

# WOMEN EMPLOYMENT STUDY FOR SERBIA



**Title:**

Women Employment Study for Serbia

**Publisher:**

Regional Cooperation Council  
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**Date of publication:**

May 2022

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# Acknowledgements

The Women Employment Study for Serbia is prepared under the overall guidance of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in the framework of the Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP 2), a regional project financed by the European Commission and jointly implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Western Balkan economies. On behalf of RCC ESAP 2 project, this Study was guided and overseen by Amira Ramhorst, ESAP 2 Team Leader.

The Study was prepared by Sanja Popović Pantić and Dušica Semenčenko, research experts. The preparation of this research was guided and overseen by Mirela Arqimandriti from the Gender Alliance Development Center, Team Leader and Esmeralda Shehaj, Key Expert. This study benefited from the editorial work of Nick Adnett.

The experts would like to express their gratitude to all stakeholders interviewed for purposes of this study, particularly following representatives: Svetlana Aksentijević, Head of the Department in the Public Policy Secretariat of Serbia, for providing data in user-friendly form on employment/unemployment, advising and expertise in the preparation of the relevant chapters; Sunčica Stefanović Šestić, Head of the Department in the Statistical Office of Serbia for providing data; SME department in the Ministry of Economy including Katarina Obradovic Jovanovic assistant to Minister and Milica Stankovic and the Association of Business Women in Serbia. Special gratitude goes to the representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of Serbia, Jelena Vasić and Dragica Ivanović for the valuable final comments and inputs.

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# Abbreviations

<b>ABW</b>	Association of Business women in Serbia
<b>ALMPs</b>	Active Labour Market Policies
<b>CGC</b>	Career guidance and counselling
<b>CLIP</b>	Country Level Implementation Plan
<b>DAS</b>	Development Agency of Serbia
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Regional Development
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>ERP</b>	Economic Reform Programme 2021–2023
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EURES</b>	European Union Employment Services
<b>GAP III</b>	Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025
<b>GBWN</b>	Gender Budget Watchdog Network
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEI</b>	Gender Equality Index
<b>GRB</b>	Gender–Responsive Budgeting
<b>GVA</b>	Gross Value Added
<b>ISCO</b>	International standard classification of occupations
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>LSG</b>	Local self–government
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Economy
<b>MoLEVSA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of Serbia
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium enterprises
<b>NACE</b>	Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne
<b>NES</b>	National Employment Service
<b>NFESP</b>	Non–formal education service providers
<b>PLR</b>	Prior learning recognition
<b>PWD</b>	Persons with disabilities
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>RSD</b>	Republic Serbia Dinar

<b>SMEs</b>	Small and medium enterprises
<b>SORS</b>	Statistical Office of Serbia
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Program
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>Y-o-Y</b>	Year on year
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkan
<b>WiB</b>	Women in Business program



# I Executive Summary

The purpose of the study is to provide a factual state of play of the labour market in Serbia through gender lenses, considering some of the key gender gaps such as the gender gaps in the labour market and the gender care gap and develop recommendations to reduce such gaps. These recommendations aim at extending employment opportunities to women and vulnerable groups, contributing thus to sustainable economic growth and social inclusion. The economic decline in Serbia in the first pandemic year, 2020 was only about 1% of real GDP, which was much lower than the initial forecasts and also much less than the decline recorded by most countries in the EU and globally. The decline was due to lower private consumption, net exports and private investment, which was partially offset by higher government spending and investment and higher stockpiles (Arandarenko, 2021).<sup>1</sup> However, it does not imply that Serbia has gone through the crisis without significant losses in economic terms since Serbia entered 2021 with almost 5% lower GDP than expected in 2019.

Estimates of the labour market in 2020 based on LFS data show that the lost working hours were not directly translated into lost jobs. The change in the employment rate was not gender discriminatory in 2020. However, a slight difference in employment trends by gender is noticeable when looking at the quarterly data, given that the female employment rate fell in the last quarter of 2020 as opposed to the stagnation observed among men. As to the unemployment rate in 2020, a decline was recorded, being somewhat more pronounced among women than among men. The decrease in the absolute number of unemployed resulted in a reduction of the annual unemployment rate by 1.4 percentage points, which for the first time fell to a single-digit level (9.5%). Viewed in an international context, Serbia is one of the few economies in Europe that has seen a decline in the unemployment rate (Arandarenko, 2021).<sup>2</sup> There is a large gap in employment rates between men and women, amounting to 14.5 percentage points in favour of men, in the third quarter of 2021 (age group 15 and above). While unemployment decreased in the male population there was an increase in unemployment in the female population and female unemployment rate increased by 0.2 pp and in the third quarter of 2021 it was 12.0%. The difference in unemployment rates between men and women was 2.8 percentage points in favour of women. In the same period, activity rates among men and women were 64.5% and 48.2%, respectively. The factor that most directly influenced the activity of women in the labour market was the change of the statutory retirement age, as well as the introduction of penalties for early retirement.

Women are among those social groups who are significantly affected by COVID-19 pandemic. The main challenges they faced was reconciling working from home with family responsibilities during the state of emergency in 2020, especially when the education system switched to online teaching. A previous assessment of the vulnerability of the sector by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020)<sup>3</sup> showed that women are relatively more represented in the sectors most vulnerable to the effects of

1 Arandarenko, M. (2021). Analytical report on the situation in the labour market of Serbia in the context of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RCC

2 Arandarenko, M. (2021). Analytical report on the situation in the labour market of Serbia in the context of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RCC

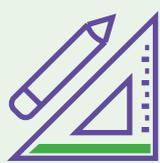
3 ILO, 2020, ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Geneva. Third edition. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743146.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743146.pdf)

negative shocks caused by the COVID–19 pandemic. Women are disproportionately represented in the informal service sector, but also in labour–intensive production activities such as the textile industry, the footwear industry and the like. Also, women make up the majority of employees in the health sector that is directly affected by the pandemic. Although the labour market has seen considerable improvements in recent years, structural problems, demographic and migration challenges remain and Serbia was assessed as moderately prepared according to the EU Progress Report in 2020 in Serbia. There is a lack of adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies to ensure a more systematic targeting of women. The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and National Employment Service (NES) are the main stakeholders in the field of employment.

According to the NES, the number of unemployed registered women exceeded the number of men between 2018 and 2021. However, the number of registered women job–seekers declined in the period of 2018–2021, though this gender gap increased over time and was significantly higher in 2021 compared to 2018. The gender gap in unemployment is significantly higher for highly educated women. As to the position of the vulnerable groups, there are no specific programs which would improve their position in the labour market. The NES provided mediation service to more women than men in the period between 2018 and November 2021. In general, women were not targeted by specific NES programs in the period of 2011–2020, participating mainly in general labour market programs. An ex–ante evaluation of the implementation of the previous National Employment Strategy (2011–2020) concluded that Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) have to some extent contributed to improving the absolute and relative position of women in the labour market and reducing the gender gap in unemployment. The financial and non–financial supporting programs for medium, small and micro enterprise (MSME) entrepreneurs, including a temporary focus on women, resulted in an increase in the share of the women’s companies in the total number of MSMEs from 25.8% in 2011 to 33% in 2021. However, women’s entrepreneurship remains on a considerably smaller scale than that of men. Women entrepreneurs are concentrated in the service sectors with majority in trade and in other services. The challenges women faced before pandemic remain, while the new ones related to inequality and gender pay gap in the gig economy, emerged. Since there are a lack of programs specifically targeting women entrepreneurs, the Serbian Ministry of Economy launched in 2021 The Entrepreneurship Development Encouragement Program targeting women and youth.







## 3 Methodology

This report is prepared based on a mixed method approach focusing on Serbia's labour market, its developments and key issues from a structural and gender perspective and roles and status of women in the Serbian labour market. The methods used to complement data collected include qualitative and quantitative methods. An in-depth analysis was carried to identify issues related to gender employment gap, gender pay gap, and gender care gap.

### **Qualitative methods**

Qualitative methods are used to provide a more in-depth analysis of the statistical data available and those to be collected through this Study. Three types of qualitative methods were used to provide relevant information for the study:

#### **Desk research**

The core activity of the desk research is the review the existing and public data and reports. Thus, desk research of recent publications, statistics and documents form the bulk of the data sources that feed the report and analysis. The qualitative desk research is focused on:

- Collection of statistical data on employment, education, labour market from Serbia's institutes of statistics, Gender Equality Indexes, EU reports, WB reports, UN reports, ILO reports and other international publications.
- Review of policy-level practices, institutional setting and governance of the sector and labour policies, assessed through gender-sensitive lenses.

#### **One on one interviews**

In-depth interviews with key stakeholders were realized based on a mapping of stakeholders conducted by the research team at the beginning of the research work. The in-depth interviews focused on better understanding the data collected through desk research and quantitative methods, reform processes and current active policies in the Serbian labour market. The key stakeholders interviewed during December 2021 were representatives from SORS, Public Policy Secretariat of Serbia and the Ministry of Economy.

Specific interview guides were prepared and followed. These research guides were adapted to the context, organisational structures operating within the governance framework.

### **Quantitative methods**

The report employed statistical data and analysis, from public, independent and governmental sources. Q3 2021 was set to be the cut-off period for the report. Nonetheless, certain data limitations did not always allow for such approach. The data were further analysed using statistical instruments to create













Despite some shifts in recent years, a gender gap in Serbia persists in almost all the indicators relating to the labour market (Babović & Petrović, 2021).<sup>35</sup> According to the Gender Equality Index, Serbia had a lower score than most EU countries in the domain of work with large gender gaps in participation, occupational segregation and quality of work. The index for 2018 (58.0) increased slightly overall compared to 2014 (52.4). The Work index for Serbia has increased by 2.1 points since 2014 (67.3), reaching 69.4 in 2018. This rise was mainly due to an increase in female participation attributed to a rise in total employment rather than a reduction in the gender gap. Occupational segregation has also increased, but by only 0.3 points over the same four years (from 62.2 to 62.5). Working women still tend to be concentrated in certain industries and occupations, such as education, health and social protection. A significant gender gap remains regarding the flexibility of working hours and career prospects.

