportunities to fully participate in the economy and to empower them economically. Social services are not doing sufficiently to provide the support needed to alleviate women's burden of care and traditional gender norms continue to dominate Albanian society. The following is a set of recommendations to address both social norms and policies needed in action.

### Social Protection:

- Increase investment in childcare systems to address the disproportionate responsibility of care that falls upon women. There should be a universal childcare system, that is affordable and accessible to all, including rural areas.
- Introduce legislation to protect the rights of unpaid care work/carers and secure a living wage for paid care workers to ensure they have access to social assistance or a living wage and work towards the elimination of gender wage gaps.
- Strengthen social protection systems to improve access to childcare and out-of-school support.
- Recognize unpaid and paid care work at the national policy and legal level.
- Improve data collection on unpaid work to help inform and shape policy and decision-making.
- Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality to understand the impact of interventions and make necessary changes.
- Undertake gender analysis and assessments to consider the impacts of infrastructure, social protection, and public service investments on women and girls' unpaid work and whether they lead to unpaid work responsibilities being transferred to other women in the household, particularly older women and girls.

- Ensure accessible and affordable child- and elder-care public services to reduce women's unpaid work responsibilities and to enable their labor force participation.

### **Employment measures:**

- Advocate for employment policies that support employees sharing caregiving responsibilities.
- Improve awareness of the benefits of flexible family/work policies including flexible schedules and different types of working arrangements (e.g. part-time, reduced hours, flexible schedules, shorter working weeks) that will facilitate more equal distribution of unpaid work and that will help women and men find a better work-life balance.
- Raise and strengthen employers' awareness of their responsibilities to help challenge gendered cultural norms and expectations of ideal workers and ideal carers.
- Combat informality in the labor market, especially in the agriculture sector.
- Improve women's position in the agriculture sector, especially through property ownership and social services to alleviate their care burden.
- Support unpaid and informal carers' transition to the formal labor market.

### **Shifting social norms:**

- Conduct awareness-raising initiatives to facilitate changes in sociocultural gender norms and attitudes.
- Invest in combating rigid gender norms that continue to plague Albanian women. One way to do so is through providing incentives to fathers to make use of parental leave and offering fatherhood programs to teach parenting skills and the value of co-parenting.
- Promote men's involvement in unpaid work by addressing gender segregation in the home and workplace.
- Normalize cultural expectations of fathers' equal involvement in unpaid work.
- Transform negative masculinities at the societal, community, family, and individual levels, through a special curriculum for schools' students from elementary school to the high school.
- Create spaces for men and boys to discuss gender stereotypes in school special hours dedicated to gender equality or violence against women.
- Initiate media campaigns to destigmatize and disrupt gendered notions of women's and men's work, norms, and roles.
- Engage more men in paid childcare positions to advance cultural norms of men's roles in care taking.
- Revalue domestic and care work's worth to both society and the economy. Formally recognize the skills gained through paid and unpaid care work.

# North Macedonia

## Introduction

The care economy refers to the paid and unpaid labor and services that support caregiving in all its forms.<sup>44</sup> Paid labour in that regard is related to services provided outside of the home for example care for other persons that are not direct family members or doing domestic work outside of the household. The care economy is economically valuable but globally undervalued.<sup>45</sup> It remains characterized by a void of benefits and protections, lack of contract, paid leaves,<sup>46</sup> low wages or non-compensation, and exposure to physical, mental, and, in some cases, sexual harm.<sup>47</sup>

Care work within the household refers to doing domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, or taking care of family members, including childcare, care for elderly or disabled people or for those who are ill. This work usually is invisible, undervalued, and unpaid without a proportionate share of the labor between men and women.<sup>48</sup> Traditionally, women have shouldered the majority of care responsibilities, resulting in gender inequalities and economic disparities.

This gendered division of labor has had significant implications for both men and women. Women’s participation in the labor force has been limited due to the demands of care responsibilities, leading to lower wages, reduced career advancement opportunities, and a widening gender pay gap. Men, on the other hand, have been less involved in care work, which has limited their engagement in nurturing and domestic activities. Understanding the importance of the care economy and addressing its gendered dynamics is crucial for achieving a more equitable and inclusive society.

The care economy is not only essential for individual well-being but also has significant implications for sustainable economic growth. The provision of care services, both formal and informal, contributes to the overall functioning of society and enables other economic activities to take place. However, the undervaluation and underinvestment in care work can hinder economic development.

This brief document focuses primarily on assessing the situation in N. Macedonia, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources to examine the division of unpaid labor in the household aiming to identify who spends more time taking care of children or other family members, and how household work is distributed between the partners. Additionally, the time used by women and men is a matter of

interest to understand the social norms and underlying factors that have or could have influenced in creation of gender roles within the Macedonian household.

## Official statistics from time use survey and employed by economic sectors

the allocation of time and how people prioritize their daily activities, including paid work (career development), domestic tasks, caring for others (unpaid work), and activities for personal fulfillment and well-being, plays a crucial role in understanding gender equality and societal gender norms. Examining how individuals spend their time in these areas sheds light on potential disparities between men and women. The State Statistical Office carries out a Time Use Survey to collect valuable information about the average time use per day of the population in the country. Unfortunately, the latest available data on time use is from the year 2015 when the research was conducted. Since then, no new or updated data has been published on these matters. Despite these limitations, the existing data provides valuable insights into the division of labor and the involvement of women and men in unpaid household work.

On a typical day, people in the country allocate their time to various activities, each contributing to different portions of their daily routines.<sup>49</sup> The largest amount of time, 36% (*equivalent to 8 hours and 44 minutes*), is devoted to **sleeping**, whether during the night or day, as well as any resting periods due to disability. Coming in at 22% (*5 hours and 17 minutes*) is **free time**, encompassing socializing, visiting and receiving guests, phone conversations, entertainment, cultural pursuits, sports, walking, hiking, engaging in artistic activities, using computers, reading books or magazines, watching TV, listening to music, and more. **Domestic activities**<sup>50</sup> take up 10% (*2 hours and 25 minutes*) of the day and encompass a range of tasks, such as food preparation, dishwashing, cleaning, laundry, ironing, handicrafts, gardening, pet care, household repairs, shopping, childcare, and other unspecified household-related activities. **Employment** accounts for 10% (*2 hours and 30 minutes*), considering both the main job and any secondary employment, as well as activities like short breaks during work, travel for work purposes, overtime, business trips, seminars, and more. **Eating and drinking** represent 9% (*2 hours and 14 minutes*) of daily activities, while another 4% (*56 minutes*) is attributed to other personal care activities, including personal hygiene, health care, intimate relations, and caring for household members, relatives, or friends. The other activities<sup>51</sup> take less time during the day.<sup>52</sup>

The survey data highlights the persistence of traditional gender roles in the division of work. The results indicate that men allocate a larger portion of their time, approximately 13.5% (*equivalent to 4 hours and 1 minute*), to **paid work**, in contrast to women who dedicate around 7.3% (*equivalent to 2 hours and 39 minutes*) of their time to employment-related activities. This employment disparity spills over into other aspects of life, including free time and domestic responsibilities. As a consequence, women are found to devote a significant proportion, approximately 15.6% (*equivalent to 3 hours and 38 minutes*), of their time to **domestic activities**, which is three times more than the 5% (*equivalent to 1 hour and 11 minutes*) of time that men allocate to such tasks.<sup>53</sup> This discrepancy highlights the disproportionate burden placed on women in terms of household responsibilities.

Even among the employed population, a significant gender gap persists in domestic responsibilities, with women shouldering the majority of the burden at a staggering 14% (*equivalent to 3 hours and 14 minutes*), while employed men contribute a mere 5% (*equivalent to 1 hour and 10 minutes*) to these tasks. Upon closer examination of domestic activities, specific tasks reveal even more pronounced gender disparities. Notably, food preparation occupies a substantial 35% (*equivalent to 1 hour and 11 minutes*) of women's domestic workload, whereas it constitutes only 7.9% (*equivalent to 9 minutes*) of men's responsibilities. Similarly, dishwashing accounts for 8.5% (*equivalent to 27 minutes*) of women's domestic duties, while it is a mere 1.4% (*equivalent to 1 minute*) of men's responsibilities.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to their unequal share of domestic tasks, employed women also find themselves with less time for leisure activities when compared to men. Specifically, women allocate 15.1% of their time (*equivalent to 3 hours and 39 minutes*) to leisure activities, whereas men have the privilege of dedicating 19.1% of their time (*equivalent to 4 hours and 35 minutes*) to such pursuits.<sup>55</sup>

This data reveals a significant trend regarding the time spent on domestic activities by women and men in the age group of 25 to 44 years.<sup>56</sup> During this period, women's time spent on domestic tasks notably increases, while it decreases for men of the same age. This pattern paints a clear picture of a patriarchal family structure, where women shoulder the majority of responsibilities related to childcare, elderly care, and other family obligations. Consequently, unemployed women often find themselves dedicating their time to home duties, leaving them with limited opportunities to acquire new skills or gain work experience, which could enhance their competitiveness in the labor market. This situation has a direct impact on women's leisure and personal development. As they devote a significant portion of their time to domestic roles, they have fewer opportunities to engage in cultural activities, sports, volunteering, and other leisure pursuits. The unequal distribution of domestic work and caregiving responsibilities not only perpetuates traditional gender roles but also hinders women's progress in various areas of life.

