

Gender Gap in Access to Productive Resources and Decision-Making Process

What do we know about women's access to productive resources and their representation in decision-making processes of the northern part of Cyprus

 **Fatma Güven Lisaniler
Feyza Bhatti**

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Foreword

The Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women (TCAUW) is a public-interest non-governmental organisation founded in 1991 with the aim of strengthening solidarity among women with university education in the country and around the world, without discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, religion, or political opinion; encouraging the sharing of understanding, knowledge, experience and skills; and contributing to the promotion of equal opportunities in legal, economic and cultural spheres. Since its establishment, it has supported advocacy work through scientific research and has engaged in cooperation and networking activities with other civil society organisations.

Within this framework, from its foundation to the present day, TCAUW has implemented numerous projects, conducted scientific research, and published in Turkish and English. One of the first comprehensive studies in this field was the research project entitled "The Education and Employment Profile of Turkish Cypriot Women", carried out in 2001 through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project aimed to present, based on scientific data, women's access to education and to the workforce. The data obtained were later compiled into a book by Prof. Dr Fatma Güven Lisaniler and made available to the public. As part of the same project, an award-winning academic essay competition was organised to encourage scholarly writing in gender studies.

Another initiative of the Association that created a lasting social impact was the Women's Books Library, established in 2001. The library served universities and the public until it was transferred in 2023 to the Turkish Cypriot National Library. In addition, the Mother and Child Centre project, funded by the European Union, was successfully implemented for 12 years, providing regional and school-based support activities for women and children, as well as counselling services. By publishing books in Turkish and English in selected thematic areas, organising conferences and panel discussions, and issuing letters and press statements addressed to politicians, TCAUW has sought to

enhance public visibility and raise awareness among policymakers. Through the formation of platforms with other civil society organisations, it has also worked towards amendments to the Family Law and has continued its advocacy efforts with determination. TCAUW is a full member of University Women of Europe (UWE), operating under the umbrella of the European Union, and of Graduate Women International (GWI), which holds consultative status with the United Nations.

In 2023, the Association applied for funding under the European Union's Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community and was awarded support for a comprehensive three-year research and action project. The Partnership for Improving Women's Access to Productive Resources Project (the Parity Project) is funded by the European Union within the framework of the EU Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community and is implemented by TCAUW. In addition to compiling and making accessible the studies and research resources produced to date, the project adopts a holistic approach to examining the cultural, social and economic factors that hinder women's access to productive resources, to their own labour and to their time. Within the scope of the project, research was conducted on gender inequalities in the labour market, participation in "institutional" decision-making processes, gender roles, unpaid care labour, women's access to economic opportunities and decision-making mechanisms, and gender-based differences in time use. The research was led by Assoc. Prof. Dr Feyza Bhatti, and the findings were compiled into this volume by Prof. Dr Fatma Güven Lisaniler and Assoc. Prof. Dr Feyza Bhatti.

We believe that this book will serve as a scientific and guiding resource for civil society organisations engaged in advocacy, academics, policymakers and all relevant stakeholders in the period ahead. We express our gratitude to the European Union for enabling the project, and to Assoc. Prof. Dr Feyza Bhatti for leading the project; to Prof. Dr Fatma Güven Lisaniler for her insightful advice; to Mine Balman, Güliden Plümer and İnan Barlas for their valuable contributions; and to the TCAUW Executive Board members and all individuals and "institutions" involved in this work.

Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women Executive Board, January 2025

Introduction

Between 2001 and 2003, the Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women (TCAUW) implemented a project titled The Employment and Education Profile of Turkish Cypriot Women. The findings of this project were shared with the public through the book *Assessing the Status of Women: A Step towards Equality*. The research was conducted at a time when collected economic data were not disaggregated by sex. Its findings surprised researchers and members of civil society organisations who were interested in the issue at the time. What surprised them was not the existence of inequality, but its magnitude. Individuals active in various civil society organisations were already aware of the inequalities prevailing in both opportunities and representation and were engaged in efforts to address them. However, expressing this inequality in numerical terms revealed its scale and made it more visible. Twenty-three years have passed since the publication of that book. During this period, numerous studies and projects have been carried out by individuals, "institutions" and civil society organisations on gender inequality, discrimination, violence against women, discrimination embedded in legislation, and many related issues. Today, considerably more is known about the extent of inequality and the factors that produce it. A greater number of civil society organisations, research centres and individuals are working in this field, and public awareness has increased.

Despite studies, growing awareness, and legal reforms, findings of the existing studies indicates that the gender gap has not narrowed. As was the case 23 years ago, women still do not have effective representation in the legislative and executive branches—that is, in determining and administering the rules of the game and in distributing resources. Their representation in the decision-making mechanisms of economic organisations—such as

chambers of industry, commerce and crafts—is insufficient to influence these bodies’ decisions. In addition to the central executive and economic organisations, women’s representation in local authority decision-making mechanisms also remains below a level that would enable them to shape outcomes. Women do not have equal access to, or representation within, the bodies and mechanisms that regulate daily life, production and distribution, and that plan the future.

With this awareness, TCAUW launched a new project in 2024 titled “Gender gap in access to productive resources and decision-making systems”¹, aiming to examine, through a holistic approach, the current state of gender equality and the changes that have occurred over the past 23 years. This book’s primary objective has been to present the current state of gender equality, changes over time, and the findings of studies conducted to date. It has also sought to ground the analysis of the current situation in a more comprehensive framework by incorporating the distribution of unpaid domestic labour within the family and the diverse experiences of women across groups.

The book consists of two parts. The first part presents an analysis of what is known about the existing gender gap in access to resources and decision-making systems, the distribution of labour income, and the factors that produce this gap. The second part advances and deepens the analysis of the determinants shaping the current situation. It examines how domestic work is divided between women and men and, in doing so, discusses the extent to which women and men enjoy equal conditions. The analysis of the current situation is further elaborated through the experiences of migrant, refugee, disabled and LGBTI+ women in accessing resources and decision-making systems.

In the first part, which constitutes the current situation analysis, women’s access to productive resources and participation in economic decision-making processes were examined using available primary² and secondary³ statistical data disaggregated by gender. The analysis of the factors determining the

¹ Survey data conducted by civil society organisations and the World Bank operating in the northern part of Cyprus

² Survey data conducted by civil society organisations and the World Bank operating in the northern part of Cyprus.

³ Household Labour Force data from the ‘Statistical Institute’ and data obtained from other state “institutions” and organisations.

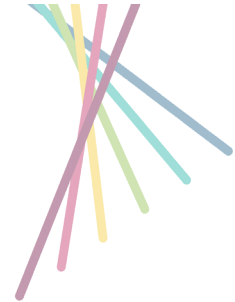
current situation draws on findings from scientific research in this field, as well as field research data from various civil society organisations.

In the second part of the book, primary data obtained from field research conducted within the scope of the Project were used. Data from the Time Use Survey were utilised to analyse the distribution of domestic labour, while data from face-to-face in-depth interviews conducted within the scope of the project and from research reports previously conducted by civil society organisations were used to examine the labour-market experiences of women with multiple vulnerable identities.

This book has been made possible through the direct and indirect contributions of many individuals and civil society organisations. The initiative of the TCAUW Executive Board brought the project to life. Akova Women's Association, Yeni Boğaziçi Women's Association, Mormenekşe Women's Union, MAKAMER, Turkish Cypriot Women's Council Association, Refugee Rights Association, Association for Supporting Life through Women, Queer Cyprus Association, Turkish Cypriot Orthopaedic Disabled Association, Universal Patient Rights Association, Businesswomen's Association, 4K: Rural Development Women's Cooperative, Lefke Women's Initiative, Kyrenia Working Women's Cooperative, Human Rights Platform, EMU Centre for Women's Studies and Education, CSU Women's Studies Research and Application Centre, "Güzelyurt Municipality" and "Lefke Municipality" shared their experiences and oral and written knowledge, enabling the project to become more inclusive. Participants in the Time Use Survey opened their homes and devoted their time, allowing detailed time-use information to be compiled. The survey data were collected with the contributions of Tuncel Soycan, Yelda Çubukcu, Safiye Tüvür, Zehra Sevgüm, Gonca Seval, Pelin Aykut, Rahime Tekdaş and Ezgi Aybala Ateş; Nadia Karimi assisted with coding and data entry, and Mishael David-Nwedu contributed to data entry. Participants in the qualitative research on the Daily Life Practices of Migrant Women devoted part of their limited free time to sharing their experiences, thereby deepening and broadening the research. Many colleagues and friends made valuable contributions to the implementation of the research and the compilation of data. Gözde İnal Cavlan, Nur Köprülü, Zehra Azizbeyli,

Yeřim Özben, Yelda Çubukcu, and Emine Esen contributed voluntarily to the field research, while Umure Örs assisted with data processing, ensuring the project's continuity. Without their contributions, the project—and therefore this book—would have remained incomplete. We also extend our sincere thanks to the Project Assistant, Eda Büyükcayman, whose dedication and meticulous work ensured that all stages of the project were carried out effectively. Feyza Bhatti, the project researcher and co-author of this book, and I consider it a duty to express our gratitude to all these organisations and individuals.

Fatma Güven Lisaniler



CHAPTER 1

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

1.1.Introduction: The global gender gap

Despite ongoing social and economic transformations, gender inequality remains one of the defining features of the contemporary world. Today, many countries provide equal opportunities to women and men, and to girls and boys. Women are now more educated, more active and more visible and active in both public and private spheres.

However, when examining the most important criteria of equality; gender representation in decision-making systems and how income is distributed between men and women, a striking fact emerges: the world is still far from achieving gender equality. At the global level, women are not represented in central or local decision-making systems at a level sufficient to influence decisions. Women make substantial contributions through both paid and unpaid work, yet they receive a significantly smaller share of income. When both market and domestic labour are considered, women work longer hours overall; nevertheless, they earn less, own less property, and are less likely to hold secure employment. In every region, women's share of total labour income lags that of men.

According to the *Global Gender Gap Report*⁴ (2025) published by the World Economic Forum since 2006, the largest gender gap is in political empowerment, followed by economic participation and opportunity. The Global Gender Gap Index is calculated from four sub-indices: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. According to the 2025 data, the gender gap

⁴ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report: Key Findings - Global Gender Gap Report 2025 | World Economic Forum

stands at 78% in political empowerment, 40% in economic participation and opportunity, 5% in educational attainment, and 4% in health and survival. The overall Global Gender Gap Index, calculated as the equally weighted average of these four sub-indices, indicates that the global gap remains at 31%.

Compared with the previous year, the global gap has improved by 0.04 points. However, if progress continues at this pace, it will take an estimated 123 years on average to achieve full equality; meaning that gender equality would only be reached after approximately five generations. When examined by geographical region, the estimated time required to close the gap varies considerably. In one hand, Latin America requires 57 years, Europe 67 years, and North America 89 years. On the other hand, Central Asia requires 208 years, and the Middle East and North Africa 185 years. Of the 10 countries with the smallest gender gaps in 2025, 8 are in Europe. No country has yet fully closed the gap. Iceland ranks first by a significant margin. Although the majority of the countries in the top rankings are economically affluent, the presence of Moldova, Namibia and, comparatively, Ireland demonstrates that

Table 1.1 Top 10 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2025

Rank	Country	Geographic Region	Index Value	Gender Gap %
1	Iceland	Europe	0.926	7%
2	Finland	Europe	0.879	12%
3	Norway	Europe	0.863	14%
4	United Kingdom	Europe	0.838	16%
5	New Zealand	East Asia & Pacific	0.827	17%
6	Sweden	Europe	0.817	18%
7	Republic of Moldova	Europe	0.813	19%
8	Namibia	Sub-Saharan Africa	0.811	19%
9	Germany	Europe	0.803	20%
10	Ireland	Europe	0.801	20%

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2025

achieving gender equality cannot be explained solely by levels of economic prosperity. Exceptions, as ever, challenge the rule.

1.2. Where does the northern part of Cyprus stand in the global gender gap rankings?

When the gender gap is calculated for the northern part of Cyprus, a similar

picture emerges: it is also far from achieving gender equality. In 2022, the gender gap was 32%. Over the years, the gap has decreased slightly; between 2008 and 2022, it fell by 4%, but it remains very high. The largest gaps are in economic participation and opportunity (28%) and political empowerment (91%) (Table 1.2). Among the 146 countries ranked, the northern part of Cyprus ranks 102nd. In its geographic region, closing the gap would require approximately 185 years, or roughly nine generations. These gaps indicate that, despite women being more active, better educated, and more visible, and despite increased awareness of gender equality, the overall gap is not diminishing. The gender gap, that is, gender inequality, remains persistent. Any improvement in the gender gap is slow and decelerating: between 2008 and 2015, the gap decreased by only 3%, and between 2015 and 2022, by just 1%. In the Global Gender Gap rankings, the northern part of Cyprus has consistently appeared between 100th and 103rd place over three-year

Table 1.2 Gender Gap Index for the northern part of Cyprus¹

Sub-Indices Constituting the Gender Gap Index / Years	Index Values by Year			Gender Gap (%) by Indicator		
	2008	2015	2022	2008	2015	2022
Economic Participation & Opportunity	0.664	0.728	0.722	34	27	28
Political Empowerment	0.043	0.050	0.093	96	95	91
Health & Survival	0.931	0.992	0.967	7	1	3
Educational Attainment	0.915	0.930	0.943	9	7	6
Overall Gender Gap Index	0.638	0.675	0.682	36	33	32

Source: Household Labour Force Survey 2008, 2015, 2021; Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–2022; Statistical Yearbooks 2017, 2021, 2023. Note: The indices were calculated by the authors.

Table 1.3. The northern part of Cyprus in the Global Gender Gap Rankings by year

2022		2015		2008	
Rank	Index Score	Rank	Index Score	Rank	Index Score
93	South of Cyprus (0.696)	99	Hungary (0.672)	76	South of Cyprus (0.669)
100	Greece (0.689)	100	southern part of Cyprus (0.671)	97	Mexico (0.644)
101	Azerbaijan (0.687)	101	Japan (0.670)	98	Japan (0.643)
102	China (0.682)	102	Swaziland (0.670)	99	Brunei Darussalam (0.639)
	northern part of Cyprus (0.682)		Cyprus (0.668)	100	Paraguay (0.638)
103	Malaysia (0.681)	103	Belize (0.668)		northern part of Cyprus (0.638)
104	Brunei Darussalam (0.680)	104	Malta (0.668)	101	Kuwait (0.636)
	Total 146 countries		Total 145 countries		Total 128 countries

Source: Global Gender Gap Reports 2008, 2015, 2022

intervals. The south of Cyprus has a slightly higher index score, but the difference is not substantial, ranking between 90th and 100th (Table 1.3).

The sub-indices of the Gender Gap calculate gaps in each area using multiple indicators. Economic Participation and Opportunity use five indicators, Political Empowerment three, Health and Survival two, and Educational Attainment five. Within the Economic Participation and Opportunity sub-index, the largest gap is in the ratio of women to men in managerial positions. The second largest gap is in labour force participation. There is a 26% gap between women and men in managerial roles and a 35% gap in labour force participation (for more detailed data, see Annex Tables E1, E2, E3 & E4). In the Political Empowerment sub-index, the largest gap is in the proportion of women to men heads of state⁶ over the past 50 years, with a 100% gap; in other words, there has never been a female president or prime minister. There is also a large gap in the Cabinet, 90%. In Parliament, the gap has declined to 79% in recent years due to the increase in the number of women members of parliament (for more detailed sub-index data, see Annex Tables E1, E2, E3 & E4).

The following section examines the current state of gender equality in the northern part of Cyprus along two axes: first, how paid work and labour income are distributed between women and men; and second, women's access to and representation in decision-making systems that play an effective role in the use of public resources.

1.3. Gender gap in access to resources in the northern part of Cyprus

In this section, women's and men's labour is taken as the primary production factor. The opportunities and conditions under which women and men access their own labour as a factor of production are examined. Although labour is important as a factor of production that has supply and demand, beyond that it is also a fundamental concept significant to an individual's identity. In the context of gender equality, access to labour is not merely access to an income-generating factor; it is also a determinant of social relations, social structure, and gender equality and hierarchy.

⁵ The sub-index on Economic Participation and Opportunity was calculated for the three years in which the Household Budget Surveys were conducted, taking into account the years for which indicators on income distribution between women and men were available, and ensuring that all indicators correspond to the same year.

⁶ Women/men prime minister ratio in countries without a presidential system

In the northern part of Cyprus, women and men do not have equal opportunities and conditions in the labour market. Women are disadvantaged both in entering the labour market and in their position within the market once included. Their labour force participation and employment rates are lower, and their employment is limited to certain occupations and sectors. Their probability of finding a job is lower, and their unemployment duration is longer. In addition to lacking equal opportunities for employment, they also do not have equal conditions for these opportunities to function effectively. The vast majority of domestic work is carried out by women. Responsibility for maintaining the household and family order, as well as for the care and daily organisation of children and the elderly, rests with women. Women and men do not have equal conditions for self-realisation. Even if equal opportunities are provided to women and men, these opportunities are not functional because they are not under equal conditions.

1.3.1. Gender gap in access to labour: Inequality in opportunities and conditions

In the northern part of Cyprus, gender disaggregated labour force data began to be collected in 2004. Table 1.4 presents the labour force participation, employment, and unemployment rates for 2004 and 2024, which are used to measure the functioning⁷ of the labour market. The key indicators in Table 1.4 show that women do not have access to their own labour as an income-generating productive resource. From 2004 to the present, the production capacity of the economy in the northern part of Cyprus, measured in US dollars, has increased two and a half times in terms of Gross National Product (GNP), while GNP per capita, again in US dollars, has increased one and a half times (SPO, 2023).⁸ In parallel with this growth, total employment for women and men has also doubled. However, there has been only a 2 percentage point improvement in the distribution of paid employment between women and men. In 2004, women accounted for 33% of total employment; by 2024, this figure had risen to 35%. The employment gap declined from 24% to 22%.

⁷ The employment rate indicates the percentage of individuals of working age who are employed. It is assessed together with the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate shows the percentage of economically active individuals, that is, those in the labour force, who are unable to find work. A labour market with high employment and low unemployment rates is considered functional.

⁸ 'SPO', Economic and Social Indicators 1977–2023. Access: [seg-1977.xls](#)

**Table 1.4: Employment, unemployment and labour force participation rates
by gender (2004 and 2024)**

Year	Gender	Employment Rate ¹ % (number of people)	Unemployment Rate ² % (number of people)	Labour Force Participation Rate ³ %	Share of Total Employment ⁴ %	Women–Men Employment Gap ⁵
2004	Women	26.5 (28,826)	14.9 (5,053)	39.2	33	24.0
	Men	50.5 (58,087)	7.4 (5,202)	68.3	67	
2024	Women	40.7 (64,611)	7.8 (5,459)	37.6	35	21.2
	Men	61.9 (120,996)	3.3 (4,093)	64.0	65	

Source: Statistical Office, HLF5 2004–2024⁹.

At this pace, it would take 220 years to close the employment gap.

1.Women's employment rate: the percentage of women of working age who are in paid employment.

2.Women's unemployment rate: the percentage of women in the labour force (those in paid employment plus those seeking work) who are unemployed. 3.Women's labour force participation rate: the percentage of women of working age who are in the labour force (those in paid employment plus those seeking work).

4. Distribution of total employment between women and men; their respective shares of total employment.

5.Employment gap: the difference between women and man employment rates.

1.3.1.1 Labour force participation and employment gap

The labour market in the northern part of Cyprus has been insufficient to include women, that is making half of the working-age population, to the labour force. In 2004, only 39 out of every 100 women of working age were included in the labour force; in 2024, the figure was 37. The corresponding figures for men were 68 and 64, respectively. Employment and unemployment rates indicate the labour market's capacity to generate employment. Both indicators have improved. Employment rates for both women and men have increased, and unemployment rates have declined. There has also been some improvement in the distribution of total employment between women and men. In 2004, women accounted for 33% of total employment and men for 67%; by 2024, women's share had increased to 35%. However, in both years, the women's employment rate remained 24 and 22 percentage points lower

⁹ The Household Labour Force Survey data used here can be accessed via the Statistical Office > CORE STATISTICS > EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

than the male rate, respectively, while the women's unemployment rate was twice that of men (Table 1.4). Despite women's low labour force participation, their unemployment rate being at least twice that of men indicates the existence of a demand constraint on women's labour. The reasons for this constraint are discussed in the following sections.

The data presented in Table 1.5 are important in illustrating the magnitude of this constraint. In addition to the conventional narrow unemployment rate, Table 1.5 presents the distribution working-age population by gender who were neither employed nor unemployed in the reference week during the survey period, as well as the broad unemployment rate. The broad unemployment rate is calculated by including not only those who were unemployed (actively seeking work) during the reference week, but also those who wish to work yet have lost hope of finding a job, have stopped seeking employment but are available to start work. The vast majority of those who have lost hope of finding employment are women. The broad unemployment rate reveals more strikingly the gap between women and men in their likelihood of finding work and makes the constraint on women's labour demand more visible. Women have lower probabilities of being employed and of finding work, and they remain unemployed for longer periods (Güven-Lisaniler, Bhatti, & Emir, 2016). They do not have equal opportunities in the labour market.

**Table 1.5 Unemployment rates and distribution of the potential labour force by gender
(2004, 2014 and 2024)**

Year- Gender	Narrow Unemployment Rate %	Broad Unemployment Rate %	Distribution by Gender of Those Who Have Lost Hope of Finding Work ¹ (%)	Distribution of Those Not Unemployed for Other Reasons ² (%)	Distribution of the Potential Labour Force by Gender ³ (%)
2004 Women	14.9	41.6	73	64	66
Men	7.4	14.8	27	36	34
2014 Women	12.8	35.5	66	73	71
Men	5.8	10.8	34	27	29
2024 Women	7.8	10.4	76	48	58
Men	3.3	4.3	24	52	42

Source: Statistical Office, HLF5 2004–2024.

1. Individuals who do not seek work because they believe no jobs are available in the region, or due to reasons such as seasonal work, engagement in domestic duties, being a student, retirement, or incapacity to work, but who state that they would be available to start work within two weeks.
2. Individuals who are seeking work but cannot start within a short period.
3. The sum of columns three and four. The potential labour force consists of working-age individuals who, in the reference week, were neither employed nor unemployed; it includes those seeking work but unable to start within a short period, as well as those not seeking work, but who wish to work and would be able to start within a short period.

As noted earlier, in the Global Gender Gap Index, the largest gaps between women and men were in labour force participation and in the ratio of women to men employed as managers. The women-to-men ratio in labour force participation is an important basic indicator of the extent to which women and men have equal opportunities to access the labour market. The ratios of women to men employed as managers and in professional, associate professional, and technical occupations are two key indicators of the conditions under which women and men are included into the labour market. It is also one of the factors determining the share of labour income received by women and men. The economic sectors, occupations and employment statuses in which women and men are employed are crucial for understanding employment and income gaps. The following section examines these distributions and ratios.

1.3.1.2. Gender-based segregation in the labour market

employment status: vertical segregation

The employment status of women and men is important for assessing their position on the labour market. Most employed women and men work in salaried or waged employment (Table 1.6). Those working as wage workers or as unpaid family workers have a weaker attachment to the labour market and occupy more precarious positions. Between 2004 and 2024, the proportion of both women and men in these categories declined. Women are predominantly in the status of unpaid family workers, while men are predominantly in wage labour. Most women working as unpaid family workers¹⁰ are engaged in agriculture, whereas men in this status are mainly employed in non-farm family businesses. Over the 20-year period, the number of women working as unpaid family workers per 100 men working as unpaid family workers increased from 226 to 336. In wage worker, the number of women per 100 men also increased. Although the overall share of women and men in more insecure statuses has fallen, women in these categories remain in more precarious positions than men. There has also been progress in the proportion of women working as employers and the number of women employers per 100 male employers. However, a substantial gap between 10 53% of women working as unpaid family workers in 2004 and 88% in 2024 were employed in family enterprises in the agricultural sector. Among men, these rates were 48% and 40%, respectively.

women and men employers persists.¹¹ If the gap continues to close at the current pace, it will take approximately 60 years for there to be 100 women employers for every 100 men employers (Table 1.6 Women/Men ratio).

Table 1.6 Employment status of the employed by gender (2004 and 2024)

	Employer	Own Account Worker	Salaried Worker	Wage Worker	Unpaid Family Worker	Total
2004 Total	5,5	14,8	75,8	9,8	3,9	100
Women	2,6	11,1	72,1	6,1	8,2	100
Men	6,9	16,6	63,1	11,6	1,8	100
Women/Men Ratio	19	33	56	26	226	50*(54)
2021 Total	8,5	9,7	77,2	3,7	1,0	100
Women	6,8	6,4	82,3	2,5	2,2	100
Men	9,4	11,4	74,5	4,3	0,3	100
Women/Men Ratio	39	30	60	31	336	54 (57)

*Number of women per 100 men in employment. Figures in parentheses indicate the number of women per 100 men in the labour force (employed + unemployed).
Source: Statistical Office, HLF5 2004–2021.

Educational attainment and the employment gap

In addition to the employment status, the educational attainment of the employed also determines the amount of labour income. As educational attainment increases, the amount of labour income is expected to rise. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of women and men in employment with lower secondary education or below has decreased, while the proportion with upper secondary education or higher has increased (Table 1.7). The labour market offers more employment opportunities to women and men with upper secondary education or higher.

When comparing women and men in employment by their highest level of education, 75% of employed women have upper secondary education or higher. For men, the proportion with upper secondary education or higher is 57%. The share of employed women with lower secondary education or below has halved. In 2004, 47% of employed women had lower secondary education or below, whereas by 2024 this had fallen to 25%. Among employed men, approximately half (57%) have upper secondary education or higher, and the other half (43%) have lower secondary education or below.

However, in terms of access to education, there was a 9% gender gap in 2008 and a 6% gap in 2022 (Table 1.2). This indicates that the labour market in the northern part of Cyprus does not provide equal opportunities to women and

¹¹ For every 100 men employers, there were 19 women employers in 2004 and 39 in 2024. Compared with 2004, more women now work in an employer status; however, the gap between women and men in employer status remains significant. If the gap continues to close at this pace, it will take another 60 years for there to be 100 women employers for every 100 men employers.

men with lower secondary education, and women with this level of education are underrepresented in the workforce.

Table 1.7 Percentage distribution of the employed by last completed school and gender (2004 and 2019)

Educational Institution Completed	Men		Women		Total	
	2004	2019	2004	2019	2004	2019
Did not finish school	6,7	1,5	19,9	1,1	7,8	1,4
Primary school	31,2	20,5	20,3	13,3	27,6	17,9
Middle school	13,9	20,1	7,1	9,4	11,6	16,3
High school or equivalent	31,7	33,8	28,9	34,4	34,1	34,0
Faculty or college	16,5	24,1	23,8	41,8	18,9	30,4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Statistical Office, HLFS 2004–2019.

Segregation by occupation and economic sectors: horizontal segregation

Gender roles and stereotypes about what women and men can do lead them towards different occupations, sectors, and employment statuses. This resulted in horizontal and vertical gender-based segregation by sectors and occupations. The segregation deepens, and the labour market becomes segmented by gender, with 'men' and 'women' jobs and sectors (Güven-Lisaniler F., 2010). Mobility between these segments is limited. This segmentation imposes constraints on both the demand for and the supply of women and men labour. In the context of gender roles, women, who are seen as responsible for housework and caregiving, are in a more disadvantaged position. The jobs that women 'can do' and the professions and sectors 'suitable' for women are much fewer compared to the jobs that men 'can do' and the 'suitable' professions and sectors for men. For example, in 2004, 80% of employed women worked in the services sector (compared to 65% of men). By 2021, nine out of ten women (91%) were employed in this sector (71% of men) (HLFS 2004, 2021). The services sector is the sector that creates the highest level of employment. Consequently, the majority of both men and women are employed in this sector. However, over the years, it has become the sole employment-generating sector for women (see Table E5 for distribution of women's and men's employment across sectors).

The same assessment applies to occupations. 60% of employed women work in three main occupational groups (for men, this was 40% in 2004 and 50% in

2021) (Table 1.8). In 2004, one in four employed women (25%), and in 2021, one in five (20%), worked in clerical and customer service positions. In both 2004 and 2021, one in five women worked in professional occupations. In 2004, the occupations with the highest concentration of women's employment were clerical and customer services, professional occupations, and elementary occupations (one in seven women worked in each of these groups). As noted in the section examining the educational attainment and the employment gap, the labour market does not generate employment for women with lower secondary education, as evidenced by the declining proportion of women with lower secondary education in employment. In 2004, elementary occupations were the third most common occupational group for women. By 2021, this had been replaced by the service and sales worker group. The demand for female labour in elementary occupations slowed, and the increase in the number of women employed in this occupation (48%) lagged the overall growth in women's employment (52%). This development parallels the findings presented in the Educational attainment and the employment gap section.