In the rural population according to Census of Agriculture 2012 (Bogdanov & Babovic, 2012)<sup>36</sup> 62.9% of women who work in agriculture do so as unpaid family members, whilst only 15.9% of women participate in decision-making related to agricultural holdings (Ferigra Stefanovic, 2021).<sup>37</sup> Overall, the situation of women working on farms is a challenge as they remain largely invisible, may be unpaid, lack access to social insurance, and have limited access to social rights. Unemployment rates of Roma women were at 50.2% (as of 31 October 2020) much higher than unemployment rates among Roma men which was at 33%.<sup>38</sup> According to the 2020 SORS report on Roma, 60% of women in Roma settlements were reported to be inactive.

The “Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2021–2026”, was adopted by the Government in early 2021 (MoLEVSA, 2021).<sup>39</sup> The Action Plan for its implementation during 2021–2023 (MoLEVSA, 2021)<sup>40</sup> was also adopted. The overall goal of the Strategy is defined as establishing stable and sustainable employment growth based on education and decent work, and its achievement is monitored through gender sensitive employment indicators. Furthermore, the Strategy includes 3 specific objectives: 1) Achieving growth in quality employment through cross-sectoral measures aimed at improving supply and demand for labour, 2) Improving the status of unemployed persons in the labour market, and 3) Improving the institutional framework for employment policy. The indicators defined to monitor the implementation of these goals can be more gender-sensitive, and only one of the indicators targets a decrease in the pay gap between women and men from 10.6% in 2019 to 8.7% in 2026. Regarding overall goal, the action plan (MoLEVSA, 2021)<sup>41</sup> defines a range of values to be achieved by 2023, including

35 Babović, M., Petrović, M., 2021, Gender Equality Index of the Republic of Serbia. Belgrade: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. Available at: <https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Gender%20Equality%20Index%20for%20Serbia%202021.pdf>

36 Bogdanov, N., Babovic, M. Agricultural holdings by economic size and type of production in the Republic of Serbia, 2012 (in Serbian only), 2014, SORS, Belgrade, Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/oblasti/poljoprivreda-sumarstvo-i-ribarstvo/popis-poljoprivrede/>

37 Ferigra Stefanovic, A. (2021). EU gender country profile for Serbia. UN Women. <https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Serbia%20Gender%20Profile.pdf>

38 [http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Factsheet\\_SERBIA\\_Roma](http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Factsheet_SERBIA_Roma).

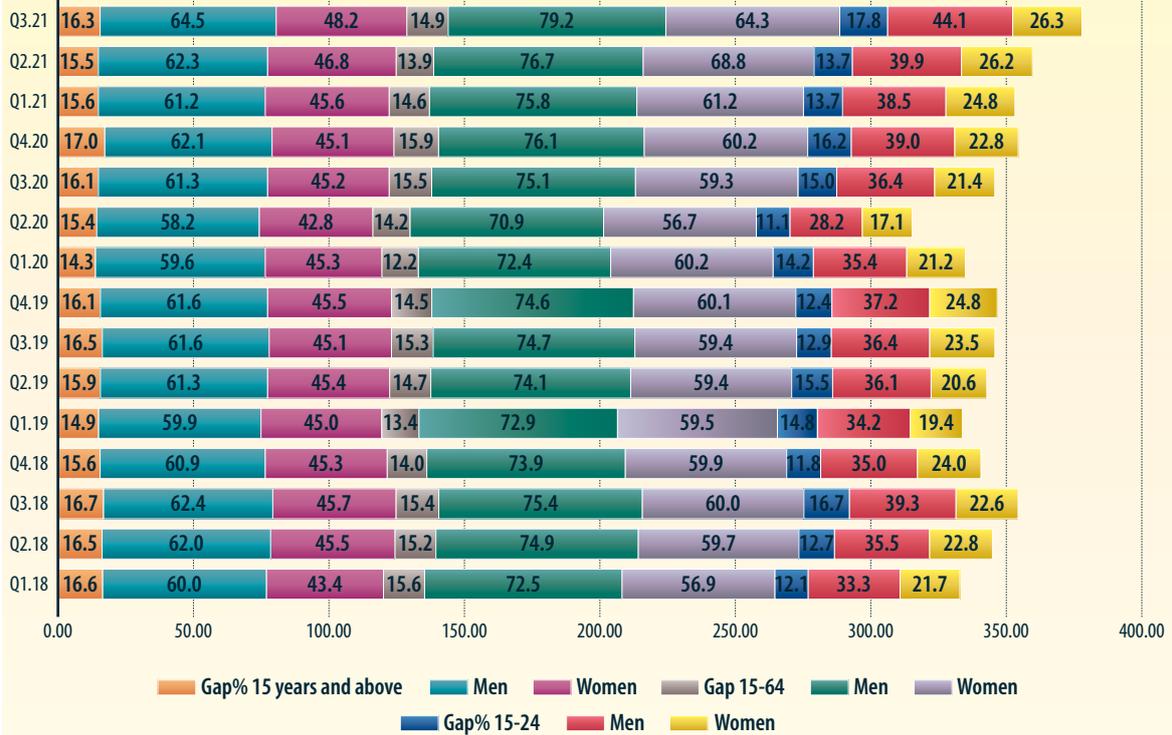
39 Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]

40 Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021. The Action Plan for implementation during 2021–2023 [http://sociojalnokljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Akcioni\\_plan\\_2021-2023\\_za\\_sprovodjenje\\_Strategije\\_zaposljavanja\\_u\\_Republici\\_Srbiji\\_engleski.pdf](http://sociojalnokljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Akcioni_plan_2021-2023_za_sprovodjenje_Strategije_zaposljavanja_u_Republici_Srbiji_engleski.pdf)

41 Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of Serbia, 2021, Action Plan 2021–2023 for the implementation of Employment Strategy 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: [sociojalnokljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Akcioni\\_plan\\_20212023\\_za\\_sprovodjenje\\_Strategije\\_zaposljavanja\\_u\\_Republici\\_Srbiji\\_engleski.pdf](http://sociojalnokljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Akcioni_plan_20212023_za_sprovodjenje_Strategije_zaposljavanja_u_Republici_Srbiji_engleski.pdf) [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]



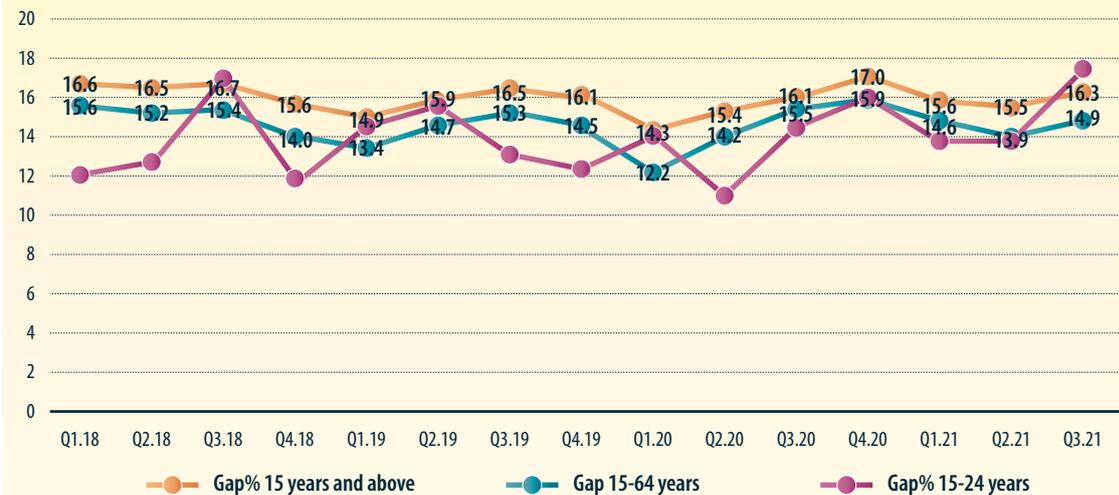
**Figure 1.** Labour force participation (activity rate), gender gap, quarterly by age groups (2018-2021)



Source: SORS, Labour Force Survey 2018-2021.

It is evident that the pandemic did not permanently lower the total labour force participation rate, having in mind that at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021 it was slightly higher than in the first quarter of 2018, while the gender gap was nearly the same at 16.3 pp in the biggest employment age group 15 years and above (Figure 2). However, the gender participation gap had widened for the age 15–24 group, from 12.44 at the end of 2019 to 17.8 at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2021.

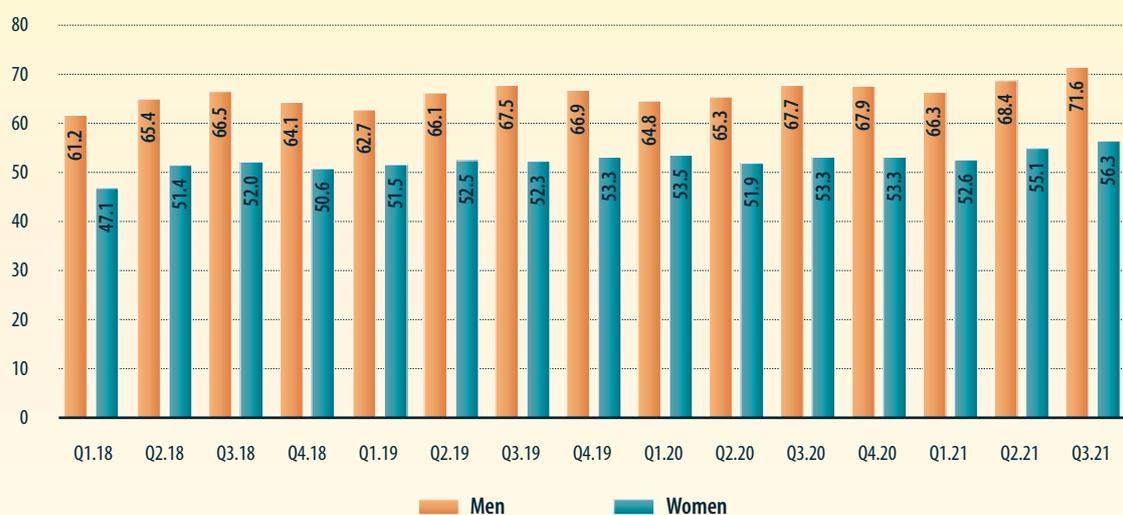
**Figure 2.** Labour force participation (activity rate), gender gap, quarterly by age groups (2018-2021)



Source: SORS, Labour Force Survey 2018-2021.