### **Women and men employed by economic sectors**

According to the data from the State Statistical Office, a total of 287,360 women are employed. Among these employed women, the largest proportion, consisting of 64,611 workers, is found in the manufacturing sector. Following the wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, and motorcycle sector which employs 49,207 women.<sup>57</sup> In the human health and social work activities sector, there are 35,583 female workers, outnumbering the 10,932 men employed in the same field. Moving on to education 29,461 women are employed compared to 18,290 men. Lastly, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector also has significant female representation in the total employed workforce, with 24,597 women actively working.<sup>58</sup>

If we examine the distribution of employees across various sectors of activity expressed as %, it becomes evident that the majority of the workforce in the following sectors comprises women: Human health and social work activities (76.5%); Education (61.7%); Activities of extraterritorial organizations

and bodies (56.5%); Professional, scientific and technical activities (56.4%); and Financial and insurance activities (56.4%). On the other hand, men constitute a smaller portion of the workforce employed in these sectors.<sup>59</sup>

It can be observed that men constitute the majority of the employed persons in activities such as construction (91.3%), mining and quarrying (90.5%), transportation and storage (88.7%), water supply, sewerage, waste management, and remediation activities (82.4%), and electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (74.8%). Additionally, over 60% of the workforce in the sectors of public administration and defense, compulsory social security (68.3%), information and communication (66.3%), accommodation services (65.4%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (64.4%), and real estate activities (62.6%) are men as well.<sup>60</sup>

The observed gender disparities in the distribution of the employed workforce across different economic sectors might indicate that there is occupational segregation, for example, women are seen as more suitable for healthcare and education, while men are for construction or transportation. Furthermore, there are still deep-rooted gender stereotypes and social norms that influence career choices and opportunities. From a young age, girls are encouraged to pursue careers in traditionally “female” occupations, such as those in the health, social care, education, or public administration sectors.

This division of labor and job roles is deeply ingrained in both the educational system and the broader society, persisting across generations.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, this gendered approach to careers affects girls’ self-confidence and necessitates additional support during their high school years, as compared to boys. The “Girls in Technology” study discovered that even at a young age and while still in the educational process, girls are aware of the gender stereotypes that hinder their career choices.<sup>62</sup> They notice that society has expectations from them and girls may face challenges and societal barriers when aspiring to become, for example, car mechanics or competing in traditionally “male” occupations.<sup>63</sup> Another reason among others might be the work-life balance and caregiving responsibilities. As we have observed in the presented data on time use there is no equal division of unpaid labour in the households. Women often shoulder a disproportionate share of caregiving which can impact their ability to pursue certain careers of work longer hours.

## Social norms and perception of women on the care economy and division of the unpaid work

The country has made significant strides in pursuing gender equality, with the adoption of comprehensive legislation that aligns with fundamental conventions and widely accepted norms. Despite these efforts, certain entrenched social norms persist, leading to gender inequality and discrimination in the labor market.

One pressing concern is that 55.6% of women are inactive<sup>64</sup> in the labor market.<sup>65</sup> This inactivity can be attributed to several factors, but a major one is the prevalence of traditional gender roles in society, which become even more pronounced after marriage or having children. Many women opt to remain inactive and embrace the role of full-time housewives, dedicating three times more time to household activities than men.<sup>66</sup> According to the State Statistical Office, a significant portion of inactive women, or 41%, are categorized as housewives. The time women in the country dedicated<sup>67</sup> to domestic activities significantly increases for the age group of women from 25 to 44 years, while it reduces for men of the same age<sup>68</sup> suggesting a gender disparity. Consequently, unemployed women find themselves devoting their time and energy to fulfilling these obligations, leaving them with limited opportunities to acquire new skills or gain work experience, hindering their competitiveness in the labor market.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that some measures, such as the closure of kindergartens three years ago (due to COVID-19), can inadvertently institutionalize gender roles and stereotypes. For instance, a measure was implemented allowing one parent of children younger than ten years to be released from work to provide care for the child. Unfortunately, this resulted in only every fifth parent being a father, leading to mothers taking on three-quarters of the total burden of care.<sup>69</sup> The lower uptake of this measure by men could be attributed to the fact that they typically hold more secure and often better-paid jobs, reinforcing the traditional gender stereotype of men as the primary breadwinners. This example illustrates how certain policies can reinforce existing gender roles, where women are expected to prioritize caregiving responsibilities while men are seen as the main providers in the workforce. In that regard, the Gender Equality Index findings show that women in N. Macedonia earn less and are at a higher risk of poverty compared to men. Lower earnings, shorter duration of working life by 10 years, and higher inactivity in the labor market contribute to a higher risk of poverty and economic vulnerability.<sup>70</sup>

The inactivity of women in the workforce and difficulties in finding decent work can be attributed to their traditional reproductive roles, often requiring them to prioritize childcare responsibilities. Compounding this issue is the inadequate availability of facilities, especially kindergartens, which makes it challenging for mothers to balance work and family duties. Previous studies have shown a significant shortage of kindergarten vacancies, a problem persisting in every municipality across the country.<sup>71</sup>

## Perception of women in the care economy and division of unpaid work

As part of this activity, we organized two focus group discussions involving a diverse group of women from various personal, educational, and professional backgrounds, with participants spanning different age groups. Throughout these discussions, the women openly shared their experiences and perspectives concerning the division of labor and the time they spent on unpaid domestic activities. These activities encompassed a wide range of tasks, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare, and providing care for family members.<sup>72</sup>

While there is a growing awareness of the need for a fair division of unpaid labor today, traditionally, women often bore the entire burden of household work, especially if they were unemployed. Participants acknowledged that the division of labor within the household depended on the employment status of the partners. If both of them are employed, the household tasks should be shared. Interestingly, specific household tasks were still viewed through traditional gender roles. For instance, repairs of household appliances and yard work were usually expected to be carried out by men, while cleaning by women.

Single mothers, on the other hand, often receive assistance from their children. During the discussions, one participant, a divorced mother living with two children, highlighted how they functioned as a team in managing household tasks. Despite the financial constraints of her children being students, they actively participated in dividing and completing household tasks.

When women initially allow their partners to avoid household chores, this can establish a pattern where men accept and refrain from participating in such tasks. Despite some progress, many participants expressed that the division of labor was not entirely equal. While husbands or partners contributed to unpaid household work to some extent, women often felt a heavier burden. Men, in their experience, showed limited interest in learning domestic duties and tended to avoid tasks such as washing dishes. The use of household appliances, like the washing machine, was cited as an example where men “do not know how to use it”.

While education and upbringing do influence personality development, women generally believe that it is up to them to decide what will and what will never be part of their relationship with their partner. One participant shared a personal example from her family. Her father took an active role in household chores, including washing dishes and cooking. Despite her father’s willingness to participate, she reflects on the possibility that sometimes women themselves might inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles in their relationships. She mentions that she can’t easily change her husband’s behavior if she’s been married for a long time, highlighting the complexities of altering already established patterns.

When asked about who might influence men not to participate in household chores, the participants pointed towards parents as potentially playing a role in shaping these beliefs. One participant humorously recalled an incident from her past where she encouraged her son to use a vacuum cleaner. His father seemingly discouraged him from attempting such tasks again. This anecdote highlights how preconceived notions and negative experiences can deter men from taking part in household work.

During the discussions on the time allocated to unpaid household work, participants emphasized that tasks such as laundry or cleaning could be particularly time-consuming. The majority of women expressed their belief that they continue to invest more effort and time in household work compared to their male partners, with estimates ranging from 60% to 80% of the overall tasks. This discrepancy is often attributed to various factors, such as their partners not completing the tasks well or simply being unwilling to contribute to these responsibilities.

One participant expressed a common sentiment, stating that while she might claim it's a 50-50 division of the work when it comes to more challenging tasks like cleaning, she ends up taking on a larger share. She prefers to handle the cleaning herself rather than switching tasks and being dissatisfied with her partner's results. This attention to detail and preference for control contribute to the heavier workload she takes on. Another participant prefers to do the cleaning by herself and while her husband takes the children out, she chooses to stay behind and do the cleaning.

Regarding childcare and homework assistance, women generally take on more responsibilities. However, men do get involved in activities like parent-teacher meetings, and dropping off, or picking up children from kindergarten or school. In cases where there are multiple children, both partners have no choice but to divide these duties, often attending separate meetings simultaneously. In situations when children are sick, it is primarily mothers who take time off from work to care for them. This indicates that women often make career sacrifices due to social norms and expectations surrounding caregiving. These expectations can create imbalances in work-life dynamics, impacting women's professional growth and opportunities.

From the discussions, it became evident that women struggle to find time for themselves due to the extensive demands of household tasks. When asked how they would spend their free time if the burden of household chores were divided more evenly, they expressed a desire to engage in recreational activities with their families while also having dedicated time for themselves to pursue personal interests. On the other hand, in their experience, men generally have more flexibility in managing their time during the day, as they are not overloaded with household tasks.