Table 1.8 Major occupational groups with the highest women and men employment

Major Occupational Groups – 2004		Major Occupational Groups – 2021	
	Total (%)		Total (%)
1. Craft and related trades workers	15.2	1. Service and sales workers	19.7
2. Professionals	13.1	2. Professionals	15.3
3. Clerical and customer service workers	12.9	3. Craft and related trades workers	14.4
Total	41.2	Total	49.9
	Men		Men
1. Craft and related trades workers	20.9	1. Craft and related trades workers	20.7
2. Legislators, senior officials and managers	13.7	2. Service and sales workers	19.2
3. Elementary occupations workers	11.5	3. Professionals	12.2
Total	45.1	Total	52.1
	Women		Women
1. Clerical and customer service workers	25.8	1. Professionals	21.2
2. Professionals	17.4	2. Clerical and customer service workers	20.0
3. Elementary occupations workers	15.3	3. Service and sales workers	20.6
Total	58.5	Total	61.8

Source: 'Statistical Office', Household Labour Force Survey 2004–2021. Note: Total: Percentage Distribution of the Employed across Major Occupational Groups, 2004–2021

The fact that 90% of women's employment is concentrated in a single economic sector and 60% in three out of nine occupational groups requires looking beyond the characteristics of women's labour, that is, the supply of women's labour, to the demand for women's labour. What is the perception of women's labour? In the field survey commissioned by TCAUW in 2001, perceptions of women working in paid employment were measured.

Perception was assessed through the open-ended question: "What do you think about a women working in a paid employment outside the home?" The responses given condition the woman working in a paid job. The paid job that the woman will work in should be one that does not cause problems within the family, does not disrupt the family order, and does not interfere with the education of the children. In 2022, a field survey¹² titled Entrepreneurship and Women in Employment: Findings and Perceptions, conducted by the KTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, measured perceptions of both women and men labour. Responses to the question of why women's employment rates are only half those of men indicate that the perceptions identified in 2001 persist. Survey participants cited low women labour supply due to domestic responsibilities as the primary reason, and low women labour demand resulting from employers viewing motherhood and marriage as potential obstacles as the secondary reason. Conditional acceptance of women's participation in the workforce has, by 2023, translated into both low supply and low demand for women's labour. The conditions that household responsibilities must not be disrupted and that family order must be maintained have channelled women into certain sectors and occupations, while the same conditional acceptance has limited the demand for women's labour to specific sectors and occupations. In a small economy with limited human resources, such a constraint constitutes a waste of an otherwise scarce resource. Employing only 35% of working-age women results in underutilisation and the waste of women's knowledge, skills, ways of working, and resources. This waste increases if women and men are employed only in occupations deemed appropriate to their gender roles and responsibilities.

The proportions of women and men across major occupational groups demonstrate gender-based segregation (Table 1.9). In 2004, women accounted for 33% of total employment and men for 67%. If there were no gender-based segregation within occupational groups, the female share in each group would be around 33% and the male share around 67%. However, both women and men are overrepresented in certain occupational groups

¹² The study aims to measure the level of awareness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and perceptions of women's labour. The survey was conducted in 602 randomly selected enterprises of small, medium, and large scale, based on the number of employees, using the member databases of the Turkish Cypriot Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Crafts and Trades. The survey was completed by enterprise representatives responsible for hiring (297 women and 305 men). The survey took place between November and December 2022.

relative to their overall employment. For instance, men are overrepresented in the legislators, senior officials, and managers group by 10 percentage points relative to their total representation (67%). In the plant and machine operators' group, men's representation exceeds their total share by 30 percentage points, and in the craft and related trades group by 20 percentage points. Similarly, women are represented twice their overall share in clerical and customer service occupations and 11 percentage points above their total share in professional occupations (66%). Such levels of overrepresentation indicate that occupational groups are segregated into women's and men's occupations.¹³

Seventeen years later, in 2021, this segregation persists. In five of the nine occupational groups, the representation of women or men remains above their overall share (groups highlighted in Table 1.9). Of these, men are overrepresented in three groups and women in two. The fact that this segregation has continued for approximately 20 years indicates that it has evolved into gender-based segmentation. The difference between segmentation and segregation is that segregation persists over time and is accompanied by wage differences between groups. Gender segregation in occupations has continued for two decades in the northern part of Cyprus' labour market. Analysis of data on the distribution of labour income between women and men, presented in the following section, shows that there is an ongoing difference in average monthly wages between women and men working in the same occupational group and employment status. In other words, labour market in the northern part of Cyprus is segmented by gender.

¹³ In 2004 and 2021, of the nine occupational groups, three are considered 'male occupations' and two are 'female occupations'. The remaining four occupational groups are mixed occupations. The definitions of female and male occupations are based on the representation of women within each occupational group. In this study, the overall female representation in 2021 is 35%; occupational groups where female representation exceeds the overall share by 10 percentage points or more (45% and above) are classified as female occupations, while groups where female representation is 10 percentage points or more below the overall share (25% and below) are classified as male occupations. Occupational groups with female representation between 25% and 45% are considered mixed occupations.

Table 1.9 Proportion of women and men in major occupational groups

Major Occupational Groups	2004				2021			
	Total	Men	Women	W/M ratio	Total	Men	Women	W/M ratio
Legislators, senior officials and managers	100.0 Men	78.3	21.7	28	100.0 Mixed	66.4	33.6	50
Professionals	100.0 Women	55.7	44.3	79	100.0 Women	51.7	48.3	93
Associate professionals	100.0 Mixed	70.7	29.3	41	100.0 Mixed	66.3	33.7	51
Clerical and customer service workers	100.0 Women	33.8	66.2	196	100.0 Women	35.3	64.7	183
Service and sales workers	100.0 Mixed	63.2	36.7	58	100.0 Mixed	63.5	36.5	57
Skilled agricultural, forestry, hunting and fishing workers	100.0 Mixed	58.6	41.4	70	100.0 Men	80.3	19.7	24
Craft and related trades workers	100.0 Men	91.7	8.4	9	100.0 Men	93.7	6.3	7
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	100.0 Men	97.0	3.0	3	100.0 Men	91.6	8.4	9
Elementary occupations workers	100.0 Mixed	60.3	39.7	66	100.0 Mixed	57.0	43.0	75
Total Employment	100.0	66.8	33.2	49	100.0	65.1	34.9	53

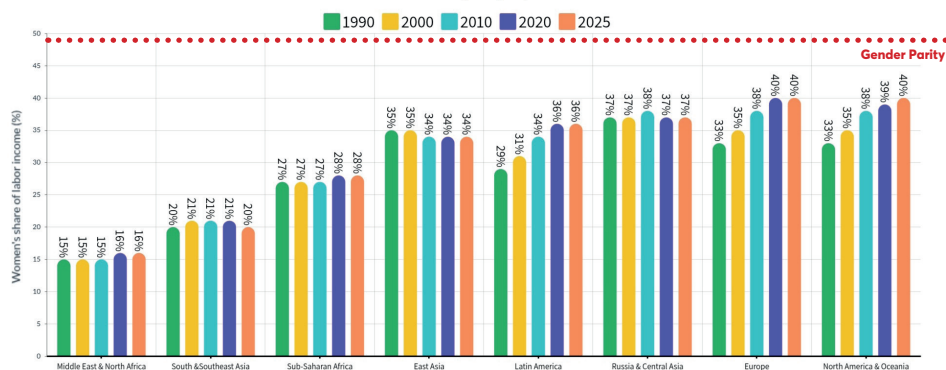
Source: 'Statistical Office', Household Labour Force Survey 2004–2021

1.4. Distribution of labour income

1.4.1. Global labour income gap

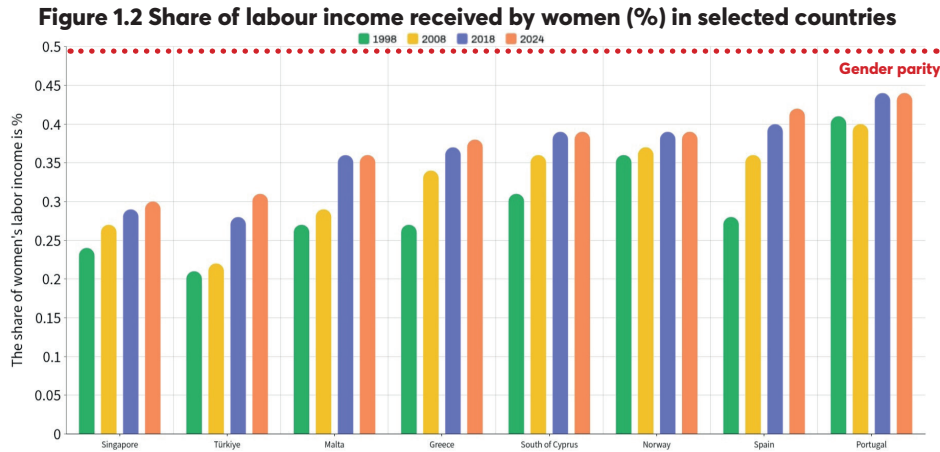
At the global level, women workers earned 28.2% of labour income in 2025 (WIR, 2026). In 1990, their share was 27.8%. Thirty-five years later, it reached 28.2%. Some progress has been made, yet gender equality in the distribution of labour income remains a distant goal across all regions. Figure 1.1 shows the development of women's share of labour income across regions between 1990 and 2025. There are significant differences between regions. For example, in 2025, women workers received approximately 16% of total labour income in the Middle East and North Africa, compared to around 40% in North America & Oceania and Europe.

Figure 1.1 Share of labour income received by women 1990-2025



Source: World Inequality Report 2026

Figure 1.2 shows the trend in women’s share of labour income in selected countries over the years 1998–2024. All countries remain below the gender equality threshold in the distribution of labour income. Both the size of the gap and its development vary by country. Progress in Spain is notable, with women’s share increasing by 14-percentage points. Türkiye and Greece also saw a 10-percentage point improvement. In countries approaching the gender equality threshold, such as Norway and Portugal, progress has been slower. In contrast, in countries with a large gap and far from the threshold, improvements have been faster over time.



1.4.2 Gender gap in main job income in the northern part of Cyprus

Since gender-disaggregated data on total labour income is not available for the northern part of Cyprus, the share of women in labour income is unknown. However, the average annual income from the main job is available. Using this data to calculate the women/men ratio reveals a 20% gap between women’s and men’s average annual main job income. For every 100 lira of average annual income from the main job earned by men, women earn 81 lira (Figures 1.3 & 1.4).

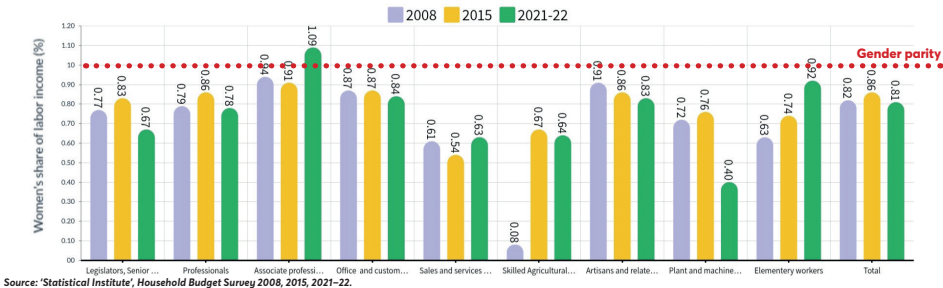
1.4.2.1 Income gap across occupational groups

The income gap also varies across occupational groups (Figure 1.3). In occupations where women are predominantly employed—such as

professional occupations, clerical and customer service, and sales and service workers—the average annual income gap from the main job ranges between 22% and 36%. For example, for every 100 TL earned by a man in a professional occupation, a woman in the same occupation earns 78 TL. The gap is larger in the service and sales group and the clerical and customer service group, where women earn 63 TL and 64 TL, respectively, for every 100 TL earned by men. Although average annual income from the main job has improved in certain occupations, there has been no overall progress in occupations with high female employment or in total. The overall income gap in average annual income from the main job, which was 18% in 2008, increased to 19% in 2022.

As noted in the section examining labour market segregation (1.3.1.2 Gender-based segregation in the labour market), if horizontal and vertical gender-based segregation persists and a gender-based income gap exists, the labour market becomes segmented. This section confirms that a gender income gap exists and has persisted over time without reduction. Gender-based segmentation is evident in the labour market in the northern part of Cyprus. This segmentation restricts the mobility of labour, particularly women's labour, across occupations, leading to increased female employment in certain groups and downward pressure on wages in these occupations. This creates crowding out effect, further reduces women's labour force participation.

Figure 1.3 Female-to-male ratio in average annual main job income by major occupational groups



1.4.2.2 Income gap by employment status

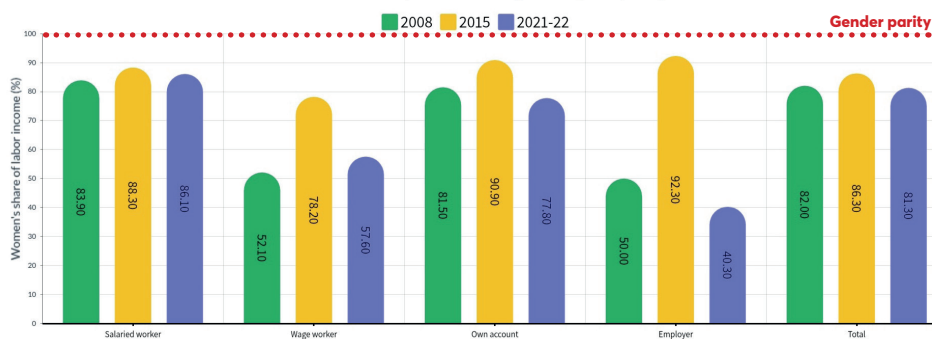
The income gap exists not only between women and men within the same occupational group but also between women and men with the same employment status. In 2022, the smallest income gap between women and men was 14% among salaried employees and 22% among the self-employed.

The largest gap was observed between women and men working as employers (60%) (Figure 1.4). In comparison, 2015 saw significant improvements across all employment statuses relative to 2008, particularly in the gap between women and men employers. However, by 2022, the gap widened again; the income gap between women and men employers rose above the 2008 level (which was 50%). The pandemic contributed to this regression. Studies examining the impact of the pandemic on small businesses indicate that women-owned businesses were more adversely affected, experiencing greater losses in employment, market share, and income. In the northern part of Cyprus, 80% of businesses are small enterprises. Women-owned businesses are generally smaller, younger, and primarily active in the service sector, making them more vulnerable to the pandemic's effects (Esen, 2017) (Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti, 2021).

As noted earlier, there is no difference in educational attainment between employed women and men that could explain these gaps. In fact, a larger proportion of employed women have a high school education or higher than employed men (Table 1.7). The persistence of such gaps within the same occupational group and employment status is considered, in the labour economics literature, as evidence of discrimination and of both vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market. In gender-based vertical segregation, women and men occupy different hierarchical positions in the same job. For example, most head waiters or store sales supervisors are men, as are department heads or branch managers in banks. This vertical segregation creates wage gaps. Gender-based horizontal segregation that is concentration of men and women in different occupations or sectors is also creates wage gap. Some sectors, due to higher productivity, offer higher returns. Consequently, employers or self-employed workers in these sectors have higher average annual incomes. Even within the same occupation, the incomes of women and men concentrated in different sectors diverge due to gender-based horizontal segregation. Nine out of ten women work in the service sector, which has lower productivity compared to other sectors (this ratio is 60% for men) (Table E.5). Women also occupy lower-ranking positions within this sector. Most women-owned businesses are also in this sector. This segregation contributes to the wage gap, and the persistent nature of this segregation and the resulting wage gap over time has led to the segmentation of the labour market.

Figure 1.4 Female-to-male ratio in average annual main job income by employment status

Source: 'Statistical Institute', Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–22.



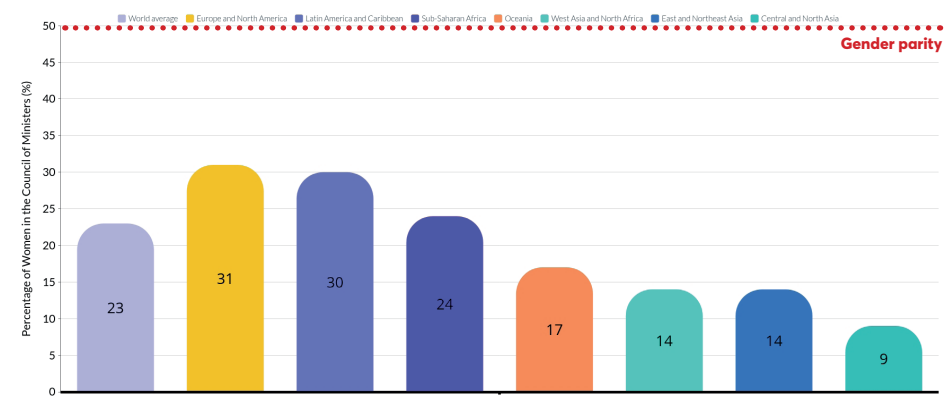
Source: 'Statistical Institute', Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–22.

1.5 Representation gap in decision-making systems

1.5.1 Equal and inclusive representation gap

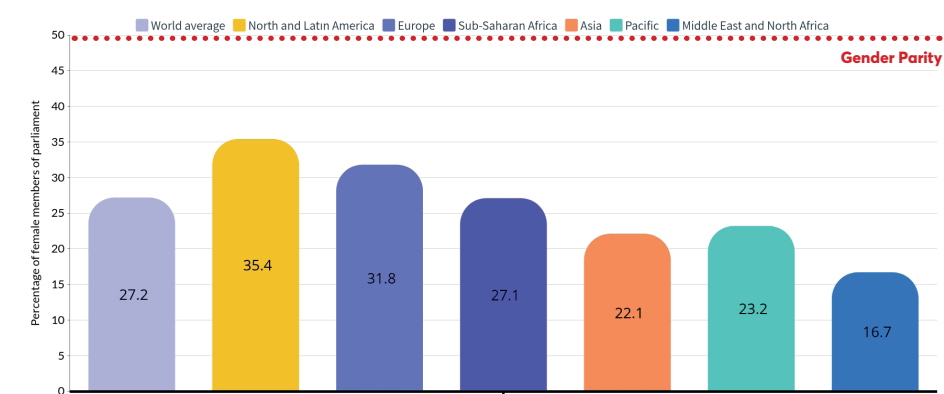
Both globally and in the northern part of Cyprus, women are not represented in decision-making systems on equal terms with men, nor in an equal and inclusive manner. One of the United Nations' monitoring bodies, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, defines the term "equal and inclusive" as 50:50 representation. Such representation is understood to ensure equal access and equal power for women and men in decision-making systems. Today, among 189 countries, only 9 have equal numbers of women and men in their cabinets (Figure 1.5). Of 185 countries, only 6 have an equal or higher number of women in parliament than men. Out of 151 countries, only 11 have a woman head of state (12%), and among 193 countries, only 6 have a woman prime minister (8%) (UN Women, 2025) (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.5 Proportion of women in ministerial positions by region, 2025



Source: UN Women Database. Access: Thematic Area Dashboard | UN Women Data Hub

Figure 1.6 Proportion of women members of parliament by geographic region, 2025



Source: UN Women Database. Access: Thematic Area Dashboard | UN Women Data Hub

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued General Recommendation Decision (CEDAW/C/GC/40) on 23 October 2024, entitled "Equal and Inclusive Participation of Women in Decision-Making Systems."¹⁴ The central rationale of the Decision is that the increasing number of disruptive challenges not only hinders the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women but also transforms societies, and these challenges cannot be effectively addressed if women are not represented equally and inclusively in this transformation. According to the Decision, the complexity of these problems requires equality and inclusion to be placed at the centre of decision-making processes in all areas. Only through progress towards equality at every level

¹⁴ General Recommendation Decision No. 40: Equal and Inclusive Participation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 23 October 2024. Access: CEDAW/C/GC/36

can collective intelligence be built. Collective intelligence, built through more equal and inclusive decision-making systems, can generate the innovative solutions needed to build resilient societies.

The Recommendation Decision emphasises that the definition of "decision-making systems" must encompass decision-making processes across all sectors, including public, private, economic, political, formal, informal and digital spheres. It recommends women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems to States parties as a game-changing solution in:

- ensuring peace and political stability,
- building sustainable, inclusive and human rights-based economies,
- reducing the risks of climate change and environmental disasters,
- developing and implementing artificial intelligence and other technological advancements that are transforming global society through an ethical, human rights-based and accessible approach.

Two further points are underlined in the Recommendation: the need to address multiple domains of decision-making and their interactions, and the necessity of removing all barriers that prevent women's equal access to decision-making systems. Chief among these barriers are patriarchal structures. Patriarchy is defined as an institutionalised regime, permeating all societies, designed to systematically oppress women and maintain dominance over them. As part of the solution, the Recommendation Decision calls for patriarchy to be legally recognised as a crime and for full accountability to be ensured for gender-based offences.

In this context, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which prepared the Recommendation Decision, identifies seven core principles underpinning the roadmap to secure women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems:

1. Recognition of 50:50 equality between women and men as a starting point and universal norm;
2. Effective youth leadership, conditional upon equality;
3. The intersectional and inclusive participation of women in all their diversity within decision-making systems;

4. A comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach to decision-making systems;
5. Equal power and influence for women within decision-making systems;
6. Structural transformation for equal and inclusive decision-making;
7. Representation of civil society within decision-making systems (UN Women, 2024, p. 4).

1.5.2 Equal representation gap in decision-making systems in the northern part of Cyprus

1.5.2.1 Access and representation gap in the legislature and executive

In the northern part of Cyprus, women’s access to and representation within decision-making systems remains far below the gender equality threshold (50:50). Except for the 2018 (18%) and 2022 (22%) elections, women’s representation as members of parliament has remained below 10% (Table 1.10). Of the 35 “governments” formed after 1974, two cabinets included no women ministers. From the 13th “government” —when the first woman minister was appointed—until the 29th “government” , there was only one woman minister. Only during the 2018–2019 four-party coalition period did the 29th “governments” cabinet include two women ministers (Information Box 1). There are currently no women ministers in the present “government” . Women’s access to and representation (and thus power) within the legislative and executive branches are not equal to those of men.

Table 1.10 Number of women members of parliament in the northern part of Cyprus over the years

Elections Years	Number of women members of parliament	Proportion of women members of parliament (%)
1985	0	0
1990	2	4
1993	3	6
1998	4	8
2003	3	6
2005	3	6
2010	3	6
2013	4	8
2018	9	18
2022	11	22

Source: ‘Supreme Election Council’ Website, Elections section. Access: ‘Parliamentary Elections – Supreme Election Council’

Box 1.1 Women 'Ministers', 1974–2025

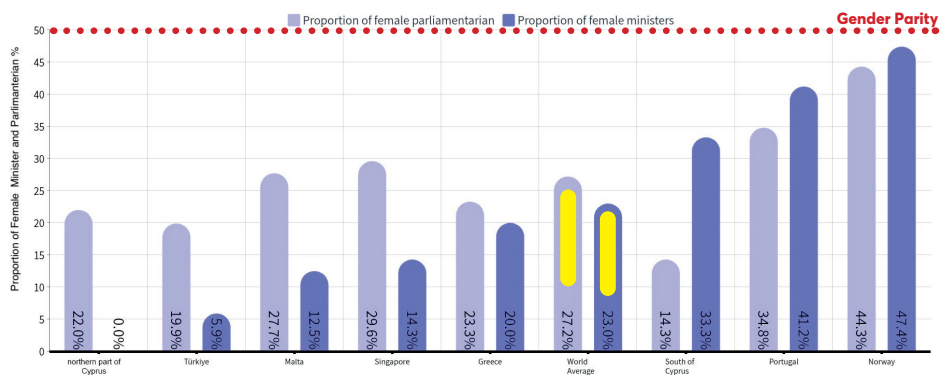
- During the periods of the "Turkish Cypriot Administration" and the "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" (1974–1983), there were no women ministers.
- In the "governments" formed between 1983 and 1996, there were no women ministers or prime ministers also.
- First woman "Prime Minister": Sibel Siber (18th "government" after 1983) – Interim election "government".
- 1996, 15th "government" formed by the Turkish Cypriot community (9th after 1983): first woman "minister" – Onur Borman, "Minister of Labour and Housing" (1996–1998).
- 1998, 16th "Government" (10th after 1983): Gülsen Bozkurt, "Minister of Health and Environment" (1998–2001).
- 2004, 18th "Government" (12nd after 1983): Ayşe Dönmezer, "Minister of Economy and Tourism" (2004–2005).
- 2005, 20th "Government" (14th after 1983): Canan Öztoprak, "Minister of Education and Culture" (2005–2006).
- 2006, 21st "Government" (15th after 1983): Canan Öztoprak, "Minister of Education and Culture" (2006–2009).
- 2011, 24th "Government" (18th after 1983): Şerife Ünverdi, "Minister of Labour and Social Security" (2011–2013).
- 2013, 25th "Government" (19th after 1983) – Interim election "government": Gülsün Yücel, "Minister of the Interior" (June–August 2013).
- 2015, 27th "Government" (21st after 1983): Emine Çolak, "Minister of Foreign Affairs" (2015–2016).
- 2018, 29th "Government" (23rd after 1983): Ayşegül Baybars, "Minister of the Interior Affairs" (2018–2019), and Filiz Besim, "Minister of Health" (2018–2019).
- 2019, 30th "Government" (24th after 1983): Ayşegül Baybars, "Minister of the Interior" (2019–2020).
- 2021, 31st "Government" (25th after 1983): Resmiye Eroğlu Canaltay, "Minister of Public Works and Transport" (2021).
- 2021, 32nd "Government" (26th after 1983): Resmiye Eroğlu Canaltay, "Minister of Public Works and Transport" (2021–2022).
- 2022, 35th "Government" (29th after 1983): İzlem Gürçağ, "Minister of Health" (2022–2023).
- 2022, 35th "Government" (current government): no women ministers.

Source: Internet search. Compiled by the authors.

The northern part of Cyprus ranks near the bottom globally in terms of the proportion of both women members of parliament and women ministers. In the ranking of the proportion of women members of parliament, it ranks 111th out of 185 countries, together with Georgia and Laos. In the ranking of the proportion of women ministers, it ranks last among 188 countries, alongside nine others ¹⁵ (UN Women, 2025). In terms of the proportion of women members of parliament, the last two elections brought the northern part of Cyprus close to the world average (27.2%) (Figure 1.6). However, regarding the proportion of women ministers, the issue is not merely a representation gap but a complete chasm.

¹⁵ Azerbaijan, Hungary, Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Figure 1.7 Proportion of women as 'ministers' and 'members of parliament' in selected countries, 2025



Source: IPU Parline Global Data on National Parliaments. Accessed via IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliaments & UN Women database.

1.5.2.2. Access and representation gap in local “governments” and economic organisations

Representation in local “governments”

Local and regional administrations, as the layer of governance closest to individuals, offer an effective framework for preventing inequalities and promoting social equity. These administrative units can take concrete steps towards gender equality through their existing authority and collaborations with various stakeholders.

One of the primary objectives of local “governments” is to make cities and villages liveable for the people who live there. “local administrations” (especially “municipalities” and “village headships”) are responsible for addressing and meeting the common needs of all individuals in their areas. Adopting a gender-sensitive approach when identifying these needs begins with recognising that women and men have different needs and requirements. This enables differentiated urban service expectations for women and men to be met. Municipalities also transform the social and physical environment through the services they provide and the regulations they implement. Decision-making processes regarding which services will be provided and what types of regulations will be introduced must be equitable and inclusive.

Without equal access and representation of women and men in local “government” decision-making bodies, it becomes difficult to identify and address the differentiated needs of women in the area. Moreover, women cannot participate in or contribute to societal transformation. Ensuring equal access and representation not only makes women active participants in this transformation but also incorporates their life experiences, skills, and creativity into the process. Women assume a contributing role, gain empowerment, and become integral to the transformation.