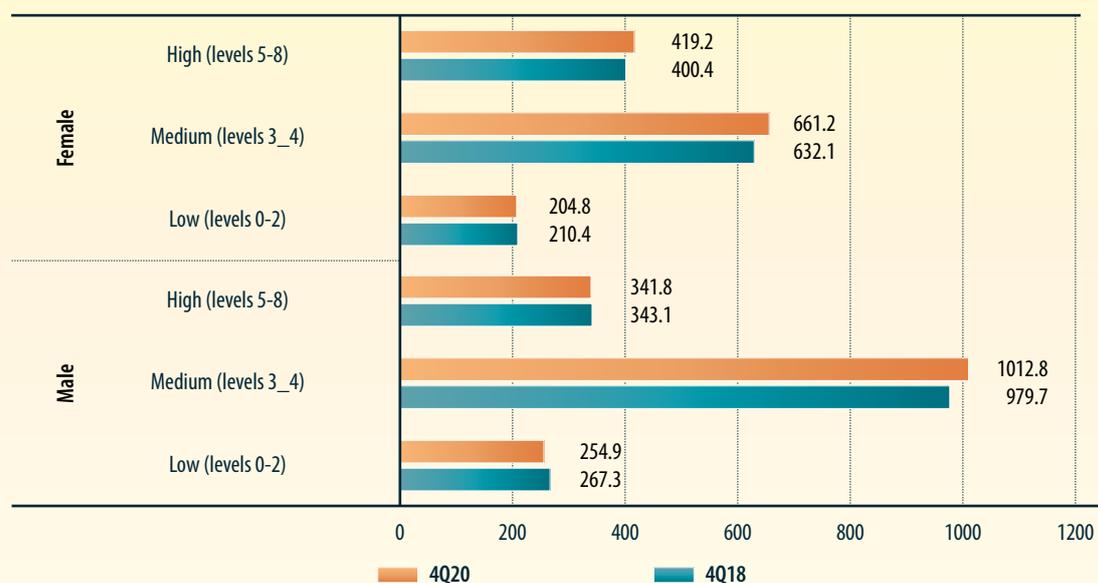




**Figure 4.** Employment rate quarterly age group 15-64 year (2018-2021)

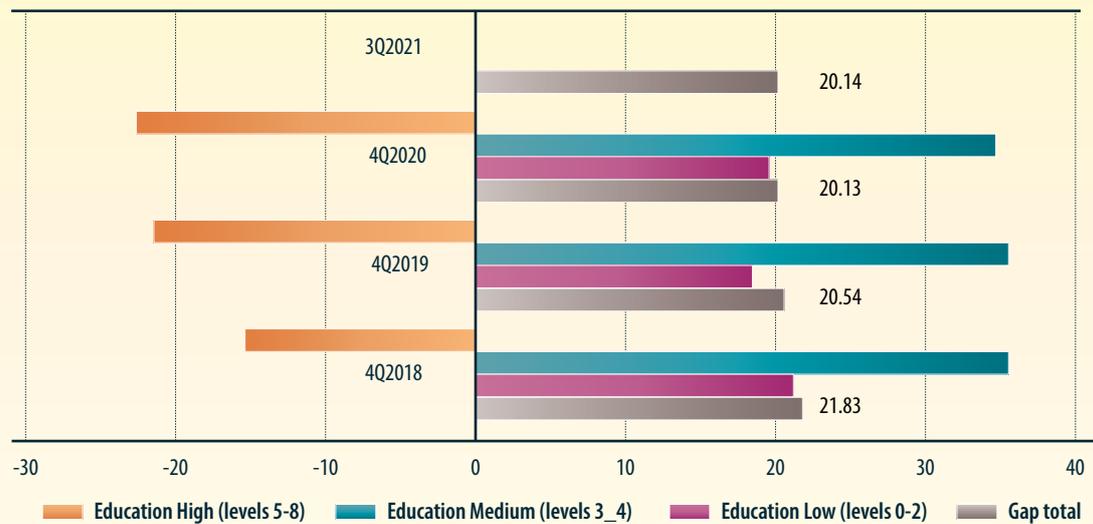
Source: SORS, Labour Force Survey 2018-2021.

It is evident (Figure 5) that the female employed population (age group 20–64) in Serbia is, on average, more educated than the male employed population, with a higher number high–level educated (ISCED levels 5–8) women. The number of HE (high–level educated) women increased in the fourth quarter of 2020, compared to the fourth quarter of 2018, while the number of highly educated men in employment fell slightly during this period. Whilst amongst those with a high level of completed education the gender gap favours women, the gap for the group of medium level education (ISCED levels 3–4) favours men, with a gap of around 35pp (Figure 6)

**Figure 5.** Employment aged 20-64 by education and gender (in thousands)

Source: SORS, Labour Force Survey 2018-2020

**Figure 6.** Employment gender gap by educational level, age group 20-64



Source: SORS, Author's calculation

Informal employees<sup>48</sup> are a heterogeneous group characterized by irregular income, modest savings and limited access to the social protection network. These circumstances put informal workers who lose their jobs during a crisis, like the pandemic, at a high risk of poverty and social exclusion. In Serbia, there was only a small difference between the share of women and men in informal employment during the period 2018–2020, with an evident drop in the fourth quarter of 2020 in both groups. There is a slightly higher share of employed women in informal employment than men although this gender informal employment gap rose to 1.9% in 2020.

**Figure 7.** Share of total informal employment (in agriculture and non-agriculture) by gender and quartile 2018-2020 and 2021 (1st-3rd Q) in % of total employment



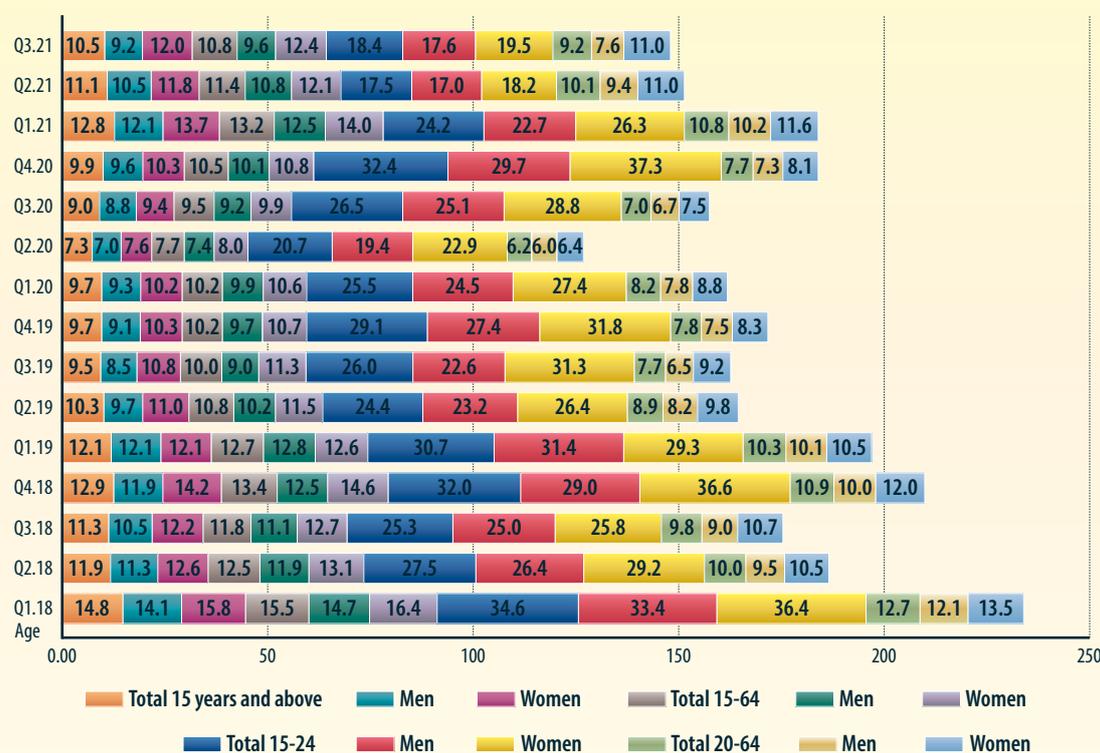
Source: SORS, Labour Force Survey 2018-2021.