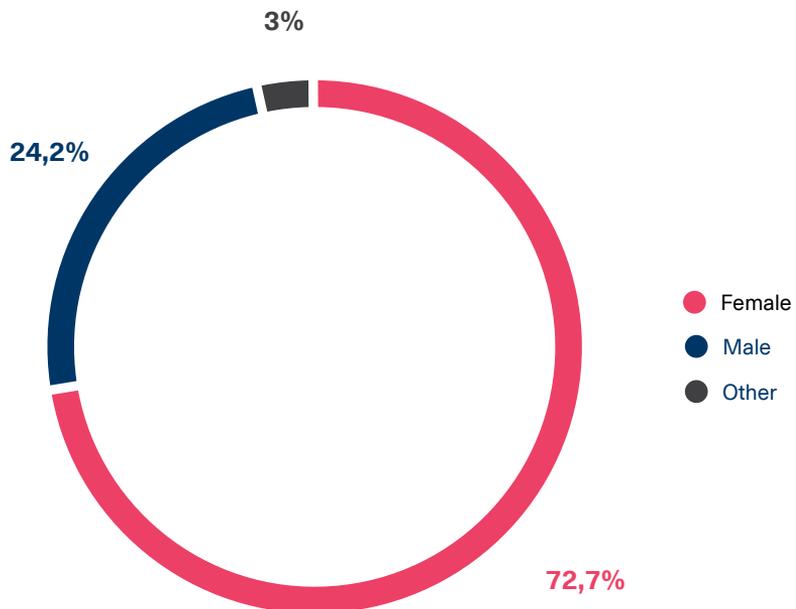
The participants pointed out that these issues discussed above have roots in an early age of socialization. Girls tend to be exposed to toys and activities that reinforce traditional gender roles, emphasizing their roles as caregivers and homemakers. On the other hand, boys are encouraged to play with toys like cars or planes that are considered more “masculine,” which may not involve domestic responsibilities. The influence of parents was also highlighted, as some raise boys without involving them from a young age in the division of labor within the household.

## Survey Data Analysis

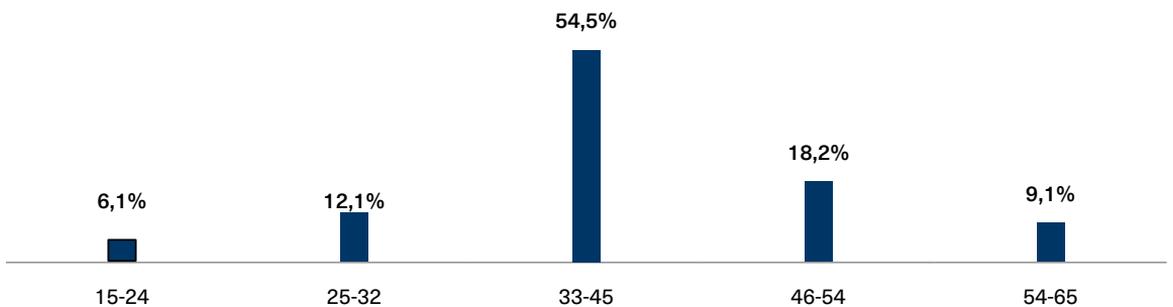
Within this activity, a brief online survey was carried out to examine the roles of women and men from N. Macedonia regarding the division of unpaid domestic work including childcare. The questionnaire comprised 10 questions, and the data was collected from a randomized selection of respondents who accessed the available link.

Of the total number of respondents who completed the online questionnaire, 72.7% were women, 24.2% were men, and 3% identified as other. All of the respondents live in the city or urban area.

**Graph 7. Respondents by gender**



**Graph 8. Respondents by age**

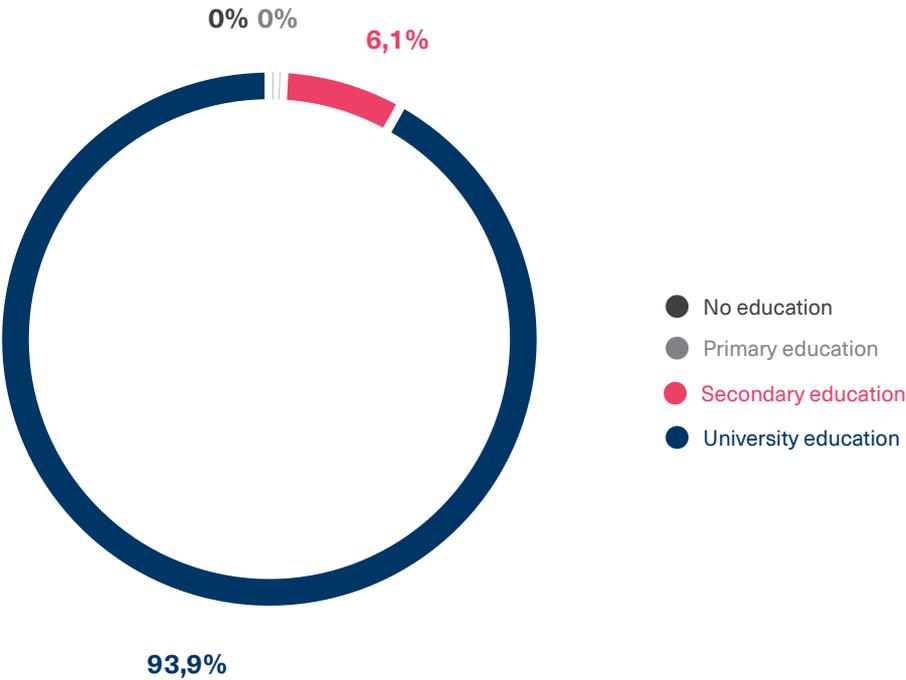


According to the age structure presented in the graph, it can be observed that the majority of respondents, or 54.5%, fall within the age range of 33 to 45 years. The next significant age group is between 46 to 54 years, comprising 18.2% of the respondents. The age group of 25 to 32 years is represented by 12.1%, while those aged 54 to 65 years make up 9.1% of the surveyed population. The youngest age group, individuals aged between 15 to 24 years, constitutes only 6.1%.

Regarding the highest level of education, out of the total number of respondents, 93.9% have a university or college degree while 6.1% have secondary education.

If the economic status of the respondents is analyzed it can be observed that most of them or 93.9% are employed. Out of those who are employed, 54.5% are employed in the public sector, while 39.4% in the private sector. The remaining respondents fall into two categories: unemployed (3%) and those who are unemployed but not actively seeking employment (3%). Asked about why they were not looking for a job, the reason was the low salaries.

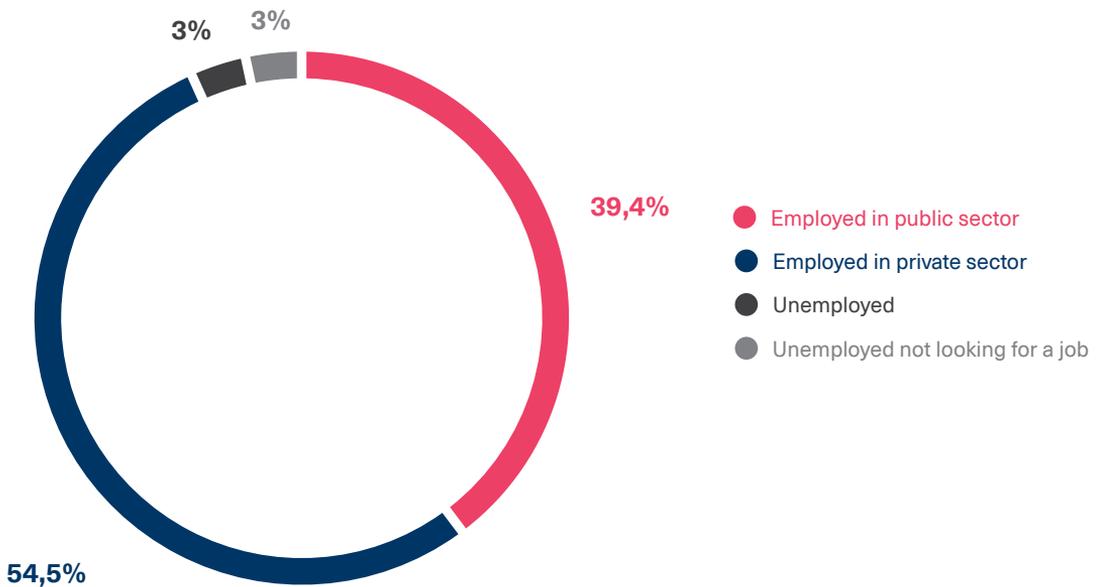
**Graph 9. Respondents by education**



■ Underrated economy

The respondents were asked which household activity they do the most. The largest share of them 42.4%, responded that they are primarily involved in cleaning, 18.2% in childcare, and 12.1% in cooking. Additionally, 3% said that they are mainly involved in elderly care, and another 3% mentioned ironing as their main task. Interestingly, 6% stated that they perform a combination of the aforementioned tasks. On the other hand, a notable 15.1% responded that they do not engage in any of the listed activities.