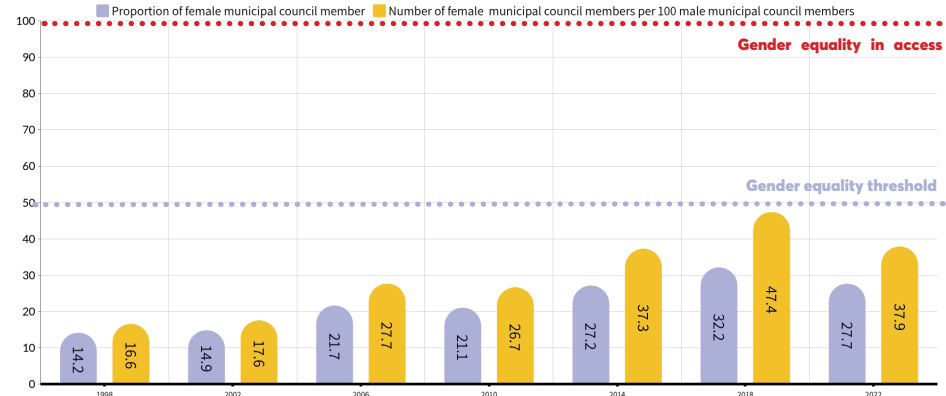
The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, prepared and opened for signature by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in 2006, aims to achieve this. Since its opening for signature, 1,850 municipalities from 36 European countries, and 62 municipalities in Türkiye, have signed the Charter..

The Charter has six fundamental principles;

1. Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right.
2. To ensure the equality of women and men, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage must be addressed.
3. The balanced participation and representation of women and men in decision-making is a precondition of a democratic society.
4. The elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving equality of women and men.
5. The integration of the gender perspective into all local and regional “government” activity is indispensable to advancing equality of women and men.
6. Properly conceived and funded action plans and programmes are essential tools in advancing equality of women and men.

From this perspective, in the northern part of Cyprus, women do not have equal representation, access, or effective participation in local “government” decision-making mechanisms. Today, women are represented in municipal councils at only 27%. For every 100 men who can access municipal councils, 38 women can do so (Figure 1.7). Out of 17 male mayors, there is only one female mayor. Women’s access to decision-making mechanisms—where decisions that directly affect their daily lives and the spaces they inhabit are produced—is limited, and their representation is low. Women’s life

Figure 1.8. Representation in Municipal Councils, 1998–2025

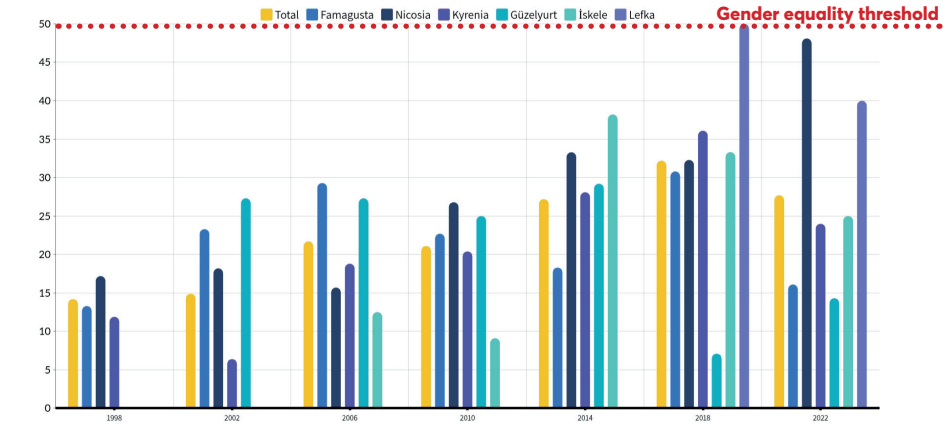


Source: 'Supreme Election Board' Website. Election Results.

experiences, skills, and creativity cannot be incorporated into the local transformation process.

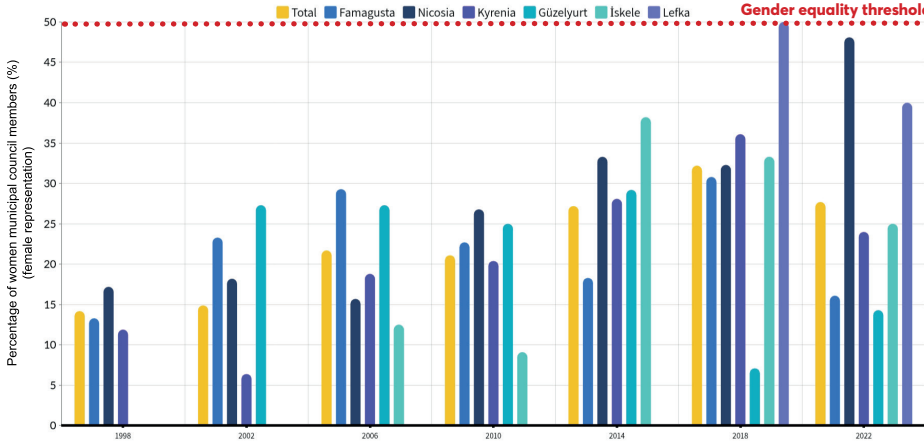
However, over the years, women's representation and access have increased. Compared to 1998, by 2022, women's representation and access had doubled.

Figure 1.8. Women's representation in municipal councils by administrative region and year, 1998–2025



Source: 'Supreme Election Board' Website. Election Results.

Figure 1.9. Women’s access to municipal council membership by administrative regions and years (female/male member ratio), 1998–2025



Source: 'Supreme Election Board' Website. Election Results.

In some municipalities (Lefke and Nicosia), significant progress has been made towards gender equality (Figures 1.8 & 1.9).

Representation in the management of economic organisations

Women’s representation in leadership positions within the business world remains a key issue globally. Worldwide, women occupy only 20% of corporate board positions. Countries are implementing regulations to increase female leadership in business. For example, in 2011, the European Union (EU) issued a directive mandating that by 2026, at least 40% of corporate board members must be women. In 2010, the proportion of women on boards in the EU was 18%, rising to 34% by 2024. In some EU countries, the increase in women’s representation has been faster (reaching 45% in France and Norway), while in others (for example, Germany at 37.5%) it has been slower; however, no EU country has yet achieved gender equality on corporate boards. In other regions of the world, only a few countries have achieved equality in corporate board composition (Lara & Baird, 2025, pp. 14–17). Even in countries where gender equality has been established on corporate boards, women’s equality in senior executive positions has not yet been achieved (Table 1.11).

Table 1.11 Women's representation in leadership positions in business, 2024

Countries with the Highest Representation				Countries with the Lowest Representation			
Rank	Top 10 Countries	Percentage of Women in Senior Management (%)	Percentage of Women Members on Corporate Boards (%)	Rank	Bottom 10 Countries	Percentage of Women in Senior Management (%)	Percentage of Women Members on Corporate Boards (%)
1	Finland	44.7	57.4	62	Algeria	19.3	28
2	Philippines	43.6	51.8	63	Qatar	19.1	23
3	Jamaica	41.8	56.3	64	Jordan	18.1	30
4	Barbados	40.6	54.4	65	India	17.6	27
5	Trinidad & Tobago	39.8	51.6	66	Egypt	17.2	22
6	Latvia	38.5	54.5	67	Nepal	17.2	26
7	Romania	38.1	50.9	68	Bangladesh	11.8	16
8	Bahamas	37.1	50.7	69	Pakistan	11.6	19
9	Colombia	36.4	46.9	70	Saudi Arabia	11.5	18.4
10	Croatia	35.5	47.9	71	Maldives	10.2	22

Source: Lara & Baird (2025), *The State of Women in Leadership: Global Employment Trends*, LinkedIn Economic Graph Research Institute. Accessed via: [the-state-of-women-in-leadership.pdf](#).

Findings from research on women's leadership in business indicate that boards with higher female representation tend to make more balanced decisions, particularly in reconciling short-term profitability with long-term objectives (Bertay, Aytekin, & Avşar, 2025). Eliminating this inequality and breaking the glass ceiling that prevents women's leadership in business is a precondition not only for gender equality but also for social dynamics, economic growth, and, especially, environmental sustainability. Breaking the glass ceiling requires cooperation among businesses, "governments", and society to remove the systematic barriers to women's leadership. Incorporating women's skills, resources, creativity, and ways of doing business into senior management in the corporate world can unlock untapped societal and economic potential and enhance innovation and resilience amid changing challenges.

For the northern part of Cyprus, data on women's representation on corporate boards and in senior executive positions are not available. Therefore, no comparison with other countries could be made. However, for the purposes of this study, the percentages of women's representation on the boards of three professional chambers were compiled (Table 1.12). While representation on the boards of professional chambers does not, of course, directly reflect women's representation on corporate boards or in senior executive positions, it provides an indication. The low level of women's representation on these boards is striking. The highest representation is on the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry, at 15%. Women's representation

is similarly low in the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce Assembly, at 13%. Among the presidents of the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Craftsmen and Artisans (13 chambers in total), only one is a woman.

Table 1.12 Women's representation on boards of directors, January 2025

Chambers	Number of Board Members			Percentage of Women %
	T	M	W	
Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry	13	11	2	15.4
Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce	10	9	1	10.0
Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Craftsmen and Artisans	14	14	0	0.0
Total	37	34	3	8.1

Source: Compiled by the authors from the official websites of the Chambers.

Data on the proportion of member businesses of the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry and Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce that are women-owned were not accessible. According to the Household Labour Force Survey data, 38.5% of employers are women (HLFS, 2021). This suggests that at least 30–35% of the members of these Chambers are women. However, their representation on Chambers' boards of directors is 8%. There are no women members on the board of the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Craftsmen and Artisans. In addition to the Chambers, women's representation in senior management positions in the public sector is also low. Although half of public-sector employees are women, only 33% of senior managerial positions are held by women (PSCPC, 2023).

Such a level of representation, particularly within the bodies responsible for shaping the Chambers' vision and developing strategies to implement that vision, overlooks women's skills, resources, creativity, and ways of doing business.

The underrepresentation of women in managerial positions across "governments", parliament, municipalities, public administration, and the business world, and their exclusion from decision-making systems, is further complicated by other structural inequalities. Women's underrepresentation in decision-making systems is not independent of structural inequalities such as the gender pay gap, the employment gap, and the disproportionate distribution of unpaid domestic work and care responsibilities between women and men. Efforts to address women's underrepresentation in decision-making systems must adopt a holistic approach that accounts for other structural inequalities.



CHAPTER 2

SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF WOMEN'S LABOUR

2.1. Introduction

There has been no improvement over the years in women's labour force participation. Two-thirds of women in working age population remain outside the labour force; the knowledge, skills, different ways of working, and resources they possess remain unused. Still, women account for only one-third of total employment, and only one-third have access to their own earned labour income. Unemployment rates are at least twice as high as those of men, and the number of women in employer positions still lags far behind that of men. Women's average annual main job income is 20% lower than men's. There are differences of up to 40% in average main job income between women and men working in the same occupational group and with the same job status.

This section presents findings that help make sense of this unequal situation between women and men in the labour market. Although the decision to participate in the labour force is often treated as an individual choice to supply one's labour to the market or not, it cannot be considered independently of labour demand. The labour market refers to the setting in which those who supply labour and those who demand labour meet and, if they reach an agreement, work together under certain conditions and rules to produce goods or services. For this reason, the labour force participation rate results not only from supply-side determinants but also from demand-side determinants. Market conditions and the nature of the labour demand shape the labour supply. Accordingly, this section examines women's low labour force participation not only in terms of supply- and demand-side determinants, but also by accounting for market conditions and the nature of the labour demand.

2.2. Supply- and demand-side determinants of women's labour force participation

One of the primary factors determining an individual's decision to participate in the labour market is the wage level. In addition, an individual's educational attainment, work experience, labour market conditions, and if the individual is a woman, perceptions regarding women's employment are supply and demand-side determinants influencing the decision to participate or not in the labour market..

An individual's education, work experience, age, the profitability of the enterprise in which they are employed, the productivity level of the sector in which the enterprise operates, the annual inflation rate, and taxes are variables that determine wage levels. The research estimating the public-private sector wage gap, using 2006 Household Labour Force Survey microdata, finds that the wage functions of women and men—that is, the determinants of wages—differ (Uğural & Güven-Lisaniler, 2009). The findings identify age, educational attainment, and work experience as significant determinants of both women's and men's wages. There is a linear relationship between educational attainment, work experience, and wages: increasing experience and education raise wages. Between the ages of 16 and 65, wages increase with age; beyond 65, wages decline with age.

In addition to these variables, region of residence is significant in the female wage function, while marital status is significant in the male wage function. Residing in Nicosia increases women's wages, whereas for men, there is no significant relationship between region of residence and wages. Being married was estimated to increase men's wages, but no significant relationship was found between marital status and women's wage level (Uğural & Güven-Lisaniler, 2009). The significant relationship between region of residence and women's wage level may be explained by women's more limited mobility between regions compared to men, due to domestic responsibilities, care duties, and more restricted access to personal transport. Studies using microdata from 2004 and 2011 on the determinants of labour force participation similarly found a significant relationship between region of residence and participation. Residing in Güzelyurt and İskele reduces

women's likelihood of participating in the labour force. Both findings point to women limited inter-regional mobility (Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti, 2004–2005; Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti & Emir, 2015). The significant relationship between marital status and men's wages may be explained by the fact that men utilise tax exemptions for those with children.

In addition to differences in wage determinants, data from the 2021–2022 Household Budget Survey indicate a labour income gap between women and men. There is a 20% gap in average annual main job income, and a 21% gap in average annual main job income between similar occupations (Table E1.1). In the service and sales occupations and clerical occupations—where 20% of women are employed—this gap reaches 36–37% (Table E1.10). The gap between women's and men's main job income, along with differences in wage determinants, increases the importance of wages in women's decision to participate in the labour force, but makes them less responsive to small changes in wages.

For individuals with higher educational attainment, the opportunity cost of not participating in the labour force is higher. Therefore, as educational attainment increases, labour force participation rates rise for both women and men. An increase in women's educational attainment raises their likelihood of participating in the labour force. According to findings from a 2001 study, being a secondary school graduate increases the likelihood of participation by 30%, a high school graduate by 40%, and a university graduate by 70%. According to findings from a 2004 study, women with a high school education are 1.7 times more likely to participate in the labour force than women with a primary school education. For university graduates, the likelihood of participation is 12.5 times higher. However, being a lower secondary school graduate reduces the likelihood of participation. Data from 2011 show that this relationship became even stronger. Among married women, the relationship is much more pronounced: completing high school increases the likelihood of participation by threefold, and completing university increases it by fifteenfold (Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti, & Emir, 2015).

A university degree protects women from unemployment, long-term unemployment, and becoming a discouraged worker. Considering that the

return to labour (wage) is positively correlated with education and skill levels, rising education increases income/wages beyond women's labour supply cost, thereby increasing their likelihood of participation in the labour force. The fact that lower secondary education reduces the likelihood of participation in the labour force indicates that the income earned at this level falls below the women's labour supply cost. The limited employment opportunities offered by the public sector, the largest employer in northern part of Cyprus, to women with lower secondary education also contribute to this outcome.

This linear relationship between educational attainment and labour force participation is stronger among women. However, a low probability of finding employment—that is, high unemployment rates and prolonged periods of unemployment—can lead individuals to lose hope of finding work, to cease actively seeking employment, and to remain outside the labour force. Women's unemployment rates are higher, and their durations of unemployment are longer (Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti, & Emir, 2016). Accordingly, the vast majority of discouraged workers; those who have lost hope of finding work (76%, HLFS 2024) are women.

Similarly, labour market conditions may also lead individuals to either participate in the labour force or remain outside it. Working hours, the number of working days per week, the presence of irregular overtime, the working environment, and leave entitlements constitute key labour market conditions. Although these factors are also relevant for men, wage levels and labour market conditions are more decisive in women's decisions to participate in the labour force. Due to gender roles, women's decision to participate in the labour force is more sensitive to labour market conditions. This is because women have a second job as a result of the gender-based social division of labour: carrying out domestic work, maintaining family organisation, and providing care. In the northern part of Cyprus, despite all economic and social developments since 2004, only one-third of working age women participate in the labour force; this can be explained in these terms. In the northern part of Cyprus, working hours are not compatible with school hours, and the timetables of private public transport services providing access from areas outside the centres are not compatible with either private or public sector working hours. There are no accessible childcare facilities,

after-school study services, or elderly and patient care services. For this reason, the labour force participation decisions of married women, women with young children, women with more children, and women with disabled or elderly family members in need of care are particularly sensitive to labour market conditions.

Women's "second job" also increases their labour supply cost. The labour supply cost refers to the minimum wage level an individual is willing to accept to supply their labour—that is, to participate in the labour market. When a woman enters paid employment, some of the domestic work and services she previously provided unpaid must instead be regularly obtained from the market at market prices. In other words, there is a cost associated with women's decision to participate in the labour force. The lack of accessible public care and transport services increases the women's labour supply cost. Women's participation in the labour force is possible only if the income or wage generated by their labour supply exceeds the costs incurred by working. If earnings are equal to or below these costs, women remain outside the labour force. For this reason, women's labour force participation is lower and concentrated within certain age groups and specific occupations and sectors.

Findings from econometric studies¹⁶ on the determinants of women's labour force participation estimate the supply-side determinants as educational attainment, age, marital status, and region of residence. Demand-side determinants are identified as the number of children, whether there is a child under age 4, citizenship status, and the spouse's income. Demand-side determinants reflect the type of labour demanded under prevailing market conditions. Based on these findings, if market conditions continue in their current form and the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work and care responsibilities between women and men persists, women's employment rates will remain low, unemployment rates will remain high, and the majority will continue to remain outside the labour market (Güven-Lisaniler & Bhatti, 2004–2005; Güven-Lisaniler, Bhatti, & Emir, 2015; Güven-Lisaniler, Bhatti, & Emir, 2016).

¹⁶ The 2001 study used microdata from a field survey of 840 participants conducted as part of the project "Employment and Education Profile of Turkish Cypriot Women" by TCAUW. Studies conducted in 2015 and 2016 used microdata from the Household Labour Force Surveys for the years 2004, 2011, and 2023.

The findings indicate that the gender based unequal distribution of domestic work and particularly care responsibilities, reduces women's likelihood of participating in the labour force, while increasing the probability of being unemployed, remaining unemployed for longer periods, and losing hope of finding job (Box 2.1 & Box 2.2 & Box 2.3).

Having a child under the age of 4, or an increase in the number of children in the household—that is, an increase in the number of individuals requiring care—reduces women's likelihood of participating in the labour force. An increase in household income also raises the likelihood that a woman will remain unemployed. Being married increases the likelihood that a woman become a discouraged worker. In other words, despite wanting to work, she is more likely to remain outside the labour force because she has lost hope of securing a job (Box 2.1).

Region of residence is also among the factors determining women's labour force participation. Studies conducted in 2001 and 2011 found that women residing in the districts of Güzelyurt and İskele were less likely to participate in the labour force than those residing in the districts of Kyrenia, Nicosia, and Famagusta. The relative distance of these two districts from areas where service provision and goods production are concentrated, the limited availability and scheduling of transport services, and women's comparatively more restricted access to private transport reduce the likelihood of labour force participation in these regions. In 2023, residing in the administrative regions of Güzelyurt and İskele was again associated with a lower probability of participation, although the relationship was not statistically significant (Box 2.2).

The determinants of unemployment and long-term unemployment also point to the rising cost of women's labour supply resulting from the unequal distribution of domestic work and care responsibilities between women and men (Box 2.2). Another determinant of unemployment is occupational segregation in the labour market. Women working in occupations where women are concentrated face a higher probability of unemployment. The

concentration of women in certain sectors and occupations increases labour supply in those fields, thereby raising the likelihood of unemployment. At the same time, excess labour supply in certain occupations depresses wages and

Box 2.1 Determinants of women's labour force participation (2001, 2004, 2011, 2023)

2001 Using primary education or below as the reference category, higher educational attainment increases the probability of labour force participation. Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation. Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, age increases the probability of participation at younger ages but decreases it at older ages. Using residence in Nicosia, Famagusta, and Kyrenia as the reference, living in Güzelyurt or İskele reduces the probability of labour force participation. Using single, divorced, and widowed as the reference, being married is a factor that reduces the probability of participation, although it is not statistically significant. The number of children was not included in the model; therefore, its effect is unknown.	2004 Using primary education or below as the reference, having a secondary or higher education increases the probability of labour force participation, whereas completing only middle school decreases it. Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation. Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, age increases the probability of participation at younger ages but decreases it at older ages. Region of residence is not a significant determinant. Using never-married women as the reference, being divorced or widowed doubles the probability of labour force participation compared to never-married women. Being married is not a significant determinant. Citizenship increases the probability of labour force participation. An increase in spousal income reduces the probability of labour force participation. As the number of children increases, the probability of labour force participation decreases.
2011 Using primary education or below as the reference, having a secondary or higher education increases the probability of labour force participation. Using never-married women as the reference, being divorced or widowed increases the probability of labour force participation. Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation, increasing participation at younger ages and decreasing it at older ages. Citizenship increases the probability of labour force participation. Using residence in Nicosia, Famagusta, and Kyrenia as the reference, living in Güzelyurt or İskele reduces the probability of labour force participation. Having a child under the age of four reduces the probability of labour force participation.	2023 Using primary education or below as the reference, having a secondary or higher education increases the probability of labour force participation. Using never-married women as the reference, being divorced or widowed increases the probability of labour force participation. Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation, increasing participation at younger ages and decreasing it at older ages. Citizenship could not be included in the model because the microdata did not contain information on citizenship. No significant relationship was found between region of residence and labour force participation. Having a child under the age of four was not included in the model.

Source: Güven-Lisaniler, F. & Bhatti, 2005; Güven-Lisaniler, F., Bhatti, F. & Emir, F., 2015; Bhatti, F. & Güven-Lisaniler, F., 2025.

Box 2.2 Determinants of unemployment and long-term unemployment (2011)

Determinants of Unemployment	
Women	Men
• Number of employed persons: As the number of employed household members increases, the probability of becoming unemployed decreases. • Total household income: An increase raises the probability of becoming unemployed. • Citizenship: Being a citizen reduces the probability of becoming unemployed. • Marital status: Using never-married women as the reference, no statistically significant relationship is found between being married, divorced or widowed and the probability of becoming unemployed. • Education: Using primary education or below as the reference, being a high school or university graduate reduces the probability of becoming unemployed. • Age: Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, the probability of becoming unemployed decreases as age increases. • Region of residence: Using residence in Kyrenia as the reference, residing in Güzeyurt increases the probability of becoming unemployed. • Occupational segregation: Working in occupations where women are overrepresented (i.e. occupations in which their representation exceeds their overall share in total employment by 15 per cent) increases the probability of becoming unemployed.	• No statistically significant relationship was found with the number of employed persons in the household. • An increase in total household income reduces the probability of becoming unemployed. • Being a citizen increases the probability of becoming unemployed. • Being married reduces the probability of becoming unemployed. • Being a high school graduate reduces the probability of becoming unemployed. • As age increases, the probability of becoming unemployed decreases. • Residing outside the Kyrenia region increases the probability of becoming unemployed. • Working in occupations overrepresented by women or men increases the probability of becoming unemployed.
Determinants of the Duration of Unemployment	
Women	Men
• Citizenship: No statistically significant relationship was found between being a migrant and the probability of long-term unemployment. • Marital status: Using never-married individuals as the reference, being divorced or widowed reduces the probability of long-term unemployment. • Education: Using primary education or below as the reference, being a lower secondary school graduate increases the probability of long-term unemployment, while having upper secondary education or above reduces it. • Age: Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, the probability of long-term unemployment increases as age increases. • Region of residence: Residing in the Nicosia region reduces the probability of long-term unemployment. • Number of children: No statistically significant relationship was found between the number of children and the probability of long-term unemployment. • No statistically significant relationship was found between long-term unemployment and the number of employed persons in the household, household income, and occupational segregation, which are among the determinants of unemployment.	• Not being a citizen reduces the probability of long-term unemployment. • Using never-married individuals as the reference, being married or divorced/widowed reduces the probability of long-term unemployment. • No statistically significant relationship was found between education level and the probability of long-term unemployment. • As age increases, the probability of long-term unemployment increases. • No statistically significant relationship was found between region of residence and the probability of long-term unemployment. • An increase in the number of children reduces the probability of long-term unemployment. • No statistically significant relationship was found between long-term unemployment and the number of employed persons in the household, household income, and occupational segregation, which are among the determinants of unemployment.

Source: Günen-Lisaniler, F., Bhatti, F. & Emir, F., 2016.

Box 2.3 Determinants of Women Losing Hope of Finding Employment (2011)

- As the number of children increases, the probability that a woman loses hope of finding a job decreases.
- The probability that a married woman loses hope of finding a job is 2.6 times higher than that of a single woman.
- A university graduate woman has a much lower probability of losing hope of finding a job compared to a woman with only primary education.
- As a woman gets older, the probability of losing hope of finding a job increases.

Source: Güven-Lisaniler, F., Bhatti, F. & Emir, F., 2016.

Box 2.4 Estimated determinants of married women's labour force participation decision (2004, 2011, 2023)

2004	2011
• Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation. Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, age increases the probability of participation at younger ages but reduces it at older ages. • Using primary education or below as the reference, having upper secondary education or above increases the probability of labour force participation. • With citizenship as the reference category, not being a citizen reduces the probability of labour force participation. • As the number of children increases, the probability of labour force participation decreases. Having a child under the age of four was not found to be statistically significant. • As spousal income increases, the probability of labour force participation decreases.	• Age shows an inverted U-shaped relationship with labour force participation. Using the 15–24 age group as the reference, age increases the probability of participation at younger ages but reduces it at older ages. Compared to 2004, it is a weaker determinant. • Using primary education or below as the reference, having upper secondary education or above increases the probability of labour force participation. • Using citizenship as the reference, not being a citizen reduces the probability of labour force participation. Compared to 2004, it is a less influential determinant. • Having at least one child under the age of four reduces the probability of labour force participation. The number of children was not found to be statistically significant. • As spousal income increases, the probability of labour force participation decreases. Compared to 2004, it is a stronger determinant.
2023	
• Compared to the reference group of 15–24-year-olds, women over 55 have a lower probability of labour force participation. No significant relationship was found for the 25–54 age groups. • Using primary education or below as the reference, having a university degree increases the probability of labour force participation. No significant relationship was found for upper secondary or lower secondary education. • Citizenship could not be included in the model as the microdata did not contain information on citizenship. • No significant relationship was found between the area of residence and labour force participation. • Having at least one child under the age of four reduces the probability of labour force participation. • Spousal income could not be included in the model.	

Source: Güven-Lisaniler, F. & Bhatti, 2005; Güven-Lisaniler, F., Bhatti, F. & Emir, F., 2015; Bhatti, F. & Güven-Lisaniler, F., 2025.

crowd out women, further reducing women's participation in the labour force.

In addition to the findings from scientific research, the field survey¹⁷ conducted by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (TCCC) Women Entrepreneurs Council—aimed at measuring awareness of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and perceptions of women's labour—also indicates that market conditions and gender roles are decisive in women's low labour force participation.

¹⁷ The Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (TCCC) Women Entrepreneurs Council's survey, titled "Women in Entrepreneurship and Employment: Findings and Perceptions", aims to measure awareness of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and perceptions of women's labour. The survey was conducted across 602 randomly selected small, medium, and large-scale enterprises, using the membership databases of the Turkish Cypriot Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Tradesmen and Craftsman. The survey was answered by company representatives responsible for recruitment (297 women and 305 men). Data collection took place between November and December 2022.

Participants were asked: "In your opinion, what are the two main reasons why women's employment rate is only half that of men?"

The primary reasons identified were:

- The insufficient provision of supportive services for family and/or childcare (%51; women participants 54%, men participants 49%) and
- Working hours (%19; women 18%, men 19%)

The second most important reasons were:

- The perception of motherhood and marriage as obstacles by institutions (%49; women 54%, men 46%) and
- Working hours (%15; women 19%, men 13%)

The respondents making these observations were managers responsible for recruitment in their organisations. Their findings show that the barriers to women's labour force participation—market conditions, the unequal distribution of domestic work between men and women, gender roles, and the inadequacy of public services—continued to determine women's participation in 2022, just as they did in 2001, 2004, and 2011.

2.3 Labour market under the shadow of gender roles and stereotypes regarding what women and men can do

2.3.1 Demand constraint on women's labour

The perception of women working is a phenomenon that affects women's labour supply. If society does not view women's paid work outside the home positively, this perception can negatively influence a woman's decision to participate in the labour force. She may choose not to offer her labour. In the northern part of Cyprus, as previously noted, there is conditional acceptance of women working: it is positively regarded only as long as it does not cause problems within the family, disrupt the household, or negatively affect the child's education. Consequently, women's labour allocated to occupations and sectors that enable women to meet these responsibilities. This is one of the reasons of the gender based occupational and sectoral segregation. However, the perceptions of women's working also act as a demand constraint, limiting the demand for female labour in certain occupations and employment statuses, thereby increasing gender based occupational and sectoral segregation. .