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48 Informal employment is considered to be work in unregistered companies, work in registered companies without an employment contract, as well as the work of contributing family members. Informal employment rate is the percentage share of informally employed in total employment. According to methodology used for Census 2011– persons who performed at least one hour of paid work (in cash or in kind) in the week before the Census, regardless of whether they have a formal employment contract, only an oral agreement with the employer or perform work independently, including unpaid persons who worked in the shop of a member of the family household or on the family property; [https://data.stat.gov.rs/Metadata/3I\\_Popis/Html/S018150\\_ESMS\\_G10\\_2011\\_I.html](https://data.stat.gov.rs/Metadata/3I_Popis/Html/S018150_ESMS_G10_2011_I.html)





**Figure 10.** Unemployment rate by gender and age group quarterly 2018–2021\*

Source: Labour Force Survey (<https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/2400020107?languageCode=sr-Cyrl>)

\* Note: Starting from January 2021, LFS the LFS methodology has been changed and the comparability with previous years has been lost

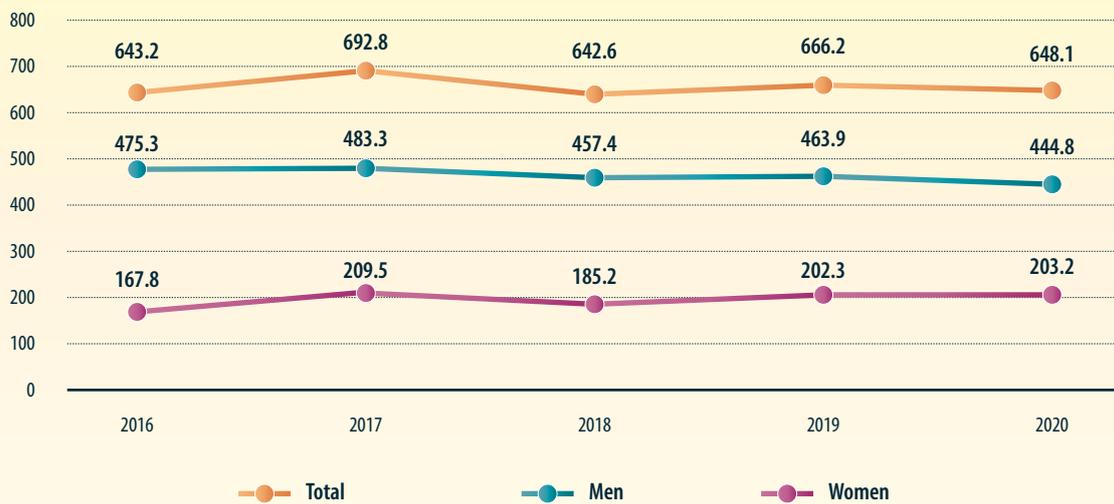
In the period 2018–2021 the registered unemployment of women in absolute numbers decreased, while the share of registered unemployment of women in the total registered unemployment (period 2018–2021) increased by 2.64 percentage points.

Although in 2020 there was a fall in the unemployment gender gap (first and second quarter of 2020), in the first quarter of 2021 it increased, only to fall again in the following two quarters (Figure 10). The unemployment rates for both men and women aged 15–24 was the highest. The large gender gap for this age group was about twice the overall rate throughout this period (with a significant fall in the second and third quarter of 2021), suggesting that younger women have much greater problems in finding and retaining employment.

The category of the self-employed includes entrepreneurs, owners of partnership firms and companies. There is a difference between self-employed and self-employed with employees. However, this latter category also includes unemployed persons who work for others as workers, which is not a regular form of self-employment. The number of self-employed has been fairly stable in recent years (Figure 11), though the number fell in the first year of the pandemic in Serbia. The number of female self-employed has slightly risen since 2016, and the gender gap has been falling (Figure 12). Another similarity is apparent, namely the percentage of self-employed women is around 31% in 2020 compared with 26% in 2016, which corresponds with the percent of women entrepreneurs' number in Serbia (see the chapter 4.6.1 State of the play of the women entrepreneurship in Serbia).

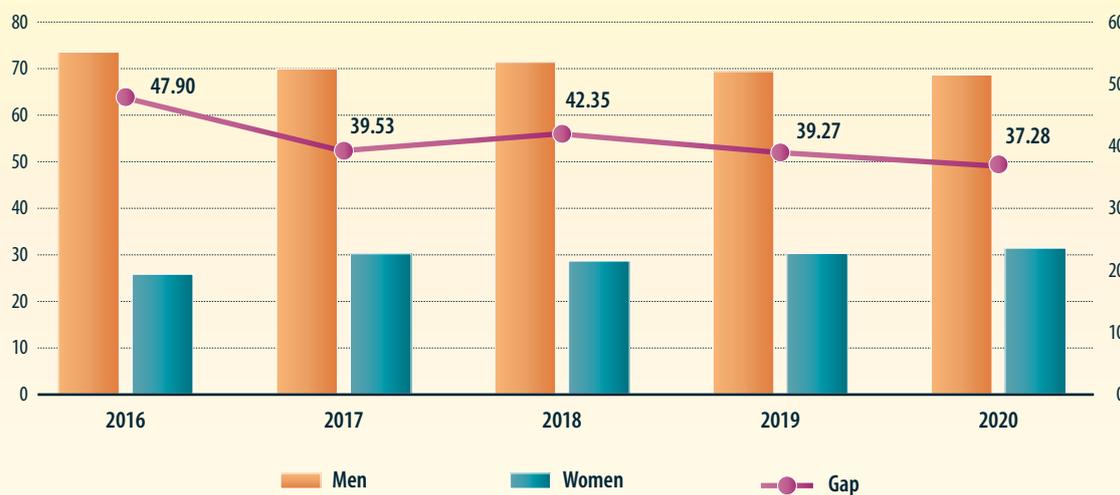
The area of work, employment, and self-employment is recognized by the new Law on Gender Equality as one of the key areas where general and specific measures for achieving gender equality is being implemented. It is also no longer considered discriminatory to provide additional incentives for the development of entrepreneurship among women (Article 27).