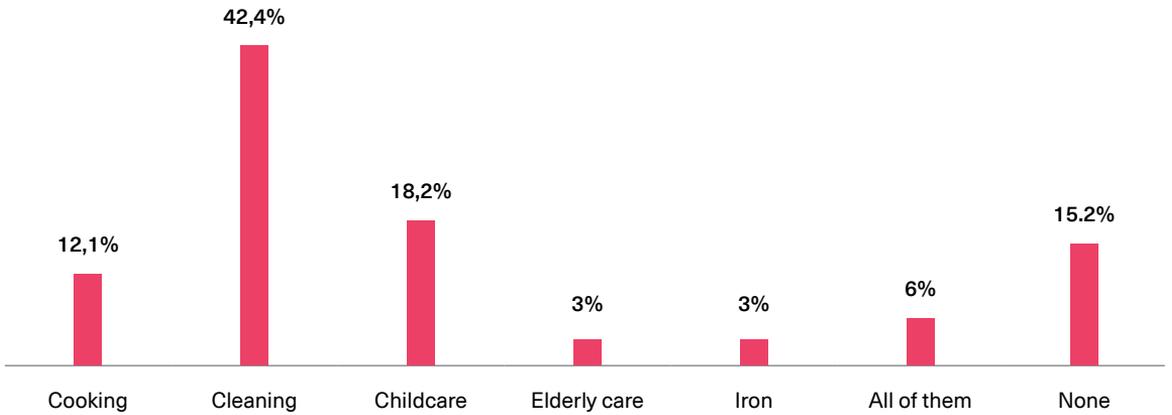
**Graph 10. Respondents by Economic status**



When asked about the division of housework, the majority of respondents, comprising 93.9%, expressed the belief that both partners should share the responsibilities. Conversely, only 6.1% believed that women should solely be responsible for housework.

Regarding childcare responsibilities, once again, a significant majority, accounting for 90.9% of the respondents, believe that both parents should share the caregiving duties. In contrast, a smaller portion, 9.1%, stated that mothers should be primarily responsible for taking care of the children.

**Graph 11. Which household activity do you do the most?**



The majority of the respondents, precisely 66.7%, dedicate the most hours per day to paid work. Additionally, 6.1% of them allocate their time to childcare, and another 6.1% to grocery shopping. A notably smaller portion of the participants spend the majority of their day in leisure activities, self-care, or gardening.

### Graph 12. Who should do the housework?



## Conclusion

Gender disparities in unpaid labor have a profound impact on women’s quality of life and their personal and professional development. The unequal distribution of household chores places a significant burden on women, leaving them with limited time for pursuing personal interests and self-care. In contrast, men often enjoy greater flexibility in managing their time, as they are not burdened with the same extent of essential household tasks. This disparity was not only evident in statistical data but also confirmed through the discussions held on the topic.

Both society and public institutions play a vital role in addressing the issue of unpaid work. They should collaborate to focus on education and awareness-raising initiatives that shed light on the significance of unpaid labor. These efforts must encompass promotion activities aimed at challenging existing stereotypes related to the division of unpaid labor while emphasizing the value of unpaid work and caregiving. By doing so, we can gradually transform societal attitudes towards these responsibilities. Moreover, it is crucial to cultivate a culture of appreciation and recognition for unpaid labor and caregiving, not just within families but throughout society as a whole.

It is encouraging through the research to identify that some families are challenging these traditional norms by adopting a more balanced approach to task division. This illustrates that change is possible when conscious efforts are made to break away from rigid gender roles and expectations. To achieve a more equitable society, it is essential to promote open conversations about shared responsibilities within households and change by encouraging all family members to participate in a wide range of household and care activities, regardless of their gender.

It is crucial to prioritize the implementation of gender-sensitive policies at the national level. Policymakers must take the initiative to develop and enact effective and gender-responsive public policies that directly address the existing unequal division of unpaid labor and care responsibilities. Such policies should strive to promote parental leave for both mothers and fathers, offer financial support or subsidies for childcare costs, and provide incentives for companies that actively encourage work-life balance for their employees.

Public policies supporting work-life balance should allow women and men to fulfill their responsibilities both at home and in their careers without compromising one for the other. In conclusion, addressing the unequal division of unpaid household work requires collective efforts from individuals, families, and society as a whole. By challenging traditional gender roles, promoting open communication, and advocating for supportive policies, we can strive towards a future where women have more time for personal development and a fairer sharing of domestic responsibilities. Such a shift will lead to greater economic empowerment for women, and a more inclusive and progressive society overall.

# Montenegro

## Introduction

Montenegro has a small open economy mainly based on the service sector, tourism, and trade. That is why COVID-19 significantly impacted the country and economic activity decreased by almost 16% in 2020. The GDP of Montenegro in 2020 was 4,186 million euros or 6,737 euros per capita. During 2021 the Montenegrin economy began to recover, and real GDP growth of 12.4% was achieved. The growth was mostly attributed to higher tourist activity, but positive trends were also recorded in trade, transport, and industry. In the first quarter of 2022, real GDP grew by 7.2%. However, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the associated developments have significantly worsened the outlook for Montenegro in 2022. For example, the World Bank is reducing the estimated growth rate to 3.6%, from an estimation of 5.9% before the war. It is expected that war will have a major impact on tourism which will then cause a decrease in consumption and negatively affect employment.

Although traditional sectors are major contributors to economic growth, in recent years' new sectors such as financial services, IT services, and the creative services sector have made an increase significant contribution to economic development. It is expected that those sectors will continue to increase their share in economic activity in the future.

Due to limited economic activity, unemployment was a significant challenge during the last years in Montenegro. The total number of unemployed in 2021 was 42.2 thousand or 16.6% which is the highest level of unemployment in the period from 2005. On the other hand, the number of employees, after a large decline during the first half of the year, grew during the second half of the year as a manifestation of increased economic activity. Thus, at the end of 2021, the employment rate was 51%.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MONSTAT, employment rate 2021

## Gender equality

according to the 2011 census, the latest available census, there are 620,029 inhabitants in Montenegro, 50.6% of them women. In 2011, of all live-born children in Montenegro, 52% were boys and 48% were girls (IPSOS, 2015b).

After regaining independence in 2006, Montenegro UN member and member of OSCE Montenegro signed the European Convention on Human Rights in 2006 and became the 47th member of the Council of Europe in 2007. In 2017, it became a member of NATO. Montenegro started negotiations with the EU in June 2012. Montenegro has ratified all significant international documents and integrated them into its legal framework creating the preconditions for developing policies and measures related to the protection of human rights and achieving gender equality.

The legal framework in this area is defined, besides the Constitution, by the **Law on Prohibition of Discrimination**, which was adopted in 2010, and the **Law on Gender Equality** was adopted in 2007. When it comes to the national strategic framework **National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro until 2030** was adopted in 2016. In that sense, the measures and sub-measures defined within the strategic goal “Stimulate active relationship of the key stakeholders towards development sustainability “15 are in line with SDG516.

Some of the expected outcomes by 2030 are:

- eliminated political, economic, and any other gender-based discrimination;
- at least 40% of women in political decision-making bodies at the national and local level;
- eliminated all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking in human beings;
- gender-equal participation in unpaid work;
- gender-equal share in unemployment;
- Strengthen national gender equality mechanism.

Another important document that develops measures regarding gender equality is **the National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021–2025**. The Strategy is based on the evaluation of the Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2017- 2021. The Plan that expired almost two years ago was based on eight areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in which Montenegro chose to act. The principal strategic goal of the new strategy is to “*Achieve higher levels of gender equality in Montenegro by 2025*”.

The operative goals are to improve the implementation of the existing normative framework regarding gender equality policy and protection against gender-based discrimination, as well as to improve education, culture, and media policies to reduce the level of stereotypes and prejudices towards women and persons of different gender identities. The final operative goal is to increase the participation of

women and persons of different gender identities in areas that provide access to natural and social resources and the benefits of their use. Some of the specific measures are:

- Standardization of the procedures for shaping public policies;
- Education of employees and management staff in institutions on key issues and concepts in the field of gender equality and their obligations in the field of gender equality following the law;
- Introduction of gender-responsive content and mandatory use of gender-sensitive language in curricula and teaching;
- Encouraging the media to introduce gender-responsive programs and use gender-sensitive language;
- Organize campaigns for a more even distribution of work at home, care for children, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc. between men and women and regularly monitor data on the participation of men and women in unpaid care and household work;

Empower women and people of different gender identities to participate in political decision-making. According to Gender Profile for 2021, published by UNDP and the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights (UNDP; 2021) Montenegro's society remains patriarchal, although it is evident that legislation and policies have changed and significantly contributed to progress in gender equality. The report confirms that traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes persist in all spheres of life, notably at home, political life, the labor market, and education. The huge presence and impact of customary norms are especially reflected in inheritance, land, and immovable property ownership – data shows that women are owners of only 4% of houses and 8% of the land. Representation of women in decision-making bodies and managerial positions in the economic sphere remains low. However, a slight increase in the participation of women in political life is evident and also triggers violence against them, especially in the public sphere.

Although women are more educated than men, they still represent the majority of the unemployed. 67% of specialist's degree holders and 61% of master's degree holders are women, but women comprise 44% of the employed and active population. In addition, the report notices several sectors in which women remain invisible in terms of specific policies, such as Climate change, Energy, and Transport. Most importantly, the report emphasizes that violence against women, in its different forms, is still the most widespread violation of women's human rights.