The women's labour demand constraint is reflected in the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) data on labour force participation and unemployment rates. While women's labour force participation remains low (40.8%, 2024 HLFS), the female unemployment rate (7.8%) is more than twice that of men (3.3%). This indicates that the issue is not a lack of female labour supply but a demand constraint on women's labour. In other words, if women were choosing not to participate in the labour force (not supplying their labour), the proportion of actively job-seeking (unemployed) women should also be low. Yet, for every 100 unemployed men, there are 133 unemployed women, whereas for every 100 men in the labour force, there are only 56 women. This demonstrates the presence of a demand constraint on women labour.

The labour market literature identifies the determinants of women's labour demand constraints as gender-based discrimination in opportunities and conditions, gender-based horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, and legal regulations. The Current Situation Analysis¹⁸ section detailed how women and men do not have equal opportunities and conditions to access the labour market, and how the labour market is segregated by gender. Findings from the TCCC Women Entrepreneurs Council survey show that gender roles, the responsibilities these roles entail, and stereotypes about what women and men can or cannot do constitute a constraint (barrier) on women's labour demand. Below are the survey findings on women's labour demand constraints.

2.3.2 Awareness of women's disadvantaged position in access to the labour market

The awareness level of business managers, who generate labour demand in the labour market, regarding women's disadvantaged position in the workforce constitutes half of the effort needed to improve women's representation and position in employment. In this context, participants were asked about the status of women's labour force participation compared to the world average. More than half of the participants (56.6%; female participants, 65.5%; male participants, 52.8%) stated that the northern part of Cyprus ranks below the world average. In other words, more than half of the managers responsible

18 Gender Gap in Access to Labour: Inequalities in Opportunities and Conditions, and Gender-Based Horizontal and Vertical Segregation Sections.

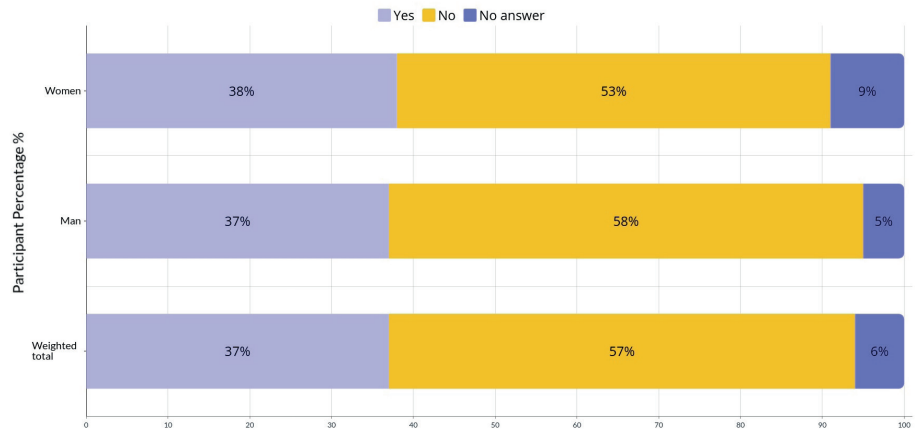
for hiring (half of the male managers, and two-thirds of the female managers) are aware of the underrepresentation of women in the labour market. Considering that these participants are decision-makers in recruitment, the high level of awareness among female participants is significant. However, it should be noted that the proportion of women in senior management positions is 33% (HLFS, 2021). The remaining 67% are men (HLFS, 2021), and about half of them (47%; TCCC, 2022) are unaware of this issue. Similarly, a notable proportion of both female and male participants, approximately one-quarter, are unaware, thinking that the northern part of Cyprus has women's labour force participation above the world average or among the best countries.

Following the awareness question on women's underrepresentation in the labour force, participants were asked for their observations and experiences after being presented with findings from scientific research. The responses not only indicated the depth of awareness but also helped cross-check the overall level of awareness. Through the following prompts, participants were asked about the gender pay gap and barriers women face in leadership:

- Do you think there is wage inequality between women and men in the private sector with comparable professional experience and competence in our country?
- Do you think there are barriers for women in leadership and managerial roles in general?

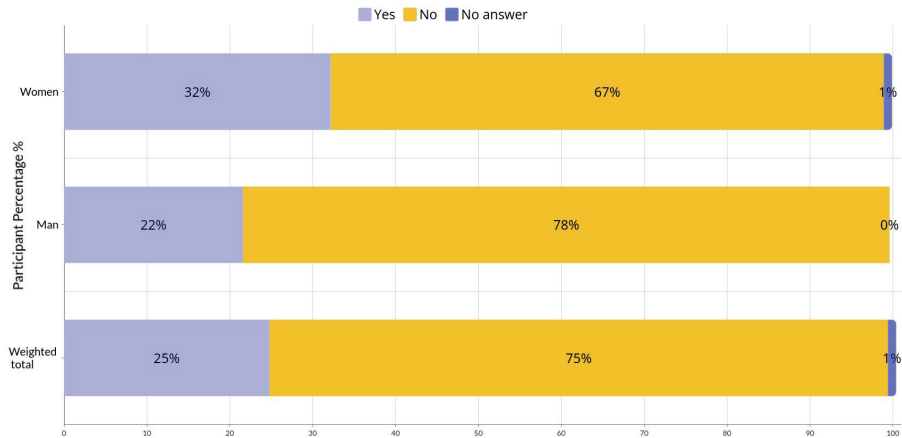
The responses indicated that participants have awareness beyond general perceptions about women's disadvantaged position in the workforce and their underrepresentation in decision-making systems. About two-fifths of the participants (37%) reported being aware of the wage gap between women and men with comparable professional experience and competence (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Do you think there is wage inequality in our country between women and men in the private sector with comparable professional experience and competence?



Source: KTTU Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.¹⁹

Figure 2.2 Do you think there are barriers for women in leadership and managerial roles in general



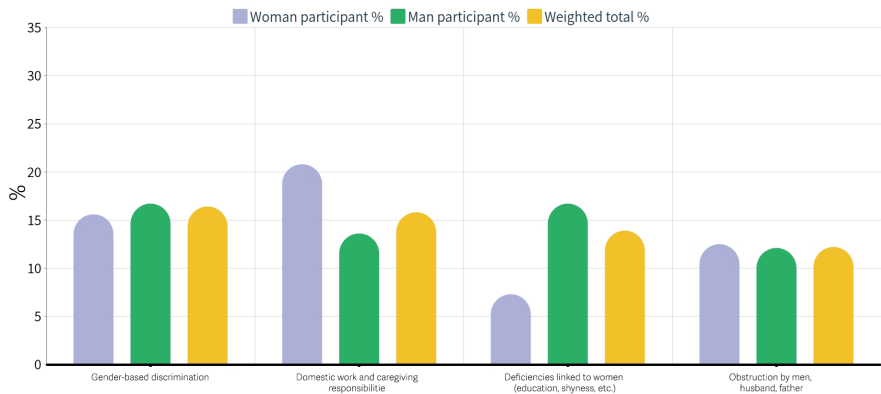
Source: KTTU Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Similarly, one quarter of participants (25%) indicated that there are barriers to women taking on leadership and managerial roles (Figure 2.2). This proportion is higher among female participants.

2.3.3. Perceptions of women's and men's knowledge, qualifications, and skills

Participants who indicated that there are barriers to women taking on leadership and managerial roles identified these barriers as: the burden of domestic work and caregiving responsibilities on women (20.8%), gender-based discrimination (15.6%), obstruction by men in the family (husband, father) (12.5%), and deficiencies linked to women's gendered traits (education, shyness, etc.) (7.3%) (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 What do you consider to be the main barriers to women taking on leadership and managerial roles in general?



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern Cyprus, 2022.

Participants were then asked what they considered to be the two main reasons why women's employment rate is only half that of men. The two factors highlighted as the primary reason were:

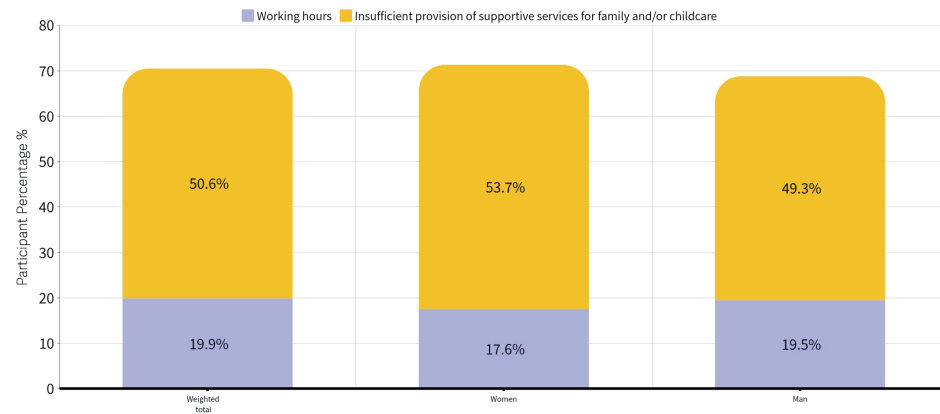
- The insufficient provision of supportive services for family and/or childcare, and
- Working hours (Figure 2.4). Working hours emerged as both the top primary reason and the second-highest reason overall, which is why it is specifically highlighted here.

The two factors highlighted as the secondary reason were:

- The perception of motherhood and marriage as obstacles by firms, and
- Working hours (Figure 2.5).

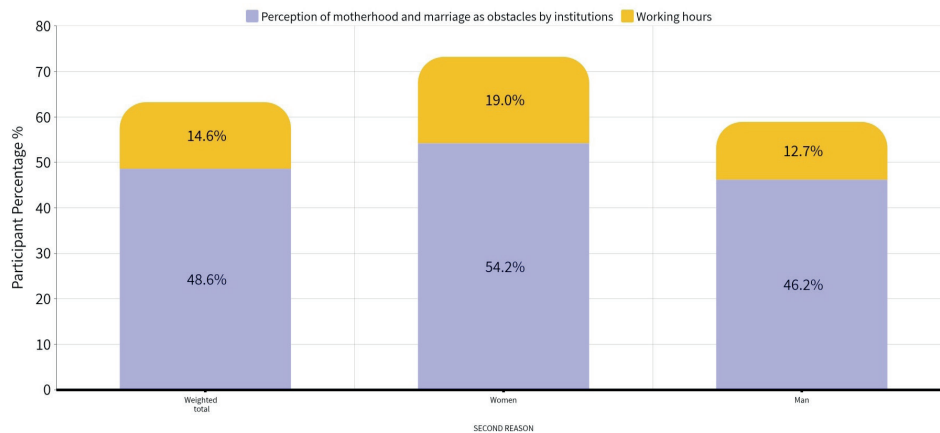
Both sets of reasons emphasise the domestic and caregiving responsibilities predominantly placed on women. In particular, the burden of caregiving creates a disadvantage for women in recruitment, generating inequality of opportunity in access to employment. The focus on working hours points to the conflict between women's first and second jobs. The fact that these observations were made by managers responsible for hiring indicates that this scheduling conflict acts as a barrier (constraint) to women's labour demand.

Figure 2.4 In your opinion, what are the two main reasons why women's employment rate is only half that of men? First reason.



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

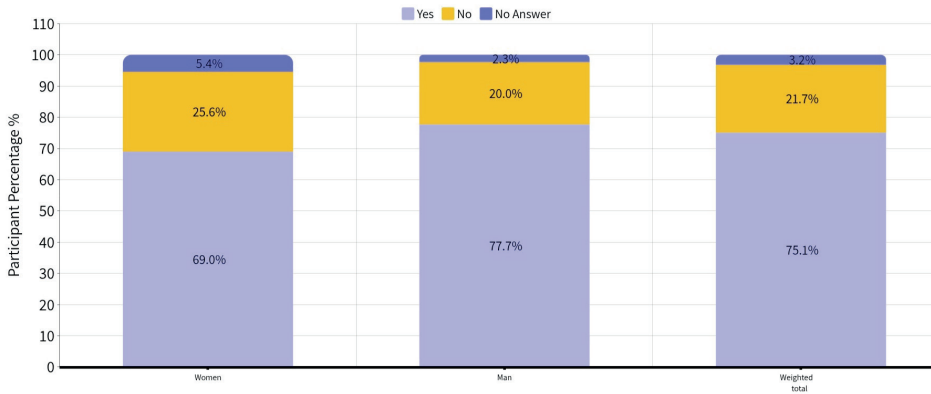
Figure 2.5 What do you think are the two main reasons why the employment rate of women is half that of men? Second reason.



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Participants were then asked to compare female and male employees in terms of education and development opportunities. A large majority stated that there is no discrimination in terms of education and development and that female and male employees have equal opportunities (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 Do you think that female and male employees in our country have similar and/or equal education and development opportunities?



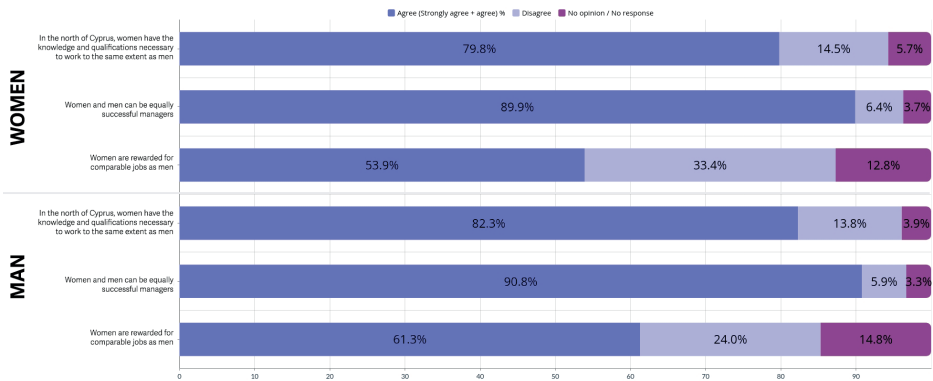
Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

To measure perceptions regarding the knowledge, skills, and managerial abilities of women and men, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statements presented in Figure 2.7. Almost all participants perceived that women and men do not differ in terms of knowledge, skills, and qualifications, and that they are equally successful in management. Women and men are rewarded similarly for comparable jobs, and neither is channelled into specific jobs. Although the proportion of participants who agreed with the statement that women and men are rewarded for comparable jobs is not as high as for the other statements, half of the female participants and slightly more than half of the male participants still agreed with this statement.

In summary, the labour market offers women and men equal opportunities for education and development and does not differentiate between "women's jobs" and "men's jobs". The perception of women's labour is that women possess the same level of knowledge, qualifications, and skills as men and that they can be equally successful managers. In that case, let us return to the participants' assessments regarding why women's employment is only half that of men's. Women's labour force participation (that is, the supply of

labour) is low; therefore, their access to employment (women's employment rate) and their representation (their share of total employment) are also low. However, low labour force participation, a lower employment rate, and a lower likelihood of finding a job compared to men are not due to a lack of knowledge, skills, or qualifications. Their underrepresentation in decision-making systems is also not due to a lack of skills or qualifications. Rather, it stems from the perception created by the unequal conditions arising from the fact that the vast majority of domestic work and care services required for the continuation of society and the reproduction and maintenance of the labour force are carried out by women. Survey participants, consisting of managers responsible for recruitment in businesses, identify the insufficient provision of family care services, the lack of alignment of working hours with the family–work axis, and, as a result, the perception of motherhood and marriage as obstacles in the eyes of institutions as the main causes. In other words, motherhood/marriage creates a demand constraint on women's labour.

Figure 2.7 Perceptions regarding the knowledge, skills and qualifications of women and men



Source: KTT0 Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

2.3.4 Perceptions of women working in paid employment and the demand for women's labour

Perceptions regarding women and men working in paid employment are still strongly shaped by family ideology. The man is primarily responsible for bringing bread to the table and providing for the household; therefore, he is expected to either work in paid employment or establish his own business.

The woman's primary duty, on the other hand, is to build and maintain the home. That is, to marry, give birth to children, maintain the household order, and meet the needs of the children, the spouse and elderly family members. If the spouse's income is insufficient to meet the family's needs, women may contribute to the family income by working in jobs that do not disrupt the family order. Women may contribute to the household income through paid employment, self-employment or by establishing their own business, as long as this work does not disrupt family order, cause problems within the family, or negatively affect the child's education.

Table 2.1 Perceptions regarding women working in paid employment (2001)

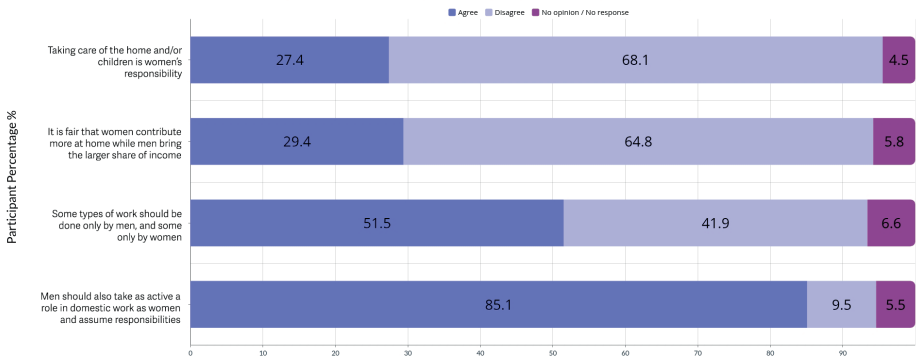
Statements	Percentage of Women Agreeing with the Statement (%)	Percentage of Men Agreeing with the Statement (%)
Women should not work in paid employment	11.2	19.9
For a stable family life, women should not work in paid employment	28.0	39.5
Women's employment causes problems within the family	34.0	37.9
Women's employment negatively affects children's education	48.7	50.6

Source: Güven-Lisaniler, F. *Assessing the Status of Women: A Step Towards Equality*, 2003, Nicosia, Ateş Printing office, TCAUW.

In the field research conducted in 2001 within the scope of the project titled Employment and Education Profile of the Turkish Cypriot Woman, carried out by the Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women, participants' perceptions regarding women working in paid employment were measured through the four questions presented in 2.1. While approximately 10% of women and about 20% of men do not consider it appropriate for women to work in paid employment, the proportion of those opposing women's paid employment to maintain a regular family life, avoid family conflicts, and ensure that children's education is not negatively affected increased gradually to reach 50%. In other words, at that time, both women and men conditionally accepted women working in paid employment. The condition was: "I consider it appropriate for a woman to work in paid employment outside the home as long as it preserves family order, does not cause problems within the family, and especially does not negatively affect the child's education."

Over the quarter-century since 2001, there has been no significant improvement in women's workforce participation or in their share of employment and the labour force (Table 1.4 Employment, unemployment and labour force participation rates by gender). During this period, has there been any change in perceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men? This question is partially addressed by participants' responses to the statements shared in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8 Perceptions regarding women's/men's roles: to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Source: KTTU Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

At first glance, participants appear to adopt a fairly egalitarian approach to how unpaid domestic work is shared between men and women, who is responsible for household tasks and childcare, and who serves as the primary income earner. Only 10% of participants disagreed with the statement that men should be as active and responsible as women in household chores. However, half of the participants agreed with the statement that certain tasks should be performed exclusively by men or by women. In other words, half of the participants approved of men taking a more active role and assuming responsibility for the unpaid domestic work that men are capable of performing. In addition, about one-third of participants agreed with the statements "Taking care of the home and/or children is women's responsibility" and "It is fair that women contribute more at home while men bring the larger share of income" (29% and 27%, respectively). When these four statements are read together, it is evident that society's conditional acceptance of women working persists. Compared to the conditional acceptance in 2001, attitudes are somewhat more egalitarian, yet the conditional acceptance persists.

As noted, in the 2001 study, both women and men expressed conditional acceptance of women working (Table 2.1). Similarly, in 2022, this conditional acceptance continues to be expressed by both women and men (Table 2.2). Two out of five women (three out of five men) agreed that certain types of work should be done exclusively by women or by men; one in five women (two in five men) agreed that the primary breadwinner should be men; and one in five women agreed that caring for the home and children is primarily a woman's duty.

Table 2.2 Attitudes on gender roles

Statements on Attitudes	Agree (%)		Disagree (%)		No opinion / No answer (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
In unpaid domestic work outside the workplace, men should be as active and take on responsibilities as women	84	86	12	7	4	7
Some types of work should be done only by men, and some only by women	59	44	36	48	6	8
It is fair that women contribute more at home while men bring the larger share of income	36	22	59	71	5	7
Taking care of the home and/or children is women's responsibility	35	19	62	75	3	6

Source: KTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Attitudes toward gender roles continue to shape women's labour supply and demand. Women's labour supply is directed toward jobs that can accommodate these conditions, leaving women's labour supply and demand very limited in certain sectors and occupations. As a result, the labour market remains horizontally and vertically segregated. Research on gender-based occupational segregation (Beton-Kalmaz & Güven-Lisaniler, 2019) finds that this segregation persists and has increased over the years. Women concentrate on "women's work," while men concentrate on "men's work" (Table 1.8). This reduces labour market efficiency, increases unemployment—especially female unemployment—and particularly extends women's periods of unemployment (Güven-Lisaniler, Bhatti, & Emir, 2016) (Box 2.2). In the economy as a whole, a surplus of labour supply arises in some jobs, while a labour shortage emerges in others. This segregation represents a significant constraint on women's labour demand because jobs classified as "women's work" are limited in number.

To give an idea of how the statement “Some types of work should be done only by men, and some only by women,” which half of the participants agreed with, shapes women’s labour demand, participants were asked which jobs and workplaces/sectors women cannot perform. About two-fifths of participants (42–43%) indicated that women “can do any job/occupation, and can work in any workplace and sector,” expressing that such segregation does not exist (Table 2.3, first and second columns). When asked specifically about the types of work women can perform, the proportion saying “can do any job” dropped by ten percentage points (34.8%). Additionally, the jobs listed as possible for women largely reflected traditional roles and responsibilities attributed to women. These jobs were relatively routine, indoor work. Beyond women’s labour supply being directed to certain jobs and sectors due to the conditional acceptance of women working, gender-based stereotypes about which jobs and sectors women and men can or cannot perform create further constraints on women’s labour. Low female labour force participation is therefore a result of gendered women’s labour supply and demand.

Table 2.3 Which jobs can women do? Which can they not do?

Jobs/Occupations women cannot do	Workplaces/Sectors women cannot work in	Jobs/Occupations women can do
1. Can do any job/occupation (43.3%)	1. Can work in any workplace/sector (42.1%)	1. Can do any job (34.8%)
2. Construction/Plumbing (21.4%)	2. Construction/Site (29.3%)	2. Office / Desk / Secretarial (12.9%)
3. Heavy / Physically demanding / Load carrying (20.8%)	3. Physically demanding sectors (6.4%)	3. Management/Business Administration (8.3%)
4. Machinist/Bodywork/Tires (3.4%)	4. Motor Vehicle Repair (3%)	4. Sales/Marketing/Cashier (6.2%)
5. Certain occupations (pilot/butcher/carpenter, etc.) (2.9%)	5. Night work/Club/Bar (2.3%)	5. Banking/Accounting/Real Estate (5.8%)
6. Transport/Distribution (1.6%)	6. Industry (2.2%)	6. Beauty sector/Hairdresser (4.5%)
7. Mechanical/Technical work (1.3%)	7. Garden/Outdoor (2.2%)	7. Teacher (3.7%)
8. Industrial work (1.2%)	8. Electricity/Assembly (1.7%)	8. Health/Doctor/Nurse (2.6%)
9. Mining/Iron (0.8%)	9. Mine/Quarry (1.6%)	9. Domestic work/ Cleaning/Motherhood (2.3%)

Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

2.3.5 Gender analysis of qualifications sought in recruitment

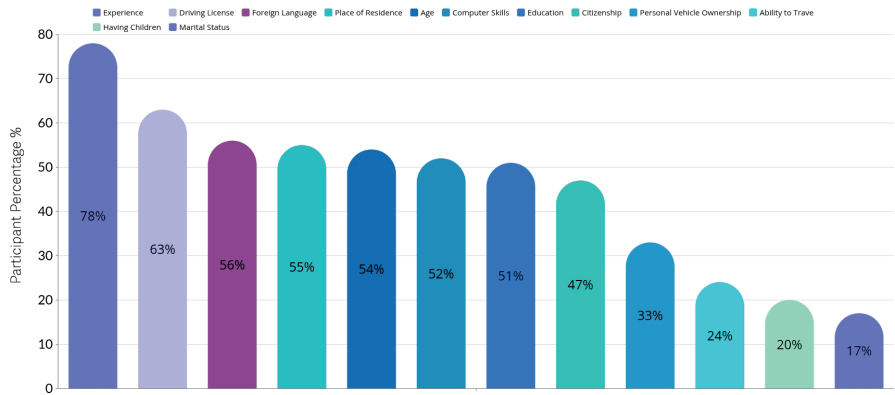
Participants were presented with the qualifications shown in Figures 2.9 and 2.10 and asked about the extent to which these criteria are determinants in recruitment, and whether there are any criteria that are determinants only for women or only for men. The business representatives interviewed were decision-makers in recruitment. Therefore, their responses are important

for understanding the interaction between gender-based occupational segregation in the labour market, stereotypes about women and men, and social gender roles.

Figure 2.9 shows the percentage of participants who consider the given criteria to be determinants for both women and men candidates. Figure 2.10, on the other hand, shows the percentage of participants who consider these criteria to be determinants only for female or only for male candidates. Approximately 80% of participants stated that work experience is an important determinant for both women and men candidates. Work experience is followed by knowledge of foreign languages and possession of a driving licence. With the exception of marital status, having children, ability to travel, and ownership of a personal vehicle, the remaining criteria were identified by approximately half of the participants as determinants considered in the recruitment process.

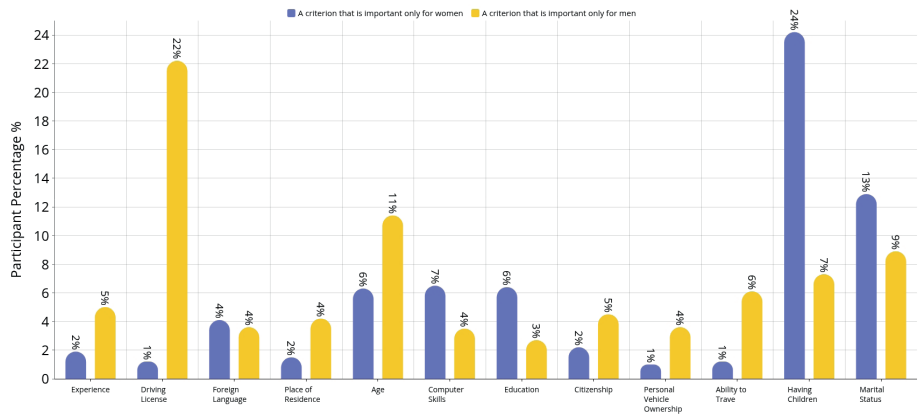
The fact that only 17% of participants consider marital status and childbearing in hiring supports the perception that women and men have equal opportunities in recruitment. However, analysis of the distribution in Figure 2.10 shows that gender stereotypes and roles continue to influence hiring decisions. Criteria deemed "important only for women" reflect the requirements of jobs traditionally defined as women's work (e.g., foreign languages, education, computer skills), indicating gender-based occupational segregation. Moreover, childbearing remains a determining factor in hiring women. In conclusion, society's conditional acceptance of women's employment observed in 2001 persisted into 2022. Employers pay more attention to a female candidate's marital status, particularly whether she has children, compared to male candidates.

Figure 2.9 Percentages of participants indicating that the above criteria are important for both female and male candidates in recruitment.²⁰



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Figure 2.10 Percentages of participants indicating that the above criteria are important only for female or only for male candidates in recruitment.



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

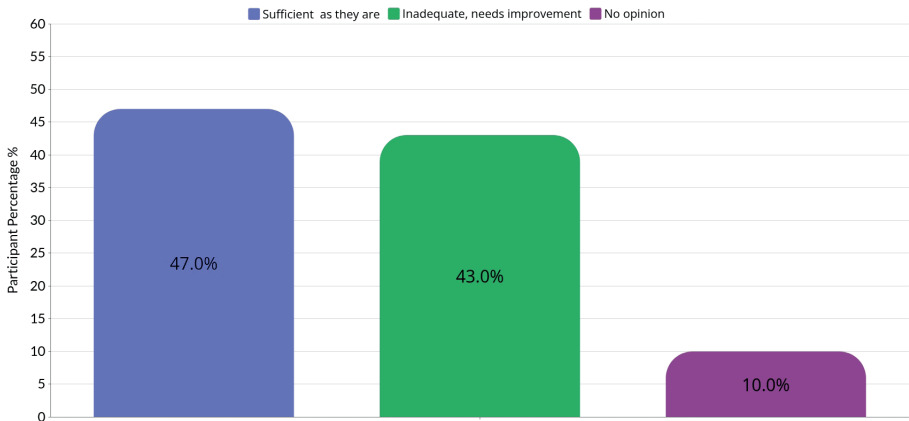
2.3.6 Legal regulation: Women's labour demand under the constraint of maternity and breastfeeding leave

It is important to understand how the constraint on women's labour demand interacts with legal regulations. Social and economic policies and regulations designed and implemented without a gender analysis can yield different outcomes in terms of men's and women's access to and position in the labour market. They can either increase or decrease demand for female or male labour.