**Figure 11.** Self-employment (age 15+), yearly 2016-2020, by gender in 000



Source: Labour Force Survey

**Figure 12.** Share of self-employment 2016-2020 gender gap in %

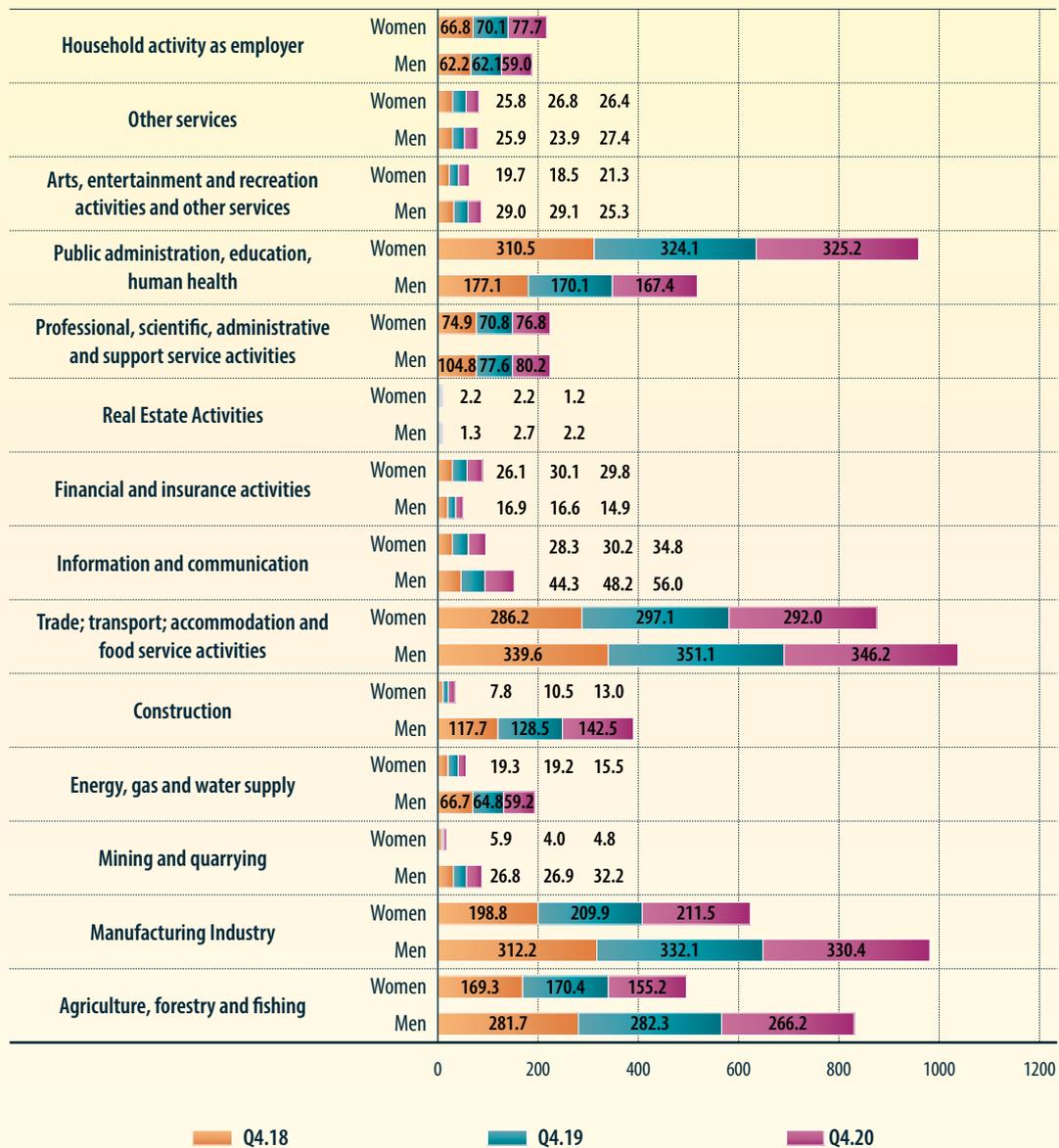


Source: Labour Force Survey



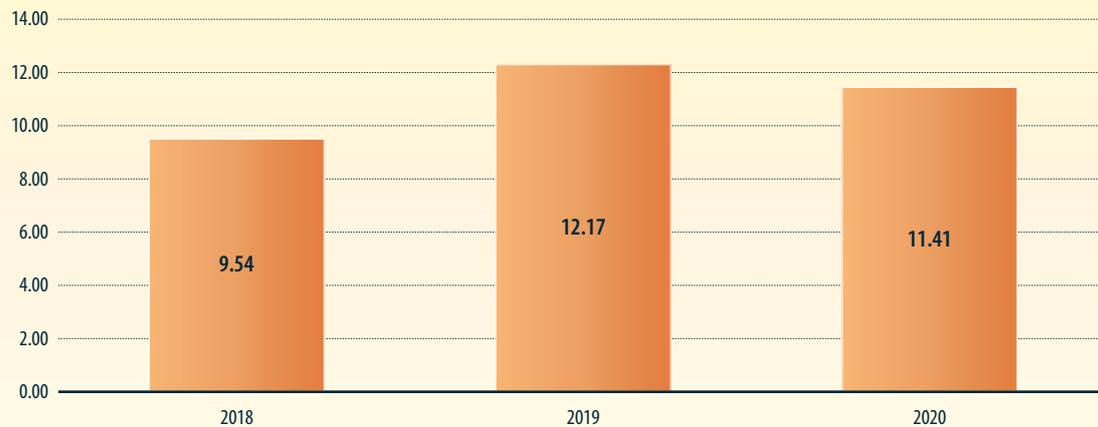




**Figure 15.** Share of employment by economic sector, 15+, in 000 (2018-2020)

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2018, 2019, 2020

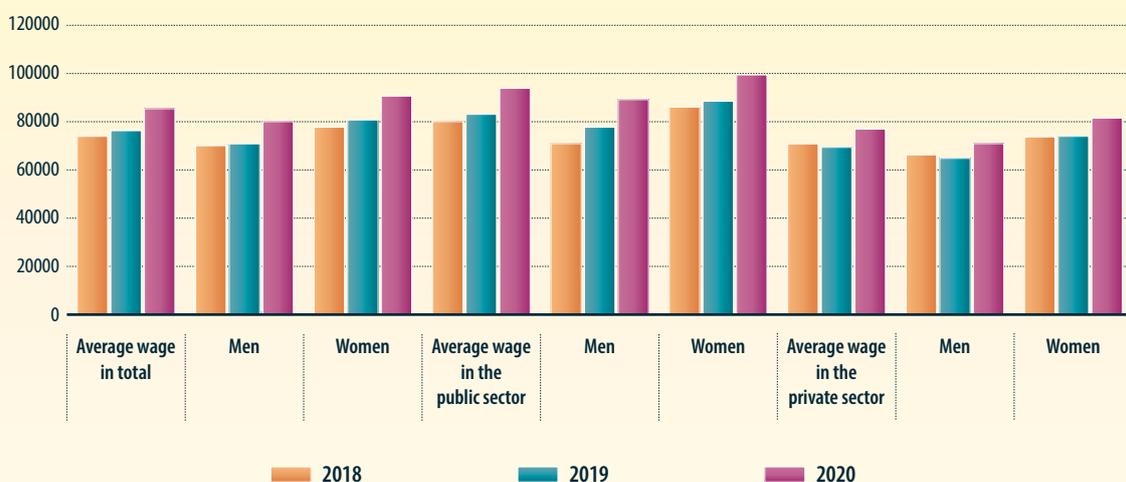


**Figure 16.** Average wages pay gap (in total-public and private sector) in %

Source: SORS, <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/2403040503?languageCode=sr-Cyrl&displayMode=table&guid=4dc18125-b32f-45fa-a929-4f2042eeba66>

The statutory minimum hourly wage in Serbia increased by 11.1% in 2020, up to average monthly wage of about RSD 30 000 (about EUR 250). Average monthly net salaries and wages calculated in Serbia for the third quarter of 2021 amounted to 64 863 dinars. Compared with the same period of the previous year (2020), they were nominally up by 9.2% and by 4.5% in real terms. At the beginning of March 2021 wages started to increase, so by September despite certain variations, the average weekly salary amounted to EUR 555. This strong wage growth was in part a consequence of a large increase in wages in parts of the public sector which rose by 9.7% in this period (Figure 17).

Most importantly, employed women have, on average, better educational characteristics and consequently it might be thought that they work in potentially better-paid occupations, but in reality, it is not the case because the gender pay gap exists at an average of 11.41% at the end of 2020 (Figure 16). The wage gap is slightly higher in the private than in public sector where the average wages are higher than those in the private sector.

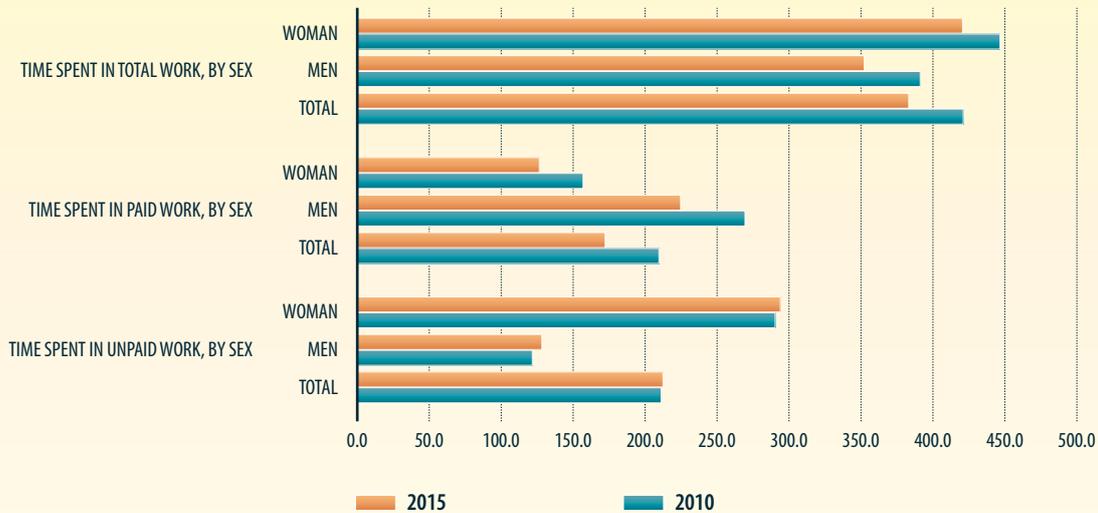
**Figure 17.** Average wages in 000 in total-public and private sector by gender

Source: SORS, LFSs 2018-2020







**Figure 21.** Time spent on unpaid/paid work, by gender (age 15-64), (minutes per day) in 2010 and 2015

Source: Time Use in Serbia, 2010 and 2015, SORS, Belgrade, 2016 <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2016/Pdf/G20166006.pdf>

## 4.1.7 Recommendations

In general, women in Serbia have a lower employment rate than men and their activity rate is also lower, despite being on average more educated, they work in jobs that pay less, they are burdened more with household work and childcare than men and take less part in decision-making at home and work. Despite some shifts in recent years, significant gender gaps persist in almost all the indicators relating to the Serbian labour market. According to the Gender Equality Index, Serbia has a lower score than most EU countries in the domain of work with gaps in participation, segregation and quality of work.

The labour force participation rate in Serbia is still under the average level of EU-27, and in the period of 2018–2020, remained around 64% of total population for men and just 47% for women. Several well-formulated strategies, such as the Employment Strategy of Serbia, have not been as effective as expected in improving the women's position in the labour market because they have not been fully implemented or enforced. One of the key recommendations is the need to ensure comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and assessment during the period of implementation of strategic documents and laws, if these are to achieve the targets regarding gender mainstreaming.

### Recommendations

- ⦿ Consistently apply a gender-sensitive approach during implementation and monitoring of activities from the strategic documents as well as in application of gender responsive budgeting.
- ⦿ Make employment and self-employment one of the key areas where general and specific measures for achieving gender equality need to be implemented.
- ⦿ Ensure organizations in charge of employment have the resources and mandates to provide equal employment opportunities for women and men, and for members of vulnerable social groups, providing access to jobs, and self-employment.

- 
- Achieve growth in the quality of employment through cross–sectoral measures aimed at improving the status of women in the labour market.
  - Foster inclusion of unemployed women from particularly vulnerable categories in active employment measures.
  - Through regular analysis of preconditions for reconciling work and family life contribute to gender equality in the labour market.
  - Implement special measures to activate and encourage employment of inactive women in under–developed areas.

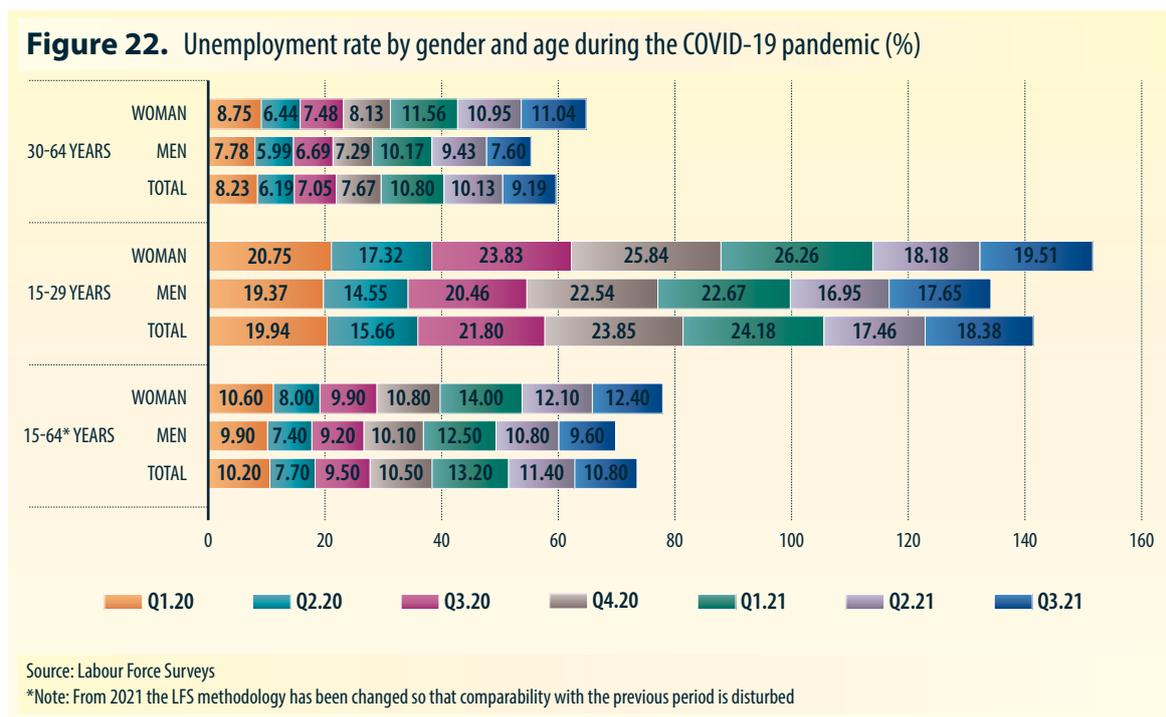
To ensure an evidence–based approach, gender disaggregated statistics are crucial for the analyses of changes in the position of women in the labour market. Specifically, SORS should make additional efforts:

- To record informality by gender and education;
- To gather employment statistics by gender and education on a quarterly basis;
- Data on employees by categories: Employed in the public sector, Employed in the private sector and Employed by wage groups, are not available because the application for compulsory social insurance (Form M, CROSO) does not contain this input data. Strengthen cooperation of SORS with the Central register of compulsory insurance and the Business register agency.
- Since SORS Structure of Earnings Survey is available only for 2018, it should be undertaken annually.
- A Time Use Survey in Serbia, (only available for 2010 and 2015) should be undertaken every 2 years.