The Gender Equality Index<sup>2</sup> also gives a good insight into the position of women in the country. According to the latest available data from the National Statistical Office, the Gender Equality Index in Montenegro (MONSTAT, 2023) for 2023 is 59.3, which shows an increase of 4.3 index value compared to the index from 2019. Compared to the EU-27, Montenegro records a lower index value by 9.3 index points. The Index of the main domains of gender equality shows the highest gap of gender equality in the area of

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<sup>2</sup> Gender Equality Index measures the gender equality in the EU Member States across six domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health. The index value is presented on a score from 1 to 100, where 1 represents complete inequality, while the value of 100 represents complete equality.



“Gender equality shall mean equal participation of women and men, as well as persons of different gender identities in all spheres of the public and private sectors, equal position and equal opportunities to exercise all rights and freedoms and use personal knowledge and skills for the development of society, as well as realize equal benefits from work achievements.”

(UNDP, Gender equality profile of Montenegro, 2021)

money (lower value of the index by 20.7 index points compared to the average of EU-27), while the lowest gap in Montenegro compared to the average EU-27 is in area of health (lower value of the index by 0.8 index points compared to the average EU-27).

The domain of money measures gender inequality in accessing financial resources and the economic situation of women and men, and it amounts to 61.9%. The first subdomain, Financial resources which includes monthly earnings and income of women and men, is very low 48.2. The second subdomain Economic resources covers the risk of poverty and the distribution of income among women and men, and its value is 79.6.

The domain of **knowledge** (measures gender inequality in education attainment, share in life-long education and training) is 53.4. Subdomain Educational attainment is measured by two indicators: %age of women and men graduates, and share of women and men in formal and informal life-long education and training. The value of this subdomain is 67.1. The second subdomain Segregation has a value of 42.4, and it covers gender segregation in tertiary education through the %age of women and men among students in domains of education, health, welfare, humanities, and arts.

- The domain of time measures gender inequalities in the allocation of time for care, housework, and social activities. The value of this sub-domain is 58.9. The first sub-domain of Care measures gender gaps in women and men's every involvement in the care and education of their children or their grandchildren, older people or people with disabilities, as well as their involvement in cooking and housework. The value of this sub-domain is 61.7. The value of the second sub-domain of Social activities is 56.2.

- The domain of power measures gender equality in the highest decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres, and its value is 44.1 The lowest value is for the sub-domain of Economic power which measures the gender balance in economic decision-making and amounts to 34.7.

- The domain of **health** measures three health-related aspects of gender equality: health status, health behavior, and access to health services. The value of this domain is 87.9. The sub-domain Health has the lowest value of all health subdomains is 81.1.

Although there is a rounded legal framework, present data clearly shows data that women in Montenegro are still facing significant inequality in almost all spheres. This indicates that adequate implementation of the existing laws is still lacking. This work does not require efforts from decision makers and institutions, but close partnership with international organizations and CSOs as gender equality is a development issue and a condition for the prosperity of every community.

There are several sectors in which women, other than being employees or members of managerial bodies, remain invisible in terms of specific policies, such as Climate change, Energy, and Transport. The general knowledge about gender mainstreaming procedures in public administration is not satisfactory and leaves room for continuous improvements that are crucial for the implementation of gender-informed policies in all sectors. The existing legislation enables it but also seeks enhancements, especially when it comes to penal provisions.

## Women's contribution to the economy of montenegro

uNDP Montenegro report "Women's Contribution to the Economy of Montenegro – Utilization of Care Work by Women during Covid-19", (UNDP, 2020) tries to estimate the contribution of women to the overall economy. The report shows that although the number of women in Montenegro is slightly higher than that of men, women contribute less to the country's GDP. There are two reasons for that: a lower number of employed women and their employment in the sectors with lower net wages.

According to the data presented in the report, in total, women's contribution to the GDP of Montenegro amounts to €2.038 billion, which cent of the country's GDP at the end of 2018. Thus, although women outnumber men in contribution to the GDP is lower. The sectors where women contribute the most are trade (€332,888,000); public administration and defense and compulsory social security (€142,776,000), and education (€132,164,000).

As they are employed in the sectors that were dominantly influenced by COVID-19, women were hit hard by this crisis. According to the data (UNDP, 2020), the number of employed women has declined by 5,721 due to COVID-19; the total amount of the drop in the net wages received by women at the end of June against the end of February 2020 was €2,347,600. The biggest shares of women lost their jobs in the following sectors: trade (1,674, which represents almost 30% of the total number of women who lost their jobs); agriculture, forestry, and fishing (797), and accommodation and food services (499). In terms of the wage drop, women recorded a drop in the net wages in the following sectors: accommodation and food services (€2,575,200); agriculture, forestry, and fishing (€2,016,000); wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (€939,600). Women earned more in the following sectors:

health care and social protection; education; public administration; information; construction; water supply; electricity supply, and mining and quarrying. Still, the drop in the rest of the sectors surpassed the increase, resulting in a net effect of -€2,347,600.<sup>3</sup>

## Unpaid work

according to the generally accepted definition, unpaid care and domestic work refer to all unrecognized and unpaid activities that take place in a household, including caring for others, such as children or the elderly, and indirect care, such as cooking, cleaning, and other housework. Just as paid care, unpaid care, and domestic work are critical for the well-being of the individual and the society at large since they contribute to the better functioning of the entire society. Despite such importance for the common good, practically all countries leave unpaid care and domestic work out of their economic policies due to the assumption that, unlike the standard procedures for market work measurement, it is too difficult to measure.

Furthermore, it is completely unjustified to consider these data less relevant for the design of economic and social policies. Still, ignoring this type of unpaid work leads to completely inaccurate inferences on the socio-economic position of individuals, in particular women, since they usually spend disproportionately more time engaged in this type of unpaid work than men; this ultimately affects their capacity to take part in the paid economy. These issues result in major differences in employment, getting paid for one's work, and enjoying a pension. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) data for 64 countries that account for two-thirds of the global labor force, as many as 16.4 billion hours are spent per day in unpaid care work – the equivalent of two billion people working eight hours a day with no remuneration. Were such services to be valued based on an hourly minimum wage, they would amount to 9 % of global GDP or USD 11 trillion (USD 11,000,000,000,000), at purchasing power parity in 2011.

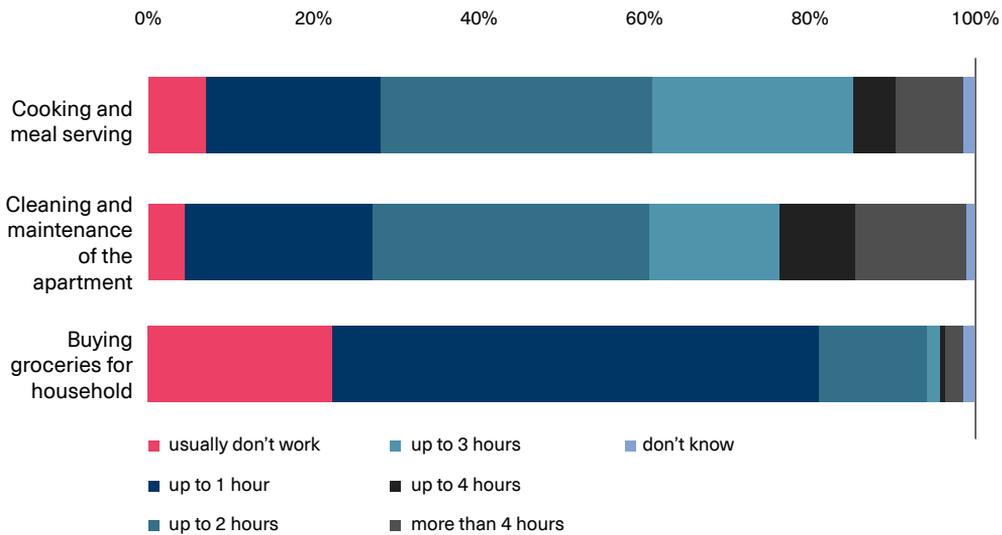
ILO Report “Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work” includes the following important piece of data: women perform 76.2 % of total hours of unpaid care work, three times as much as men. It also states that unpaid work related to care and domestic work is the main barrier preventing women from getting into, remaining, and progressing in the labor force. In 2018, 606 million working-age women reported that they were not able to get employment and progress in their careers due to unpaid care work and domestic work. Only 41 million men reported the same. According to an OECD report, gender inequality in the field of unpaid work related to care and domestic work is also linked to the gender pay gap. Analyses show that, in countries where women spend twice as much time as men engaged in unpaid care and domestic work, they earn only 65 % of what their male counterparts earn for the same job. The ratio drops to 40% when women spend five times the amount of time engaged in care and domestic work as men (for full-time employees). In countries where women spend most of their time engaged in unpaid care and domestic work, they are less likely to be employed, and those who are active in the labor market are more likely to be limited to part-time

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<sup>3</sup> ESPN Country Profile Montenegro 2020 - 2021

or informal employment and earn less than their male peers. There are no data on unpaid work (care and domestic work) for Montenegro.<sup>4</sup> Unpaid work is a major unknown quantity in Montenegro, given the lack of any statistical reports on unpaid care and domestic work and the money generated by it. The only available report that offers some kind of estimate is the UNDP Montenegro report “Women’s Contribution to the Economy of Montenegro – Utilization of Care Work by Women during COVID-19”, (UNDO, 2020) The report elaborates on the contribution of women to the Montenegrin economy, as well as the issues of unpaid work and care during the Covid-19 pandemic and provides estimates of their value to better understand early and most pronounced impacts of the crises on women. The report estimates the monetary equivalent of the value of unpaid care and domestic work.