²⁰ The percentages in Figures 2.9 and 2.10 present the percentage distribution of responses from participants who stated that the criteria are important in recruitment. Participants who indicated that the criteria are not important in recruitment were not included.

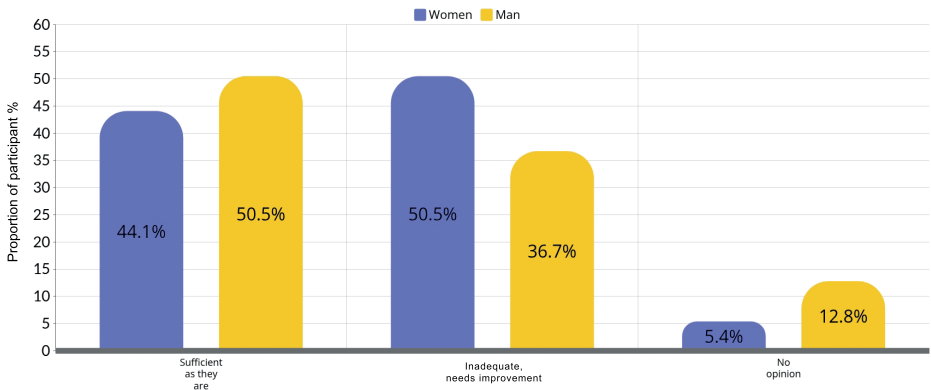
Participants were asked whether they considered the leave entitlements under the Labour Law for female employees (pregnancy, maternity, breastfeeding leave, and similar rights) to be adequate. About half of the participants considered them sufficient, while 40% deemed them inadequate and in need of improvement (Figure 2.11). The proportion of participants who found them inadequate was higher among women (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.11 Findings regarding the adequacy of leave entitlements under the Labour Law for female employees



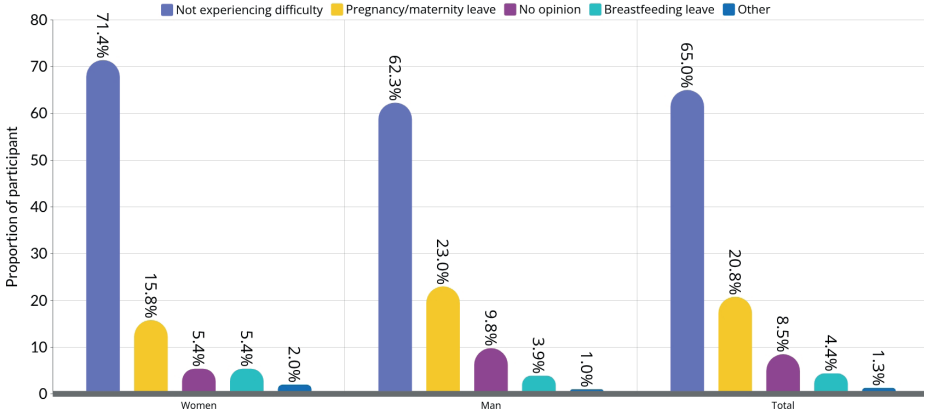
Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Figure 2.12 Distribution by gender of findings regarding the adequacy of leave entitlements under the Labour Law for female employees



Source: KTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

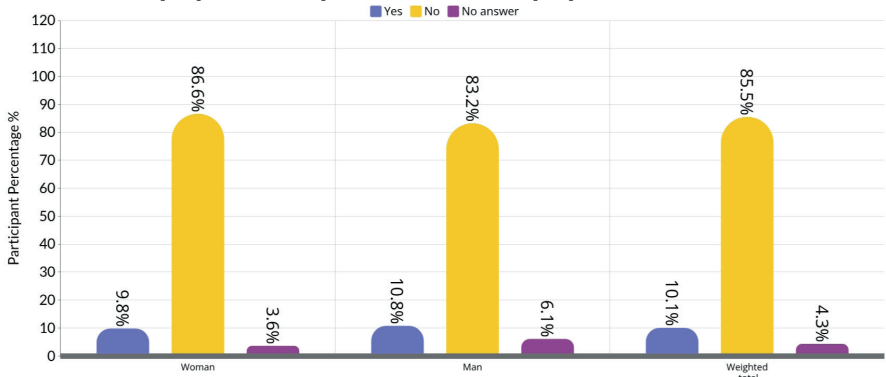
Figure 2.13 Which of the mentioned leave entitlements do you find most difficult to implement or cannot implement?



Source: KTT0 Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

To understand whether these leaves constitute a constraint, participants were asked: "Which of the mentioned leave entitlements do you find most difficult to implement or cannot implement?" and "Do the mentioned leaves affect your decision to employ women?" Around 65% of participants indicated that they do not find these leaves difficult to implement (Figure 2.13) and that the leaves do not affect their hiring decisions (Figure 2.14).

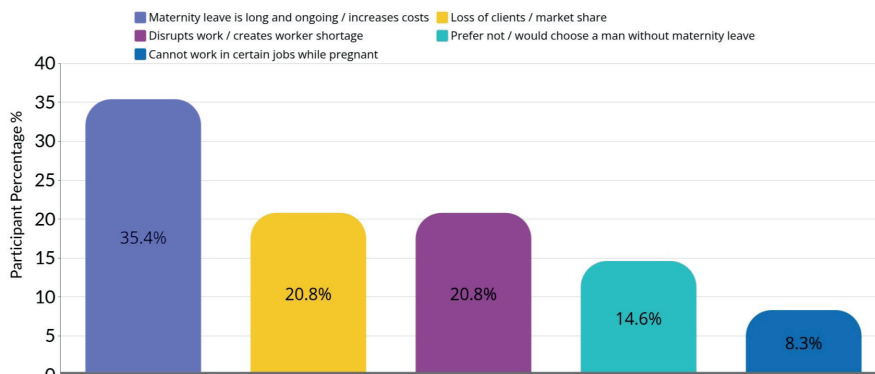
Figure 2.14 Do the mandatory leave entitlements under the Labour Law for female employees affect your decision to employ female workers?



Source: KTT0 Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

Participants who reported that the leaves affect their decision to employ women (10%) were asked to explain why (Figure 2.15). The most frequently cited explanation was increased labour costs due to the length of the leave. Work disruption and potential loss of clients were identified as the other two prominent reasons.

Figure 2.15 Could you explain how the mandatory leave entitlements under the Labour Law for female employees affect your decision to employ female workers?



Source: KTTTO Women Entrepreneurs Council, Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in northern part of Cyprus, 2022.

In conclusion, findings regarding both the qualifications sought in recruitment and maternity and breastfeeding leave show that female and male candidates do not have equal employment opportunities. A female candidate being married is interpreted as a potential mother, which, even if she has the same qualifications as a male candidate, is perceived as a risk due to higher costs, potential work disruptions, and client loss, leading to lower demand. Additionally, another dimension of demand constraints should not be overlooked. At this point, the nature of jobs in sectors with higher employment-creation capacity is important. Over the years, which professions have seen increasing labour demand, and which have seen declining demand? And crucially, is there an increase in labour demand for jobs traditionally associated with women or men? This is because the labour market remains gendered..

2.4. What is known about women's entrepreneurship? Opportunities and barriers

Equal opportunities and conditions for women and men in the labour market are only possible if they participate equally and occupy equal positions. In the northern part of Cyprus, women face significant economic disadvantages. They do not have the same opportunities and conditions as men, whether in accessing public- or private-sector employment or in establishing their own businesses. Their representation in labour market decision-making bodies—such as the boards of professional organisations and as employers—

is very limited. Representation on boards of professional organisations is 15% or lower. Data on representation on business boards could not be obtained; however, for every 100 men employed as employers, there are 39 women, and for every 100 men self-employed, there are 26 women. Equal representation of women and men in labour market decision-making bodies is essential for equal workforce participation, equal status in participation, and equal representation in senior management positions in the public and private sectors. Therefore, this project examined the nature of women's entrepreneurship in the northern part of Cyprus, including the opportunities and barriers they face. The review drew on the findings of scientific studies and field research conducted in this area that were accessible to the authors.

2.4.1. Profile of women entrepreneurs in the northern part of Cyprus

A study conducted in 2007, based on face-to-face interviews with 200²⁰ women entrepreneurs about their business performance (Jenkins & Katircioğlu, 2007), shows a positive linear relationship between women entrepreneurs' business performance and their drive to succeed, education level, and the age of their first child. The study also reports that 70% of the women entrepreneurs in the research were founders of their ventures, and 24% started their enterprises because they identified a business opportunity. It highlights the rapid increase in the number of women entrepreneurs after 2000, primarily in small enterprises with 1–3 employees, largely within the trade sector. Since the businesses in the study were predominantly service-oriented, their performance was sensitive to labour costs; rising labour costs were found to reduce business performance. Another study with TCCTA members (Esen, 2017) indicates that 32% of the Chamber members are women business owners. The study reports that women-owned businesses tend to be smaller, more family-oriented, younger, and largely concentrated in trade and personal services sectors than those established by men. According to Esen, women business owners have a higher level of education than men: 85% of women have completed secondary education or higher, compared with 68% of men.

20 The 200 women-led enterprises interviewed in the study were randomly selected from among 660 TCCC and TCCTA members.

To better understand women-led businesses and the barriers faced by women managers and entrepreneurs, the World Bank conducted the Women-Led Enterprises survey in March 2021 with 309 women managers/entrepreneurs.²¹ The survey findings indicate that women entrepreneurs are predominantly educated, aged 30-49, and concentrated in the services sector; they lead young, micro- and small-scale enterprises that mainly supply goods and services to the domestic market (see Box 2.4).

Box 2.4 Characteristics of women pioneers and their enterprises

Characteristics of women pioneers: • Age is 39; 30% are aged 40–49, and 23% are 50–65. 10% are aged 20–29, and only 3% are 65 or older. • Women pioneers are educated. Nearly half have at least a university degree (33% are university graduates, 15% are postgraduates). In addition, among high school graduates (40%), 9 out of 10 women pioneers have received at least a secondary education. • Married (72%); 17% are single, 5% divorced, and 6% widowed. Additionally, 34.6% of women pioneers stated that they are the sole income earners in their households. • Before starting to manage their businesses, 60.5% (187 women) of the pioneers were employed in formal jobs. Of these 187 women, 39.6% had worked for more than 10 years, 21.4% for 6 to 10 years, 23.5% for 3 to 5 years, and 12.8% for less than 2 years. • Reasons for starting their current business: 89.5% always wanted to work independently, 80.2% stated that running their own business would be more profitable than a salaried job, 75% believed it was the best job based on their skills, and 61.6% saw it as the best way to gain flexibility in combining work and care responsibilities. • Among the 309 women pioneers, 55.7% (172) stated that they are the founders or owners of the businesses. Characteristics of women pioneers' enterprises: • The enterprises are mainly located in Nicosia (44%), Kyrenia (27%), and Famagusta (20%). The percentages in Güzelyurt, Lefke, and Karpaz/Iskele regions are very low. • 65% of women-led enterprises are sole proprietorships, while 31% are private limited companies. • These enterprises are micro and small-scale. 8 out of 10 enterprises have either a single employee (36%) or fewer than five employees. Only 2 out of 100 enterprises have more than 50 employees. • The enterprises are relatively young. 4 out of 10 have been operating for less than 5 years, while 2 out of 10 have been operating for 6 to 10 years. • Women-led enterprises are concentrated in the services sector. 8 out of 10 operate in services, followed by 15% in industry. Women pioneers are almost absent in agriculture (2%) and construction (1%). At the sub-sector level, women entrepreneurs are concentrated in two areas: 8 out of 10 operate in personal services (38.8%) and wholesale/retail trade (31.4%), followed by manufacturing (12.6%) and hotels/restaurants (10%). • 9 out of 10 enterprises primarily serve the domestic market. • 38.5% of women-led enterprises are family businesses. Of these, 72.2% were founded by the woman entrepreneur herself, 23.6% by a male parent, 1.4% by a female parent, and 2.8% by other relatives.

Source: Women-led enterprises survey, 2021.

2.4.2. Entrepreneurship culture and women’s entrepreneurship

Increasing women’s entrepreneurship requires developing all elements of the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The concept of an ecosystem was first used in 1993 by Moore under the term “business ecosystem” to understand the economic world. According to Moore, in the “business ecosystem” approach, firms interact with suppliers, customers, and financiers. Firms operating within this interaction have greater opportunities for growth, job creation,

²¹ The data used in this study were obtained from a telephone survey conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) with 309 women-led enterprises in the northern part of Cyprus. The sampling frame covers six administrative districts in the northern part of Cyprus and was developed from databases on women-led enterprises obtained from five leading business organisations. In addition to demographic information such as age, education, and marital status of female managers, the survey collected information on women-led enterprises, the support received, the obstacles encountered, and how COVID-19 affected the businesses of female managers/entrepreneurs.

and innovation. After 2011, the "entrepreneurship ecosystem" approach was developed from a geographical perspective (Cansız, Kurnaz, & Yavan, 2018). The entrepreneurship ecosystem is defined as "a structure formed in a geographic region through the combination of interdependent and interacting actors (entrepreneurs, "institutions", and organisations) and factors (e.g., markets, regulatory framework, supports, entrepreneurship culture), which evolves over time and leads to the emergence of new ventures" (Boutillier et al., 2016; Vogel, 2013:446).).

The components of the entrepreneurship ecosystem are broadly grouped into the general external environment, the entrepreneurship-specific environment, and individual-level components. The general external environment includes infrastructure, public policies, "governments" and legal regulations, markets, innovation, and geographical location. The entrepreneurship-specific environment covers access to finance, entrepreneurial education, culture, networks, start-up support, and exposure to pressures. Individual-level components are defined as the entrepreneur's personality, human capital, and social capital (Künü & Duman, 2020).

Particularly within the entrepreneurship-specific environment—covering education, finance, markets, networks, and access to start-up support—gender equality must be ensured. Opportunities provided in these areas can only be effectively utilised by women if conditions are also equal. Equal opportunities functionally operate only when conditions are equitable. Ensuring equality in conditions requires reviewing laws and regulations through a gender impact analysis and making adjustments to eliminate inequalities between women and men arising from gender roles and stereotypes. Progress in this area would enable the ecosystem's development and make it more inclusive, while also enhancing investment and competitiveness by incorporating women's knowledge, skills, and ways of doing business into the ecosystem. In the northern part of Cyprus, although various capacity-building programmes and support activities have been implemented over the past 10 years to increase women's entrepreneurship, the proportion of women entrepreneurs remains lower than in other countries. Survey findings indicate that women entrepreneurs face disadvantages in terms of financial and moral support, while care responsibilities and gender-based stereotypes regarding women's skills and capabilities create additional barriers.

2.4.3. Experiences of women entrepreneurs: Supports and barriers

The support women entrepreneurs receive—such as consultancy, training, grants, loans, and mentorship—encourages them during the process of establishing and managing their businesses. However, the barriers they encounter negatively affect their motivation, success, and the sustainability of their enterprises. The barriers to women's entrepreneurship are diverse and include cultural norms and societal expectations; access to education and training; availability of and access to finance and investment; access to markets and customers; and the general economic and political environment. Below, based on survey findings, the support received by women entrepreneurs and the barriers they face are presented.

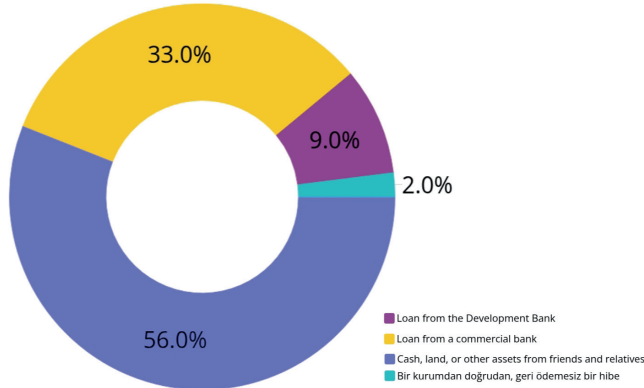
2.4.3.1. Supports

Financial support

The survey included questions about the financial support required to start and sustain a business, as well as the sources of that support. The findings indicate that women face significant difficulties in accessing financial resources to start their businesses. Only 16.8% were able to access financial resources beyond their own. The majority of these sources (56%)²² were informal, coming from friends, family, and relatives. Loans from "institutional" sources were obtained as follows: 33% from commercial banks, 9% from the Development Bank, and 2% in the form of grants (Figure 2.16).

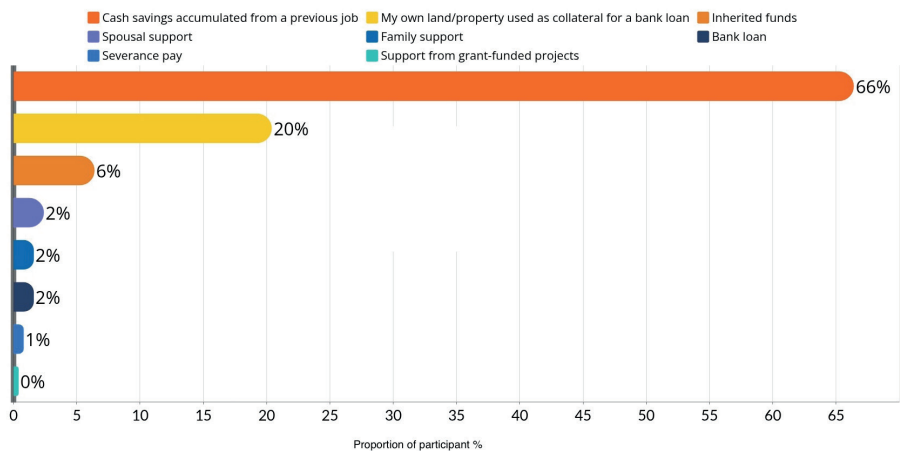
²² The majority of this support (55%) came from a male relative with a blood relation or partner.

Figure 2.16 If you did not use your own financial resources to start your business, what was the main source of the financial support you received? Note: 14% of respondents did not answer or did not know.



Source: Survey of Women-Led Enterprises, 2021

Figure 2.17 – If you used your own financial resources to start your business, what was the source of these funds?



Source: Survey of Women-Led Enterprises, 2021

Regarding financial support needed to continue business investments, 38.2% stated they did not require any external financial support. Among those who did use financial support for investments, the top three sources were: bank loans (21.7%), European Union grant support (21%), and financial support from male family members (19.1%).

Table 2.4 Ranking of financial supports according to their importance for sustaining the business

	Number (n=309)	%
Not applicable, the business does not need any financial support	118	38.2
A loan from a bank	67	21.7
Grants from the EU	65	21.0
Financial support received from male members of my family (including partner)	59	19.1
Grants provided by the Turkish Cypriot community authorities	41	13.3
Financial support received from female members of my family (including partner)	34	11.0
From a state institution in Türkiye	23	7.4
Financial support received from women who are not family members	7	2.3
Financial support received from men who are not family members	6	1.9
Don't know/No response	29	9.4

Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

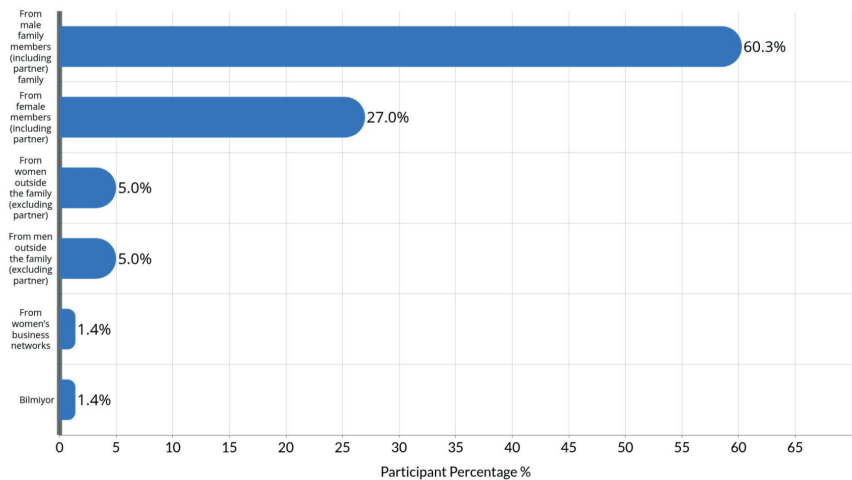
Moral support

In bringing an enterprise to life, moral support is as important as financial support. What entrepreneurs have in common is their ability to take initiative. The ability to take initiative—entrepreneurship—exists in every individual. According to the psychologist Albert Bandura, known for his work on social

learning theory and self-efficacy theory, all individuals are closely concerned with their self-efficacy, that is, with their self-development and their desire to accomplish things. An individual's self-efficacy is shaped by vicarious experiences²³, verbal persuasion ²⁴, and emotional stimuli/satisfaction²⁵ (Bandura, 1977).

The self-efficacy of women and men occurs at different levels due to gender-based stereotypes and different role models that influence vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional stimuli/satisfaction. Stereotypes about what women and men are capable of doing, women’s experiences of discrimination, and the limited number of entrepreneurial female role models make the presence of moral support—especially for women—at least as vital as financial support in enabling an enterprise to come into being. Of the 187 respondents, 90% (141 people) reported receiving moral support during the establishment phase of their business. According to two-thirds of the women entrepreneurs included in the survey (75%), the most important source of moral support when establishing their businesses was male family members. Support from female family members ranked second, while moral support provided by women's business networks ranked last.

Figure 2.18 The importance of moral support received during the establishment of the business: among the supports listed above, which one do you think was the most important when establishing your business?



24 Vicarious experience – experience acquired by observing other people engaging in such behaviours and seeing them rewarded
 24 Verbal persuasion – being persuaded and encouraged by others
 25 Emotional satisfaction – the satisfaction an individual derives from having done or achieved something regarding their own life (Bandura, Albert (1977). Social Learning Theory, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall)

Table 2.5 Among the following, please rank the types of moral support you currently receive according to their importance for sustaining your business

Type of support	% (N=187)
Moral support received from male family members (including partner)	67.9
Moral support received from female family members (including partner)	47.6
Moral support received from women outside my family (excluding partner)	26.2
Moral support received from men outside my family (excluding partner)	17.6
Moral support received from women's business networks	12.8
Mentoring received from another woman	5.9
I do not receive moral support	17.1

Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Training support

Nearly half of women entrepreneurs have a university degree or higher. 60% have prior work experience. However, the proportion of women entrepreneurs who have access to training on starting and managing a business is quite low. Access to training in areas that would enable reaching wider audiences is particularly limited. Of the 309 participants, 34% (105 people)—that is, only one in three—were able to receive training while establishing their businesses. Nearly half of the training focused on sales, marketing, and customer relations, while about one-third focused on bookkeeping and accounting, preparing a business plan, and human resources management. In areas where the need is currently higher (social media, other technologies, and website development), the training proportion is around 20% (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Type of training received during business establishment

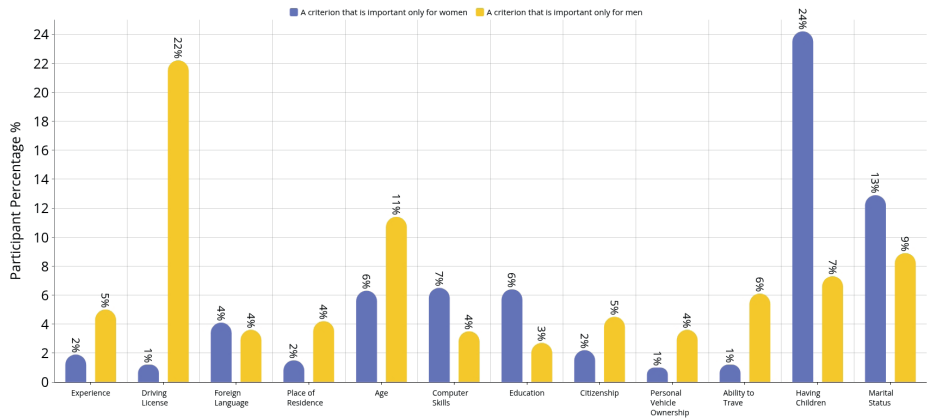
Type of training	% (n=105)
Sales	46.7
Marketing	45.7
Customer relationship management	45.7
Bookkeeping and accounting	34.3
Preparing a business plan	32.4
Human resources management	31.4
Other financial management topics	28.6
Building business networks	27.6
Social media	21.9
Other technologies	21.0
Coaching	21.0
Website development	17.1

Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021

Business network support

Business networks for women are effective networks that bring women entrepreneurs together under a single umbrella to support one another, collaborate on joint business activities and connect women entrepreneurs with “institutions” interested in working with them, thereby helping them confront women’s disadvantaged position.²⁶ In the northern part of Cyprus, only 3 out of every 10 women entrepreneurs participate in such a network. Fifty-four per cent stated that they chose not to take part in business networks, while 14% indicated that they had no information about such networks (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10 As a manager/entrepreneur, are you part of a business network for women?



Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Among those not part of a network (211 people), 62.1% stated they would like to join a business network for women. Among these 211 participants, 122 (57.8%) stated that being part of such a network would benefit their business, 30.8% said it would not, and 10% stated they did not know.

2.4.3.2. Barriers

In addition to the challenges that come with entrepreneurship itself, women entrepreneurs also have to contend with barriers arising from gender roles, stereotypes about women and discrimination against women.

²⁶ In the northern part of Cyprus, examples of such networks include the Businesswomen’s Association, TCCC Women Entrepreneurs Council, the Women Entrepreneurs Association, the Rural Development and Women’s Cooperative, the Kyrenia Working Women’s Cooperative, and the Lefke Cittaslow Women Producers Market.

Gender-based barriers: Care burden and prejudice

Women entrepreneurs who participated in the survey were asked to list the barriers faced by women-led businesses in order of importance (Table 2.7). The majority of the barriers stem from gender-based role expectations and their distribution (care responsibilities (54%)), access to credit (29.4%), and stereotypes and prejudices about women's capabilities (business skills, competitiveness, cultural attitudes). In addition, infrastructure problems within the entrepreneurship ecosystem and a masculine/gender-blind approach in legislation were listed as barriers.

Table 2.7 Rank the issues listed below according to their potential to constitute a barrier for women-led businesses

	% (N=187)
Trying to balance care responsibilities with work responsibilities	54.0
Women's access to credit	29.4
Women's business skills compared with men's	25.7
Women's competitiveness compared with men's	23.0
Cultural attitudes towards women-led businesses	18.7
Availability of public or private transport	17.1
Lack of networking opportunities for women-led businesses	17.1
Other laws are not being adapted to women-led businesses	12.8
Lack of services for women-led businesses	12.3
Labour laws are not being adapted to women-led businesses	12.3
None / No barrier	9.6

Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

Financial barriers

Based on their experiences, 44% of women entrepreneurs (136 people) stated that women's access to finance is more difficult than men's. They indicated that this difficulty stems from banks not trusting that women entrepreneurs will be able to repay the loans they receive (20.4%), banks requiring a man's signature because of this lack of trust (15.5%), and women not having property in their own names to offer as collateral (12.3%) (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 Reasons why women's access to finance is more difficult than men

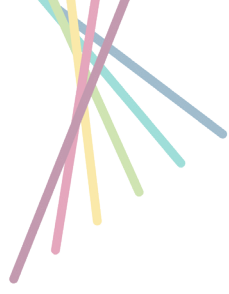
	Number	% (n=149)
Cultural factors: banks do not trust women-led businesses	63	20.4
Banks require a man to sign before granting credit	48	15.5
Women do not have property in their own names	38	12.3
Women's businesses operate in sectors with weak competitiveness	33	10.7
Women lack the skills to write business plans	25	8.1
Women do not have time to go to the bank	21	6.8

Source: Survey of women-led businesses, 2021.