## 4.2.1 Labour market and social conditions during COVID-19

As shown in the Figure 22, the overall gender gap in unemployment rate in the first period of COVID-19 pandemic (1st and 2nd quartile of 2020) was in decline. Within the younger population both women and men's unemployment rates increased sharply in the third quarter of 2020, only to return to their pre-pandemic rates by the second quarter of 2021.



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during the proclaimed state of emergency on activity and employment was more profound for males than for females. At the beginning of the pandemic (March–June 2020), the loss in the contingent of active population was bigger for men than women (-3.3 vs. -0.3 percentage points), similarly the contraction of employment was greater for males, (-3.6 pp for men and -0.2 pp for women). Consequently, there was an increase in inactive male population (5.4 pp), while the number of inactive women (traditionally larger than inactive men) remained the same. However, LFS data do not reflect fully the initial impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, as they consider both the pre-pandemic period as well as the first month and half of pandemic time (15 March–30 April).

For those retaining employment, women's working hours increased more often than for men, while the number of working hours decreased for employed men more often than for women. The former is probably at least partly related to the higher workload in healthcare sector which employs a majority of women.

Women were forced more often than men to take compulsory leave, but they were also more often to be at least partly paid than unpaid in comparison to men. A large portion of workforce transferred work to their home and this was more common for women. This can again be a consequence of their





According to latest Statistical release (National accounts–Quarterly national accounts) the real GDP growth in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, was 7.7%. According to seasonally adjusted GDP data, gross domestic product increased by 1.6% in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the previous quarter. Observed by activities, in the third quarter of 2021, compared to the same quarter of the previous year, a significant real growth in the gross value added was recorded in the sectors: wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; transportation and storage and accommodation and food service activities 17.0%, construction 15.8% and professional, scientific and technical activities and administrative and support service activities 13.7% (SORS, 2021).<sup>77</sup>

Average gross salaries and wages increased in the period January–October 2021, relative to the same period in the previous year by 5.1% in real terms. Simultaneously, net salaries and wages increased by 5.3% in real terms. Compared with the same month in the previous year, average gross salaries and wages for October 2021 increased by 2.9% in real terms (SORS, 2021).<sup>78</sup>

### **4.2.3 Short–and medium–term measures undertaken by the government to prevent job losses and protect the economy**

The Government of Serbia very quickly, within less than a month of declaring an epidemic, came up with a plan to mitigate the economic consequences. These sets of measures targeted preserving the liquidity of economic entities, maintaining economic activity and supporting employment. The measures were adopted on the 10th April 2020 and the implementation began on the 10th May. This rapid reaction had a gender dimension, because on average women have less capital, less income and have less access to resources and therefore any crisis in liquidity affects them faster and any delay in responding increases the chances of women’s businesses shutting down. Therefore, the speed of the adoption of the measures certainly benefited women in business. RSD 11 billion was allocated to support companies in maintaining liquidity. This was undertaken in the form of loans from the Development Fund and RSD 131.1 billion for the payment of minimum wages.

The first set of measures enabled the postponement of the payment of due tax obligations, for which RSD 189 billion (EUR 1.6 billion) or 3.4% of GDP was allocated. The second set of measures refers to direct benefits to companies, payment of subsidies to entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium enterprises, to enable them to pay the minimum net salary (May–July). Subsidies of 50% of the minimum net salary were available to large companies whose employees had been sent on forced leave, due to reduced business volume or complete suspension of work. This set of measures covered about 235 thousand business entities with about 1.05 million employees. Additional direct support for the economy was through the payment of another two months (August–September) of 60% of the minimum net salary as a direct benefit from the budget of Serbia that were paid in July 2020 (about RSD 18 thousand or EUR 155), while taxes and contributions on earnings were to be postponed for one month. Also,

77 SORS, Statistical Release, Quarterly Gross domestic product of Serbia, III Quarter 2021. <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/HtmLE/G20211333.html>

78 SORS, Statistical release: Average salaries and wages per employee, October 2021. <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2021/HtmLE/G20211351.html>



## 4.2.4 Gender sensitive policy response

Despite a variety of measures to sustain the economy, these measures did not specifically address gender-based inequalities, such as the large gender gaps in the labour market, high informal employment, lower access to capital, finance and other resources by women-owned businesses, higher vulnerability to shocks a greater unpaid work burden and the generally small size of women-owned businesses. The package of assistance measures offered no measures targeting specifically women entrepreneurs (UNWOMEN, 2021).<sup>80</sup> The following is a gender analysis of the measures taken in Serbia to mitigate the pandemic. These measures were not gender-disaggregated.

### Tax Delays and Reductions

1. Delayed payment of tax on income and contributions for the private sector during the emergency situation, with later payment of outstanding amounts in instalments, starting no sooner than 2021.
2. Delayed payments of business income tax in Q2.

These measures were in favour of SMEs but less favourable for micro business which constitute 95% of all business and in the case women-owned firms almost 99% of the total, in that way this measure was gender blind. In order to gain access to this measure, micro-enterprises were forbidden from laying-off any employees. There was no consideration to the specific needs of microenterprises where the representation of women as company owners and/or small shop or agency owners is far higher than in SMEs, or of those companies and entrepreneurs that suffered a complete ban on their activities.

### Special support to companies in priority development sectors

1. Support to the economy through the Development Fund of Serbia, loans for entrepreneurs, MSMEs and agricultural holdings, Subsidies (grants) for licensed travel agencies to support to their operations and Subsidies (grants) to support the hotel industry.
2. Only 19% of agricultural holdings were registered to women, although women are informally engaged as a majority of agricultural workforce (63%). Women own smaller land parcels. This measure did not increase the total size of subsidies to agriculture.
3. Among sectors in which women have most of their SMEs are accommodation and food service activities. Although these subsidies were gender blind, it can be asserted that these measures helped some women to maintain their businesses.

This measure can be considered as gender blind or neutral.

### Financial Support to Companies and Liquidity Protection

Financial support to business entities for liquidity and working capital; Guarantee scheme to support businesses through banks. This measure was gender blind and potentially negative because it may have the risk of deepening the existing gender gap. Women-owned enterprises, especially micro-enterprises, had more difficulty accessing finance. Women operate more in the service sector, in less

<sup>80</sup> UNWOMEN (2021). Budget for gender equality in a time of pandemic: Hindering progress or closing the gap. Country report Serbia. Available at: [https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Budget%20for%20GE%20in%20pandemic\\_ENG.pdf](https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Budget%20for%20GE%20in%20pandemic_ENG.pdf)

























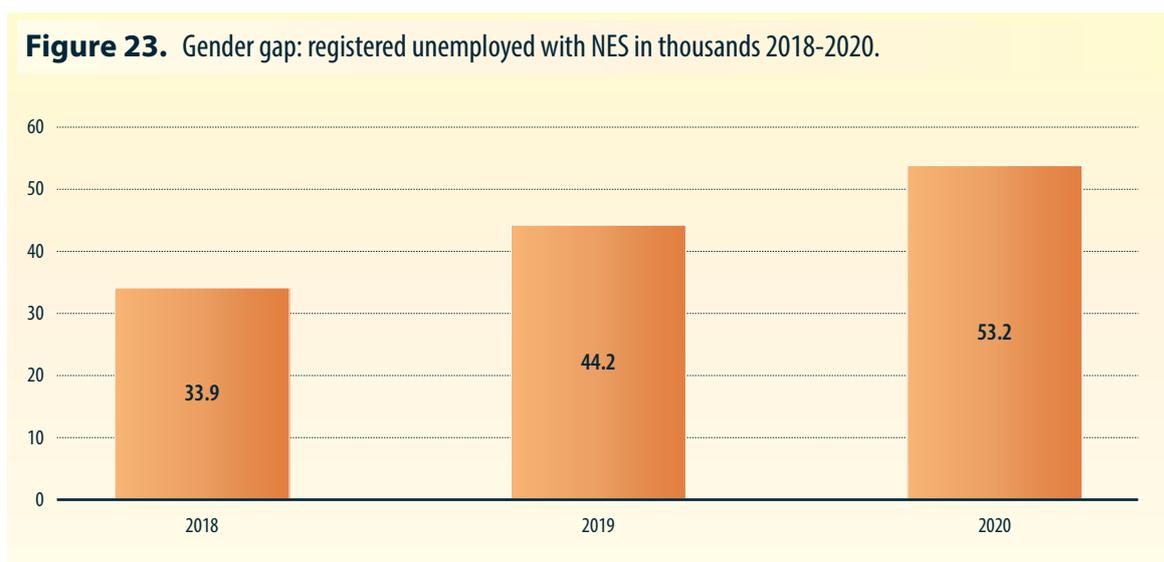


Since the number of unemployed persons registered with NES is more relevant for the programming of the measures envisaged in the Action Plan 2021–2023 for the implementation of Employment Strategy 2021–2026, these figures are used in the following analysis. The total number of registrants has been falling since 2018 and this is the case for both male and female registrants. As indicated in Table 7, the number of unemployed women registered with NES exceeds that of men and the gender gap has increased since 2018. In 2020, there were 53 200 more women than men among unemployed registered persons with NES (Figure 23).