**Graph 13. Number of hours of unpaid care and domestic work, by activity (women)**



Source of data: COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN MONTENEGRO (UNDP, 2020)

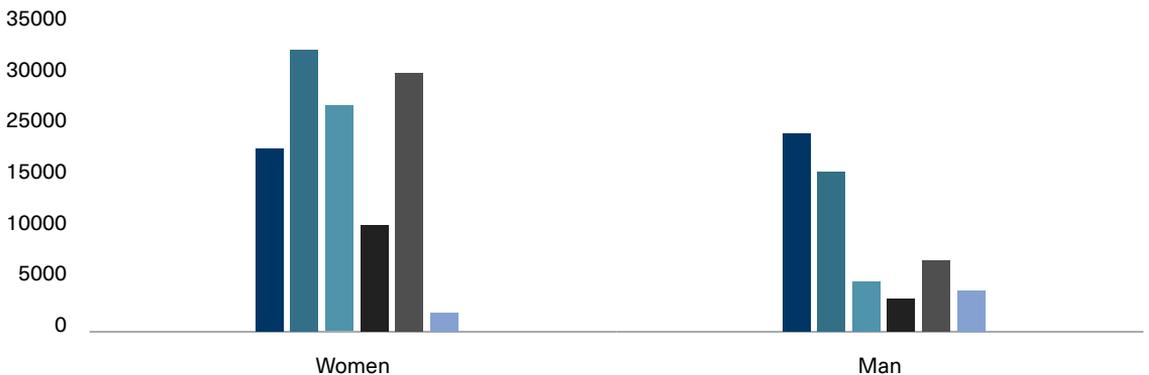
Analysis has shown that: women who spend up to one hour devote most time to shopping for the family and the household (58%); women who spend up to 2 hours devote most time to cleaning and maintenance of their own home and surroundings (33.30%); women who spend up to 3 hours devote most time to cooking and serving meals (24%); women who spend up to 4 hours devote most time to cleaning and maintenance of their own home and surroundings (9%) and women who spend more than 4 hours devote most time to caring for children (15%).

4 UNDP, Gender equality profile of Montenegro

## Estimate of the monetary equivalent of the value of unpaid care and domestic work

The monetary equivalent of the unpaid care and domestic work done by women in Montenegro is estimated to amount to €122.3 million for only three months of 2020 (April, May, and June), while the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and domestic work done by men amounts to €63.5 million (UNDP; 2020). This means that women did 90% more work in the domain of unpaid care and domestic work than men. Furthermore, if these data are projected over 12 months, it is possible to conclude that women generated the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and domestic work of €489 million or 10% of GDP, while men generated €254 million or 5% of the GDP of Montenegro for 2019. It is projected that, in total, men and women generated €743 million as the monetary equivalent of unpaid care and domestic work, which amounts to as much as 15% of the country’s GDP for 2019.

**Graph 14. Unpaid care and domestic work done by women and men, respectively (in €)**



Source of data: UNDP COVID-19 IMPACT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN MONTENEGRO

Although reports indicate that certain progress has been made in Montenegro regarding legal and institutional improvements for women, this progress is not yet evident in real life. Despite women having better education than men, it is not reflected in their economic status. Stereotypes about the role of women in society, work, and family life are still strong and pose a barrier to gender equality. Women are still underrepresented in managerial positions, have lower salaries, are more often underemployed due to household responsibilities, and carry out the majority of domestic work. All of this contributes to their unequal status. Much work needs to be done to raise awareness of the status and roles of women in society and to bring about changes that will contribute to greater equality

# Serbia

## Introduction

The care economy is a cornerstone of economic and social life and it “refers to paid care work provided by people as part of human survival, welfare and reproducing the labor force”<sup>73</sup>. Everyone is impacted by care work, but women bear the brunt of this underappreciated effort. The well-being of individuals and society as a whole depends on both paid and unpaid care, which is a key component of attaining equitable economic growth.

The care economy encompasses all occupations that entail caring for others, such as education, health, and social care, as well as primarily informal but paid services given in households. There are two main categories of care activities. First, those include direct, in-person, personal care tasks (“nurturing” or “relational” care) such as feeding a baby, tending to a sick partner, assisting an elderly person with bathing, conducting health exams, or instructing small children. Second, those involving non-face-to-face personal care activities known as “non-relational care” or “household work” that set up personal caregiving. These activities include cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, and other household maintenance tasks. These two categories of caregiving tasks cannot be distinguished from one another, and both in homes and institutions, they frequently overlap in actual practice.<sup>74</sup>

## Relation Between The Labor Market And The Care Economy

In terms of the labor market, the care economy can have a significant impact. For example, as more women have entered the workforce in recent decades, there has been an increasing demand for care services such as child care and elder care. This has led to the growth of the care sector as a major source of employment. However, many care workers are paid low wages and lack benefits such as health insurance or paid time off. This is partly due to the undervaluation of care work, which is often seen as “women’s work,” and therefore less important than other forms of labor.

Women’s unpaid work has often been a barrier to their full participation in the labor market. When women are expected to take on the majority of unpaid work, they often have less time to devote to paid work or education. This can result in lower wages and fewer opportunities for career advancement. Additionally, employers may discriminate against women who they perceive as likely to take time off to care for family

members or who they believe may be less committed to their careers. However, there are ways to address this issue. Policies that support paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and flexible work arrangements can help women balance their unpaid and paid work responsibilities. Additionally, efforts to challenge gender norms and encourage men to take on more caregiving responsibilities can help to shift the burden of unpaid work away from women.

The equivalent of a full-time job (8 hours a day) is spent by two billion people every day in the unpaid care industry, according to estimates based on time use survey data from 64 countries. These activities would contribute 9% to the global GDP if they were valued by labor market standards, or if they were paid the minimum wage per hour. The same sources claim that women perform three-quarters of this work globally, and there isn't a single nation where males perform more of this work than women.<sup>75</sup>

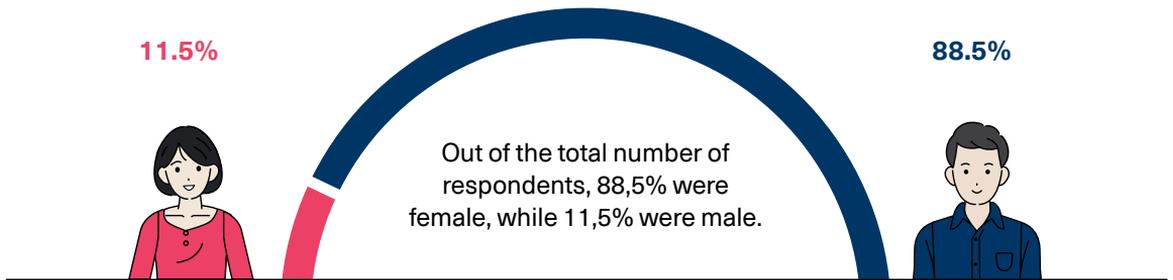
## Official Statistics

According to data from the Republic Institute of Statistics on time consumption in the Republic of Serbia from 2021, a resident of the Republic of Serbia spends an average of three hours (3:08) in paid labor. However, women labor slightly less than two and a half hours (2:23), while males work for an hour and a half longer (3:57), or nearly four hours. When it comes to paid and unpaid employment, the population spends the same amount of time (3:08), although there are significant gender variances.<sup>76</sup>

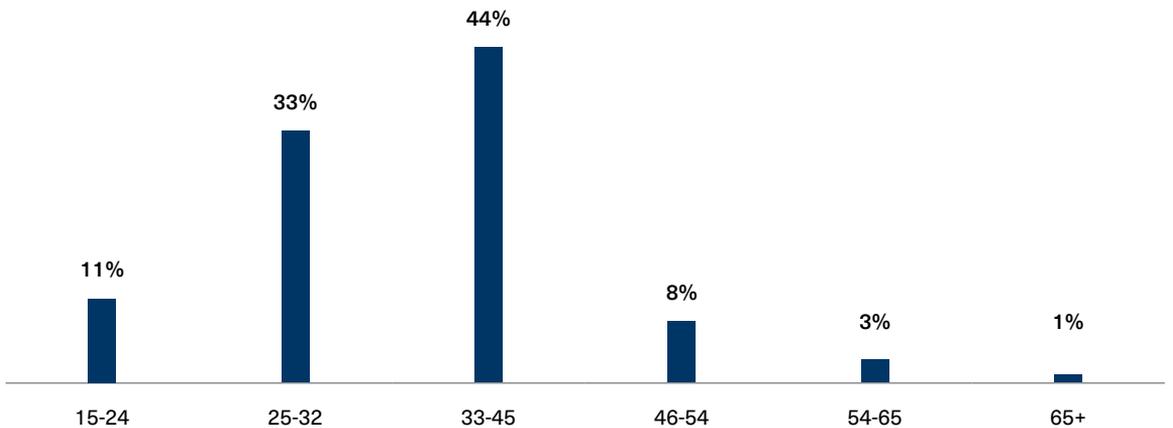
According to the Labor Force Survey in the Republic of Serbia for 2022, conducted by the Republic Institute of Statistics, women are dominantly present in the areas of the following are on the labor market. Thus, in the field of financial and insurance activities, we have 32 thousand women compared to 17,5 thousand men, in the field of professional, scientific, innovative, and technical activities we have 57,6 thousand women compared to 54,7 thousand men, then in the field of education, we have 136,3 thousand employed women compared to 45,1 thousand men. Also, the dominant employment of women in the field of health and social protection was recorded, where we have 133 thousand women compared to 38,8 thousand men. In other service activities, we have 29,4 thousand women compared to 22,9 thousand men, while in the activity of democracies as employers we have 7,9 thousand women compared to 1,4 thousand men.<sup>77</sup>