In summary, women entrepreneurs are generally unable to access "institutionally" sourced financial support when starting their ventures. They finance the start-up phase of their businesses through personal savings and through individuals with whom they have family or friendship ties. This partly explains why businesses owned by women are smaller than those owned by men and tend to operate in sectors and markets that do not require large start-up capital. Moral support does not appear to constitute a barrier. 90% of participants reported receiving moral support during both the start-up and continuation stages of their businesses from both women and men, within and outside their family networks. However, receiving entrepreneurship-related training at the start-up stage, participating in women-focused business networks, and using mentoring mechanisms are not yet widespread among women entrepreneurs.

Gender-based roles, expectations and stereotypes remain the most significant factors that both weaken "institutional" support for women entrepreneurs and create obstacles in running their businesses. In the long term, increasing the number of women entrepreneurs requires equalising both opportunities and, especially, conditions in access to finance, training, business networks and markets. Ensuring equality of opportunities and conditions is only possible through the development of "institutions" that recognise women's disadvantaged position and the strengthening of the "institutional" support and incentives they provide.

In the short term, targeted measures should be developed specifically for women, including improved access to finance and markets, investment support for businesses' technological infrastructure, and special incentives to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in sectors where their presence is currently limited. To increase women's representation in economic decision-making systems, a quota requiring a certain level of women's representation should be introduced and gradually increased over time, with the aim of achieving equal participation and power (50:50).



CHAPTER 3

INEQUALITY IN CONDITIONS

In this chapter, inequality in conditions is discussed along two axes. The first concerns time use: inequality in conditions arising from the unequal distribution of hours spent on domestic work and care labour between women and men. The second concerns intersectionality: inequality in conditions arising from possessing more than one vulnerable identity (disadvantage).

3.1. Inequality in time use

Time-use studies show how individuals allocate their time across different activities in their daily lives, making care labour and the gender-based division of labour visible. In this context, time-use statistics demonstrate that inequalities are reflected not only through economic indicators such as income, employment or education, but also through individuals' access to time resources and their ability to use that time. In particular, when gender-based division of domestic work and the fact that most care work is carried out by women considered, they make women's invisible labour visible.

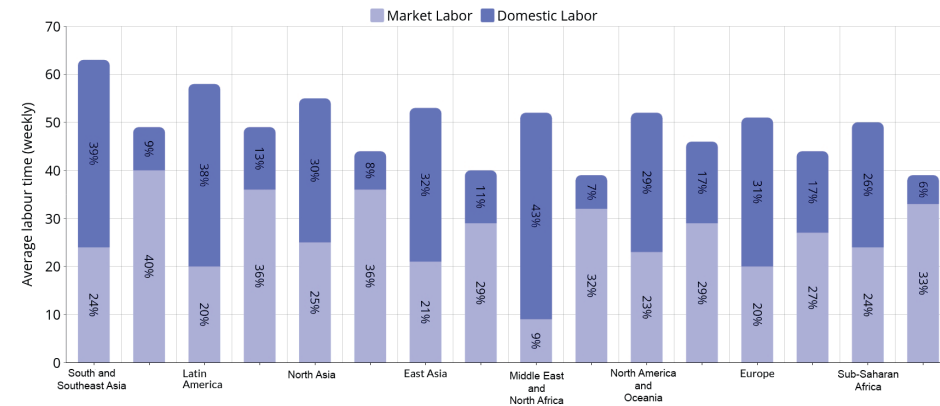
Despite being widely recognised as a dimension of gender inequality, inequality in time use remains one of its most invisible aspects and one for which the least policy has been developed. Time-use studies conducted in many countries reveal that women systematically devote more time than men to unpaid domestic labour and care activities, while men occupy a more advantageous position in paid work and leisure activities (Chancel, Gómez-Carrera, Moshrif, Piketty, & al., 2026; EUROSTAT, 2019). As noted above, this inequality generally stems not from individual preferences but from the gender-based division of labour and the attribution of care work to women. The time women devote to unpaid care work directly limits their

participation in the labour market, their access to full-time, continuous or secure employment, and their career progression. Therefore, inequality in time use is not merely a household matter; it is a structural problem that must be placed at the centre of employment, poverty and gender equality policies.

3.1.1. Global inequality in time use

Compared with 200 years ago, the typical weekly working time has fallen from 60 hours to 30-45 hours (Chancel, Gómez-Carrera, Moshrif, Piketty, & al., 2026). However, overall, women continue to work longer hours than men. According to the World Inequality Report 2026, women work 10–12 hours more per week than men in all geographical regions of the world (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Average weekly market and domestic labour hours of women and men by geographical regions.



Note: The data in Figure 3.1 were compiled by the World Inequality Lab, which prepared the World Inequality Report, using time-use survey data conducted in 35 countries. Figure 3.1 was created by the authors using these data.
Source: World Inequality Report, 2026.

Across the world, women’s weekly working hours in paid employment are shorter than those of men, while their hours in unpaid work are longer. Overall (the sum of weekly hours in paid employment and domestic labour), women work longer hours than men. For every 100 hours of market labour performed by men, women perform on average 70 hours. In contrast, for every 100 hours of domestic labour performed by men, women perform more than 3 times as many hours (347). In terms of total weekly hours of labour spent on both market and domestic labour, for every 100 hours of male labour, women perform, on average, 124 hours of labour.

The time women spend on unpaid work limits the time they can allocate to other activities. Even when equal opportunities exist in areas such as training and career development, women's lack of equal conditions in terms of time use renders these opportunities ineffective for them. The unequal distribution of domestic work between women and men leads to women's lower labour force participation, fewer employment opportunities, and their concentration in certain jobs and occupations.

Domestic and care work are not included in national income accounts. The vast majority of this work is carried out by women. Consequently, the labour women spend producing goods and services within the household, as well as the goods and services produced domestically, are not counted as part of national income. The labour women expend in producing them is rendered invisible. Despite working longer hours, women's share of total labour income corresponds only to their market labour. For this reason, the World Inequality Report describes the long-term decline in global working hours as "a story of unbalanced gains" (Chancel, Gómez-Carrera, Moshrif, Piketty, & al., 2026, p. 91). The report notes that men have benefited most from this reduction in weekly working hours, that women's workload remains high, and that improvements in working conditions do not automatically translate into gender equality (Chancel, Gómez-Carrera, Moshrif, Piketty, & al., 2026, p. 91).

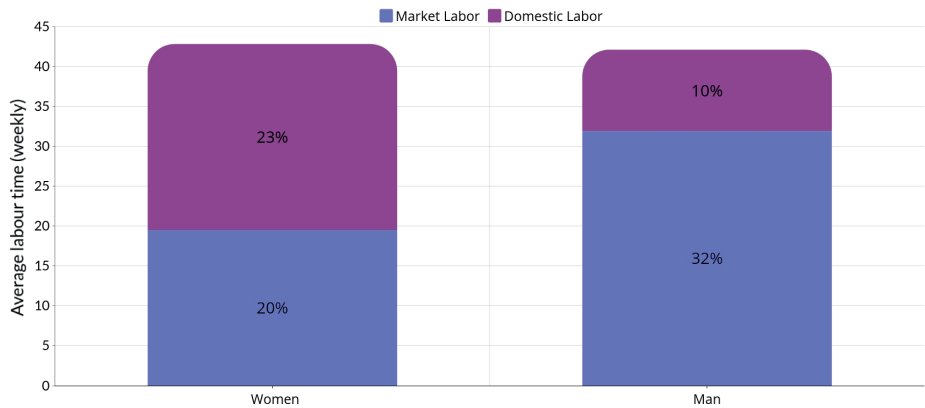
3.1.2. Inequality in time use in the northern part of Cyprus

There is no official data on time use in the northern part of Cyprus. For this reason, within the scope of the TCAUW Parity Project, a study was conducted to examine individuals' time-use patterns from a gender perspective. The research—Time Use Survey 2024-2025—was based on the methodological framework of the Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (HETUS) developed by the European Union. In the survey, time-use information was collected by asking all household members aged 15 and above in participating households to record their daily activities over 24 hours on two separate days—one weekday and one weekend day—using diaries structured into 10-minute intervals. Information about the participating households and the individuals within them was collected through face-to-face interviews. The data collection process took place between November 2024 and October

2025. The study universe consisted of households living in the northern part of Cyprus; the sample comprised 150 households from six districts who agreed to participate in the survey, along with the individuals aged 15 and above living in these households. As a result of the research, 268 weekday diaries (164 women, 104 men) and 112 weekend diaries (69 women, 43 men) were collected.

During data collection, the activities of household members over a 24-hour period were recorded in a structured time diary in accordance with HETUS standards. The activities specified by participants in 10-minute time intervals were categorised under the main codes of personal care, employment, education, household and family care, voluntary work and meetings, social life and entertainment, sports and outdoor activities, hobbies, mass media, and travel, making it possible to quantitatively analyse the distribution of individuals' daily time use. To date, no regular, systematic, and comparable official data on time use have been produced in the northern part of Cyprus. In this respect, this research is a first, providing the first comprehensive information on the time use of women and men and, in particular, revealing women's invisible labour.

Figure 3.2 Average weekly labour time use in the northern part of Cyprus (age 15+) 2024–2025

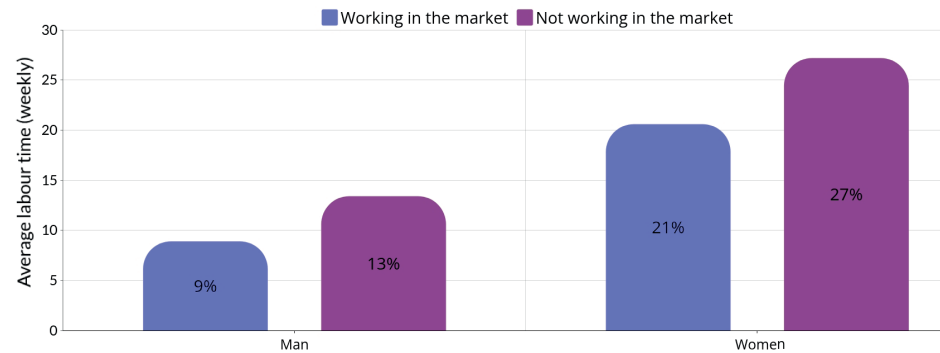


Source: Parity Project Time Use Survey, 2025. Data were calculated weekly for 5 weekdays and 2 weekend days using the daily averages from weekday and weekend diaries.

In the northern part of Cyprus, no significant difference was found between women (42.8 hours) and men (42.1 hours) in total weekly labour time. Women and men spend an average of 42 hours of labour per week in total (Figure 3.2). As noted earlier, across all regions, women’s total weekly labour time is, on average, at least 6 hours higher than men’s weekly labour time (Figure 3.1; European region). At this point, the northern part of Cyprus presents a different case. In terms of labour allocated to domestic work and market work, it follows a pattern similar to that of other regions. The average labour time women spend on domestic work is 2.3 times higher than that of men. (This difference is 3.5 times in the global average and 2 times in the European region.)

In market labour, however, men spend 61% more labour time than women; in other words, men’s market labour is 1.64 times higher than women’s. For every 100 hours of market labour performed by men, women perform 61 hours, whereas for every 100 hours of domestic labour performed by men, women perform an average of 228 hours. When compared with other regions, the northern part of Cyprus shows that although women’s total weekly labour time does not differ from men’s overall, the pattern of market and domestic labour time follows the general trend: women’s domestic labour burden is higher than men’s, while men’s market labour is higher than women’s.

Figure 3.3 Comparison of average weekly domestic labour time in the northern part of Cyprus by gender and employment status (age 15+) 2024–2025

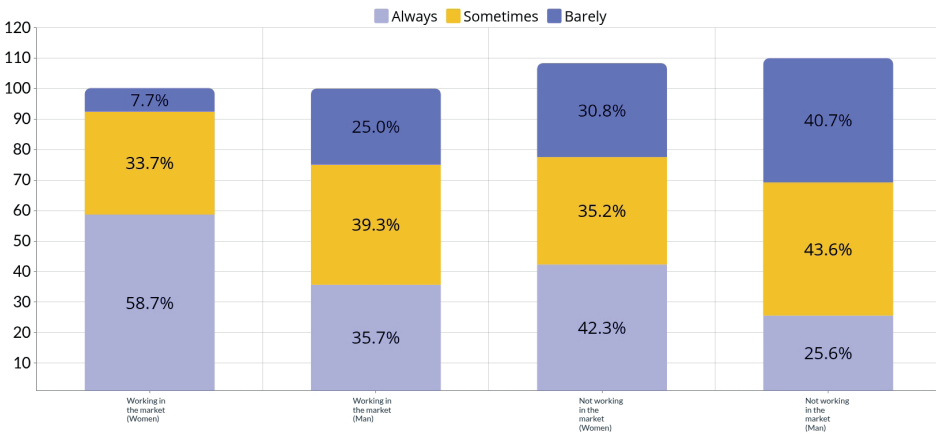


Source: Parity Project Time Use Survey, 2025. Data were calculated weekly for 5 weekdays and 2 weekend days using the daily averages from weekday and weekend diaries.

Whether women work in paid employment outside the home or not, in both cases, they spend more time on domestic labour than men (Figure 3.3). Women who do not work in paid employment outside the home spend more

time on domestic labour than women who do. The same applies to men. As a result of gender inequalities in time use, women are more time-poor than men. One indication of this is that when asked how often they feel rushed, half of the women (51.7%) responded “always”. Among men, this rate is one-third (32.5%). When paid employment is added, 6 out of every 10-women report feeling rushed. For men, this rate is 35.7%.

Figure 3.4 Feeling rushed among individuals in the northern part of Cyprus by gender and employment status (age 15+) 2024–2025



Source: Parity Project Time Use Survey, 2025.

Time-use data show that gender inequality is reproduced not only through economic indicators but also through the temporal distribution of everyday life. In the northern part of Cyprus, the extremely limited availability of public care services means that the care of children, the elderly, and the sick is largely shifted to the household and, within the household, primarily onto women’s shoulders. This significantly increases the amount of labour time women devote to unpaid domestic work and care activities. At the same time, the time women can allocate to activities outside the home is limited. As a result, women and men do not have equal conditions to participate in social, political, and economic life or in decision-making systems.

3.2. Intersectionality: Which woman?

Intersectionality is an approach that argues that inequalities cannot be understood through singular identities alone. Women are not a homogeneous group; when axes such as gender, disability, migrant status, ethnicity and sexual orientation intersect, multiple forms of discrimination emerge. These intersections shape women's access to employment, the nature of the jobs they hold, wage levels and job security, leading to the hierarchical and fragile structuring of their status in the labour market. Within this hierarchy, women who possess more than one vulnerable identity occupy a lower position than both men and women with a single identity, and experience their vulnerabilities more strongly and more deeply. In other words, while some women may access secure and visible forms of employment, others become concentrated in low-paid, informal and precarious forms of labour due to multiple discrimination.

3.2.1 Women with special needs: Remaining on the threshold of employment

Individuals with special needs are among the disadvantaged groups exposed to inequalities in social and economic life. However, this disadvantage deepens when it intersects with gender. Compared with women without special needs or men with special needs, women with special needs—like other disadvantaged groups—face multi-layered inequalities in working life. These inequalities manifest in discriminatory standards in recruitment and promotion processes, unequal access to training, unequal access to credit and resources supporting production processes, unequal pay for equal work, occupational segregation, and limited participation in economic decision-making processes (Kim, Skinner, & Parish, 2020; O'Reilly, 2003).

The source of these layered inequalities lies in stereotypical and discriminatory perceptions towards women's labour and persons with disabilities:

- the association of women's labour with a secondary, low-status/low-paid position and with the gendered division of labour, and
- the perception of persons with special needs as individuals with limited productivity, dependent and in need of care (WHO; WB, 2011)

These perceptions lead to exclusionary outcomes for women with special needs across every sphere of the labour market, including recruitment processes and opportunities for advancement (O'Reilly, 2003). Thus, being a woman and having special needs creates a double disadvantage in the labour market that reinforces itself.

In the northern part of Cyprus, there are no regular, reliable statistics that systematically reveal the participation of persons with special needs in economic life and their status in the labour market. Existing information largely depends on administrative records and the extent to which these records are accessible when shared. This data limitation renders persons with special needs in the northern part of Cyprus invisible in social and economic life.

The most detailed and regular source of data concerning persons with special needs is the records of the 'Labour Department'. According to the records of the 'Labour Department', in 2023, a total of 8,038 persons with special needs received monetary assistance, of whom 43 per cent were women ('SPO', 2024, p. 316) (see Table E15 for more information).²⁷ Of the persons with special needs registered with the 'Labour Department' and waiting for employment (357 persons, 2023), 42 per cent were women and 58 per cent were men ('SPO', 2024, p. 317) (see Figures E1 and E2 for more information). This distribution follows the general pattern. In 2023, 40 per cent of all unemployed persons were also women (HLFS, 2023). For every man with special needs waiting for employment, there are 71 women ('SPO', 2024). In the overall labour market, however, there are 65 unemployed women for every unemployed man (HLFS, 2023). When the comparison is made through registration with the 'Labour Department', unemployment rates among women with special needs appear to follow a trend parallel to overall female unemployment rates. However, for the comparison to be meaningful, it should also be evaluated alongside opportunities for employment access. In the same year, total employment of persons with special needs was reported as 608, of which 25 per cent were women. For every 100 employed men with special needs, 35 women were employed. In the overall labour force, women constitute 35 per cent of total employment. For every 100 employed men, there are 53 employed women.

²⁷ As stated in the Labour Department Establishment, Duties and Working Principles Law (No. 35/2000), one of the aims and duties of the department is to provide suitable employment for persons with disabilities and to take the necessary measures regarding the employment of persons with disabilities in accordance with the Law on the Protection, Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities. Monetary assistance is also paid within the scope of the law.

As can be seen, although it does not reflect the entire picture, this comparison, based on the records of the 'Labour Department', reflects the double disadvantage experienced by women with special needs in the labour market. The sectors with employment opportunities are also valuable for understanding the labour market experiences of women with special needs. The most recent data on the sectors in which persons with special needs are employed—public, private, and local “government” —date from 2015 (Table 3.1). According to an analysis based on these data, male employment is higher across all types of disability and sectors, and the distribution of women's and men's employment varies according to both the type of disability and the sector.

Table 3.1 Distribution of employed persons with special needs by type of disability and sector, 2015

Type of Disability	Public Sector			Municipality/SOE			Private Sector			Other		Total		
	Number of Women	Number of Men	Women %	Number of Women	Number of Men	Women %	Number of Women	Number of Men	Women %	Number of Women	Number of Men	Number of Women	Number of Men	Women %
Visual	11	58	16	1	7	13	0	12	0		2	12	79	15
Hearing-Speech	17	42	29	1	7	13	1	2	33			19	51	37
Cranial Nerve and Mental Disorders	10	25	29		6	0	2	9	18			12	40	30
Musculoskeletal System	35	115	23	6	17	26	3	15	17		3	44	150	29
Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell	32	35	48	4	6	40	3	2	60			39	43	49
Spastic	1	6	14		1	0		1	0			1	8	13
Other System	5	18	22	1	2	33	1	2	33		1	7	23	30
Total	111	299	27	13	46	22	10	43	19		6	134	394	34

Source: 'SPO', 2017. *Macroeconomic and Sectoral Developments 2015*. <https://www.deuplan.org/arslu/Makroekonomik%20ve%20Sektorel%20Gelistmeler/makro-eko-2015.pdf>

The public sector is the area in which women are relatively most represented across all types of disability; however, even here, the proportion of women is 27%. In municipal/SOE and private-sector employment, the proportion of women declines further (22% and 19%, respectively), indicating that inclusiveness decreases as one moves from the public to the private sector.

By disability group, the share of women in total employment ranges between 15% and 30% in the visual, hearing-speech, cranial nerve and mental disorders, and musculoskeletal disability groups. In these groups, women lag behind men across all sectors. In the spastic disability group, women's employment is extremely limited (13%); this suggests that in disability types that are more severe or require intensive care or greater support from employers, women are almost entirely excluded from employment. In the thalassaemia and sickle cell group, however, the relatively high share of women (49%) indicates

that in disability types based on health conditions that do not restrict mobility or impose additional care/support obligations on employers, the gender distribution in employment is relatively more balanced—although this balance still does not create an advantage for women.

In 2026, the number of individuals with special needs employed in the public sector, which is the primary employer of individuals with special needs, was 296. Only 72 of these were women; in other words, for every 100 men with special needs employed, only 32 women with special needs were employed. In addition, the share of women with special needs within total female employment in the public sector is limited to only 0.8% (Table 3.2). These figures demonstrate the extremely limited visibility of women with special needs in economic life. Another finding is that despite the increasing number of female personnel in the public sector, both the number and proportion of women with special needs have declined. While in 2010 and 2020, there were 40 women with special needs for every 100 men with special needs employed in the public sector, this ratio declined to 32 in 2026.

Table 3.2 Employment of persons with special needs in the public sector in the northern part of Cyprus

Employment of persons with special needs	Women	Men	Total	W/M	Women (% of total public sector employment of persons with special needs)	Women (% of total public sector female employment)
January, 2026	72	224	296	32	24	0.8
January, 2020	77	194	271	40	28	1.0
January, 2010	95	239	334	40	28	1.3

Source: ‘Personnel Department’, 2026

As in the general pattern, lack of education alone is insufficient to explain the more disadvantaged position of women with special needs in the labour market. The educational attainment of women with special needs registered with the Labour Department and waiting for employment is higher than that of men with special needs. While 32.7% of women have at least a high school or university degree, this figure is 27% among men with special needs (see Table E16 for more information).

Despite legislation concerning persons with special needs in the TRNC, it is widely recognised that these regulations do not translate into adequate

conditions in everyday life. The legislation on the Protection, Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Special Needs, enacted in 1993 (No. 64/93), and the regulations introduced in 2014 to support employment in the private sector contain uncertainties and limitations in practice (Gözügüzelli, 2022).²⁸ This situation reinforces a sense of insecurity about the future for persons with special needs and their families. Indeed, a study conducted with parents of adults with special needs revealed that parents' primary concern is their children's future care and living conditions; uncertainties in legislation and inadequacies in services generate a sense of hopelessness among families (Efendi & Nazım, 2022).

Although detailed data on economic life are limited, there are studies pointing to structural barriers that indirectly restrict the participation of persons with special needs in social and economic life. For individuals with physical disabilities, barriers in transport systems and public buildings (Duman & Uzunoğlu, 2021), communication problems faced by individuals with hearing impairments (Haksız & Nuri, 2023), and spaces not designed in an inclusive manner severely limit the mobility of persons with special needs and their access to public spaces (Tatar, Öğün, & Akdeniz, 2019). These structural barriers transform exclusion from employment not merely into an individual issue but into a spatial and "institutional" one.

According to the Identification of Barriers to the Employment of Persons with Disabilities Survey 2024 published in 2025 by the Cyprus Turkish Orthopaedic Disabled Association, although the high proportion of single-storey buildings among the buildings examined may appear to reduce the need for accessibility in multi-storey buildings, the very low rate of elevators in multi-storey buildings (particularly 9.4% in public "institutions") indicates a serious deficiency. Moreover, the limited presence of audible warning systems in existing elevators indicates that not only physical but also sensory accessibility has been neglected (Cyprus Turkish Orthopaedic Disabled Association, 2025).

The proportions of basic accessibility elements, such as physical arrangements at building entrances, dedicated toilets, and parking facilities, are also

²⁸ For more detailed information on the legal framework concerning accessibility to employment in the northern part of Cyprus, see the Identification of Barriers to the Employment of Persons with Disabilities Survey 2024, published in 2025 by the Cyprus Turkish Orthopaedic Disabled Association.

generally low. These indicators limit the independent mobility of persons with disabilities and their equal use of public spaces. The relatively higher rates observed in municipalities compared with other “institutions” suggest that accessibility varies depending on “institutional” priorities and governance.

Table 3.3 Physical accessibility of “institutions” in the northern part of Cyprus, 2024³⁰

"Institutions and Organisations"	Total number of buildings	Percentage of buildings examined (%)	Single-storey buildings (%)	Elevators in multi-storey buildings (%)	Elevators with audio warning systems (%)	Physical modifications at building entrance (%)	Accessible toilet available (%)	Parking arrangements available
"Local Institutions"	774	30.0	64.5	15.6	46.5	35.1	19.8	25.6
"Prime Ministry & 'Ministries" Public Sector	13	53.9	23.1	30.0	100.0	69.2	0.0	76.9
"Municipalitie"	524	18.3	67.9	9.4	37.5	30.0	15.1	14.7
"Private Sector	98	66.3	75.5	37.5	44.4	64.3	49.0	51.0
	139	46.0	48.9	21.1	46.7	30.9	18.7	43.9

Source: KTOÖD, 2025, Identification of barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities survey 2024.

According to the findings³⁰ presented in the same report regarding the working lives of persons with special needs who are currently employed:

- Institutional mechanisms implemented in areas such as job satisfaction, job security, protection from occupational diseases, promotion, performance evaluation, remuneration, orientation processes, and inclusiveness in job advertisements, as well as perceptions of equality of opportunity in recruitment, nepotism, and favouritism, did not show a statistically significant difference between genders. A significant difference between women and men with special needs was observed only in the dimension of “inclusive social structure”. While men perceived their “institutions” as more inclusive, women’s lower levels of perception indicate the presence of gender-based exclusion mechanisms in organisational culture’s everyday practices.
- There is also gender-based differentiation in access to and communication with managers. The fact that women experience greater difficulties than men in accessing and communicating with managers suggests that internal communication channels do not function equally from a gender perspective.

29 These findings are based on 201 responses collected from 97 focal points and cover the accessibility status of 774 buildings associated with these focal points.

30 The report also collected quantitative data from 151 persons with special needs (47% women, 53% men) and 67 enterprises (50 private, 17 public) on employment policies and managerial processes, recruitment processes, orientation procedures, reasonable accommodation, working hours and working models, leave arrangements, transportation opportunities, wages and fringe benefits, promotion and performance evaluation, occupational health and safety, organisational culture, job satisfaction, retirement, decent working conditions, “institutional” altruism, and individual factors affecting employment. Among the participants, 51.7% had orthopaedic disabilities and 39% had chronic illnesses. Seventy-nine were currently employed, 51 had worked in the past, and 21 had never worked.

- The perception of “working in jobs that require less human interaction and are distant from social environments” also differs by gender. Women with special needs reported that, compared with men, they feel they are more often employed in or considered more suitable for jobs with limited social interaction.

- Women with special needs perceive their working conditions more negatively than men. In particular, women’s evaluations are statistically significantly lower in the dimensions of safe working conditions, access to health services, and altruism (a humane and supportive environment). Women’s perceptions are also lower than men’s regarding adequate wages, breaks, food facilities, and alignment of values; although these differences are not statistically significant, they display a consistent pattern in the same direction.

- In terms of value orientations and career motivation, there is no statistically significant difference between women and men with special needs.

The findings of the report indicate that women with special needs in the northern part of Cyprus perceive their working lives as more disadvantageous compared with men. Although most “institutional” mechanisms and recruitment processes do not differ by gender, clear gender differences emerge in organisational culture’s inclusiveness, access to managers, the social dimensions of work, and the experience of working conditions. Women with special needs perceive their workplaces as less inclusive, experience greater difficulties in communicating with managers, and believe they are directed towards jobs with limited social interaction. In contrast, there is no significant difference between women and men with special needs in terms of career motivation and value orientations. Within the scope of the Parity Project, a woman participant with special needs first describes what it means to be a person with special needs in the northern part of Cyprus, and then explains how being a woman with special needs may create different experiences in working life. The participant prioritises disability over being a woman; however, while emphasising disability, she also reveals the specific differences associated with being a woman (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Remaining on the threshold of employment: the experiences of a woman with special needs

The narrative of a participant in her late forties, who has a physical disability and is actively engaged in advocacy for the rights of persons with special needs, begins with education—or more precisely, with fears about not being able to access education. Throughout secondary school, the attitudes she encountered—“figure it out yourself”, “don’t be a burden”, and “manage quietly”—became decisive in her decision about university. The decision of whether to attend university is shaped more by the realities of everyday life than by academic ability. Going to university would not only mean attending classes; it would also mean planning transportation every day, relying on others, questioning whether such dependence would be sustainable in the long term, and ultimately withdrawing out of necessity.

At school [secondary school], you are always adjusting yourself. I mean, I go to class, but how I get there and how I leave is nobody's concern. It is like... You sort it out, you solve it... I considered university, but there was the question of how to get there and back every day. Would someone take me there, would someone bring me back? When you think about that, you stop at some point... It's not that I was afraid of the exam or of studying. The going and coming is very difficult. Living dependent on someone every day is hard.