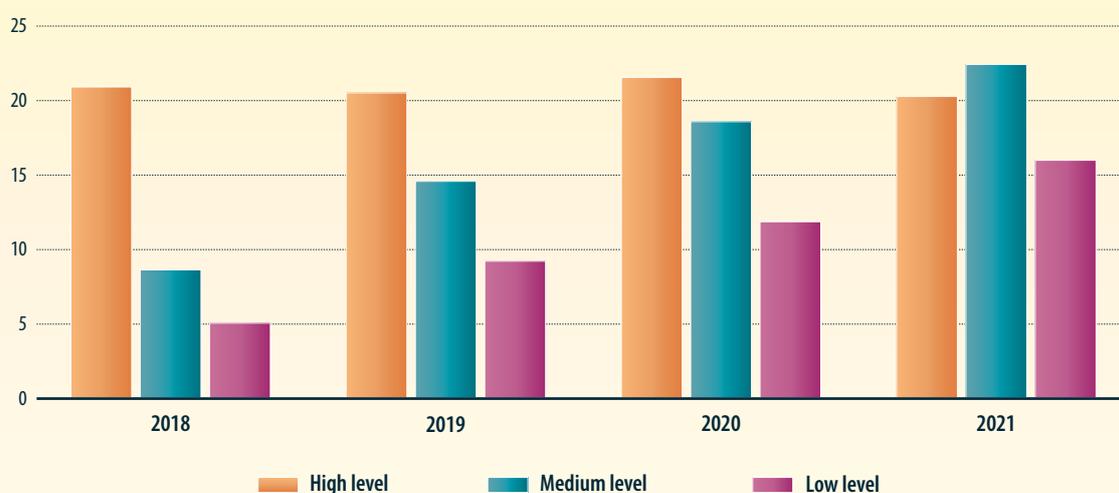
*Table 7. Number of registered unemployed jobseekers by gender 2018–November 2021*

	2018*	2019*	2020*	November 2021
Male	274 609	242 635	227 960	211 272
Female	308 490	286 871	281 219	269 930
Gap	33 881	44 236	53 259	58 658

Source: NES \* Data for the period 2018–2020 are provided as an annual average



As in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, there are more female registrants amongst those with a high level of completed education, whilst the gender gaps are smaller for those with a middle and low level of education (Figure 24). Though the NES data, unlike the LFS data, suggests that more women are unemployed in the latter two categories than men.

**Figure 24.** Gender gap: registered unemployed by education in thousands (female/male)

Considering the age composition of registrants, women registrants exceed males in all age groups with the gender gap being highest in the age group of 30–34 in the period of 2018 to 2020 (Figure 25) and their share has been increasing in almost all age groups.

**Figure 25.** Share of registered unemployed women jobseekers in the total number of registered unemployed jobseekers by age 2018-2020 in %

Women registrants form a majority of those in each category of duration of unemployment, whilst their share of long-term employment has been rising since 2018 (Figure 26).















In recent years, in order to modernise instruction at all education levels, modules in digital literacy enhancement have been introduced, as well as subjects aimed at developing entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial spirit/skill as a key competence.

Career guidance and counselling (CGC) services to assist young people in choosing the right education pathway for the occupation they wish to pursue, and to help adults manage their careers, should be further developed. Crucial for CGC development is the implementation of the Rulebook on Career Guidance and Counselling Service Standards, adopted in 2019 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, and the Recommendation for the Fulfilment of the Career Guidance and Counselling Service Standard Implementation Plan, adopted by Serbia's National Qualifications Framework Council (MoLEVSA, 2021).<sup>129</sup> It is necessary to strengthen the role and capacities of civil society organisations involved in CGC that are capable of serving a large number of clients, especially those who are not likely to seek support from institutions within the system, to ensure they attain the required standards for high-quality CGC service provision.

At the same time, further development of the National Standard Classification of Occupations (NSCO), through the adoption of the Occupation Standards Development Methodology, setting standards for as many occupations as possible and establishing a registry of occupation standards, will allow improved monitoring of labour market changes and identify occupations in high demand. Both of which are essential for improving the coordination of formal and non-formal education systems and addressing labour market needs (MoLEVSA, 2021).<sup>130</sup> The development of occupational standards will also facilitate the creation of market-relevant qualification standards as the basis for developing high-quality education and training curricula to enable individuals to gain competencies, knowledge and skills relevant to an occupation or multiple occupations.

Given the existing skills mismatch in the labour market, substantial investments in adult education and promotion of the life-long learning are needed. In the sphere of non-formal education, the training system will need to be developed further by creating a network of non-formal education service providers (NFESP), (MoLEVSA, 2021).<sup>131</sup>

As part of further development of the National Qualifications Framework, a prior learning recognition (PLR) system will be developed in conformity with the bylaw governing PLR standards and the modality of conducting the PLR procedure. This will enable the formal recognition of the knowledge and skills gained outside the education system through the award of a (publicly recognised) document. These credentials will ensure that an individual's knowledge and skills will become recognisable in the labour market, which will improve employment prospects, and individuals' position vis-à-vis employers will be more advantageous. Intensive cooperation between the two systems—education and employment, as well as other relevant institutions, in particular the National Employment Service and schools, is crucial for PLR implementation. Almost one third of the unemployed registered with the National Employment



<sup>129</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]

<sup>130</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]

<sup>131</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]







will enable them to go to the next level and increase their probability of finding employment, based on the acquired certificate. The value of gross effects is slightly lower than the average value over the past decade, which was 6%. The efficiency of Training for the labour market in 2020 was just 16%, which is significantly below the average for the past decade (27%). The lower gross effects are understandable given that the implementation of this measure implies continuing contact with employers who were coping with pandemic crisis at this time. It is the nature of the organisation of training in the labour market, together with the effects of the pandemic, that has contributed to only 136 of the planned 1,200 participants commencing training (Arandarenko, 2021).<sup>139</sup>

The gross effects of Professional practice were 37% in 2020, a percentage again slightly below the multi-year average (2011–2020). From the aspect of vulnerable groups, it should be noted that the gross effects under this measure were significantly higher for men during 2020. Gender differences were not observed when it comes to the efficiency of Public works, which in both cases amounted to about 22%. However, the gross effects obtained for this measure during 2020 were once again significantly lower than the average values for 2011–2020, which were around 35%, and especially lower than the values from 2019, which reached 60% (Arandarenko, 2021).<sup>140</sup>

Regarding the measures for which it was not possible to estimate the gross effects in 2020, we will consider their effectiveness in the past decade 2011–2020. Subsidies for self-employment, whose gross effects at one point were at the level of 96%, stand out as extremely effective (average of 85%). They are followed by Subsidies for employment of hard-to-employ persons (for new job creation) with an average gross effect of about 80%.

There was a noticeable decrease in the number of participants in 2020 compared to 2019 in all these measures. In addition to the health crisis, the reduction in the number of participants on these measures was influenced by another factor. That is the implementation of the My first salary programme, in which more than 8,000 people participated in 2020. This has largely occupied the limited capacity of the PES. Also, from the point of view of users' interest in participating in the programs, there could have been a spill-over from standard programs to My First Salary. This innovative program was launched to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, and based on the Decree of the Government of RS.<sup>141</sup> The Government of Serbia, the National Employment Service and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce participated in the planning and implementation of this programme with the technical support of the Office for IT and Electronic Administration. The goal of the program is empowering of young people up to 30 years of age with completed secondary and higher education for independent work. The programme is exclusively intended for young people without any or with limited work experience (not longer than 9 months) who are on the unemployment register of the National Employment Service. Conditions for inclusion of employers were less restrictive given that registration was available to both public and private sector employers, with preference given to the latter. As with most NES measures, the priority was given to employers coming from undeveloped areas (municipalities), (Arandarenko, 2021).

<sup>139</sup> Arandarenko, M. 2021 Analytical report on the situation in the labour market of Serbia in the context of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. RCC. Available at <https://www.esap.online/observatory/docs/165/analytical-report-on-the-situation-in-the-labour-market-of-serbia-in-the-context-of-the-economic-crisis-caused-by-the-covid-19-pandemic> [Accessed 4 December 2021]

<sup>140</sup> Arandarenko, M. 2021 Analytical report on the situation in the labour market of Serbia in the context of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. RCC. Available at <https://www.esap.online/observatory/docs/165/analytical-report-on-the-situation-in-the-labour-market-of-serbia-in-the-context-of-the-economic-crisis-caused-by-the-covid-19-pandemic> [Accessed 4 December 2021]

<sup>141</sup> Vlada RS, (2020), Uredba o Programu podsticanja zapošljavanja mladih 'Moja prva plata', Sl. glasnik RS, br. 107/20.





## 4.6 Women's Entrepreneurship

### 4.6.1 State of the play of the women entrepreneurship in Serbia

Historically, women's entrepreneurship in WB economies developed through a period of crises since 1990 (Popovic–Pantic, 2020).<sup>146</sup> The war and inflation impacted the economy causing many women to enter into entrepreneurship by need, which significantly affected the sustainability of their companies. For example, the failure rate of women's businesses was 47% comparing to 38% companies owned by men according to data in 2012 (Babović, 2012).<sup>147</sup> Recent studies indicate that the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the global financial crises could be repeated in the COVID–19 crisis since the sectors which have been most directly affected by lockdowns and similar measures are those in which women have most of their SMEs: tourism, education, child care, restaurants and other traditional "female professions", such as beauty and hair salons (Popovic–Pantic et al. 2020).<sup>148</sup> This leads to conclusions concerning the necessity to strengthen women-owned firms' resilience. One of the tools which has been recognized even before COVID–19 crisis and especially during the pandemic, has been digitalization (Popovic–Pantic et al. 2020a).<sup>149</sup>

The extent of women's entrepreneurship in Serbia has not been recorded on a regular basis and it has not been part of the regular statistical reporting. The most commonly used data is extracted from the SBA Assessment Report, which is published by the Ministry of Economy of Serbia. The Business Register Agency is in the process of launching regular statistical reporting on entrepreneurship based on gender, and it is likely that it will be an official part of the statistical reporting in 2022. The GEWE report<sup>150</sup> also suggested introducing gender-disaggregated data on entrepreneurship.