## Survey data analysis

Graph 15. Respondents by gender

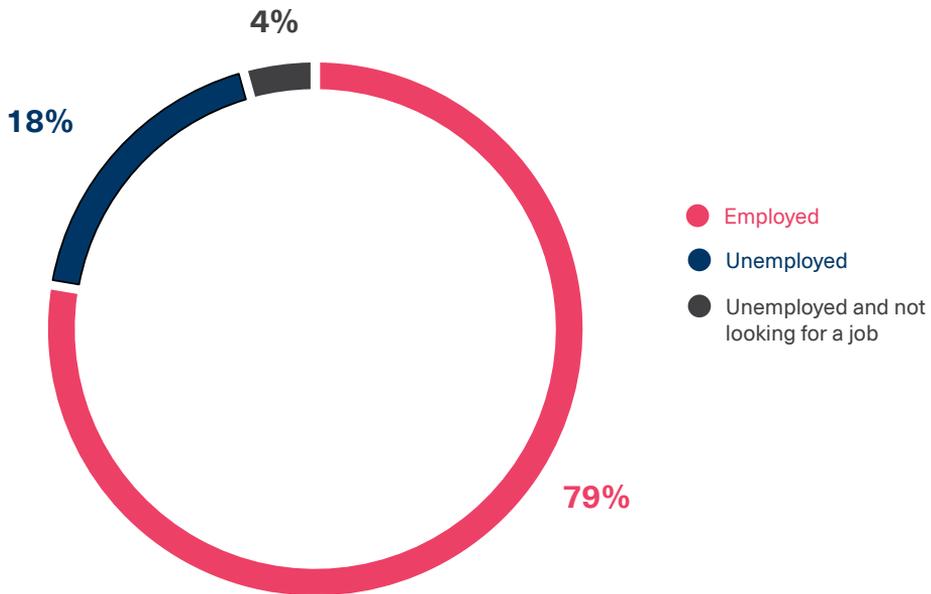


Graph 16. Respondents by age



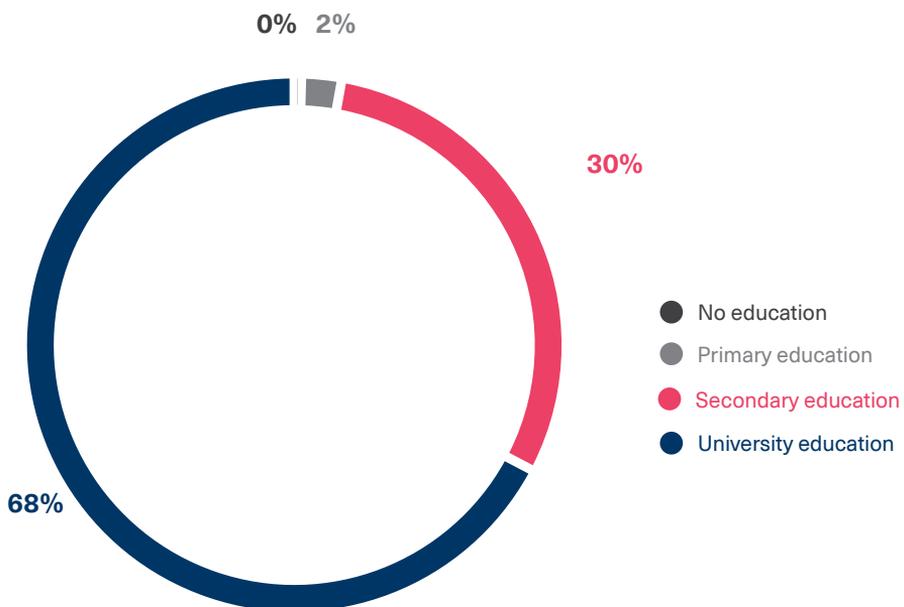
Out of the total number of respondents 11% of them are in the group 15-24, 33% in the group 25-32, 44% in the group 33-45, 8% in the group 46-54, 3% in the group 54-65 and 1% in the group 65+.

Graph 17. Respondents by employment status



Out of the total number of respondents 79% are employed, 19,7% unemployed, 3% of respondents said that they are unemployed and that they are not looking for a job. Furthermore, 42,2% respondents said that they are working in the public sector, and 57,8% in private sector.

Graph 18. Respondents by education

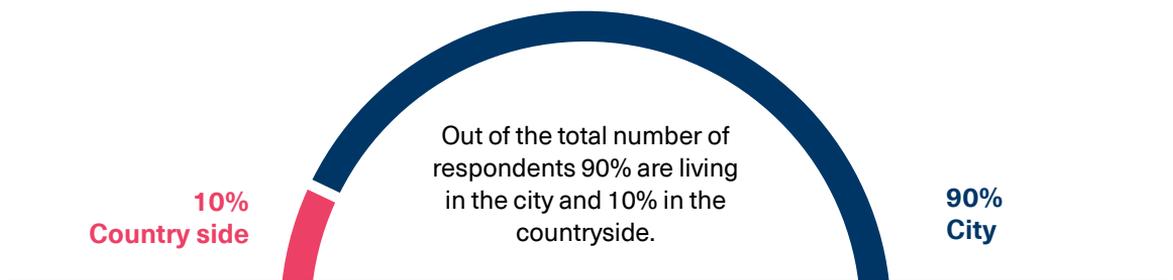


When it comes to education, out of the total number of respondents 68% responded university education, 30% secondary education, 2% primary education and we didn't have respondents with no education.

When asked why they are not looking for a job, 4% of respondents said that there is no job, 6% said that they don't want to work, 20% said that there are jobs but with low salaries, 4% of the respondents said that they don't have time to work because of the housework/children/elderly care or because there is no transport, while rest of respondents have chosen the option other(in that case the most of them are students of employed).

When asked which household activity they do the most, answers are different. 23% said cleaning, 26% childcare, 11% cooking, elderly care 2%, 5% said they do none, and 34% said that other activities like ironing, taking care of wardrobe grocery shopping, and all of the above mentioned.

### Graph 19. Respondents by place of residence (urban/rural)



When asked who should do the housework, 2,5% responded women, 0% said males and 97,9% said they should do both. When asked who cares for children, 1% said fathers, 20% mothers, and 79% said both. When asked who should take care of the children, 0% said fathers, 1% said mothers, and 99% said both.

When asked about the activities they do the most and activities they do the least. The activities they do the most are paid work, childcare, house repairs, grocery shopping, and other activities that are all mentioned. When it comes to the activities they do the least, there we have cooking, doing the dishes, and self-care activities.

## Perception and factors that impact on the care economy and position of women – results of quantitative research

Most data collected in the previous research on the position of women in the labor market indicates that in Serbia care work as unpaid care has a big impact on whether women join and stay in the labor market, as well as the level of the work they provide during active participation in the labor market.

A desk research online questionnaire was created and distributed to the various groups, men and women, throughout Serbia to gather relevant findings as well as valuable and significant information to test assumptions and findings based on data analyses about unpaid work and the care economy. Additional in-depth interviews and focus groups were set up to support findings from the online research.

The focus group gathered representative women coming from different social backgrounds, different ages, and from different social groups and other focus groups gathered institutions, experts, CSO representatives, trade unions, and media representatives.

In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, but primarily with representatives of institutions as well as CSOs that work with women, labor markets, or work on economic empowerment of women in business, among others.

Several legal and social factors were discovered through analyses of all the data gathered, including the need for *transformative policies, patriarchal and traditional roles in society, and lack of awareness and knowledge about the value of the care economy.*

Based on the analyses of the data collected the key findings are:

### **Legislative, relevant, and effective strategies that acknowledge unpaid work are still lacking.**

The unpaid work and care economy is still not acknowledged by Serbian legislators as a significant and essential component of the economic structure. There are many laws that in some parts mention the care work and economy but these laws are not visible enough and they are confusing.