The limitations experienced during education reappear later in the participant's life, in her job search and work experiences. After finishing secondary school, working becomes a necessity for economic survival, reducing dependence on her family, and remaining part of social life—not a career choice:

I finished secondary school. I struggled a lot to have a salary. Because I receive a disability allowance. But if someone had been able to employ me, I would have removed that disability report and continued my normal working life. I applied to every vacancy I could find. I went and spoke to people. I can say there was hardly any path I didn't try.

Looking for a job is not simply a matter of reading advertisements; it also means constantly calculating transport possibilities and the limits of everyday life. For this reason, when looking at job advertisements, the first question is not “Can I do this job?” but “Can I reach this job?” If possible, the first contact should occur before physically going there.

At that time, we used to get newspapers more often. We would look at the newspapers. Which job suits me? Which one can I first talk about on the phone? By “suits me,” I mean, for example, looking at architectural barriers. Are there stairs? How many steps? Is there a handrail? Is there a lift? And let me also say this: I got into such a habit that when I go out, I don't even go to the toilet. That is also part of it. The biggest problem is the toilet... At first, I preferred the phone. Because I don't drive. I have to arrange for someone to take me to the interview.

Spatial arrangements, transportation, and access to basic needs come before the job's content, which makes the job search process restrictive from the outset. Even if a job is feasible, if it is not accessible, it becomes impossible. Telephone conversations often do not lead to a clear outcome. After the interview, there is silence; no reply. Over time, these silences begin to acquire meaning. The participant interprets the lack of responses not only through her disability status but also through the degree of disability and employers' perceptions of “suitability”:

Whether you can walk or not also matters. In general, even in the public sector, they prefer those who can walk. The disability should be very minimal so that no one has to deal with it. You understand. I cannot walk. They think my father would have to bring me to work and take me home. But when someone holds my arm, I can walk.

The preferred profile in employment is someone who is “almost without disability despite having a disability”. At this point, disability is often perceived by employers as dependency. When this perception intersects with gender, it becomes even stronger. The participant explains that women with special needs are implicitly excluded from employment by both families and employers through assumptions about strength, privacy, and the idea that “she should not be strained”.

For example, in some places, someone might need to lift me. There might be a difficult spot. Maybe they wouldn't want to lift a woman. Or the person with the disability might not want to be lifted... Both the woman and the other side might not want it. It could be misunderstood... And then there is the issue of strength. I always come back to strength. They might think: how will a woman carry this? Let's say a box of A4 paper. How will the woman carry it? A man is stronger. So let's choose the man... And I will say this as well. Since we already receive an allowance... Now she will go there. How will people treat her? Everything starts from that first attitude. And then they stay at home more. I can even say they are made to stay... The family says: she already has an allowance, the state already gives it, no need to push. The employer says: “If it will be difficult, let's not hire her... Let her not ask us for anything. What if she cannot reach the toilet in time?” And at that point, being a woman becomes even harder. Because when it is a woman, they say: Don't strain her. Let her stay at home.

After many job interviews, she eventually finds a part-time job, but accessibility is still a problem there. Over time, the workplace resolves it for broader reasons unrelated to her specifically. Yet the difficulties do not end there; unresolved small shortcomings eventually lead her to leave the job.

When I first started, I used to go up to the second floor. There were quite a lot of stairs. I said, well, I'm doing my morning exercise... Then they said our members are getting older as well. So a lift was installed. In other words, everywhere I went, I made a positive contribution... The environment became fully accessible, but we couldn't solve the wheelchair issue. I didn't insist. That's why I suspended that job.

Over time, these experiences lead the participant to produce solutions based on her own experiences, guide others, and act as an intermediary. However, she observes that symbolic support at the societal level still fails to create real awareness in society and everyday life.

We put on our socks, we join the walk, there is applause and so on. But when it comes down to it, society is not really aware of us.

Discourses of awareness are insufficient to eliminate the ongoing invisibility of people with special needs in everyday life. The possibility that women with special needs may have distinct experiences still does not find a place within these awareness efforts.

3.2.2. LGBTI+s: Discrimination from education to the labour market

LGBTI+s experience gender inequalities due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This represents one of the clearest forms of intersectional discrimination. Feminist and queer literature argue that LGBTI+s are excluded because they are considered 'unacceptable/non-traditional' by both heteronormative and patriarchal norms, which particularly deepens discrimination in the labour market (Acker, 1990; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). From an intersectional perspective, LGBTI+s' experiences in the workplace cannot be understood solely on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity but also through the intersection of these categories with the patriarchal labour structure (Crenshaw, 1991). Consequently, the disadvantaged position of LGBTI+s in the labour market stems not only from individual prejudices but also from "institutional" arrangements shaped by heteronormative and cisnormative structures (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

Findings from Queer Cyprus's 2021 report, *The Access to Employment and Experiences of LGBTI+s in the Labour Market in the northern part of Cyprus*,³¹ show that LGBTI+s are systematically discriminated against throughout the employment cycle, starting from education (Bhatti & Güven-Lisaniler, 2021). Although these challenges often overlap with those experienced by women more generally, LGBTI+s enter the labour market under more precarious conditions compared to cis-heterosexuals, and this precarity spans from education and career choice to job-seeking and workplace experiences. Bullying, exclusion, and discrimination during education—especially among trans individuals—can lead to school dropout and interruptions in educational continuity, directly limiting access to skilled and secure employment.

³¹ The Queer Cyprus Association's *The Access to Employment and Experiences of LGBTI+s in the Labour Market in the northern part of Cyprus* report reveals the discriminatory and adverse attitudes and behaviours LGBTI+s encounter in employment. The report provides a broad framework for understanding LGBTI+s experiences in accessing employment and navigating the labour market, covering their education, career choices, job-seeking experiences, workplace discrimination (harassment, outing, mobbing, assault), and the outcomes of these experiences, alongside a set of recommendations. The first two chapters highlight the challenges LGBTI+s face within the employment cycle, drawing on previous research. Subsequent chapters focus on how sexual orientation and gender identity are reflected in the labour market in the northern part of Cyprus and, rather than presenting outcomes alone, report on what LGBTI+s perceive would have been different had discrimination not occurred. The study's data were compiled through surveys, in-depth face-to-face interviews, and focus groups. For further information and to access the full report, see: 97bd5b93-aa15-4649-988b-f5948e840d2c.usrfiles.com/ugd/97bd5b_612dd4973b984b6eb6ee2cb6d5c66519.pdf

LGBTI+s' career and occupational choices in the northern part of Cyprus are largely shaped by strategies to avoid discrimination. LGBTI+s may avoid certain sectors due to the risks associated with being openly themselves at work, gravitate towards sectors perceived as "safer," or prefer self-employment. Trans women are particularly at risk of being concentrated in informal and insecure work. Anticipation of discrimination and fear of exclusion during job searches is so high that many trans women, believing "they won't hire us," do not apply for jobs they consider 'normal' and instead seek work in the entertainment industry or sex work.

Another factor is that many have had to leave their education incomplete and fear they cannot meet their health needs in low-wage employment. In this respect, trans women are more likely than cis women or lesbian/bisexual women to be trapped in insecure jobs.

Discrimination against LGBTI+s is also experienced during application and hiring processes: they may be rejected from jobs, eliminated during interviews, or receive no response to applications because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This often forces LGBTI+s to remain hidden during job searches and creates an invisible mechanism of exclusion before employment. Here, exclusion arises not from overt refusal but through normative expectations of femininity and heterosexuality. This mechanism does not always originate from employers; for example, lesbians may avoid applying to certain jobs that require visibility, self-presentation, or public exposure.

Workplace discrimination manifests in both formal (dismissal, blocked promotions, wage inequality) and informal (exclusion, ridicule, harassment, mobbing, threat of outing) forms. A large portion of LGBTI+s report having to conceal their identities as a survival strategy. Trans women, whose trans identities are more difficult to conceal, face more intense and sustained discrimination and even sexual violence.

The research also reveals that most LGBTI+s who experience discrimination do not use any formal complaint mechanism. The main reasons include fear of losing their job, risk of further stigmatisation, lack of trust in existing mechanisms, and fear of having their sexual orientation or gender identity

exposed. This leads to discrimination becoming invisible and being structurally reproduced. The absence of LGBTI+ inclusive workplace policies and "institutional" mechanisms deepens discrimination.

Trans women are the group facing the most severe and overt exclusion from employment within the LGBTI+ community. The Queer Cyprus (2021) report documents that trans women experience intense discrimination in accessing the labour market. Their ability to conceal their identity is more limited than that of other LGBTI+ groups, and they therefore avoid applying for jobs they consider 'normal' outside the entertainment and sex work sectors. Public health services are inadequate to meet trans women's healthcare needs, requiring them to self-finance. The belief that the income from "regular jobs" would not cover living costs and healthcare expenses, and that they are unlikely to be accepted into such jobs due to their trans identity, prevents their participation in the labour market. Furthermore, the mismatch between their gender identity and the gender assigned in official documents prevents them from applying for more secure jobs. This situation pushes trans women into informal, insecure, low-paid work, confines them to sex work and entertainment, and in some cases excludes them from the labour market entirely.

In the study reported by the Queer Cyprus Association, participants were asked how their personal development (education, skills, hobbies, etc.) and job-seeking or work experiences would have differed had discrimination not occurred. Findings show that discrimination affects not only LGBTI+s' access to employment but also their engagement with life, self-perception, and thoughts about the future. Discrimination not only closes doors for LGBTI+s; it determines which doors they can approach, which dreams they can pursue, and how much they can truly be themselves. One participant stated, "My greatest loss was myself" (Pansexual woman), clearly illustrating that the losses caused by discrimination are not merely economic but also human and existential.

Trans women's accounts especially highlight that discrimination from an early stage in life can prevent continuity in education and the possibility of establishing a stable life:

"I would have continued school and obtained better professions; I wanted to be a teacher." (Trans Woman)

Participants' testimonies also suggest that in the absence of discrimination, life could be experienced as freer, more productive, and secure. Another participant summarised this, saying, "Absolutely, where there is no worry, everything is more possible and easier" (Lesbian, self-employed). Ensuring equality for LGBTI+s in employment is therefore not only a matter of rights but also a matter of reclaiming lost potential.

3.2.3. Migrant and refugee women

Within the framework of the Parity Project, qualitative data on migrant women's labour-market experiences were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 10 participants (conducted between November 2025 and January 2026). The participants consisted of migrant women from Iran (1), Turkmenistan (2), Kazakhstan (1), Ukraine (1), Lebanon (1), Türkiye (3), and one refugee from Syria. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in locations and languages preferred by the participants. Nine interviews were audio-recorded, while one was documented through note-taking. After transcription of the recorded interviews using computer software, the data were analysed thematically.

The findings indicate that the absence of an inclusive migration policy, together with the lack of a structured plan governing migrant labour supply and demand, makes migrants' integration into the labour market more difficult and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Migrant women's labour market experiences reveal that their disadvantaged position stems not only from these structural shortcomings but also from the intersectional dynamics of migration status and gender.

Conversion of employment into a residence condition

Participants' narratives show that for migrant women, working becomes not only a right or an individual career choice but also a fundamental condition for remaining in the country. This linkage between employment and residence permits places migrant women in a fragile position, where they constantly

feel at risk of having to leave. In this context, working is experienced not as an emancipatory practice but rather as a necessity. For migrant women, "not working" signifies not only a loss of income but also the loss of the right to remain in the country. This situation produces a powerful mechanism of control that disciplines migrant women's labour. Our participant from Iran was driven towards full-time employment by the need to secure permission to remain in the country. Despite obtaining full-time employment, the annual renewal requirement for work permits continues to cause anxiety.

"Actually, one of the difficulties I experienced in Cyprus was being a part-time teacher. The work permit lasted four or five months; I think it was for a semester... And because my children were studying here, I wondered what I would do if they didn't give me a teaching load in the middle of the year—if I didn't have a permit. That's why I started looking for a full-time job. And luckily, I found a job here... I felt relieved about the permit. But another difficulty is that it is renewed annually. So I always have to have a second plan. What if things don't go well?... As long as I work, I receive a one-year permit. But then you start thinking: what happens if they don't renew it?... In Europe, if you have a work permit, it is valid for 5 years. So you know you will be there for the next five years. But the difficulty here is that nothing is 100 per cent guaranteed." (K1, Iranian migrant)

The experience of our Syrian refugee participant illustrates the same phenomenon. After her aunt lost the work permit on which her own residence status depended, her efforts to regain the right to reside led her to work under insecure conditions—sometimes even for months without pay—resulting in the exploitation of her labour. While searching for work, her primary concern is not the nature of the job itself but whether it will grant her the right to reside. She also believes that being Syrian makes it even more difficult for her to find employment.

"I don't have permission to stay. I have nothing... I want many things, but right now, what can I do? I need a job or something else. I went to work for someone. He said, "Okay, I will give you everything". He allowed me to work with him for five months or more. He didn't give me

money, he didn't give me a work permit. He didn't give me anything. Then I said, "I need money or a work permit because I can't stay right now. I'm stuck here." And they said, "Okay, okay, don't worry, just wait". I waited five months. I needed something else. I left. I said, okay, enough. I don't want anything else. I will leave because there is no leave, no work permit, no money, nothing. I said I don't want it anymore. I will find another job. But after that, I looked, and nobody hired me. Especially because I am Syrian... I want to be sure that I am here legally because right now I am afraid. Look, there are legislation changes and things like that." (K10, Syrian refugee)

These narratives show that although their legal statuses differ, migrant women experience similar structural pressures in the relationship between work and permits. Work operates as a common mechanism of compulsory labour and risk for all groups required to obtain residence permits. For migrant women, employment functions not only as a source of income or a field of career development, as assumed in classical labour theories, but also as a precondition for remaining in the country.

Regardless of gender, all migrants are incorporated into labour markets with the same legal status, yet in unequal and hierarchical ways; when considered together with gender, a multi-layered field of vulnerability emerges for migrant women. Migrant women are frequently compelled to work in informal sectors where labour is more unprotected, less regulated, and largely invisible. Migration produces particularly restrictive outcomes for migrant women concentrated in low-income and low-skilled jobs, severely limiting their capacity to change jobs, challenge working conditions, or report exploitation. In short, when migration status intersects with gender inequality, it results in more limited room for manoeuvre, deeper insecurity, and higher risks of exploitation for migrant women—producing further entrenched inequalities. The risk of exploitation is especially high for refugees and third-country nationals.

Downward occupational mobility

After migration, women's education, diplomas, and professional backgrounds are frequently not recognised in the labour market, pushing them into lower-

status, more insecure jobs. This process creates not only economic loss but also a loss of identity and self-esteem. Although the non-recognition of education and professional qualifications in the post-migration labour market applies to both women and men migrants, when its consequences intersect with gender, they become more permanent and restrictive for women. While migrant men generally have greater opportunities to shift into different sectors and compensate for the loss of status resulting from the non-recognition of their qualifications, migrant women are channelled into low-status and insecure jobs such as care work and domestic services, and their pathways out of these positions remain more limited. In short, while the non-recognition of education and diplomas may represent a temporary barrier for a male migrant, for women it often results in a permanent loss of status. Men tend to have access to a broader range of sectors based on physical labour, informal networks and even opportunities for upward mobility, whereas women are more likely to be confined to a limited set of sectors coded as “women’s work”, such as care, cleaning and domestic services. In this respect, migrant men who experience a temporary downward shift are in a more advantageous position than migrant women who experience the erasure of their professional identity.

Another challenge faced by migrant women who are compelled to work for economic reasons is having to take on “any job available.” This not only means not being able to practise their own profession but also leads to long working hours, lack of leave, and having to endure work that sometimes feels “like a prison” for as long as they can bear it. For example, a participant from Turkmenistan—who had been a teacher of Russian and of the hearing-impaired and who settled in northern Cyprus 18 years ago after arriving as a tourist with her husband—was unable to continue teaching because she could not complete the necessary accreditation process despite learning the language, and therefore decided to accept cleaning and care work:

“When I first arrived, I thought I would do any job. But afterwards, because my Turkish was weak, I said first I should learn the language a bit, so any job would do. Then, once I had learned the language properly, I wanted to work in my own profession. I went to the “Ministry of Education”. They said that they do not give teaching jobs to third-

country nationals. After that, I searched and tried different things. When nothing worked out, cleaning suited me. When I couldn't find anything in the private sector either, I said time is passing, you have to pay rent, you can't just sit at home... Didn't I look for work? Of course I did. But when I couldn't find anything... Then I thought, "I am a teacher; this is my profession," but the job was completely different. People don't look after elderly people. I had never done that in my life. Of course, it was difficult at first... sometimes the conditions were very harsh. There was no leave. If they wanted, they would give it; if not, they wouldn't. When you went on leave, they would say, "Come back immediately." It was very harsh. Honestly, it felt like being in prison. I couldn't last even a year, and I left myself... After that, I worked in an office. They were very good people. But the working hours were difficult. For example, I would go at eight in the morning and stay until seven in the evening. Because the children were at home, that was also difficult. The working conditions were hard. Probably because we are women. Yes, that's why I worked there for about a year, and then I left on my own... Now I work as a live-in carer. I look after an elderly woman. These conditions are better for me because, in a way, it is good. I stay in one house. Before, I used to do general cleaning in different houses six days a week, from top to bottom." (K2, Turkmenistan))

The participant also noted that her husband, who had been a food engineer in their home country, had experienced similar difficulties finding work in his profession. However, he was at least able to find a job in a shop where he could obtain a residence permit and work for a longer period with relative satisfaction. His greater range of opportunities was also linked to the fact that domestic care responsibilities—especially childcare—largely fell on her.

Occupational devaluation is experienced by migrant women as a form of forced downward mobility. The channelling of women into cleaning, care and service sectors demonstrates how the gendered division of labour is reproduced in the context of migration. What is striking here is that this redirection is not experienced as a "choice" but rather as a forced adaptation under the pressure of livelihood and maternal care responsibilities. While these findings explain why migrant women's labour is systematically concentrated

in low-paid and insecure sectors, for highly educated migrant women working in academia—although the working conditions differ from those in other countries and may not be economically satisfying—their professional status at least remains intact.

"My experience has been only in academia. I have not worked anywhere else. When I speak with people working at universities in Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom or the United States, they are shocked by the conditions we face. Of course, the workload... the number of courses we teach and the salary we receive... I see my job here as a kind of contribution to my profession. It is completely exploitative. Exploitative both in terms of labour and time, and in terms of not receiving the value of what you contribute to the university." (K3, Kazakhstan)

The narratives of refugee and third-country national women reveal the most extreme forms of vulnerability in migrant women's labour. In this context, informal work represents not only a lack of legal status but also the production of social invisibility. The account of the refugee participant in particular shows that exploitation is not exceptional but structural. Migrant women, particularly those with a precarious legal status, are often compelled to work in informal employment. In such settings, labour becomes unprotected, unregulated and invisible, and precarious work becomes normalised. The employment of women without work permits, the non-payment of wages, and short-term work or residence permits all demonstrate how migration can create unprotected labour fields.

Language and access to labour

Except for participants who migrated from Türkiye, participants' narratives indicate that, for migrant women—compared to migrant men—the language issue is not merely an individual deficiency or a skill that can be acquired over time, but rather a factor that shapes the timing and conditions of access to employment. For migrant women, whose employment opportunities are largely concentrated in service-sector jobs that require verbal communication, insufficient language proficiency not only makes it more difficult to find work; it also predefines the boundaries between which jobs are "possible"

and which are "unattainable". Although lack of language proficiency also constitutes a barrier for migrant men, the existence of job sectors where communication is less necessary differentiates its impact from the barrier it creates for women. During the period until the language is learned, job-search strategies may therefore diverge (as seen in the experience of participant K2 from Turkmenistan, cited above)..

In this sense, language differentiates the experiences of migrant women and men in entering the labour market, extending migrant women's access to employment over longer periods compared with migrant men and limiting their access to jobs where their professional qualifications, education and experience could be utilised (as in the case of K2).

Everyday discrimination and occupational stereotypes concerning migrant women's skill

Everyday discrimination and occupational stereotypes concerning migrant women's skills

It was observed that migrant women are positioned within everyday social interactions through pre-established categories, and that this positioning leads to occupational stereotypes based on origin and profession. Once outside familiar social circles, identity is interpreted not through individual characteristics but through ethnic and regional stereotypes, and migrant women therefore encounter everyday forms of discrimination.

"I had some interesting experiences regarding how people perceive me... When I first came here, it was really interesting how people behaved. I think Cypriots have a very derogatory impression of Central Asians. When we first met at my son's classmate's birthday party... the women... they didn't know how to behave towards me... Because I was speaking English, and my Turkish was not at the same level. Yes, I mean, I understand, but I cannot speak as fluently. One of the women came up to me and, because they knew nothing about me, said, 'Excuse me, where do you work? Are you a cashier?' And you know, normally that wouldn't be a problem at all. But the funny thing about this comment

in the context of Cyprus is that Central Asians work in three places here. As cashiers in supermarkets. Correct. In brothels. Correct. Or in casinos. Correct. So out of those three options... yes, the brothel or casino options were ruled out. And she probably thought that being a cashier or working in a supermarket might be the most respectable kind of job available. When I told her I worked at a university, everything changed. I became a much more respectable person... I think this is discrimination. A kind of everyday discrimination encountered in daily life."

The question "Are you a cashier?" is not simply an expression of innocent curiosity, but rather a manifestation of a stereotype. As the participant herself points out, the association of Central Asian women in the northern part of Cyprus with three specific sectors (supermarkets, nightclubs and casinos) reveals the perception underlying this question. What is significant here is that the cashier option is presented as the "respectable" one. This illustrates that discrimination does not necessarily take the form of overt exclusion but can also appear in a "well-intentioned" yet hierarchical form. Without realising it, the person asking the question sets an upper limit for the participant, presenting what they perceive as the most respectable job that a Central Asian migrant woman could hold.



CHAPTER 4

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

4.1 What have we learned?

Women's access to resources and decision-making systems remains extremely limited. Their access to labour (i.e., employment) is very low and has not improved since 2004. Women do not have equal conditions and opportunities with men in the labour market: the employment opportunity of women of working age (employment rate) is half that of men, while the likelihood of women in the labour force being unemployed (unemployment rate) is at least twice that of men. Access to employment is largely limited to certain sectors, occupations and forms of paid labour. The lack of equal conditions renders opportunities in the labour market and other spheres ineffective for women. As a consequence, through a feedback mechanism, women gradually withdraw from using these ineffective opportunities. This creates a vicious cycle that prevents women from accessing employment, participating as entrepreneurs, or being represented in economic decision-making systems.

Labour income is distributed unequally between women and men. In 2008, women's average annual main job income was 20% lower than men's. In 2022, the gap was 19%, showing no meaningful improvement. The labour market is horizontally segregated by gender across occupations and sectors. It is also vertically segregated according to employment status (employer, wage earner, self-employed, unpaid family worker). In some occupations and employment statuses where women are concentrated, the difference between men's and women's average annual main job income reaches 35%.

Whether women work in paid employment outside the home or not, they still spend more time on domestic labour than men. This demonstrates that

gender inequality is sustained not only through economic indicators but also through the temporal distribution of everyday life. In the northern part of Cyprus, the extremely limited availability of public care services means that childcare, eldercare and care for the sick are largely transferred to households—and within households, primarily to women. This significantly increases the labour time women devote to unpaid domestic labour and care work and limits the time they can allocate to activities outside the home. This unequal distribution of time restricts women's participation in social, political and economic life, as well as in decision-making systems. Women's access to and representation in decision-making systems at all levels remain far below the level of equal representation (50:50), which would be necessary to influence decisions.

Women's low labour force participation does not stem from a lack of labour supply or from deficiencies in women's qualifications. There is no educational gap between women and men. There is no widespread negative perception in the business world regarding women's skills or the quality of their labour. Rather, women's low participation in the labour force stems from constraints on the demand for women's labour. These demand constraints arise from:

- societal perceptions regarding women's employment
- the unequal distribution of domestic work and care responsibilities between women and men
- gender stereotypes about what women and men are capable of doing
- gender-blind market regulations
- the horizontal and vertical gender segregation in occupations and sectors produced by these factors

The conditional societal approval of women's employment observed in 2001—acceptance of women working only in jobs that do not disrupt family order, do not create family conflict, and do not negatively affect children's education—persists. As a result, the demand for women's labour remains very low in certain spaces and occupations. Social perceptions related to women's domestic responsibilities and gender stereotypes about the types of jobs and workplaces considered "appropriate" for women remain strong.

Women's marital status and whether they have children continue to negatively affect their chances of employment. Although the majority of participants reject the idea that women and men are naturally more successful in different jobs, different qualities still tend to be prioritised when female and male candidates are recruited. Women managers display a higher level of awareness regarding women's disadvantaged position, and this difference is statistically significant.

Representatives of the labour market are aware of the unequal position of women in the labour market in the northern part of Cyprus. It is acknowledged that this inequality stems from unequal conditions and unequal access to certain opportunities. Equal opportunities can only function effectively when equal conditions are ensured. Participants highlight unequal conditions and gender discrimination as the main causes of women's disadvantaged position. Gender-based roles, expectations and stereotypes weaken women entrepreneurs' access to "institutional" support and create obstacles in running their businesses.

The convergence of multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, special needs, migration status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation shapes access to employment, the quality of jobs, wage levels, and job security for women with multiple vulnerable identities, thereby leading to the hierarchical and precarious structuring of their status in the labour market.

Women with special needs face even more limited opportunities for accessing and remaining in employment due to their low representation and inadequate accessibility. These limitations are perceived and experienced more deeply by women with special needs because they intersect with other gender-related barriers and the lack of inclusive workplaces.

The discrimination faced by LGBTI+ individuals is not limited to individual attitudes. It represents a structural inequality present throughout all stages of the labour market, beginning with the education system. Trans women in particular are pushed into the most insecure, informal and exclusionary forms of employment within the cis-heteronormative labour market, or are excluded from the labour market altogether.

The labour market experiences of migrant women stem not from a single disadvantage but from the intersectional operation of migrant status and gender. Work becomes, for migrant women and men, less a right or an individual choice and more a mechanism that controls labour and the conditions under which it is provided as a requirement for remaining in the country; when intersecting with gender, this creates a narrower scope for manoeuvre, lower bargaining power, and deeper insecurity for women. Furthermore, although the non-recognition of professional qualifications in the post-migration labour market is a common experience for both women and men migrants, for women it often results in a permanent downward mobility concentrated in care, cleaning and domestic work. Informal employment and everyday occupational stereotypes operate as implicit mechanisms of exclusion, reinforcing these intersectional inequalities; for refugee women and third-country nationals in particular, they make precarious employment almost unavoidable.

4.2 Implications of what we have learned

Women's ability to carry out their dual roles—paid market work and unpaid domestic work—simultaneously is possible in the short term if labour market conditions are structured to reconcile these roles. The provision of employment opportunities by the labour market that are accessible within the regions where individuals live, and where working days and hours are compatible with transportation services, increases women's participation in the labour force. In the short and medium term, establishing physically and financially accessible public and private care services is essential. In the medium and long term, however, this requires transforming gender roles and the social division of labour by equalising the sharing of domestic work and care responsibilities between women and men.

Eliminating gender inequalities in opportunities and conditions is also necessary to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem and to enhance overall levels of investment and innovation. "Institutional" support mechanisms and incentive programmes that recognise women's disadvantaged position and aim to address these disadvantages should be developed to facilitate women's entrepreneurship.

Women managers demonstrate higher levels of awareness regarding the disadvantaged position of women, and this difference is statistically significant. Increasing the representation of women in managerial positions is therefore expected to play a transformative role in women's workforce participation and in reducing occupational segregation and the perception that certain jobs are more suitable for women or men.

For women belonging to disadvantaged groups, these barriers are experienced in much more complex and multi-layered ways. Women with special needs, LGBTI+ women, as well as migrant and refugee women face multiple forms of discrimination stemming both from being women and from their membership in marginalised groups. Key challenges faced by these groups include invisibility, the lack of disaggregated, inclusive data, insufficient legal protections against discrimination, and the absence of both physical and inclusive workplace accessibility. The inaccessibility and lack of inclusiveness of physical spaces—particularly workplaces—along with the limited availability of unbiased, barrier-free and gender-neutral environments, combined with prejudices and exclusionary attitudes, significantly restrict these women's access to employment and their ability to remain in the workforce through various forms of discrimination.

The findings presented in this book clearly demonstrate that gender inequality does not arise from individual preferences but from structural, "institutional" and perception-based barriers. For this reason, advocacy and lobbying efforts should focus on transforming the barriers that limit women's access to productive resources. In this context, priority areas include strengthening legal and "institutional" frameworks that promote gender equality, developing care policies that reduce inequalities in time use, and implementing employment strategies that include disadvantaged groups. Efforts must go beyond evidence-based advocacy and mere visibility of problems to achieve equal access to productive resources and equal representation in decision-making systems. Decision-makers should be encouraged to take concrete steps, assume responsibility, and present actionable plans.