Considering the state of the play of women's entrepreneurship in Serbia during the two last decades, we can say that women's entrepreneurship in Serbia has gone through a long transition from social to economic, developmental category and is exposed to a constant risk of returning to the level of social category. The basic characteristic of women's entrepreneurship as a social category is that the motivation to enter entrepreneurship is necessity and not to exploit an opportunity (Popovic–Pantic, 2020).<sup>151</sup>



146 Popović–Pantić, S., 2020. Dve decenije ženskog preduzetništva u Srbiji. Beograd: Institut Mihajlo Pupin.

147 Babović, M., 2012. Polazna studija o preduzetništvu žena u Srbiji. Beograd: UN Women Srbija.

148 Popović–Pantić S., Semenčenko, D., and Vasilić, N. (2020). Women Entrepreneurship in the Time of COVID–19 Pandemic. *Journal of Women's Entrepreneurship and Education*, 3–4, 23–40.

149 Popović–Pantić, S., Semenčenko, D., and Vasilić, N., 2020a. Digital technology and the financial performance of female SMEs in Serbia: the mediating role of innovation. *Economic annals*, 65(224), 53–81.

150 RCC, 2021, Economic benefits of gender equality and women empowerment in the Western Balkans six. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/114/economic-benefits-of-gender-equality-and-women-empowerment-in-the-western-balkans-six>; [Accessed on: 24–25 December 2021]

151 Popović–Pantić, S., 2020. Dve decenije ženskog preduzetništva u Srbiji. Beograd: Institut Mihajlo Pupin.



















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- Since there is an ongoing process of implementing the gender-based statistics within the Business Register Agency, the perspectives on improving policy measures that will be evidence-based, seem to be realistic in the forthcoming period;
  - To improve access to finance by enabling diversification of financial sources, including micro-financing which has been lagging;
  - Institutional programs to support women's entrepreneurship and women's companies should be carried out on regular basis and measures should not be limited to the gender-based analysis of the current SME support programs;
  - Women entrepreneurs in the service sector were mostly excluded from the institutional support programmes for women entrepreneurship, this sector should be taken into account when designing future measures and supporting schemes;
  - Access to markets and especially to public procurement should be improved for women entrepreneurs, through providing training on procedures in the form of workshops, info-days, organization of 'meet the buyers' sessions and other affirmative measures within the public procurement procedures.

## 4.7 Good practices and Case studies

Entrepreneurship Development Encouragement Program through Financial Support for Women Entrepreneurs and Youth in 2021

### Short description:

This program was launched in February 2021 by the Ministry of Economy of Serbia and Development Fund of Serbia. The total budget is RSD 100 000 000,00, which is around EURO 850 000. Potential beneficiaries could apply for a minimum amount of RSD 400 000 up to a maximum of RSD 6 000 000. The program was suspended in August 2021 due to the large number of applications. The number of the approved applications was 90, 68 of whom were women (Table 14).

Table 14. Entrepreneurship Development Encouragement Program through Financial Support for Women Entrepreneurs and Youth in 2021

Year	Allocated budget funds	Num. of approved requests	Total investment value	Total value of approved grants	Number of approved requests—women	Total investment value—women	Total value of approved grants—women
2021	100 000 000.00	90	251 716 616,89	89 986 593,99	68	195 759 947,00	69 778 880,72

Entrepreneurs, micro and small companies, who have been registered with the Business Registers Agency for at least five years, have the right to apply for the Public Call for Grants and the right to submit a loan application to the Fund. The woman applicant must be:

- ☉ founder and legal representative in a multi-owner business, the majority share must be owned by one or more women (minimum 51%) and one of the legal representatives must be a woman.

### Profile:

**Type of measure:** The financing modality of this Program aims to support women's entrepreneurship (and youth) as a form of self-employment. The financial framework is a combination of a grant of up to 35% of the investment value, or up to 45% of the investment value for economic entities from the least developed Serbian region and a favourable loan from the Development Fund (up to 65% of the investment value for economic entities belonging to the fourth development group), with an interest rate on loans of 1% per annum, if the bank guarantee is a means of securing the loan, or 2% annually, if other collateral is offered. Also, applicants have the opportunity to finance part of the value of the project with their own funds.

**Purpose of the program:** Funds allocated to the Program are intended for:

- purchase of equipment and delivery vehicles used for the transport of own products and other means of transport involved in the production process (new or used, not older than five years);
- current maintenance of business or production space up to the amount of RSD 350,000.00 of the total investment funds, regardless of whether the facility in which the current maintenance activities are carried out is leased or owned by the applicant;
- operating costs, which can be up to 20% in the structure of the total investment

**Context:** The 6th Pillar of the SME Development Strategy implemented in 2015–2020, was devoted to the development of women’s entrepreneurship. Although there was support in the form of mentoring for women entrepreneurs, there were no financial schemes specifically targeting women’s businesses. The Program had a low level of the participation of women entrepreneurs, not exceeding 20% of the total beneficiaries on average. Therefore, a new Program was launched in 2021. Apart from this, the Ministry of Economy initiated research on women’s entrepreneurship in Serbia, with the aim to create evidence–based policy measures to support women’s entrepreneurship.

**Procedure:** to launch this Program it was necessary to ensure cooperation with the Development Fund of Serbia as the financial institution with the mandate to implements credit schemes as a form of the financial support to SMEs. It was necessary to get approval from the Government of Serbia for the allocated financial resources. After getting approval, it was necessary to develop eligibility criteria for women entrepreneurs (and youth) which avoided over–laps with other available programs which support women’s entrepreneurship.

**Lessons learned:** As a result of the gender analysis of the entrepreneurship support program run by the Ministry of Economy, it was found that women’s participation is highest in support programs for start–ups. However, it was noted that women frequently need a longer period to stabilize the firm than is considered necessary for typical start–up companies (up to 2 years). This is why this Program was introduced and companies up to 5 years of age can also apply, which increased the number of applications.

**Links to resources.** Ministry of Economy [https://privreda.gov.rs/javni\\_pozivi/](https://privreda.gov.rs/javni_pozivi/),

Development Fund of Serbia <https://fondzarazvoj.gov.rs>.



## 5.2 Governance, functions and human resources

The following recommendations are directly from the “Employment Strategy 2021–2026 of the Republic of Serbia”, there are cited below in terms of consistency of the structure of the Study. These recommendations are not novel, author’s contribution, instead these are directly cited from the “Employment Strategy 2021–2026 of Republic of Serbia”.

Relevant excerpts from the “Employment Strategy 2021–2026 of Republic of Serbia” are cited below:

- Strengthen the capacities of labour market actors, authorities responsible for central and local-level employment policy making (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and local self-governments), employment service providers etc., as well as to ensure a stable financial framework for employment policy.
- Enhance the capacities of employment service providers, transforming the National Employment Service into a modern public service capable of responding to changing labour market demands and employers’ and unemployed people’s needs.
- Further develop and strengthen dialogue among employment policy stakeholders, i.e. broaden it to include all sectors and policies relevant to and having an impact on the labour market. In addition, a crucial role in improving the quality and efficiency of public policies should be given to improving the dialogue with institutional and non-institutional stakeholders. This dialogue needs to be seen as a tool conducive to transparency and active involvement of groups. In particular, the dialogue between employment policy makers and economic policy makers should be improved.
- Limited resources at the local self-government (LSG) level preclude the development of high-quality analyses of local labour markets, which, in turn, affects the quality of local employment action plans, which frequently do not correspond sufficient to local labour market needs.

## 5.3 Policies, programs and budgets

Further education and training measures delivered by the National Employment Service should be continued with a view to improving the competencies, knowledge and skills of the unemployed, with priority given to the measures and activities implemented in cooperation with NFESPs. In order to better meet the need of employers in the labour market, it is recommended to ensure women’s increased participation in non-formal education in ICT. In that respect, women should be given priority in specialist IT training delivered as part of further education and training measures.

In view of the rising interest among women in starting their own businesses, in addition to intensifying activities to promote women’s entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship training programs and self-employment subsidies, it is also recommended to ensure provision of ongoing mentoring support in the early years of operation of women’s businesses in the interest of the long-term sustainability of

new businesses. Other types of support, including availability of different financing measures should be designed and implemented to promote further business development and growth.<sup>182</sup>

The current portfolio of ALMPs does not fully address and correspond to the needs of the unemployed, labour market and women in particular. Therefore, it is recommended that new ALMPs be designed in order to improve women's position in the labour market and a budget for this purpose be allocated.

In the process of implementing and monitoring measures, activities and interventions in the area of employment policy, it is recommended that the NES provide additional gender-disaggregated data. This can include number of ALMP beneficiaries by education, age and length of unemployment duration, and especially more detailed evidence on the outcomes from participation in individual ALMPs. The latter will enable a more comprehensive evaluation of policies and assessment of relative effectiveness of different programs.

A joint effort of the two systems: social protection and employment is recommended to activate women from the most vulnerable groups, such as domestic violence victims, with coordinated activities and a joint approach in addressing the situation of each individual.

It is important to consider the possibility of diversifying financial instruments to support women's self-employment. In this regard, it is necessary to expand consultations with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy, as well as with international donors.

To activate a higher proportion of the population in the labour market, it is recommended to consider tax policy reforms in order to make work pay. In Serbia, there is limited difference in the level of taxes and contributions on labour between high- and low-wage sectors.

Within the tax policy reforms it is recommended to consider certain tax incentives for start-ups and assist their long-term sustainability.

It is recommended to further assist employers who employ women from vulnerable categories through tax policy measures. One of the measures available to entrepreneurs is a tax credit for equipment to be serviced by new employees from vulnerable categories.

It is recommended to establish a labour market information system that would unify data from the different sources needed to design evidence-based policies.<sup>183</sup>



<sup>182</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]

<sup>183</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA), 2021, Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2021–2026. Belgrade. Available at: <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs> [Accessed on: 5 December 2021]



other stakeholders such as international donors and civil society organizations, who are in daily contact with hard-to-employ categories of women and are directly aware of their needs and capacities and therefore can make a contribution to the implementation of the Strategy in this particular segment.

Enhancing in a comprehensive manner the system of monitoring and evaluating the impact of measures in the labor market from a gender perspective will contribute to planned outcomes and the modernization of the labor market in Serbia.



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