*“Our social protection is excellent, looking at the legislation, the resources that it foresees, and the measures. You have planned foster care for adults and planned foster care for people with disabilities. It’s all nice and a very ambitious system, but the existing infrastructure, I’m talking about, the number of people who carry that system, cannot be sustained.”*

*“How can I recognize and value unpaid work through some policies when I don’t know the methodology? I believe that it exists somewhere. People in local government units who should deal with these issues are not sufficiently trained.”*

*“We lack that system of responsibility. The fact that 40 municipalities and cities last year did not use the funds and the system to sanction irresponsible local self-government units is devastating. We already have the consequence that every year the funds to the responsible municipalities are reduced due to that methodology because the parameter is based on the expenditure of funds in that position in the Ministry of Finance.”*

**To recognize unpaid work and make the recommendation normative on all levels, transformative policies are required.**

Still, there aren't enough effective policies in Serbian society that adhere to both national and international norms (like the SDGs 5). However, the majority of documents and strategies fail to acknowledge the significance of the care economy for society as a whole. Contrarily, there is a dearth of coordinated communication among various institutions with responsibility for incorporating care economy needs and work into the pertinent policies. To contribute to the recognition of the value of unpaid care work, the reduction of the drudgery of some forms of care work, and the redistribution of care responsibilities between women and men as well as between households and intuitions, there is a need to lay the groundwork and include transformative measures in various policy areas, such as social protection, labor, care, and the macroeconomy. Policies must also encourage the representation of caregivers and provide them with adequate compensation. Additionally, it is necessary to establish ongoing communication and information sharing regarding unpaid work among various institutions, including the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, Ministry of Rural Welfare, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs.

*“To solve social issues, a systematic approach and communication between all relevant stakeholders are required.”*

*“The state institutions must ensure that institutions are operating properly and working together regularly.”*

**Traditional gender roles in society continue to have a significant impact on the unpaid work and care economy.**

There is a strong belief about the roles that men and women should play in families and society, and traditional roles are still very strong and visible in our society.

Nearly all of the research participants acknowledged the impact traditional gender roles have on the work they do for their families. Some of them indicated that their partners are willing to assist them with the housecleaning and housekeeping tasks after work, but they also indicated that they would only participate if she specifically asked them to do so.

They all recognized that they saw the patterns in their families and then just continued to work on that without taking into consideration the change that happened and that they also just started to be employed.

*"When I get home from work, I change into some casual attire and begin making dinner. I then take care of any unfinished business, such as laundry or ironing. My husband jumps in only if I ask him to."*

*"My mother always leaves her job earlier so that she can make lunch and dinner so they are ready when my father gets home from work. She frequently asserted that he is worn out because of his heavy workload. She has never mentioned her other jobs."*

*"I never thought about my role, I just repeated what my mom and my grand-mom did."*

*"My grandmother gets all the jobs on our farm but also in the house. She was first getting up and waiting for all of us, and last to go to sleep."*

Additionally, some participants mentioned that when their parents become ill, they quit their jobs and go back to the house to care for their parents. Usually not the case with men. But there are also some instances where men care for the elderly, although these are comparatively few and more the exception than the rule. The majority of them believe that women will abandon their goals and careers whenever a crisis occurs to care for their children or elderly relatives. The expectation that they stay at home and look after their children and other family members, even without being asked, was one of the factors that almost all of them mentioned in some way.

*"I simply move in with my parents to take care of them when they are elderly and in need. My brother didn't even consider coming to some sort of agreement with me"*

*"We were all shocked when the younger brother of my neighbor left his job to care for his elderly parents; somehow, we hadn't anticipated it. Then, all of our neighbors commented that it wasn't his job and that her sister should have done it instead"*

### **Educating the younger generation of men and women about equal work and bringing attention to gender stereotypes is essential.**

During the focus group, the majority of participants stated that unpaid care work is performed by women, and it is a major factor in determining whether women can enter and remain in the labor market. Also, it was stressed that the majority of caregivers are female, frequently employed in the informal sector of the economy in appalling conditions, for meager wages.

*"Boys and girls should be taught about equal work beginning in kindergarten, and parents should lead by example by doing the same at home, in my opinion. Dad can also make dinner and clean up the mess. But she can also fix things around the house or throw out the trash."*

*“Moms mostly try to protect sons from doing “women work” which creates the future stereotyped men.”*

*“I lead by example and involve my son in all household chores; although to him, they are still games, he learns that he can follow in my footsteps.”*

*“My 7-year-old son was asked to pay for my domestic work for one week. After five days, he declared that it was a lot of money to spend on cooking, cleaning, and other household chores. So, he decided to handle it alone. Gender roles can be changed.”*

All participants agreed that one of the main conclusions was that changing the narrative about unpaid work and responsibility when discussing the care economy requires education. They also concurred that women work harder and shoulder more responsibility when there is an unequal power dynamic between the partners because it is more convenient for them to do so without waiting or complaining. But it's also about teaching everyone to perform every task within a single community.

*“Balance is the key, in my opinion. You must highlight the significance of unpaid work. Because if you consume food without paying for it, someone must have made an effort to prepare it and purchase the ingredients. You can therefore see that there isn't any free lunch at all if you do the math.”*

*“We observed that mom and dad work together in my family. I reside in a village, so the types of jobs are very different. What you learn in your primary family and how you develop are very important. And, of course, what we teach our children. Knowledge is important. Additionally, give examples.”*

*“To teach our sons and daughters about gender equality, we need teachers who have undergone gender equality education.”*

### **Providing the infrastructure, social protection policies, and public services that women need to enable paid work.**

Women in Serbia, including those who are not employed, want to be able to balance taking care of their families and working for pay or profit. The persistent presence of structural barriers, such as the unequal distribution of caregiving duties between men and women in the family and the lack of accessible, affordable child and elder care, prevents this aspiration from being realized, though.

Due to the unequal and frequently significant amount of unpaid care work performed by women in Serbia, both the quantity and quality of paid employment that they can access are limited, which contributes to gender differences in paid work. The widespread undervaluation of women's paid care work stems from the undervaluation of their unpaid care work, which results in lower pay and unfavorable working conditions in the care industries, where women are overrepresented. These disadvantages in the care

sector then spread to the rest of the labor markets, escalating gender disparities at work and in terms of women's voice and representation in all spheres of life, including the political, social, and economic ones.

Valuing and recognizing unpaid care work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies becomes both a goal in and of itself as well as a strategy for ensuring sustainable development for all women and girls.

*“There is a necessity to provide adequate support to those women who don't want to choose between their families and their career. Because I just want to have the right to decide whatever I want to do and how I want to do it.”*

*“All working moms will benefit from flexible work schedules and other amenities, but only so they don't become stressed and stress their families.”*

*“Adequate facilities for the elderly or the creation of jobs for pension-paying housekeepers for those without a college degree, with training to prepare them to assist and care for the elderly. Good examples were how domestic women's “geranto domaćice” used to be. That was a useful way to assist. But regrettably, there was no systematic change.”*

All the participants recognized the important role of institutions in these processes that need a joint dialogue on the issue, and not offer just short-term solutions, but one that really will help those who need such kind of help. There are more and more older people in Serbia, so there will be a need for some kind of systematic solution to provide them with good care service that will be paid.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Legal and social factors play an important role in hindering or empowering women in the sphere of the care economy. On the positive side, legal frameworks such as equal pay regulations, anti-discrimination legislation, and parental and maternity leave programs help to empower women. These policies provide equal treatment, protect women from workplace discrimination, and encourage working mothers. Furthermore, legalizing unpaid care work could be a significant contribution to society.

On the other side, the lack of workplace rights for women, rules that limit employment prospects and perpetuate gender stereotypes, and restricted access to affordable childcare and support services all contribute to a barrier to empowerment. Furthermore, one more factor that hinders empowerment is the failure to recognize unpaid caregiving as a legitimate occupation deserving of pay and benefits.

When we talk about social factors, changes in gender roles and values associated with women's labor, a greater understanding of the importance of caregiving and the need for caregiver support, grassroots movements advocating for women's rights and economic empowerment, and education and training programs that provide women with skills and job opportunities are all positive social factors that contribute to empowerment.

Social factors could also hinder empowerment. Gender stereotypes and prejudice that limit women's career opportunities, cultural norms that prioritize caregiving over paid occupations for women, and a lack of support and acknowledgment for unpaid caregivers are all important barriers to empowerment in society.

The main issues discovered during the research are the focus of the recommendations produced by the normative framework analysis and qualitative research.

As such measures become more prevalent and of higher quality, attitudes toward maternal employment and what is considered a suitable work-family arrangement are likely to favor a more egalitarian division of paid work and unpaid care work between women and men.

Determine the amount of unpaid work and find a systemic solution for compensating costs, provide appropriate wages for paid work, free kindergartens and extended stays for children of working parents, some form of daycare for PWDs and elderly people cared for by employed children/relatives, as well as determine the amount of unpaid work.

Providing public services that would reduce the amount of time needed for childcare and other forms of unpaid work for women would allow them to participate in the labor market more fully, but they also need to be acknowledged and valued appropriately.

For example, investments in publicly funded childcare services, such as top-notch pre-schools and kindergartens, as well as public transportation, should be made to support women. Additionally, funding for high-quality care services, policies, and infrastructure is required.

To help women balance their personal and professional lives, transformative policies should be created with a better framework and more accommodating working conditions.

To build better and more welcoming environments, ensure that women have equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of political, economic, and public decision-making. Ensure care-friendly and gender-responsive social protection systems, and implement gender-responsive and publicly funded leave policies for all women and men.

Establish fair employment laws, put them into practice, and ensure that all caregivers receive equal pay for equally valuable work.

Encourage social interaction, strengthen collective bargaining rights in the care industry, and implement active labor market policies that aid in the attachment, reintegration, and advancement of unpaid careers into the workforce.

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