The action plan to be developed within this framework should adopt a phased approach aimed at translating advocacy efforts into policy change.

In the short term, increasing the availability of gender-sensitive data and expanding awareness-raising activities are essential. In the medium term, care services should be regulated as a public responsibility, policies supporting work–life balance should be implemented, and inclusive, anti-discrimination policies should be adopted in workplaces. In the long term, a comprehensive employment policy centred on gender equality should be established and supported through strengthened “institutional” capacity.

4.3 Roadmap

Achieving gender equality in access to productive resources and decision-making systems in the northern part of Cyprus requires a comprehensive and multi-actor transformation process. While the success of this transformation also depends on strong advocacy processes and multi-stakeholder cooperation, Table 4.1 summarises the main strategies of this transformation and applicable policy priorities under four headings as a roadmap.

4.3.1 Governance and policy

Gender equality should be systematically integrated into public policies, and this should be recognised as a fundamental condition for inclusive and fair governance. The equality perspective should be mainstreamed across all stages of policy development and become a standard in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Such an approach ensures that policy design becomes more inclusive and that the needs not only of women but also of persons with disabilities, older people, migrants and other vulnerable groups are reflected in policy processes.

Simultaneously, the absence of disaggregated data on gender and vulnerable groups must be resolved. Data systems should be strengthened, regular reporting mechanisms established, and equality indicators introduced to expose inequalities and enable the development of more effective programmes. These measures will foster evidence-based policymaking and improve public “institutions” accountability.

Furthermore, gender-responsive budgeting should be “institutionalised.” Gender impact analyses should be conducted during the preparation

of public budgets, and resource allocation should be planned in line with equality objectives. This approach makes the effects of public spending on different social groups more visible and supports a fairer, more transparent and results-oriented distribution of resources.

4.3.2. Transformation of social norms and recognition of the care economy

It must be acknowledged that gender inequality stems not from the “deficiencies of women” but from prevailing social norms. Traditional gender roles concentrate care responsibilities on women; this concentration limits women’s access to productive resources—including their own time—and consequently restricts their participation in economic and public life. For this reason, equality-based approaches should be strengthened within the education system, and both curricula and school culture should be transformed in ways that support gender equality. Through media collaborations, public service announcements, and awareness campaigns, egalitarian norms and attitudes should be promoted, and gender role models based on the sharing of care responsibilities should be made more visible.

Care work must be recognised, and the expansion of care services should be treated as a priority. Making unpaid care work visible and integrating it into social protection systems would encourage the social sharing of care responsibilities. At the same time, childcare and eldercare services should be expanded in ways that are accessible, high-quality and affordable, while local “governments” and public “institutions” should play an active role in providing these services.

4.3.3. Equality in working life

Care responsibilities should be recognised as a structural barrier limiting women’s participation in the labour force and their career advancement. In this context, parental leave policies should be redesigned from an equality perspective, the rights of caregivers should be strengthened, and working models that support work–life balance should be promoted. Policies encouraging men’s participation in caregiving responsibilities would contribute to a more balanced sharing of care work.

Inclusive and accessible standards should also be implemented in workplaces. Physical arrangements and “institutional” policies should be introduced to facilitate access to employment for persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. Likewise, anti-discrimination practices should be strengthened in order to create inclusive and accessible working environments.

Programmes that reduce the barriers women entrepreneurs face in accessing finance, along with mentoring networks and business development support, should be expanded, and an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem should be developed through strengthened collaboration among financial “institutions”, public bodies, and the business community.

4.3.4. Equal representation in decision-making systems

Women’s equal access to decision-making systems and their representation with the same level of influence as men make it possible to diversify policy priorities and develop solutions that are more responsive to societal needs. In this context, public “institutions”, local “governments”, and the private sector should set clear targets for equal representation and support the “institutionalisation” of gender-balanced participation through concrete measures to achieve these targets.

Table 4.1. A roadmap for gender equality in the north of Cyprus

	<i>Problem</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Policy Action</i>	<i>Responsible Actors</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
1. Governance and Policy	Gender inequality, and the underrepresentation, unequal representation, and exclusion of disadvantaged groups in policy-making processes	Mainstreaming equality in public policies	Integrating a gender equality perspective into all policy and planning processes	'Prime Ministry and Council of Ministers', 'SPO', 'TOCED/GED', sectoral ministries, municipalities	Short–Medium
	Lack of data on gender and vulnerable groups	Data collection and evidence-based policymaking	Establishing systems for collecting gender- and group-disaggregated data and ensuring regular reporting	'SPO', 'Statistics Office', public institutions, municipalities, academia	Short
	Absence of gender-responsive budgeting	Equality-focused budgeting	Conducting gender impact analyses in public budgets and allocating resources in line with equality objectives	'Ministry of Finance', 'SPO', sectoral ministries, 'GED', municipalities	Medium
	Insufficient and irregular monitoring of gender equality	Institutional monitoring and evaluation	Developing equality indicators and publishing regular monitoring reports	'SPO', sectoral ministries, 'GED', academia and civil society organisations	Long
2. Social Norms and Care	Limited gender equality awareness in society	Promoting egalitarian norms and attitudes	Awareness campaigns, educational programmes and media collaborations	'Ministry of Education', educational institutions, media, civil society organisations	Short–Long
	High unpaid care burden on women	Sharing and recognising care responsibilities	Recognising care work in social policy and social protection systems	'Ministry of Labour and Social Security', 'Ministry of Health', municipalities, civil society organisations	Medium
	Insufficient care services	Strengthening care infrastructure	Expanding and making childcare and eldercare services accessible	'Department of Social Services', municipalities, 'Ministry of National Education', 'Ministry of Health', private sector	Medium

3. Working Life	Inequality in working life, and care responsibilities	Equality-oriented labour policies	Reforming parental leave and strengthening the rights of workers with caregiving responsibilities	'Parliament', 'Ministry of Labour and Social Security', social insurance and social security institutions, trade unions	Medium
	Lack of inclusiveness and accessibility in workplaces	Inclusive and equitable workplace standards	Implementing accessible infrastructure and inclusive workplace policies	Employers, municipalities, 'Ministry of Labour and Social Security'	Medium
	Barriers to women entrepreneurs' access to finance	Supporting women's entrepreneurship	Expanding access to finance mechanisms and entrepreneurship support programmes	'Ministry of Economy and Energy', 'Development Bank', banks, business organisations, women entrepreneurs' associations	Medium
4. Decision-Making and Sustainability	Low representation of women in decision-making mechanisms	Strengthening equal representation	Setting gender balance targets in public institutions and local governments	'Prime Ministry', 'Parliament', municipalities and public institutions	Long

APPENDICES

Table E1. Global gender gap index for the northern part of Cyprus: economic participation and opportunity sub-index, 2008, 2015, 2021

<i>Economic Participation and Opportunities: Indicators 2008</i>	Percentage of Women (%)	Percentage of Men (%)	Women/Men Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Labour Force Participation	36.2	62.7	0.58	0.199	0.1154
Equal Pay for Similar Work*			0.75	0.31	0.2325
Estimated Average Monthly Earnings** (TL)	2144.5	1761.8	0.82	0.221	0.1812
Legislators and Managers	29	71	0.41	0.149	0.0609
Professionals, Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations Workers	38	62	0.61	0.121	0.0742
Index Score					0.664
Gender Gap					%34
<i>2015</i>	Percentage of Women (%)	Percentage of Men (%)	Women/Men Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Labour Force Participation	38.6	62.2	0.62	0.199	0.1235
Equal Pay for Similar Work*			0.75	0.31	0.2325
Estimated Average Monthly Earnings** (TL)	2862.5	2470.6	0.86	0.221	0.1901
Legislators and Managers	32	68	0.47	0.149	0.0701
Professionals, Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations Workers	48	52	0.91	0.121	0.1101
Index Score					0.699
Gender Gap					%27
<i>2021</i>	Percentage of Women (%)	Percentage of Men (%)	Women/Men Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Labour Force Participation	34	52	0.65	0.199	0.1301
Equal Pay for Similar Work*			0.79	0.31	0.2449
Estimated Average Monthly Earnings** (TL)	2168.5	2668	0.81	0.221	0.1790
Legislators and Managers	34	66	0.52	0.149	0.0768
Professionals, Associate Professionals and Technical Occupations Workers	43	57	0.75	0.121	0.0913
Index Score					0.720
Gender Gap					%28

Source: 'Statistics Office', Household Labour Force Survey 2008, 2015, 2022 and Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–22. Global Gender Gap Reports.

* Derived from the Household Budget Survey for the relevant year. The ratio of women's to men's average annual main-labour income (TL) was calculated within occupational groups. The arithmetic mean of these ratios across occupational groups was then used.

** Calculated as the ratio of total male and female incomes reported in the table of average annual main-labour income of household members.

Table E2. Global gender gap index for the northern part of Cyprus: Political empowerment sub-index 2008, 2015, 2021

<i>Political empowerment indicators</i> 2008	Proportion of Women	Weight	Index Score
Proportion of women in Parliament	0.06	0.31	0.019
Proportion of women in the Council of Ministers	0.10	0.247	0.025
Female-to-male ratio of heads of state over the past 50 years	0.00	0.443	0
Index Score			0.043
Gender gap			%96
2015	Proportion of Women	Weight	Index Score
Proportion of women in Parliament	0.08	0.31	0.025
Proportion of women in the Council of Ministers	0.10	0.247	0.025
Female-to-male ratio of heads of state over the past 50 years	0.00	0.443	0
Index Score			0.050
Gender gap			%95
2022	Proportion of Women	Weight	Index Score
Proportion of women in Parliament	0.22	0.31	0.0682
Proportion of women in the Council of Ministers	0.10	0.247	0.0247
Female-to-male ratio of heads of state over the past 50 years	0.00	0.443	0
Index Score			0.093
Gender gap			%91

Source: Compiled by the authors based on internet research.

**Table E3. Global gender gap index for the northern part of Cyprus:
educational attainment sub-index 2008, 2015, 2021**

<i>Educational Attainment Sub-Index Indicators</i> 2008	Men: M	Women: W	W/M Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Literacy Rate (number of literate persons)	136,925	119,658	0.87	0.191	0.167
Primary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	5,553	4,951	0.89	0.459	0.409
Secondary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	5,343	5,421	1.01	0.23	0.233
University Education Enrolment Rate* (number of students)	7122	6232	0.88	0.121	0.106
Index Score					0.915
Gender gap					0%9
2015	Men: M	Women: W	W/M Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Literacy Rate (number of literate persons)	136,925	119,658	0.87	0.191	0.167
Primary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	5532	5183	0.94	0.459	0.430
Secondary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	6141	6064	0.99	0.23	0.227
University Education Enrolment Rate* (number of students)	7122	6232	0.88	0.121	0.106
Index Score					0.930
Gender gap					%7
2022	Men: M	Women: W	W/M Ratio	Weight	Index Score
Literacy Rate (number of literate persons)	136,925	119,658	0.87	0.191	0.167
Primary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	6159	5766	0.94	0.459	0.430
Secondary Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	6872	6622	0.96	0.23	0.222
University Education Enrolment Rate (number of students)	5666	5821	1.03	0.121	0.124
Index Score					0.943
Gender gap					%9

Source: Statistical Yearbooks 2017, 2021, 2023. Accessed via: Statistical Office > BASIC STATISTICS > STATISTICAL YEARBOOK

Table E4. Global gender gap index: Health and survival sub-index 2008, 2015, 2021

Health and Survival Sub-Index Indicators					
2008	Men	Women	W/M ratio	Weight	Index Score
Sex Ratio at Birth	2017	1871	0.93	0.693	0.643
Average Life Expectancy	71.7	76.4	1.07	0.307	0.327
Index Score					0.970
Gender gap					0.03
2015	Men	Women	W/M ratio	Weight	Index Score
Sex Ratio at Birth	1926	1871	0.97	0.693	0.673
Average Life Expectancy	80.5	83.5	1.04	0.307	0.318
Index Score					0.992
Gender gap					0.01
2022	Men	Women	W/M ratio	Weight	Index Score
Sex Ratio at Birth	1885	1751	0.93	0.693	0.644
Average Life Expectancy	79.4	83.6	1.05	0.307	0.323
Index Score					0.967
Gender gap					0.03

Source: Statistical Yearbooks 2017, 2021, 2023. Accessed via: Statistical Office > BASIC STATISTICS > STATISTICAL YEARBOOK

Table E5. Percentage distribution of employment by major economic sectors and gender, women/men ratios

Economic Sectors	2004			2021			2004	2021
	T (%)	M (%)	W (%)	T (%)	M (%)	W (%)	W/M ratio	W/M ratio
Agriculture	8.4	7.6	10.0	3.6	3.9	2.8	66	38
Industry	11.7	13.4	8.3	8.6	10.8	4.6	31	23
Construction	9.3	13.2	1.3	9.6	13.8	1.7	5	7
Services	70.6	65.7	80.3	78.2	71.4	90.8	61	68
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	50	54

Source: Statistical Office Household Labour Force Survey 2004, 2021

Table E6. Women's and men's ratios in major occupational groups

	2004				2021			
	Total	Men	Women	W/M ratio	Total	Men	Women	W/M ratio
Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	100.0	78.3	21.7	28	100.0	66.4	33.6	50
Professionals	100.0	55.7	44.3	79	100.0	51.7	48.3	93
Associate Professionals	100.0	70.7	29.3	41	100.0	66.3	33.7	51
Clerical and Customer Service Workers	100.0	33.8	66.2	196	100.0	35.3	64.7	183
Service and Sales Workers	100.0	63.2	36.7	58	100.0	63.5	36.5	57
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Hunting, and Fishery Workers	100.0	58.6	41.4	70	100.0	80.3	19.7	24
Craft and Related Trades Workers	100.0	91.7	8.4	9	100.0	93.7	6.3	7
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	100.0	97.0	3.0	3	100.0	91.6	8.4	9
Elementary Occupations Workers	100.0	60.3	39.7	66	100.0	57.0	43.0	75
Total Employment	100.0	66.8	33.2	49	100.0	65.1	34.9	53

Source: Statistical Office Household Labour Force Survey 2004, 2021

Table E7. Percentage distribution of women and men by major occupational groups in employment

	2004			2021		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	11.7	13.7	7.7	7.6	7.7	7.3
Professionals	13.1	10.9	17.4	15.3	12.2	21.2
Associate Professionals	9.4	9.9	8.3	10.0	10.2	9.7
Clerical and Customer Service Workers	12.9	6.5	25.8	10.8	5.8	20.0
Service and Sales Workers	10.8	10.3	12.0	19.7	19.2	20.6
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Hunting, and Fishery Workers	7.3	6.4	9.0	3.8	4.7	2.2
Craft and Related Trades Workers	15.2	20.9	3.8	14.4	20.7	2.6
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	6.8	9.9	0.6	6.4	9.0	1.5
Elementary Occupations Workers	12.8	11.5	15.3	12.1	10.6	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistical Office Household Labour Force Survey 2004, 2021

Table E8. Changes in Numbers Employed in Major Occupational Groups 2004–2021

Major Occupational Groups	Percentage Change in Employment Numbers 2004–2021		
	T	M	W
Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	-6.6	-20.7	44.4
Professionals	69.4	57.2	84.8
Associate Professionals	55.0	45.4	78.3
Clerical and Customer Service Workers	20.5	25.7	17.9
Service and Sales Workers	162.3	163.4	160.5
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Hunting, and Fishery Workers	-24.2	3.7	-63.80
Craft and Related Trades Workers	36.8	39.8	3.7
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	35.4	27.8	284.6
Elementary Occupations Workers	36.7	29.2	48.3
Total	44.6	40.9	52.1

Source: Statistical Office Household Labour Force Survey 2004, 2021

Table E9. Major occupational groups with the highest concentration of women's and men's employment

Occupational Groups	2004 %	Occupational Groups	2021 %
	Total		Total
1. Craft and Related Trades Workers	15.2	1. Service and Sales Workers	19.7
2. Professionals	13.1	2. Professionals	15.3
3. Clerical and Customer Service Workers	12.9	3. Craft and Related Trades Workers	14.4
4. Elementary Occupations Workers	12.8	4. Elementary Occupations Workers	12.1
Total	54.0/41.2	Total	49.9/61.5
	Men		Men
1. Craft and Related Trades Workers	20.9	1. Craft and Related Trades Workers	20.7
2. Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	13.7	2. Service and Sales Workers	19.2
3. Elementary Occupations Workers	11.5	3. Professionals	12.2
4. Professionals	10.9	4. Elementary Occupations Workers	10.6
Total	57/46.1	Total	52.1/62.7
	Women		Women
1. Clerical and Customer Service Workers	25.8	1. Professionals	21.2
2. Professionals	17.4	2. Clerical and Customer Service Workers	20.0
3. Elementary Occupations Workers	15.3	3. Service and Sales Workers	20.6
4. Service and Sales Workers	12.0	4. Elementary Occupations Workers	14.9
Total	58.5/70.5	Total	61.8/76.7

Source: Statistical Office Household Labour Force Survey 2004, 2021

Table E10. Annual Average Main Job Incomes (TL) of Household Members by Main Occupational Group and Gender, 2008, 2015, 2021–22

Occupational Groups	Annual Average Main Job Income Women/Men Ratio		
	2008	2015	2021-22
1. Legislators, Senior Officials, and Managers	77.2	83.3	66.5
2. Professionals	79.3	85.7	77.5
3. Associate Professionals	93,6	90,6	109.0
4. Clerical and Customer Service Workers	86,8	87,2	84.0
5. Service and Sales Workers	61,3	54,1	63.2
6. Skilled Agricultural Workers	7,8	66,9	64.2
7. Artisans	90,9	86,4	82.5
8. Plant and Machine Operators	71,5	76,1	40.4
9. Elementary Occupations Workers	62,8	73,9	91.6
Total	82,2	86,3	81.3

Source: Statistical Office, Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–22

Table E11. Annual average main job incomes (TL) of household members by employment status and gender, 2008, 2015, 2021

Employment Status	Annual Average Main Job Income Women/Men Ratio		
	2008	2015	2021-22
Salaried/Wage Worker	83.9	88.3	86.1
Daily Worker	52.1	78.2	57.6
Self-Employed	81.5	90.9	77.8
Employer	50.0	92.3	40.3
Total	82.0	86.3	81.3

Source: Statistical Office, Household Budget Survey 2008, 2015, 2021–22

Table E12. Percentage of women in 'ministerial positions' by region, 2025

World Geographical Regions	Percentage (%)
World	23
Europe and North America	31
Latin America and the Caribbean	30
Sub-Saharan Africa	24
Oceania	17
Western Asia and North Africa	14
Eastern and North-Eastern Asia	14
Central and Northern Asia	9

Source: UN Women Database. Access: Thematic Area Dashboard | UN Women Data Hub

Table E13. Number of women 'members of parliament' by year and administrative region, 1985–2022

Administrative Regions / Election Year '	Number of Women 'Members of Parliament'									
	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003	2005	2010	2013	2018	2022
Famagusta	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	3
Nicosia	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	3
Kyrenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3
Güzelyurt	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Iskele	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Lefke*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Total	0	2	3	4	3	3	3	4	9	11
Percentage of Women Members of Parliament (%)	0	4	6	8	6	6	6	8	18	22

Source: Supreme Election Board Website, Elections Section. Accessed via: 'Parliamentary Elections – Supreme Election Board'

* Lefke was declared a district in 2015. In previous years, it was a subdistrict of Güzelyurt District.

Table E14. Statements on gender roles by women and men

TOTAL	Agree (Strongly Agree + Agree) %	Disagree (Strongly Disagree + Disagree) %	No Opinion / No Response %
It is fair that women contribute more at home and that men bring most of the income into the household	29.4	64.8	5.8
In the the northern part of Cyprus, women possess the same level of knowledge and qualifications required for employment as men	81.1	14.1	4.8
Women and men can be equally successful managers	90.4	6.1	3.5
Women are rewarded similarly to men for similar types of work	57.6	28.6	13.8
Women's political participation in our society should be encouraged. Women can bring a different perspective to politics and contribute more compared to male politicians	85.4	8.0	6.6
Some types of jobs should only be done by men, and others only by women	51.5	41.9	6.6
Taking care of the home and/or children is women's responsibility	27.4	68.1	4.5
A solution in Cyprus would strengthen / benefit the position of women in society	78.3	13.7	8.1
In domestic work outside the workplace, men should take as active a role and assume responsibilities just as women do	85.1	9.5	5.5
WOMEN			
It is fair that women contribute more at home and that men bring most of the income into the household	22.2	70.7	7.1
In the northern part of Cyprus, women possess the same level of knowledge and qualifications required for employment as men	79.8	14.5	5.7
Women and men can be equally successful managers	89.9	6.4	3.7
Women are rewarded for similar types of work as men	53.9	33.4	12.8
Women's political participation in our society should be encouraged. Women can bring a different perspective to politics and contribute more compared to male politicians	87.2	6.8	6.1
Some types of jobs should only be done by men, and others only by women	44.2	48.2	7.7
Taking care of the home and/or children is women's responsibility	19.5	74.7	5.7

A solution in Cyprus would strengthen / benefit the position of women in society	80.1	11.1	8.8
In domestic work outside the workplace, men should take as active a role and assume responsibilities just as women do	86.2	6.7	7.1

MEN			
It is fair that women contribute more at home and that men bring most of the income into the household	36.4	59.0	4.6
the northern part of Cyprus, women possess the same level of knowledge and qualifications required for employment as men	82.3	13.8	3.9
Women and men can be equally successful managers	90.8	5.9	3.3
Women are rewarded similarly to men for similar types of work	61.3	24.0	14.8
Women's political participation in our society should be encouraged. Women can bring a different perspective to politics and contribute more compared to male politicians	83.6	9.2	7.2
Some types of jobs should only be done by men, and others only by women	58.7	35.8	5.6
Taking care of the home and/or children is women's responsibility	35.1	61.6	3.3
A solution in Cyprus would strengthen / benefit the position of women in society	76.4	16.0	7.5
In domestic work outside the workplace, men should take as active a role and assume responsibilities just as women do	84.0	12.2	3.9

Source: KTO Entrepreneurial Women Council Survey on Entrepreneurship, Women's Entrepreneurship, and Perceptions of Women's Labour in Northern Cyprus, 2022

Table E15. Number of persons with special needs by type of disability and gender, 2023

Type of Disability	Women	Men	Women %	Women/Men Ratio
Visual	351	305	54	115
Hearing – Speech	128	175	42	73
Neurological and Mental Disorders	2009	3032	40	66
Musculoskeletal System	299	344	47	87
Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell	40	39	51	103
Spastic	57	95	38	60
Other Conditions	604	560	52	108
Total	3488	4550	43	77
Overall Total	8038			

Source: SPO, 2023, Macroeconomic and Sectoral Developments 2023, Table 2.19.7, p.316

Access: <https://www.deuplan.org/arsiv/Makroekonomik%20ue%20Sektorel%20Gelismeler/makro-eko-2023.pdf>

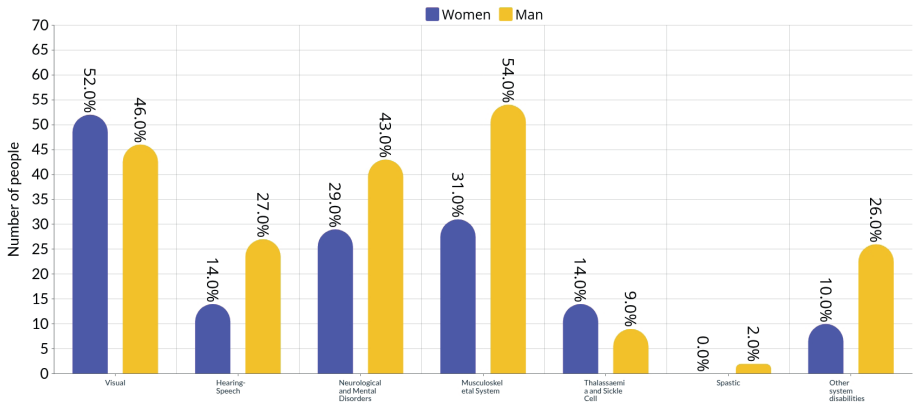
Table E16. Distribution of persons with special needs registered with the 'labour office' and seeking employment, by completed school level and gender, 2015

	Vertical Distribution			Horizontal Distribution		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Did Not Complete School / Illiterate	8.3	10.3	9.5	33.9	66.1	100.0
Did Not Complete School / Literate	6.6	6.3	6.5	40.0	60.0	100.0
Primary School	36.1	40.9	39.0	36.0	64.0	100.0
Secondary School	13.3	13.7	13.5	38.1	61.9	100.0
General High School*	27.3	23.0	24.7	43.1	56.8	100.0
Faculty / Higher Education	5.4	4.0	4.5	46.4	53.6	100.0
Other	2.9	1.8	2.3	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	38.9	61.1	100.0

Source: SPO, 2017, Macroeconomic and Sectoral Developments 2015

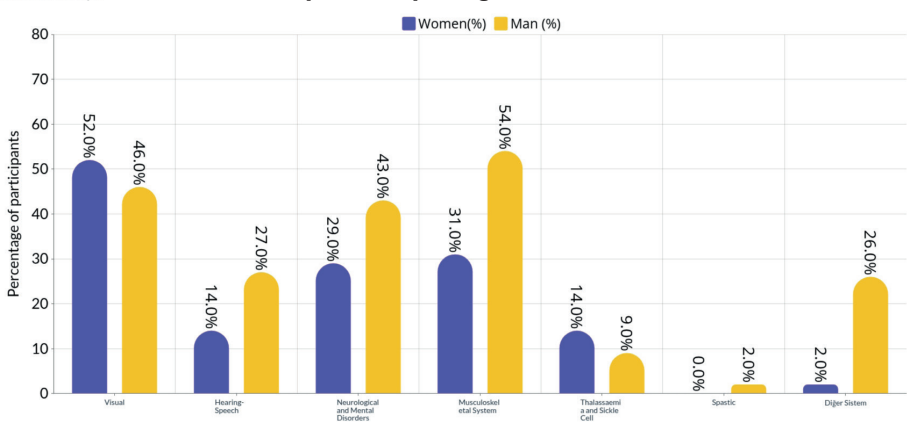
Access: <https://www.deuplan.org/arsiv/Makroekonomik%20ue%20Sektorel%20Gelismeler/makro-eko-2015.pdf>

Figure E1. Distribution of disabled people waiting-for-employment by disability and gender, 2023



Source: 'SPO', 2023. Macroeconomic and Sectoral Developments 2023.
<https://www.deuplan.org/arsiu/Makroekonomik%20ue%20Sektorel%20Gelismeler/makro-eko-2023.pdf>

Figure E2. Percentage distribution of disabled people waiting-for-employment by disability and gender, 2023



Source: 'SPO', 2023. Macroeconomic and Sectoral Developments 2023.
<https://www.deuplan.org/arsiu/Makroekonomik%20ue%20Sektorel%20Gelismeler/makro-eko-2023.pdf>

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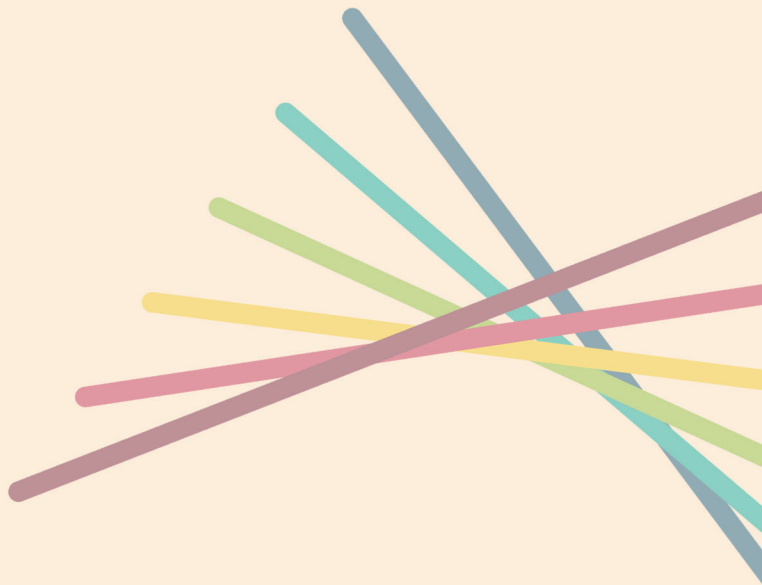
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